

Abena Sankofa Imhotep
PO Box 200
Des Moines, IA 50301-0200

March 25, 2024

Appointment Committee
Des Moines Public School Board
2100 Fleur Dr.
Des Moines, IA 50321

Dear Members of the Des Moines Public School Board,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in filling the vacant seat on the Des Moines Public School Board, following the exemplary tenure of Teree Caldwell-Johnson. With 18 years of dedicated service to our community, Mrs. Caldwell-Johnson has set a high standard for representation and advocacy within our school district, and I am committed to continuing that legacy of excellence.

As a lifelong resident of Des Moines, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of education in shaping the lives of our students and the trajectory of our community. I have also personally experienced it throughout my own K-12 matriculation through Des Moines Public Schools, bespeaking of the tremendous equalizer that public education is for all students.

My deep-rooted passion for literacy advocacy has driven me to actively engage with various educational initiatives and create community programs aimed at enhancing literacy skills among our students, namely the Des Moines Public Library Rosie Reader Initiative and Sankofa Literary & Empowerment Group afterschool literacy and creative writing programs respectively.

I have the skills, knowledge, and perspective necessary to make meaningful contributions to the Des Moines Public School Board and to help shape the future of education in our community beginning on day one:

1. A strong understanding **governance** structures, responsibilities, and best practices enables me to navigate the complexities of the Des Moines Public School Board and ensuring effective decision-making processes.
2. My experience in educational institutions gives me immediate knowledge of the importance of policies and initiatives that **support student outcomes, teacher development, and overall school improvement**.
3. My experience in **budget oversight** and financial decision-making this area will be crucial for reviewing and managing the budget of the Des Moines Public School District, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and transparently.
4. My experience in **collaborating** with diverse stakeholders, including fellow board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members will be essential for effective teamwork on the school board.
5. In order to advocate for the needs of students and represent the vision and values of the community, my record of **engaging with stakeholders** and advocating for various causes will enable me to effectively communicate with and on the behalf of my constituents.

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6. My experience in **strategic planning and problem-solving** will be instrumental in addressing issues such as academic achievement gaps, resource allocation and school infrastructure improvements.
7. Board members are held to high ethical standards, requiring integrity, transparency, and accountability in decision-making. My track record of **ethical leadership** in previous board roles demonstrates my commitment to serving District 4 with honesty, integrity, and transparency.

If appointed to the Des Moines Public School Board, I plan to prioritize literacy and college & career readiness as foundational pillars of our educational system. I believe that by fostering a culture of literacy from an early age and providing comprehensive support for college and career readiness in the forms of pipelines to Broadlawn Medical Center's healthcare apprenticeships and Drake University's Bright College, we can empower our students to achieve their full potential and succeed in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

In addition to promoting literacy and college & career readiness, I am committed to upholding the guardrails of equity, social and emotional learning, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), safety, and engagement within our schools. I firmly believe that every student deserves access to a high-quality education that is inclusive, culturally responsive, and supportive of their social and emotional well-being. By making certain that our educators have the training and resources to be not only be culturally responsive, but to be self-aware in prioritizing equity and the well-being of our students, we can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to thrive academically and personally.

Furthermore, I recognize the critical importance of maintaining safe and welcoming learning environments where students feel valued, respected, and supported in their educational journey. I believe strong partnerships with families, community organizations, and stakeholders help us enhance student engagement and cultivate a sense of belonging and holistic safety within our school communities.

As an African American wife, mother, and grandmother, as well as a dedicated community champion, I bring a unique perspective and a deep sense of commitment to serving not only the needs of students in District 4, but the needs of all students in our school district. I am eager to collaborate with my fellow board members, district leadership, educators, students, families, and community members to advance our shared vision and values of educational excellence and equity for all.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for the vacant seat on the Des Moines Public School Board. I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to the continued success and advancement of our school district, and I am confident that together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our students and the future of our community.

