



# GAYE ADEGBALOLA



**PERFORMER • MUSICIAN • COMPOSER • PRESENTER • WRITER**



## PRESS KIT



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## B I O G R A P H Y

Gaye Todd was born and raised in Fredericksburg, Virginia. She graduated as valedictorian of the then-segregated Walker-Grant High School. She finished Boston University with a major in biology and a minor in chemistry. Prior to becoming a teacher, she worked as a technical writer for TRW Systems, a biochemical researcher at Rockefeller University, and a bacteriologist at Harlem Hospital. She has a Master's degree in Educational Media (with a concentration in photography) from Virginia State University.

In the early '70s, she began her teaching career. She was an educator in the Fredericksburg City Public School system for 18 years, and honored as Virginia State Teacher of the Year in 1982. Throughout her teaching career, she directed Harambee 360° Experimental Theater. She was able to creatively use performance as a tool to assist black youth in gaining confidence as they struggled with identity issues during the spread of "integration."

During her teaching career, Ms. Adegbalola moonlighted as a musician. By maintaining the blues legacy, she now sees herself as a contemporary griot – keeping the history alive, delivering messages of empowerment, ministering to the heartbroken, and finding joy in the mundane. As a founding member of Saffire – the Uppity Blues Women (1984-2009), she became a full-time performer.

She has toured nationally and internationally, and has won numerous awards including the prestigious Blues Music Award (formerly the W.C. Handy Award – the Grammy of the blues industry). As of 2019, Adegbalola has 16 recordings in national distribution, including 6 on her own label, Hot Toddy Music. Gaye composes, sings and plays acoustic guitar, slide guitar, and harmonica.

### She currently performs in several configurations:

- SOLO Gaye: mainly original songs with guitar
- DUO Gaye with a second guitarist: mainly her original songs  
Or with pianist, Roddy Barnes, performing Neo-Classic Blues from the 1920's and 1930's
- BAND Gaye as a guest with other bands and musicians

A dynamic speaker and a natural teacher, Gaye Adegbalola can engage, provoke, and inspire just about any audience.

### She currently lectures and presents various workshops including, but not limited to:

- The History of Women in the Blues
- Blues Vocal Techniques
- Vocal Performance
- Songwriting
- Blues Repertoire
- Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs
- Gay Rights versus Civil Rights

Gaye Adegbalola continues to work diligently for ways to improve the human condition in her daily life. In the music she composes, she provides a voice for those who have been marginalized by society. With her unique writing style, she is often able to find humor in the pain which, in turn, empowers her listeners to live – and not just survive.

## BRIEF BIO:

GAYE ADEGBALOLA, Blues Music Award winner (formerly called the W. C. Handy Award) and a founding member of Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women (1984-2009), plays guitar, harmonica and is a composer. She has recorded 10 CDs on Alligator Records and has toured widely throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Gaye has also released six CDs on her own Hot Toddy Music label: "**Neo-Classic Blues**" with Roddy Barnes, "**Blues Gone Black**" by Blue Mama Black Son (Gaye & her son, Juno), "**Gaye Without Shame**," her Parents' Choice Gold Award winning Children's Blues CD "**Blues in All Flavors**", "**Is It Still Good to Ya?**" by Gaye & The Wild Rütz and, "**The Griot**".

A former Virginia State Teacher of the Year, Gaye is also in demand for workshops, lectures and motivational public speaking. A long time activist, she continues to provide a voice for those who have been marginalized by society. By definition of her life's work, she is a griot.



# GAYE ADEGBALOLA

## PERFORMANCE OPTIONS:

### Gaye Adegbalola Solo



Gaye is a story teller, a modern day griot. Much of her solo material is topical; addressing contemporary social issues, and many of her songs find humor in the pain of one's daily struggles. As written in *The Washington Post*, her originals are often ". . . songs in which a liberated woman looks on love with the rueful eye of experience and the saving grace of good humor."

The intimacy of a Gaye Adegbalola solo performance allows listeners to hear every nuance, every emotion and every turn of phrase clearly. Gaye accompanies herself with guitar, and performs mainly original songs. While some these songs might come from her Saffire repertoire or from her Neo-Classic Blues repertoire, often they are songs which don't fit either incarnation.

### Gaye Adegbalola Duo

#### Gaye with Additional Guitarist

These performances would be much the same in content as her solo performances. However, by adding a guitarist, her songs are fuller, better articulated, with "fatter" support and lead solos.

