



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

## Kwayera Archer-Cunningham

KEVIN S. PARKER May 13, 2013



*Women of*  
**DISTINCTION**  
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Kwayera Archer-Cunningham*



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**Award:** HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

**Year:** 2013

Kwayera Archer-Cunningham is the Founding President and Chief Executive Officer of Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy, Inc., a non-profit organization, which is dedicated to supporting the creative, educational, and vocational development of youth of African descent in central Brooklyn.

A former professional dancer and choreographer, Ms. Archer-Cunningham is also an experienced arts educator, and a seasoned administrator who has developed innovative programs and techniques which focus on core principles and traditions of African culture. She strategically combined arts and African culture to create programs that enable youth and families to gain heightened self-awareness and confidence, improved health and wellness, increased financial knowledge, and academic success to the benefit of both themselves and the communities in which they reside.

Under Ms. Archer-Cunningham's leadership, Ifetayo has grown from providing ten students with free dance classes to serving over 2,000 students annually through six integrated arts and cultural programs. Her hard work and dedication enabled her to build her organization's capacity from one teacher with a minute budget to 10 full-time staff members and 33 part-time faculty members with an operating budget of \$1.6 million and a steadily growing cash reserve.

Ms. Archer-Cunningham has received numerous accolades in recognition for her service to the community through local, national, and international awards for arts, culture, civic engagement, and entrepreneurship. In 2001, Ifetayo received the prestigious Union Square Award for "visionary organizations responding to society's most pressing social, political and economic issues." In 2008, Ms. Archer-Cunningham's devotion to integrating traditional African concepts into every aspect of the organization, including its management structure,

resulted in Ifetayo's receipt of the coveted *New York Times* Company Nonprofit Excellence Award for Excellent Culturally Based Management Strategies.

She has also served on several boards to provide organizations with in-kind technical assistance for strategic planning and board development and was a panelist for New York State Council on the Arts and a trustee of the National Guild for Community Arts Education.