



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLACK BANJO: THEN AND NOW GATHERING

April 7-10, 2005

Appalachian State University, Boone NC

BLACK BANJOISTS TO PICK WITH SOUL

**Banjo Lovers and Scholars Bring the Banjo Back Home to Black America
All are welcome!**

African American banjo players, scholars, lovers of the banjo and of traditional and contemporary African American music and culture will come together from all over the U.S. and beyond at the first Black Banjo Then and Now Gathering at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, April 7th through 10th, 2005. It will feature lectures, jams, workshops, down home frolics, and performances--four days to meet, mix, and mingle.

The Gathering is sponsored by Black Banjo: Then and Now (BBT&N) <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BlackBanjo/>>, an online group founded in March 2004. BBT&N's strives to create awareness that banjo playing come out of the African experience, to support contemporary Black banjo players, to celebrate the Banjo's place in Black music and culture, and to highlight the banjo's role in cultural exchange.

Presenters at this historic event include Swedish musical instrument collector Ulf Jägfors on West African relatives of the banjo, instrument maker Pete Ross on how Minstrel banjo and folk styles, musician and educator Sule Greg Wilson on rhythm and banjo playing, and Professor Cecelia Conway on her research on African American banjo players.

North Carolina Fiddler Joe Thompson accompanied by banjoist Bob Carlin will perform at the Gathering. Other African American elder musicians and players and many other players, collectors, preservers, and teachers of the banjo, fiddle, guitar, old time music, and blues are expected.

Africans brought the funky, plunky instrument to the Americas. Only in the mid 19th century did the banjo become popular among European Americans. African American banjo playing has continued to this day in traditional, Classic, Jazz, Blues, and folk styles.

This Gathering will play an important role in asserting the African American presence in the world of the banjo and the banjo's central place in Black Musical Culture.

Black Banjo: Then and Now is grateful for Appalachian State University's generous support for this event.

To arrange interviews and features on the Gathering, for information on Black Banjo Then and Now, or to give support or request information about attending the Gathering, contact us at blackbanjogathering@hotmail.com.