### Gaye with Roddy Barnes



"Hot as a New York Cabaret!"

Gaye Adegbalola embraces and redefines the classic style of the great blues divas of the 1920s and 30s those often fiercely independent "wild women" who were unashamed to lay their souls bare and unafraid to give advice. Adegbalola invokes the spirit and addresses the lyrics & improvisational techniques of these classic blues women and brings history to life. Adegbalola's partner on this project, accompanist Roddy

Barnes, is classically trained and can play any genre, but excels in the old-timey sound that works best with this music. Experience the dynamic and compelling performance of Adegbalola & Barnes as they conjure up another era and put on one hell of a show.

### Presentations and Lectures

A dynamic speaker and a natural teacher, Gaye Adegbalola can engage, provoke, and inspire just about any audience. She currently offers lectures and facilitates various workshops, including, but not limited to those described below. Customized workshops, presentations and lectures can also be created by request. Two of Gaye's most requested lectures are about her activism and are in frequent demand during Black History Month.

### CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL WRONGS

An engaging speech about the past, the present, and hopes for the future. Gaye shares her first-hand experiences and insights in the struggle for equality, from embracing the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, sitting and picketing, to the Black Power Movement and Malcom X, in order to find her own path on the journey to self-acceptance, empowerment and freedom. *This thought-provoking and insightful lecture can be custom tailored from a time of 20 minutes to 2 hours (with facilitated discussion following the speech).*

### ARE GAY RIGHTS CIVIL RIGHTS?

Gaye traces her personal journey in the fight for equal rights. Many activists in today's struggle for GLBT equality often compare this fight to that of black people during the civil rights movement of the '60s. Many blacks, in turn, feel that members of the GLBT community haven't nearly suffered the same oppression – the loss of roots, language and culture. Having been involved in both struggles, Gaye is able to present a unique and personal interpretation. *This speech can run from 20 minutes to 2 hours (with facilitated discussion following the speech).*

*Note: both presentations have songs scattered throughout to highlight the content.*

# GAYE ADEGBALOLA

## PERFORMANCE OPTIONS, continued:

### Workshops

#### • THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE BLUES

Gaye traces the history of blues women from the 1920s to today. She shares video and/or audio clips

- Bessie Smith to Billie Holiday,
- Rosetta Tharpe to Big Mama Thornton,
- From Etta Baker to Etta James,
- Many others.

She illuminates how the history of working class black women is documented in blues lyrics. Musically, she highlights the many vocal techniques (wails, syncopation, phrasing, growls, etc.) that are used that give drama and immediacy to the performances of blues women. *This presentation runs 1 1/2 to 2 hours. However, it can be presented as a full length course with in-depth information and more listening experiences. Excellent for Women's History Month (March)*

#### • BLUES VOCAL TECHNIQUES

To sing the blues is to lay your soul bare – to tell a PERSONAL story which is simultaneously a UNIVERSAL story. This workshop focuses on techniques which might enhance the telling of the story –

- "freeing up" and "energizing,"
- breathing and phrasing,
- repertoire,
- shading,
- growling,
- slurring (up and down octaves),
- dialoging,
- squeezing notes,
- nasal sounds,
- personalizing,
- and more.

This workshop does not address pitch or rhythm. It is an extension of the Homespun DVD by Gaye, "Learn to Sing the Blues". *2 hours for an introductory workshop; 10 hours to cover dozens of techniques.*

#### • VOCAL PERFORMANCE

This workshop is very student centered. Participants perform and are given immediate feedback in specific areas such as stage presence, pitch, rhythm, body language, believability, projection, the "goosebump" factor, etc. Gaye fosters an environment for all participants to receive and give constructive criticism. By observing each other's strengths and weaknesses, one is able to learn how to more effectively evaluate one's own performance. If time permits, performance related topics such as buying a mic, using monitors, overcoming stage jitters, throat remedies, set lists, etc., are discussed. *Length of workshop depends on number of participants. 2 hours to 10 hours.*

#### • SONGWRITING

If you ever had the creative urge to express yourself in song, this workshop will get you started. Or, if you're already writing songs, this workshop will help you to hone your skills and give you ideas about how to shop your songs. The workshop covers the creative process (the hook, lyrics, melody, chords, structure, etc.), and also the business of songwriting (copyrighting, publishing, royalties, etc.) with handouts about each. *This is an overview of the areas mentioned and will run about 3 hours. A week-long workshop is available which includes more exercises and analysis of participants' songs.*



#### • BLUES REPERTOIRE

From Piedmont blues to Delta blues. From Classic blues to Contemporary blues. This workshop is for anyone who loves the blues, but wants to know more songs – the words and the tunes. Dozens of songs that are "chestnuts" will be presented and ... sung by the class. From Bessie Smith to Muddy Waters. From B.B. King to KoKo Taylor. From "St. Louis Blues" to "I Got My Mojo Working."

