

**FERNE CAULKER
FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KO-THI DANCE COMPANY**

**STATEMENT FOR WAB CELEBRATION
DECEMBER 15, 2023**

What does one say to adequately talk about the WAB and all this entity has done and continues to do for the arts in our state? To George, Karen, Dale, staff and all those people before them, you have been a God send for so many of us. As Ko-Thi prepares to celebrate its 55th year, (in 2024), I can look back and call up numerous times when you literally sparked MY ability to continue! When, in the midst of organizational upheavals, betrayals, and all variations of human caused confusion, I almost gave up a few times. On a serious personal note, it was YOUR *one on one* support, patience and counsel that brought me back to reality throughout the years.

WAB has been a true 'caretaker' for those of us who create, sustain and build arts organizations. Yes! It is grant funds that keep us going. But, I know when the funds diminish, it is the humanity, cultural span of your mission and acts of sincere kindness that embrace us at some of our lowest and highest moments. You have all the right resources and hidden corners for our arts sector and you take it seriously as an advocate. As the Gullah say, ***"...NEW BROOMS SWEEP GOOD, BUT OLD BROOMS KNOW THE CORNERS."***

I am sorry I could not be here today as we are actually doing what we are supposed to do ... performing a concert for an assembly of school children this morning. Again, this is made possible because of YOUR work!!!!

I would like to end with another saying from Mexico that states exactly what I feel about you all and the WAB. You maintain, water and till the soil for us AND ... ***"THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD BURY US BUT, THEY DID NOT KNOW WE WERE SEEDS."*** Thank You for nurturing and sustaining our seeds into trees to bear more seeds. The circle of arts for all people and diverse cultures continues!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS EVERYONE AND GOD BLESS US ALL IN THE NEW YEAR!