

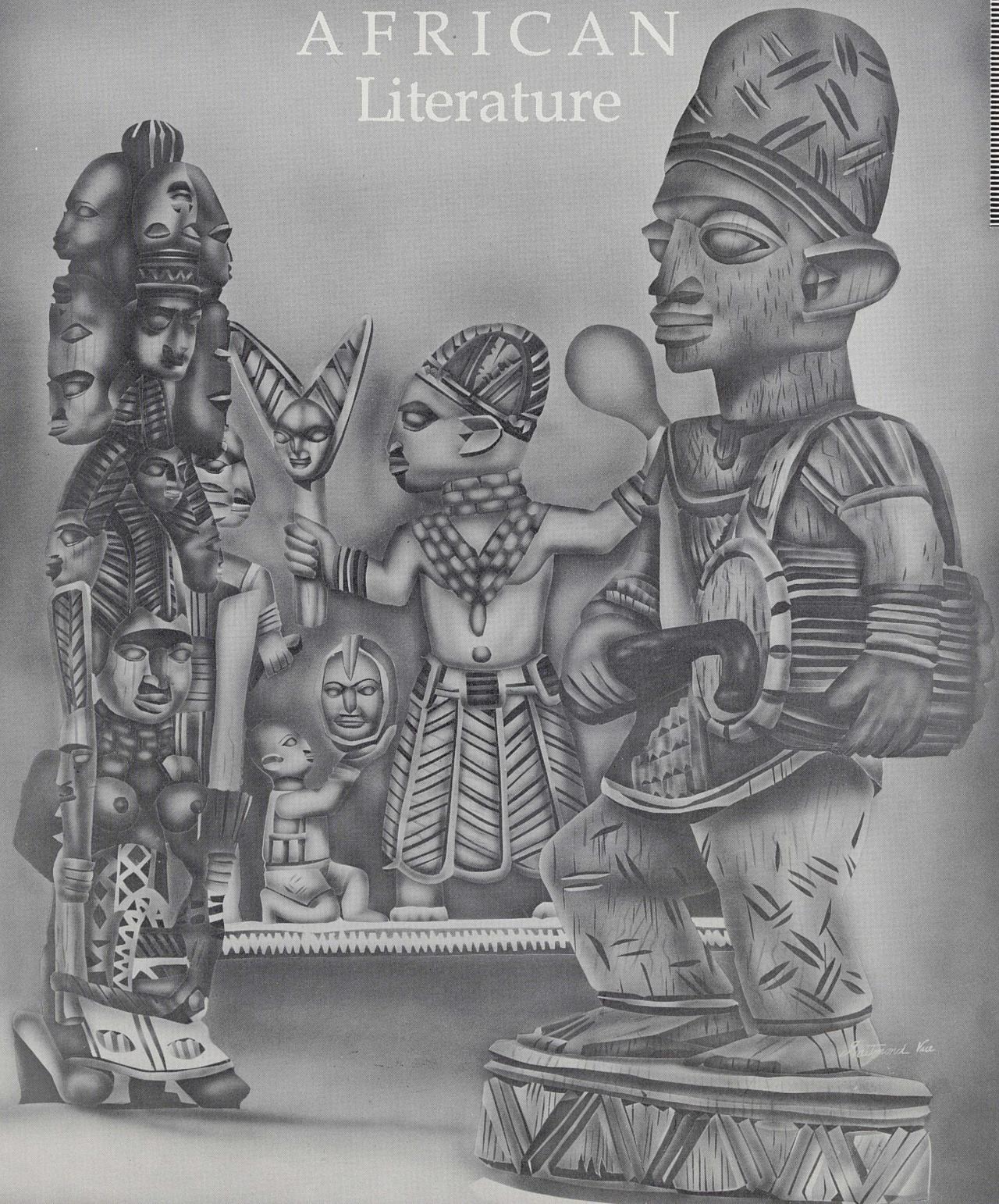
★ **ShootingStar**

ISSN 0892-1407

Black Literary Magazine

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W

AFRICAN  
Literature



Patricia Kee

\$2.95

## POEMS



## BLAME IT ON THE BOERS

(The lifesong of  
Johnny Mbizo Dyani)

*khunga ukhunga  
sinki sinki  
funtu funtu  
shundu shundu  
nithini na mawethu?  
kuzawubetha intonga  
kuzawubetha intonga*