*From 2 hours to whatever length is desired, pending the number of songs.*



# GAYE ADEGBALOLA



**PERFORMER • MUSICIAN • COMPOSER • PRESENTER • WRITER**

## THE WRITER

Gaye has been a writer all of her adult life. In the 60s and 70s, she mainly wrote articles about the struggle of black people for civil rights and self-determination for various periodicals. Her research in this capacity, lead her to write a novel which presented this information in an easily readable form.

In the 80s, while moonlighting as a solo blues woman in local barrooms, Gaye began to write songs. She found that these songs were very well received and the immediacy of the responses fueled Gaye to mainly focus her writing in this direction.

### THE SONGWRITER:

Gaye has written hundreds of songs. As the Washington Post has written, they are "...songs in which a liberated woman looks on love with the rueful eye of experience and the saving grace of good humor." Her keen observation skills and her lifetime of varied experiences allows her to touch on many topics – from hard hitting political tunes to songs of pure heartbreak and unadulterated sexuality. She loves taking a big story and telling it in 3 or 4 minutes. She also loves writing about contemporary issues in traditional blues form.

Gaye has written many 'hits' for Saffire –The Uppity Blues Women, including:  
• **The Middle Aged Blues Boogie** which won a Blues Music Award (formerly the W. C. Handy Award) for blues song of the year in 1990, as well as:  
• **School Teacher's Blues** • **No Need Pissin' On A Skunk** • **Bitch With A Bad Attitude** • **Silver Beaver** • **How Can I Say I Miss You** (When I Can't Get You to Leave)? • **Shake the Dew Off the Lily** • **It's Alright for a Man to Cry** •

On Gaye's solo recordings, her songs tend to be more topical:

- **FGM** – about female genital mutilation
- **Kaepernicked** – about non-violent protest
- **Nothing's Changed** – about the civil rights struggle
- **Nightmare** – about incest
- **Front Door Blues** – about hiding homosexuality
- **You Don't Have to Take It Like I Did** – about domestic violence
- **Lying Preacher Blues** – about the hypocrisy of the church
- **Bareback Rider** – about safe sex
- **Queer Blues** – about her own struggle for acceptance
- **Deja Vu Blues** – comparing the struggle for civil rights with the struggle for gay rights. And, her "audiobiographical" anthem:  
• **Big Ovaries, Baby**, which is all about the empowerment of women.

### THE ESSAYIST:

Gaye no longer submits her writings to periodicals. However, she still puts her thoughts out there with entries and lyrics on the "writings" page of her website. She was a "blogger" before the term was coined.

She writes about personal things: "Who Influenced My Music" (article #28); "Ah Sugar, Sugar" about her pets (#7); "Nina Simone and Me" (#20); "Body Art" about her tattoos (#6).

Sometimes she shares her lyrics and/or how they came to be: "Lying Preacher Blues" (#27) Nothing's Changed (#2); "Blues for Sharon Bottoms" (#9); "Big Ovaries, Baby" (#3).

She lets loose on some topics like the confederate flag (#23); snipers (#18); how she "ain't gonna wear no burqa" (#14) and how she supported Ike Turner (#10).

Gaye also shares other items she's received like what to do if the cops come after you (#24) or funny stuff like the heterosexual questionnaire

### THE NOVELIST:

In the late 60s and most of the 70s, Gaye was a serious student of African-American history and, to a somewhat lesser degree, African history. She fully realized how her many years of education had omitted all the beauty of her ancestors – their work, their culture, their strength, their knowledge. She immersed herself in Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Ida B Wells-Barnett, Booker T. Washington, Maggie Walker, Malcolm X ... the list goes on.

