

August 31, 2009

## **BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDENT & C.E.O**

*Georgina Ngozi—museum executive, educator, children's advocate, and Brooklyn native—is named 11th leader of the 110-year-old institution*

BROOKLYN, N.Y.—The Board of Trustees of Brooklyn Children's Museum announced the appointment of Georgina Ngozi as president and chief executive officer of the world's first museum created expressly for children, effective September 21.

She succeeds Carol Enseki, who announced in December 2008 that she would step down upon her 20th anniversary at the Museum and following its first year of operations in the recently renovated and expanded facility designed by Rafael Viñoly.

William Rifkin, chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees and vice chairman of mergers and acquisitions at J.P. Morgan, said that Ngozi, a seasoned education and arts executive who was born and raised in Brooklyn, was the Board's unanimous choice following an extensive national search.

“Georgina has the right mix of experience, skills, passion, grace, and vision for leading Brooklyn Children's Museum in its second century. A practical visionary, she brings us the critical expertise we need to continue developing and offering innovative educational programs for all New York City's children, and their families and teachers, which is the heart of our mission,” said Rifkin.

“We are impressed by her consistent advocacy for children's education, track record of innovation and national leadership in the field, Brooklyn roots and understanding of its children's needs, effectiveness in creating memorable learning opportunities, experience pulling together community collaborations and soliciting support for them, deft leadership of complex project teams, understanding of the Museum's mission and spirit, and absolute commitment to opening up the world for children who may not even be aware of their own skills and talents.”

“I'm thrilled at the opportunity to return to Brooklyn,” said Ngozi, who was born in Brooklyn Women's Hospital, lived her early years in Bushwick and Bedford-Stuyvesant, grew up in East Flatbush on East 96 Street and Church Avenue, volunteered at age 12 as a pediatric candy striper at Kings County Hospital, and graduated from Samuel J. Tilden High School.



*Georgina Ngozi, addressing the annual meeting of the Association of Children's Museums*

## *Coming home*

“I’m coming home with skills, resources, and leadership qualities that will be used to improve the quality of life for all children that cross the threshold of the Brooklyn Children’s Museum. I am committed to deepening community partnerships, maximizing social, cultural, and intellectual resources, and sharing and celebrating the wonder, joy, and discovery of childhood at the Museum.”

The appointment is a second homecoming for her; she previously served as director of education at Brooklyn Children’s Museum, from 2002 to 2006, developing science and arts programs and exhibits, including *Eyes of Children: The Rwanda Project*, with the students in the Museum’s afterschool “Kids Crew” program, and *Romare Bearden’s Li’l Dan, the Drummer Boy*, part of a citywide celebration of the artist.



School program in the new **World Brooklyn** exhibit

Ngozi also was involved heavily in the development of the new and wildly successful educational programs and exhibits that debuted last fall in the “new” Museum, including the *World Brooklyn* exhibit—a miniature street where children can explore many of the cultures from around the world that thrive in New York City, learning to write in Chinese, trying on *adire* fabrics from West Africa, designing Carnival costumes for a West Indian parade, and much more.

“I know just how much this beloved institution means to kids, parents, and grandparents, and I’m looking forward to continuing to build on the great foundation that’s here with the

Museum’s long history of focusing on the needs of the child, its creative and talented staff, and this amazing new eco-friendly facility,” Ngozi said. “I can’t wait to bring back to Brooklyn all the insights and lessons I’ve learned in other parts of the country—maintaining the focus on education, enrichment, and family support but also adding new elements that turn up the cultural vibrancy of the Borough and City.”

Ngozi was recruited away from Brooklyn Children’s Museum in 2006 to become executive director of the Children’s Museum of the Lowcountry, a museum in Charleston, S.C., that had recently opened. While there, she led the young museum to post-opening operational stability and forged partnerships that successfully increased diversity in the museum’s audience, opened up free access opportunities, and introduced new preschool education resources in the community. “It’s a wonderful, growing museum, and a fascinating part of the country, but I’m deeply honored to have been chosen to lead a world-class institution in New York City,” Ngozi said.

“Having lived and worked in other cities, I appreciate and have missed the richness and diversity of New York’s people and communities, and their strong support for arts and science education, which is so evident in the unique, forward-thinking partnership the Museum and other cultural institutions have with the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs,” she said.

“During the interview process I learned how fully the Museum is supported by the public, the philanthropic community, the business world, the Borough of Brooklyn, the New York City Council, and the New York State and Federal Legislatures—even in this challenging economic climate. I think the breadth and depth of the support for children’s education is just remarkable, and a big part of why this is the greatest city on Earth.”

### *A larger stage*

The expansion of Brooklyn Children’s Museum, and all the new arts and science exhibits inside, give her a much larger stage for producing premier learning experiences and attracting new audiences.

“One of the last things I did before leaving Brooklyn Children’s Museum and moving to Charleston was to walk through the raw space of the new building with a construction contractor, pointing out where exhibits would go. Now that I’ve seen how it turned out, I’m just in awe. My mind is blown away by the actual manifestation of our plans; the building and exhibits and programs together are so much more than I’d even envisioned back then,” Ngozi said.



The “new” Brooklyn Children’s Museum

“Having visited recently with my own family, I can see why the ‘new’ Museum is so exceedingly popular—the place is just perfect for grown-ups and their kids, and provides so many opportunities for launching new, fun programs and exhibits in the years to come.”

