CECILIA NADAL & SYDNEY NORTON

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Cecilia Nadal, sociologist, educator, producer, and playwright is currently the principal of Cross-Cultural Strategies, a consulting firm that uses multidisciplinary approaches to help organizations build community through diverse engagement. Cecilia is the founder and executive director of two successful companies: Productive Futures, a human resources firm (1984-2007) and Gitana Productions, a nonprofit arts and education organization. (1997-2019) She also served as assistant professor of human services at St. Louis Community College. (1975-1980) The German abolitionists story moved Cecilia to write the play and organize symposia on the topic inspiring Hermann's first social Black History Month celebration. (2017-2020)

Sydney Norton is an independent scholar and the director of German Language Solutions, a company that specializes in language teaching, translation, and cultural programming. While teaching German at Saint Louis University (2012-2020), she curated “German Immigrant Abolitionists: Fighting for a Free Missouri,” an exhibition that travelled to Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann. Sydney earned her doctorate in German literature and cultural studies from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Her publications include books and articles on contemporary German art and literature, the performing and visual arts of the Weimar Republic, and German immigrants in Missouri.

AVAILABLE PRESENTATIONS

THE SHARED HISTORY OF GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

Within the social and political context of nineteenth-century Missouri, German specialist Sydney Norton examines the contributions of German immigrants who dedicated their lives to ending slavery, and who, in some cases, worked with African Americans to institute laws of social equality after slavery was abolished. We will investigate the contributions of key political figures, such as Friedrich Muench, Arnold Krekel, and Henry and Augustus Boernstein, who, in their actions and writings, helped mobilize members of the German community to support Abraham Lincoln and fight for the principles of democracy. Sociologist and playwright Cecilia Nadal will follow with a discussion of how the story of the German abolitionists inspired her to investigate the shared history of African Americans and German Americans. After discussing their complex and evolving historical relationships prior to, during, and following the Civil War, Nadal will share personal insights gleaned from discussion groups she facilitated with urban and rural Missourians from both ethnic groups. She will explain why this history of relationships is crucial for our society’s wellbeing today. Nadal will also discuss how this history shaped the direction of her play, An Amazing Story: German Abolitionists of Missouri, which toured in St. Louis, Washington and Hermann.

THEN AND NOW: CONVERSATIONS WITH A SLAVE

History gives us the tools to analyze problems in the past so that there is a better understanding of the present and future. But what happens if someone from the past comes to us in the present to discuss where we are now! Caroline is a former enslaved woman (played by Cecilia Nadal) who comes to us in the present using the wisdom of her past. She readily engages in conversation that probes the “whys” and “why nots” of our relationships with each other then and now. She comes to learn, share her experiences not as an object of history but as a woman wanting to see unity in the world by sharing one on one in a humanistic way. THEN AND NOW: CONVERSATIONS WITH A SLAVE uses history and performance art to create a relationship between the former slave and audience members as observers and participants. Caroline will share her personal story and guide the conversation. Audience members will be invited to have a one-to-one conversation without interruption with Caroline in front of the audience. The questions are whatever the audience member desires based on history and/or the “here and now.”

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION

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