



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Celebrating World-Renowned Photographer and Author Chester Higgins, Jr.

SENATOR VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY March 3, 2016



State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, Councilmember Laurie Cumbo and Jazz Great Randy Weston join the Brooklyn Historical Society on March 3rd for a Celebration of “Chester Higgins, Jr. and Brooklyn’s African Diaspora.”

State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and Councilmember Laurie Cumbo joined the Brooklyn Historical Society on March 3<sup>rd</sup> for a Celebration of “**Chester Higgins, Jr. and Brooklyn’s African Diaspora.**” The evening featured an insightful conversation with the acclaimed New York Times photographer and showcased a selection of his photographs of

New York's African Diaspora, with images that range from the Caribbean Festival to African American Hebrews in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Chester Higgins, Jr. is a graduate of Tuskegee University who began his professional career documenting the political activities of civil rights activist, Jesse Jackson. In addition to his 40-year career as a New York Times photographer, his work was also published in Look, Life, Time, Newsweek, Fortune, Ebony, Essence and Black Enterprise magazines.

Higgins is the author of several books that chronicle his photographic journey including *"Black Woman"*, *"Drums of Life"*, *"Some Time Ago: A Historical Portrait of Black America (1850–1950)"*, *"Feeling the Spirit: Searching the World for the People of Africa"*, *"Elder Grace: The Nobility of Aging"*, and his memoir *"Echo of the Spirit: A Photographer's Journey"*.

Chester Higgins, Jr.'s work has also been featured in exhibits throughout the United States including the Smithsonian Institution, and the Museum for African Art in New York City; and can be found in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Mr. Higgins body of work spans five decades and 3 continents. He is particularly known for documenting the experience of "Western born Africans" in the United States. "I am so thankful to Deborah Schwartz and the Brooklyn Historical Society for recognizing the importance of Chester Higgins and his body of work in chronicling the journey of African Americans in United States and throughout the African diaspora", said Senator Montgomery.

Councilmember Cumbo guided the enlightening conversation that provided audience members, including jazz great Randy Weston, with the rare opportunity to delve into the mind of a brilliant artist. From the fond memories of taking his rebellious teenage son to Africa, to sharing his secret on how he built trust with those he photographed, to reflections from his travels throughout the world of leaving judgment behind and focusing on the humanity of individuals, Higgins passed on the kind of wisdom that could only come from

living the fullest and most enriching of lives.

“The Brooklyn Historical Society is very proud to have brought this important photographer to the public to discuss a long and distinguished career of documenting the African diaspora” said Deborah Schwartz, President of the BHS. Mr. Higgins recalled the value of the evening by stating that the “audience got a good survey of how I work, what drives me and my philosophy on life.”

**To learn more about the extraordinary life of Chester Higgins, please visit the Brooklyn Historical Society’s Oral History collection located at 128 Pierrepont Street. For more information about the Brooklyn Historical Society, please call 718-222-4111 or visit <http://brooklynhistory.org>.**