A proud mother of three grown children, and grandmother of two young granddaughters (including one who is a Brooklyn baby), she is looking forward to being a Brooklyn Children’s Museum visitor in her spare time. “It will be like having my own focus group,” she joked. Her mother—my “dearest friend and the person who nurtured my growth”—also lives in Brooklyn, not far from the Museum.

Ngozi was intrigued to learn that Brooklyn Children’s Museum will host a special exhibit in 2010 on the culture of South Carolina’s Gullah people, a successor to the *Bin Yah Gullah* exhibit she helped develop at an earlier job in Houston. “Next year when *Tales from the Land of Gullah* opens her in Brooklyn, we’ll have fantastic family and school programs to accompany the show, the type that can only be pulled off by an institution like Brooklyn Children’s Museum, with its heritage of arts and cultural programming, in a richly diverse city full of cultural and financial resources like New York.”

Her prior experience in education- and arts-management includes positions as:

- director of art education at the Children’s Museum of Houston from 1997 to 2002, where she led the development and operations of educational programs and partnerships focusing on the visual and performing arts and helped develop exhibits like the upcoming Gullah show;

- special projects director at Writers in the Schools, a literacy-arts program in Houston, from 1994 to 1997, where she created and ran reading and writing programs in partnership with organizations like the Houston Independent School District and the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department; and
- manager and sales associate at Western & Southern Arts Associates, an Austin, Texas, arts management firm, where from 1989 to 1994 she represented nationally touring theatre and dance companies.

### *Increasing opportunities for children*

“The arts, science, history, literacy . . . they’re all crucial to young children’s development and are fundamental components in their eventual self-sufficiency and success,” said Martha Graham, a member of the Museum’s Board of Trustees and chair of its executive search committee. “We were pleased, in working with the executive-recruiting firm DHR International, to have found so many excellently qualified candidates to take over upon Carol’s departure, and very, very happy to find within that pool someone who is such a dedicated champion of providing learning opportunities for kids and their families, and one with such strong roots in the community. She was our search committee’s unanimous recommendation to the full Board.”

Ngozi’s background in advocacy for children also encompasses positions as:

- public-policy analyst and spokesperson at the National Black Child Development Institute, in Washington, D.C., from 1987 to 1989, and
- head and branch chief of the preschool and day care division of the United Planning Organization, a community action agency in Washington, D.C., from 1983 to 1987.

“Cultural institutions spark wonder in nearly everyone,” said Carol Enseki, “but they can play their most important role in the lives of our young citizens, where exhibits and programs open doors to areas of inquiry that might not be available in the classroom or on television. I know Georgina’s early visits to the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden—and the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, of course!—opened that little girl’s eyes wide, and helped launch her on the path that has brought her back here today, prepared and eager to give that back, and more, for a new generation of young learners.”

Ngozi holds a bachelors of arts degree in English and African studies from the State University of New York–Binghamton, and is active in the broader museum and arts communities nationally, serving on the Board of Directors of the Association of Children’s Museums, the primary trade organization for the world’s 350+ children’s museums, and chairing its annual conference in 2007; serving as a grant reviewer for the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and other organizations; and advising other cultural institutions on arts and education matters, including the Houston Museum of African American Culture and the Chicago Historical Society.



*Discovering snails in the new Neighborhood Nature exhibit*

She is a Noyce Leadership Fellow, having been selected by the Noyce Leadership Institute along with 16 other museum presidents from around the world, as a member of its inaugural class. The program immerses museum executives in cutting-edge knowledge and tools, promising practices, and professional networks related to science education so that their institutions have a greater impact in their communities, encouraging children and youth to choose careers in science and helping adults to understand the crucial science and public-policy issues in their lives.

“Georgina’s spent her life—as a young volunteer herself, as a student teacher, and for 25 years in her professional life—focused on the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of children. There’s no better place for an advocate, community builder, and team leader like her to make a positive difference in kids’ lives than right here at Brooklyn Children’s Museum,” said Rifkin, chairman of the Museum’s Board of Trustees.

“We’re lucky to have her. I look forward to working with her and Carol together during our transition period over the next several months, and invite New York City to welcome her home. The full Board and entire staff can’t wait to help her provide kids with the enriching, life-changing experiences they all deserve.”

### *About Brooklyn Children’s Museum*



*Learning to tap dance at the Target Free Friday Family Jams series*

An international model for museum and community programs, Brooklyn Children’s Museum offers interactive learning adventures through hands-on exhibitions, multicultural performances, creative workshops, and an extensive collection of cultural artifacts and natural-science specimens. Situated in central Brooklyn for more than 100 years, the Museum was founded in 1899 as the first children’s museum in the world.

The mission of Brooklyn Children’s Museum is to actively engage children in educational and entertaining experiences through innovation and excellence in exhibitions, programs, and use of its collection. The Museum encourages children to develop an understanding of, and respect for, themselves, others, and the world around them by exploring cultures, the arts, science, and the environment.

An expansion project designed by architect Rafael Viñoly opened on September 20, 2008—doubling the facility’s size and capacity—and debuted all-new exhibits, programs, and visitor amenities under an eye-catching, kid-friendly,

daffodil-yellow facade. The Museum expects to have welcomed more than 300,000 visitors during its first year in the expanded facility, exceeding all projections and more than doubling its typical on-site attendance in the former facility. More than 5,000 families are now Museum members, a five-fold increase. Statistics are difficult to come by, but long-time staff members believe that smiles of delight and “a-ha” expressions of discovery are also at an all-time high.

*For information, please contact: Todd Happer at (718) 735-4400 x320.*