She soon realized that most black people were unaware of this history. She started writing a summary of this history in an easy-to-read form. She called this form JUJU FICTION. It was not grounded in science, but grounded in magic – magic that transcended time and space. And, it was simultaneously grounded in truth – her interpretation of "herstory." The title of Gaye's novel : 500 Year Diary of an Oppressed Woman. Given Gaye's personality and characteristics, what would she be like in different eras? Who would she be in different eras?

Even though 500 Year Diary of an Oppressed Woman was never published, (after many re-writes it remains on a shelf in her office along with a book of rejection letters), Gaye's mission was fulfilled by Alex Haley's ROOTS, published in 1976.

### THE MEMOIRIST:

For many years Gaye has been writing on/working on her own life stories -- journeys on her own, journeys with Saffire, love and loss. She keeps getting pulled away to craft her songs, but slowly the stories are taking shape. Stay tuned.

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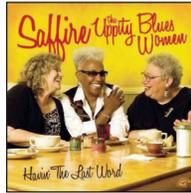


# GAYE ADEGBALOLA

## RECORDINGS WITH SAFFIRE: The Uppity Blues Women

### SAFFIRE: Havin' the Last Word

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD 4927  
2009



### SAFFIRE: Old, New, Borrowed & Blue

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD4826  
1994

### SAFFIRE: Deluxe Edition

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD 5613  
2006



### SAFFIRE: Broad Casting

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD4811  
1992

### SAFFIRE: Ain't Gonna Hush!

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD 4880  
2001

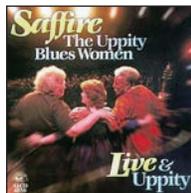


### SAFFIRE: Hot Flash

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD4796  
1991

### SAFFIRE: Live & Uppity

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD 4856  
1998



### SAFFIRE: The Uppity Blues Women

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD4780  
1990

### SAFFIRE: Cleaning House

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Alligator Records ALCD4840  
1996



### SAFFIRE: Middle Aged Blues

Saffire - The Uppity Blues Women  
Self Produced Cassette  
1987

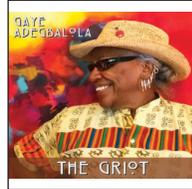
# GAYE ADEGBALOLA

## GAYE'S SOLO RECORDINGS

Mostly on her own label, **HOT TODDY MUSIC\***

### The Griot

Gaye Adegbalola  
Hot Toddy Music  
HTMCD 2420+  
2019

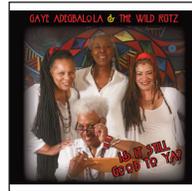


### Blue Mama Black Son

Blues Gone Black  
Gaye Adegbalola with Juno  
Hot Toddy Music HTMCD 2020  
2006

### Is It Still Good To Ya?

Gaye Adegbalola & The Wild Rütz  
Hot Toddy Music  
HTMCD 2320+  
2015

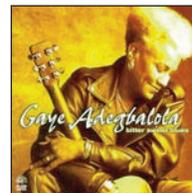


### Neo-Classic Blues

Gaye Adegbalola with Roddy Barnes  
Hot Toddy Music HTMCD 1920  
2004

### Blues In All Flavors

(Children's CD)  
Gaye Adegbalola  
Hot Toddy Music HTMCD 2220  
2012



### Bitter Sweet Blues

Gaye Adegbalola  
Alligator Records ALCD 4870  
1999

### Gaye Without Shame

Gaye Adegbalola  
Hot Toddy Music HTMCD 2120+  
2008



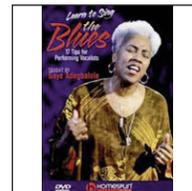
\* The name Hot Toddy is based on Gaye's maiden name, "Todd."

+ indicates indicates with VizzTone Label

## GAYE'S DVDS

### The OBD Show : video

Season I, Episodes 1 & 2  
Gaye's OUTrageous humor & friends  
+ songs by the Wild Rütz  
Hot Toddy Music & Cotton Pickin Music  
2014



### Learn to Sing the Blues Instructional video

Taught by Gaye Adegbalola  
Includes song lyrics and chords | 80 minutes  
Homespun Video DVD-ADE-VC21  
2005

### Hot Flash - The Saffire Documentary

Jo Films & Roadside Production  
Choicesvideo.net CH7056DVD  
40 minutes  
2009



Also available for download from [Homespun Videos](http://HomespunVideos.com)





# GAYE ADEGBALOLA



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## REVIEWS (1 of 2)

"Like a bucketful of cold water pitched in one's face, Gaye Adegbalola's lyrical assaults on a number of societal and cultural wrongs hit the listener unapologetically dead-center."

