

### **Overview/Abstract**

“We See You”\*: A Retrospective for Dr. Annie Mae Walker,” a roundtable meeting scheduled for September 2025, will publicly remember and interrogate the legacy of Dr. Annie Mae McClary Walker (1913- 1998). As the first director of Stony Brook University’s Black Studies, Dr. Annie Mae Walker navigated the demands of Black and Puerto Rican student organizers and the desires of university administrators to establish a program that has persisted for almost six decades. From 1969 to 1975 Stony Brook’s newly formed Black Studies Program (now Africana Studies), established by and supported by Dr. Annie Mae Walker, was decidedly internationalist, unapologetically political, and closely connected to local communities beyond the university’s walls. This vision of curricular innovation – and the Black woman in charge of it– were subject to attack. In 1970, Annie Mae Walker’s office at Stony Brook was firebombed. Her posters, one protesting the Vietnam War, the other asserting the importance of Black teachers, were burned to ash. On the charred office door was a scrawled death threat. This was not the first time Dr. Annie Mae Walker stared down violence while pursuing her vocation; her educational mission was always launched against considerable odds. From her beginnings as a Black, Native American (Seminole), female, student teacher at the Bethune-Cookman Institute in Florida and culminating in her path breaking Ph.D at Stony Brook University, Walker’s professional biography illuminates the history of the State University of New York (SUNY) as a place where educational innovators from all over the country gathered to turn ambitious dreams into reality. Yet, as is the case for so many twentieth century Black women scholars, public knowledge of Annie Mae Walker’s scholarship and institutional legacy is sparse. She is perceived “half in shadow” as theorized by Shanna Greene Benjamin (2021) or “written out” entirely, following Joel Cabrita (2023). This retrospective roundtable on Dr. Annie Mae Walker’s life and decade at Stony Brook (1966 - 1976), rooted in archival research and review, will be the first public review of Dr. Annie Mae Walker’s life and legacy at SUNY. Over the past two years, I have been able to connect with archivists, alumni, scholars, artists, and family members with living memory and archival resources (including 200 hours of audio tape) on Dr. Annie Mae. This roundtable conference (20-30 participants) will bring the life and legacy of Dr. Annie Mae to the Stony Brook University community. **Invited Participants** include: Dr. Lynn Hawkins (biographer of Dr. Annie Mae Walker/ emerita faculty Daytona State College), Lebert (Sandy) Bethune (filmmaker, writer, scholar, colleague of Dr. Annie Mae); Dr. Ayishah Dennis (public historian and grandniece of Dr. Annie Mae); and Dr. Clarissa West-White (archivist at Bethune-Cookman Institute). Key partners at the university and in the local community include Stony Brook Library Special Collections Archive (Kristin Nyitray), the Department of Africana Studies, the Association of Stony Brook Black Alumni from the 1970s, Stony Brook student organizations, and the Brookhaven Town NAACP.

\* The roundtable title “We See You” comes from a 1975 issue of *BlackWorld*, in which Stony Brook students publicly thanked Dr. Annie Mae as she stepped down as chair of Black Studies.