

Leia Lewis

Queen Leia, Iya Oriade

THE SANKOFA LADY



About Me

*I AM a deeply rooted Louisiana Woman who is an Artist, Cultural Worker, Educator, and Entrepreneur. My JOY is creating culturally nuanced art and designs, sacred spaces, and immersive experiences affirming the heritage, wisdom, stories, and aesthetic styles of Black Folk. I am fulfilling my creative purpose through several original brands: **Art by Oriade, Queen Leia Music, Beautiful and Sacred Things, Free to Soar Academy, and Sankofa Gardens Shreveport.***

30+ Year Professional Highlights

- Solutions to Grow Consultant/Strategist to Visionary Creatives
- Elementary Visual Art and ELA Teacher, Caddo Public Schools
- Founding Director, Sankofa Gardens Shreveport
- Consultant, Black Cultural Arts Coalition, Shreveport
- Grants Program Coordinator, Shreveport Regional Arts Council
- Founding Producer, Maafa New Orleans, Ashe' Cultural Arts Center
- Festival Director, Environmental Justice Project, New Orleans
- Exhibition Curator, Crossroads Arts Collective, New Orleans
- Program Director, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans

Selected Exhibits & Art Showings

- *art-ish*: A Black Art Show, Shreveport
- Pamoja Cultural Arts Society, Shreveport
- Centenary College, Fine Arts Dept., Shreveport
- Kwanzaa Shreveport
- International Music & Arts Festival, New Orleans
- Obatala Festival, Atlanta
- Soulful Underground, Shreveport
- SRAC artspace, Shreveport

CREATIVE EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE

Arts Administrator
Emerging Visual Artist & Designer
Elementary Teacher of the Year
4x Published Author
Urban Farmer & Land Steward
Community Builder
Online Course Leader & Coach
Speaker & Consultant

EDUCATION

B.A. in Drama Communications
M.A. in Arts Administration
University of New Orleans

M.A. in Teaching
Centenary College of Louisiana

School Leadership Certification
Advanced Innovative Education

DISTINCTIONS

- > African Indigenous Spiritual Lineage Keeper
- > Louisiana Foods Fellow
- > Green For All Fellow
- > Whole Thinking Communities Fellow
- > Women's Wholistic Wellness Advocate
- > Reiki Healer, Level 2

CONTACT QUEEN LEIA

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"Sankofa"

It is not taboo to go back and fetch it.
– Akan Proverb & Adinkra symbol (Ghana)



SOUL WORK

in progress!

Since 1990, I have been on a soulful mission to REMEMBER, RECLAIM, AND RENEW Black People's indigo-dyeing traditions which originated in ancient West Africa and were sustained in Louisiana by generations of unacknowledged enslaved people.

As I focus on uncovering stories of "The Louisiana Indigo Trail" (TM), I shall be creating new motifs, two-dimensional art, and hand-dyed textiles - scheduled for public exhibition in 2024. INDIGO is a color of historic memory, cultural genius, healing, and wealth transmitted over generations.

I AM Queen Leia and this is my journey...

A Glimpse Back

In 1991, I viewed the film "Daughters of the Dust" by Julie Dash. The haunting scenes of sea-island Gullah folk working indigo pots sparked recognition...memory ...and curiosity to know much more...



Seeking the Source

I begin researching indigo and learn the "blue plant" was the most prolific, profitable crop of 18th century Louisiana's plantation economy. Indigo flourished statewide by the hands of enslaved West African people. Colonizers and land owners trafficked generations of Black people specifically for their agricultural and artisan genius....

The Slow Road to Mastery

Since 2000, I have embraced opportunities to study indigo art making. My focus is mastering the Yoruba (West African) indigo tie-dye tradition called "adire". Gratitude to these Master Artists....

Iya Nike Davies Okundaye of Lagos, Nigeria - Queen Mother & Inspirational Role Model

Ms. Arianne King Comer of South Carolina - My Instructor at JCC Folk School

Mr. Olodapo Agboola of Osogbo, Nigeria - My Online Instructor

Presently, **Mr. Gasali Adeyemo** of Santa Fe - Artist Collaborator & Indigo Studio Mentor



A Commitment to Arts, Culture & Community Building



Indigo
...The Other Louisiana Blues

Textile Creations by
Leia (Oriade) Lewis
Cultural Arts Worker
Visual Artist & Craftswoman



Louisiana Tie-Dye by Oriade



Sankofa Gardens exists to honor the Earth as our home, and to teach people ancestral wisdom and modern ways of healing and flourishing in harmony with nature.

In 2004, Queen Leia Lewis founded Sankofa Gardens Shreveport. This community garden and learning campus (on indigenous Caddo and Choctaw land) is located in Caddo Heights-Linwood neighborhood. Sankofa Gardens has effected positive change locally, statewide, and nationally while advocating for justice in our food system, fresh food access, environmental literacy, and green jobs.

Sankofa Gardens celebrates and proliferates the deep insights of Black Folk Elders, Tradition Bearers, Visionary Artists, Healers and Educators who are creating a better world. Following a multi-year leadership hiatus, Queen Leia is (re)organizing Sankofa Gardens to resume public programs in 2024 with RENEWED collaborations in agriculture and artisan crafts in order to catalyze human development & economic development. *Ashe'!*

YouTube



"We are remembering the past - Building the future at Sankofa Gardens!"