- **Duane Verh, Roots Music Report**

"Femal Genital Mutilation is not easy to talk about, and I doubt it's easy to sing about. But it's happening, and a lotta women need a hero."

- **Terry Abrahamson, WNUR Radio**

"The angel who comes with healing in her wings can just as easily bear a sword...and this is one woman who is equally adept at both aspects . . . Gaye is a masterful musician, a blues historian and a wordsmith of the highest order."

- **Bill Wilson, Reflections In Blue, blog**

The Griot is a virtual kick-ass political manifesto by the husky-voiced, strong chanteuse. She is not just expressing righteous indignation and outrage, she is defiantly flipping the musical middle finger at a long list of deserved targets.

- **Frank Mathias, Living Blues Magazine**

"Adegbalola possesses a classic blues singer's talent to breathe life into mere words. It's the combination of prodigious singing, timely material and exquisite production (courtesy of Block) that raises this effort above any mere "women's blues" label . . . Her identification with humanity's daily struggles - and her ability to articulate them - secure Adegbalola's place within the tradition."

- **Blues Revue Magazine**

"Adegbalola is so supremely connected to her music that one feels the joy, beauty, and pain as if it were one's own."

- **The Washington Blade**

"Adegbalola combines an impish sense of humor with hard-nosed feminist mettle; her effervescent theatricality allows her to infuse even her most politically righteous statements with life-affirming zest."

- **Living Blues Magazine**

"a vocal range that varies from the lubriciousness of Sarah Vaughn to the crisp sonority of Nina Simone."

- **The Boston Phoenix**

"Adegbalola just keeps getting better and better as a songwriter . . . the songs can't be pigeon-holed as women's songs - they're people songs."

- **The Buffalo News**

"... some of the frankest and funniest songs in their (Saffire's) repertory are Adegbalola originals, songs in which a liberated woman looks on love with the rueful eye of experience and the saving grace of good humor."

- **The Washington Post**

"A gifted writer, vocalist and performer, her lyrics speak of the human condition with as much eloquence (earthy street talk, of course, qualifying) as one could want. She tells it like it is. . . Adegbalola is one of the most electrifying blues performers around."

- **Sacramento Blues Society**

"... Smart, savvy, witty, and unabashedly outspoken, Adegbalola continues the Saffire tradition on her solo debut of calling attention to some pretty severe social issues with sympathy and incisive clarity . . ."

- **amazon.com review**

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# GAYE ADEGBALOLA



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## REVIEWS (2 of 2)

"She doesn't simply deliver a good line – she sings her heart out, letting herself go with the flow of a phrase . . . This is no Evita on a balcony, this is the March on Washington!"

– **fab! (magazine)**

"Gaye's voice is instantly recognizable; she's made the classic songs her own and her own songs classics."

– **Bob Margolin, Blues Revue Magazine**

". . . blues performed with so much heart and panache that it is unreservedly recommended."

– **Ron Weinstock, D. C. Blues Society**

"The respect and love for this music is evident by the joy just dripping from your speakers."

– **Beardo, Sr. contributing editor, BluesWax ezine**

"Gaye has always been the ultimate modern realization of this breed of blues great (classic blues women). . . She continues to be a pathfinder to the truth in all its naked wonder."

– **George P. Sedorff, Big City Blues Magazine**

## INTERNATIONAL:

"Outspoken, yet introspective, Adegbalola's blues are essential listening material! It's enlightening, entertaining and effectively effervescent!"

– **Blues Connection; BRITAIN**

"With the obvious grand sense of showmanship this lady possesses, a voice made for singing the blues, and the simplicity of the duo (with Roddy Barnes), this act made this concert a wonderful moment of pure emotion."

– **Espace M. Begart, blues feelings; FRANCE**

"This work (Neo-Classic Blues) has the power to be pedagogical without being boring and deserves to be a reference in schools of music, to show future virtuosi what spontaneity brings to art. Well done!"

– **Fred Delforge, Zicazine E Magazine; FRANCE**

## AT HOME:

"The Saffire star boogies with the ballads and the blues. This was not your party band at work; it was a shining star treating her hometown to something very good. . . When Gaye dons that white tux, she's straight off Broadway."

– **Front Porch News, Fredericksburg, VA**

**Readers' Choice:**

**Best Performance, Best Singer**

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