Respectfully,

Abena Sankofa Imhotep

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IOWA

USA



DRIVER LICENSE



1 RUDISON-IMHOTEP
2 FARICA ABENA SANKOFA
8 2813 INDIANOLA AVE
DES MOINES, IA 50315



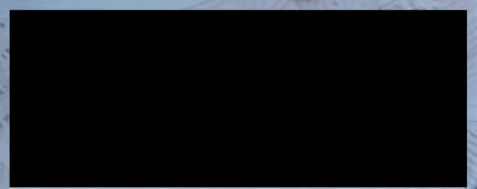
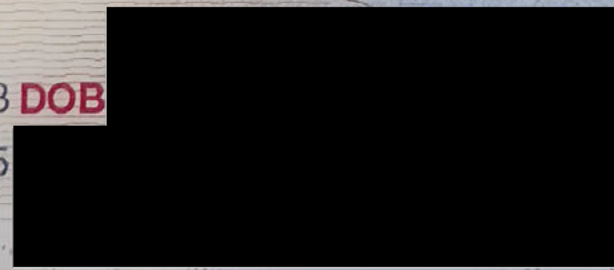
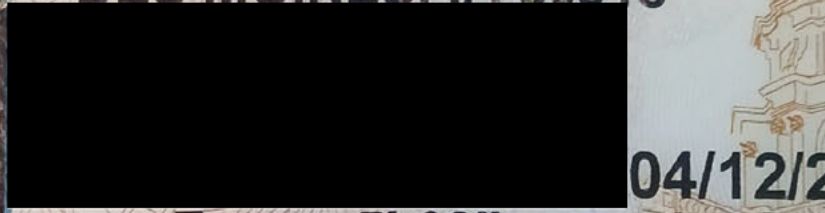
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Abena Sankofa Imhotep

P.O. Box 200
Des Moines, IA 50301, USA



PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Active diversity, equity and inclusion professional and advocate committed to providing transformative guidance across various professional fields. Skillful in educating, coaching, and facilitating foundational and advanced cultural competency techniques and community-building concepts with the goal of participants developing a more profound understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

EDUCATION

2021 – 2023

AA in Integrated Arts, Science, and Humanities

John Dee Bright College, Drake University, Des Moines, IA

Relevant Coursework: Integrated communications, representation, cultural history, and contemporary issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, and other identity categories.

2021 – 2025

BA in International Relations

Drake University, Des Moines, IA

Relevant Coursework: World politics, intercultural communications, history, comparative perspectives, and human rights contexts. Social evolution, functionalism, structuralism and a variety of post-structuralisms with attention given to the social and historical contexts framing anthropological theories.

TEACHING & ADVISING EXPERIENCE

2020 – present

Moderator and Facilitator

Department of Equity and Human Rights, City of Iowa City, IA

- Moderated the 60th anniversary commemoration of the Freedom Rides of 1961.
- Facilitated quarterly book club around African American literature.

2019 – present

Summer Apprenticeship Program Manager

Broadlawn Medical Center TEACH/TECH Program, Des Moines, IA

- Gave empowerment seminars to numerous cohorts of certified nursing students.
- Provided mentorship, professional references, and literary resources.

2019 – 2022 Instructor

Gateway Dance Theatre, Des Moines, IA

- Humanities expert for multicultural community programs.
- Vocal Music Instructor for the SASI Wind Camp.
- Virtual Instructor for poetry and spoken word.

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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2024	Drake University CBS Black History Month – speaker
2024	EMC Black History Month - speaker
2024	Grand View University – MLK Day speaker
2023	Iowa Wesleyan University – Commencement speaker
2023	Indian Hills Community College – Diversity Conference speaker
2021	“Space and Place: A Conversation on Engagement and Social Progress,” NAACP Empowering Women of Color to Serve in the Community, keynote speaker. Cedar Rapids, IA.
2021	“Iowa Nice Interrupted: Road Work Ahead,” TEDx Des Moines, TEDx speaker. Des Moines, IA.
2021	“History of Juneteenth,” Ankeny Community Network Inaugural Juneteenth Celebration, speaker. Ankeny, IA.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2023	Iowa Author of the Year, Des Moines Public Library Foundation, Des Moines, IA
2022	Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award, NE-IA American Red Cross, Des Moines, IA
2022	Outstanding Woman Business Owner, NAACP, Des Moines, IA
2021	Pacesetter Award, American Red Cross of Central Iowa, Des Moines, IA
2021	Academic Scholarship, Urban Dreams Drake University, Des Moines, IA
2019	Community Connector Award, African American Leadership Academy, Des Moines, IA

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2021	Founder and Curator Sankofa Literary Academy, Des Moines, IA
2018 – present	Director Sankofa Literary & Empowerment Group
2018 – present	Principal Consultant and Strategist Sankofa Strategies Consulting

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2021	Dean’s Advisory Council, Drake University Bright College, Des Moines, IA
2021	Donald V. Adams Leadership Institute, Drake University, Des Moines, IA

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS (** INDICATES BOARD CHAIR | * INDICATES BOARD DIRECTOR)

- American Red Cross* Clara Barton Society
- African American Museum of Iowa**
- PEN America
- Amplifying Black Voices Advisory Board*
- African American Leadership Academy Fellow 2019
- Des Moines Public Library Foundation*
- BBBS “I Am Enough” Champion 2021

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REFERENCES

Craig Owens, Dean & Professor of English
Drake University Bright College
515-271-3876, craig.owens@drake.edu

Teresa Zilk, Curator
Stories to Tell My Daughter
515-402-9335, zilk.teresa@gmail.com

Lenore Metrick-Chen, Prof. Emeritus Art History
Drake University
515-240-6033, lmetrickchen@drake.edu

Stefanie Bowers, Dir. of Equity & Human Rights
City of Iowa City
319-325-2447, Stefanie-bowers@iowa-city.org

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