*listen to the lifesong of Johnny  
i'm no jazz star  
i'm a folk musician  
i work for izilali, i work for africa  
i'm the witchdoctor's son  
born under the heat of this our africa*

*xaba and i tiptoe the strings  
forward and backwards i echo cries  
of the children of africa  
of the children of angola  
i'm bluer than the blue notes of mongezi  
i'm the joy of the spirits  
i'm the forest and the zoo*

*i sing songs for biko  
i sing songs for black warriors and  
should my fingers no more play  
blame it on boers  
blame it on boers*

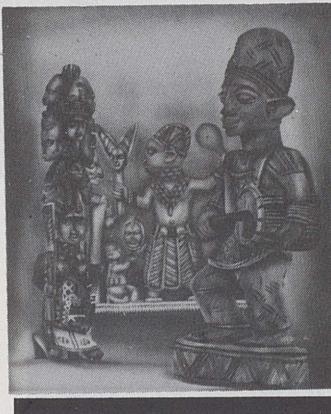
*ich bin kein jazz star  
ich mache musik für volk*

*musik fürs dorf, für die armenviertel  
ich bin der medizinmann  
ich bin der schrei  
der kinder in afrika  
der kinder in angola  
ich bringe freude für unsere vorfahren  
ich bin der jungle und der zoo  
ich bin das lied für biko  
ich bin das lied für schwarze kämpfer und  
falls meine finger nicht mehr spielen können  
die buren sind schuld daran  
die buren sind schuld daran*

Vusi D. Mchunu

Photography of  
Mr. Fakaye's work  
by Tumire Bey





## About the Cover

"African Wood Carvings"

This creation is the third in Waitmond Vire's series of air brush covers prepared exclusively for *Shooting Star Review*. These illustrations began as pencil concepts that developed into air brush paintings with, "different effects of dark and light tones that are achieved by applying and removing thin (and often very tiny) films called frisket." Vire says that with frisket, "precise areas can be toned without affecting other sections. The process gives a very bold look of realism" to a two-dimensional surface. Another example of Vire's work, called "Cleopatra," is on page four.

Portraits and illustrations are done on request. For further information, Waitmond Vire, Jr. can be reached at (412) 363-3619.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
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## Publisher's Statement

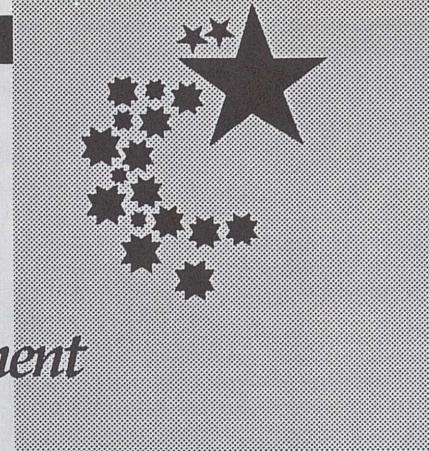


"Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" ...  
DEUTERONOMY 5:16

If this practice is one of the keys to rich and rewarding existence, then we must remember Africa, honor its past and take an interest in its future. Africa was the first continent on this planet. The first human woman raised her children there. Chunks that broke away eventually became Europe, Asia, South and North America.

In my childhood, it was an insult to imply that any colored person or Negro came from Africa. Those were fighting words. We had grown up with caricatured and cartoon images of Africans as bush-brained people who said something like "Umgowah" and who lived in grass huts with bones stuck through their ears, lips and noses. Worse, they did not wear three-piece, pin-stripe suits.

Many Black Americans believed that there was nothing in Africa's history that could be a springboard for growth and development. We were taught to appreciate the European and Far Eastern cultures while ignoring their source. We were not taught about the great African



men and women who were military tacticians, leaders, philosophers, mathematicians, architects, merchants, craftsmen and artists. In fact, Hollywood movies even presented some of Africa's greatest contributors as white people. Sheba, was an Ethiopian Queen, not an Italian and Hannibal could never have looked like Victor Mature.

Many scholars who study the African-American situation believe that our failure to progress as other immigrants have is because :

- 1) we came here against our will, and
- 2) once here, we became chattel and were stripped of culture and ethnic heritage.

