

María Terrero

Dominican Republic: singer, cultural organizer,
founder of KumbaCarey

Object: pandero frame drum

*Para nosotros, los panderos representan legado,
resistencia y preservación. [Spanish]*

*[For us, the pandero drums represent legacy,
resistance, and preservation.]*

I first came in 1972 to East Harlem at the time when the black power, feminist, and the anti-war movements were going on. At that time, many landlords were avoiding paying taxes, and they abandoned their buildings or burned down many of them. That scenario was very depressing to me. There was a lot of heroin use, and, unfortunately, many of the young people were losing their lives. So it was very shocking to me.

Coming here helped me become more aware of my African ancestry. For Dominicans, that was not a question. But coming here, I met other people of African descent and experienced living in a segregated society. There's segregation in the Dominican Republic, but here it is very clear. You know who's colored, and then there's everyone else. So that opened questions for me, and all of that translated into a whole lot of cultural awakening.

Pedro and I met when I was working for the Dominican Women's Development Center. Someone on the board had the idea of starting a Dominican dance class to encourage fitness and, at the same time, promote a cultural revival. I was assigned to coordinate that whole project. And that's when Pedro came, representing AsaDife, an Afro-Dominican music and dance ensemble, to talk about the class, and then it started. AsaDife started teaching the music, and Pedro taught dance with his brother Boni drumming along with Berto Aybar and all those people. And that's when we started working together. Since then, we haven't stopped. And we don't plan to stop. The pandero frame drum is used in the performance of sacred salves. For us, it represents legacy, resistance, and preservation. I first encountered panderos around the year 1987 and started learning to play them around 1998 with La 21 Division, an Afro-Dominican music ensemble in NYC.



Bio:

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, María Terrero migrated to the U.S. in 1972. She has been working as a cultural activist/performer of Afro-Dominican traditional music and dance since 1987. She is also an early childhood educator through art and culture. Starting off as a dancer and back up vocalist with the Afro-Dominican music ensemble AsaDifé in 1990, María was among the founding members of the music ensemble La 21 División, and later joined the all-female Dominican-Puerto Rican ensemble Yaya. In 2007, with partner Pedro Raposo, she continued the legacy of La 21 División by founding KumbaCarey. María has participated in various panels with the Interfaith Center of New York and the New York City community of researchers and performers of African-based traditions throughout the Americas.

For more information,
[facebook.com/kumbacareyfusion](https://www.facebook.com/kumbacareyfusion)