



## *Blues in the Bottom: An Intergenerational Conversation*



**About EJ Mathews:** Texas-born E.J. Mathews, originally from Atlanta, Texas, now makes his home in Dallas. Mathews lived just outside Atlanta, Texas in the small rural community of Bivins, Texas, located near Leek Creek and the Louisiana state line. Mathews musical influences call on his Georgia-born grandfather. EJ recalls his granddaddy, Zan, used to sit on the front porch at night and play slide guitar with his pocketknife, all the while spitting watermelon seeds off the porch and watching lightnin' bugs flicker in the night.

EJ's music has a good-time, foot stompin' feel and echoes the sounds of his swampy Texas/Louisiana state line upbringing. His music is best served in the presence of good friends and anyone out to have a good time. There will not be a foot in the house that doesn't stomp or a head that doesn't bob. EJ is a regular in many Texas and Louisiana music scenes either with his band or performing solo.



**About Brandi Waller-Pace:** Brandi Waller-Pace is a musician, educator, and scholar-activist. They are a 12-year veteran public school general music educator and the Founder/Executive Director of the nonprofit Decolonizing the Music Room, under which they created and organize the annual Fort Worth African American Roots Music Festival. Brandi presents, speaks, and consults nationally and internationally on topics including decolonizing and antiracist approaches in music education, Blackness in American roots music, music pedagogy, and educational/organizational equity. They perform jazz, neo-soul, old time, and genre-crossing originals on DFW area stages and around the country. Brandi has co-produced, curated artist lineups for, and performed in events with Bluegrass Pride, The Bluegrass Situation, and PineCone. They are also the Program Manager of the Oakland Public Conservatory of Music's Black Banjo & Fiddle Fellowship, and sit on the board of Folk Alliance International.



**About Vicki Meek:** Vicki Meek, a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is a nationally recognized artist who has exhibited widely. Meek is in the permanent collections of the African American Museum in Dallas, The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Paul Quinn College and Norwalk Community College in Norwalk, Connecticut. She was awarded three public arts commissions with the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Art Program and was co-artist on the largest public art project in Dallas, the Dallas Convention Center Public Art Project. Meek was selected as one of ten national artists to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Nasher Sculpture Center with the commissioning of a site-specific installation. In addition, Vicki Meek is an independent curator and writes cultural criticism for her blog Art & Racenotes and Dallas Weekly. With over 40 years of arts administrative experience that includes

working as a senior program administrator for a state arts agency, a local arts agency and running a non-profit visual arts center, Vicki Meek retired in March, 2016 as the Manager of the South Dallas Cultural Center in Dallas, Texas, a full-service African-centered center that is a division of the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs. She served on the board of National Performance Network 2008-15 and was Chair from 2012-2014. Meek is currently a full-time artist and COO of USEKRA: Center for Creative Investigation in Costa Rica, a retreat founded by Elia Arce.



**About Tufara Waller Muhammad (*Blues in the Bottom* Curator):**

Tufara Waller Muhammad is a multidisciplinary artist, political strategist, popular educator and cultural organizer. Tufara has worked for over 30 years at the nexus of art, faith and justice in the US South and Global South. Tufara Waller Muhammad draws on six generations of her multiracial familial lineage of civically-engaged artists, organizers, and spiritual leaders animated by faith and a commitment to justice, healing, and transformation of systems and structures within communities, institutions, and governmental entities.