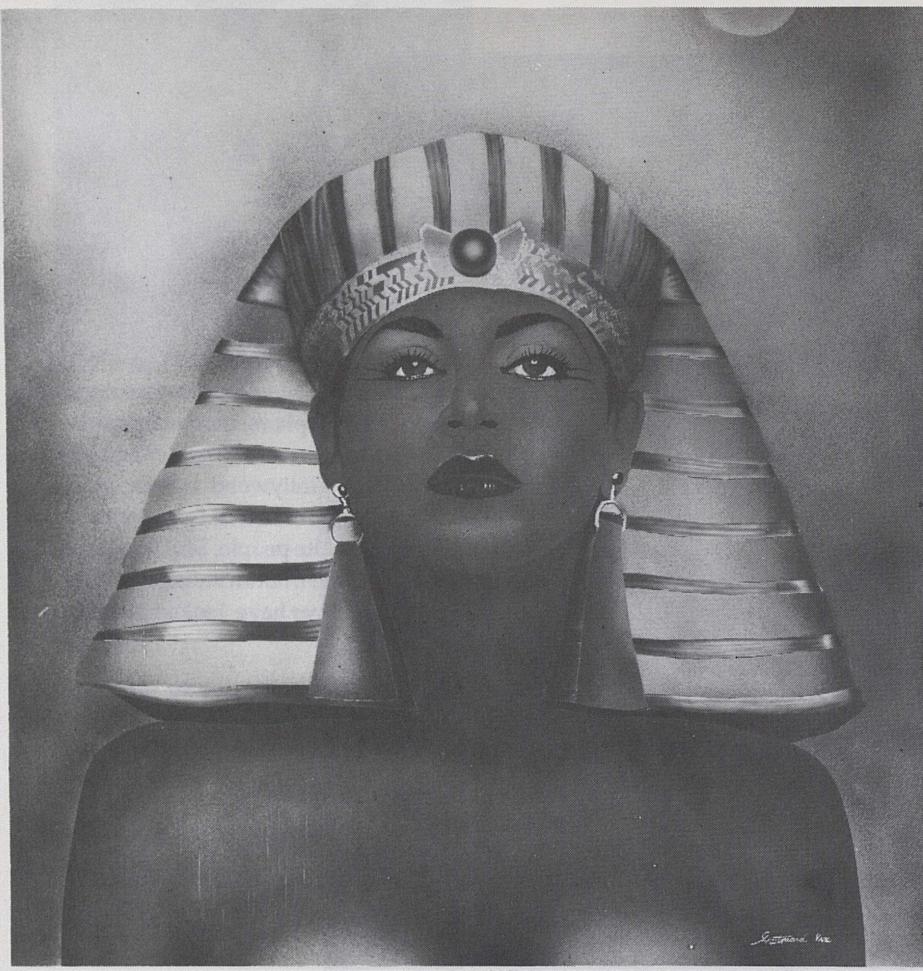
Thus, like orphans, Black Americans had no sense and appreciation of who we really were.

One of the most satisfying aspects of building this "African Literature" issue was the opportunity to rekindle kinship with our living heritage. This issue is also a reminder of the damage done by half-truths and misinformation that stopped Black Americans from embracing our African origins.

By acknowledging our African roots and honoring that culture, we enrich ourselves.

**Sandra Gould Ford**  
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

## POEMS

**OF MY EGYPT**

*The Nile of my heart refuses to weep  
between the valleys ever so deep  
burnt books and history forgotten  
pages lost and papyrus rotten  
Luxor and Karnak languish  
And yet there is no time for tears  
nor any kind of longing fears*

*I listen to the African thunder  
my brazen mind begins to wonder  
why in this land of beautiful plains  
is my history locked in chains?  
What music from me do they require  
a harp, a calimba, a drum, what attire?*

*My ears tremble hearing Theban sounds  
in the night as Truth makes her rounds.  
Up and down the bronze colored moun-  
tains  
near the sacred Imhotep fountains  
the Nile of my heart refuses to sleep  
while this mystery remains so steep.*

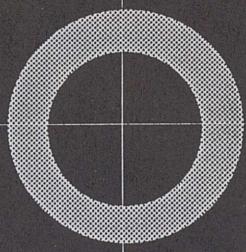
Molefi Asante

Asante is Chairman  
Afro-American Studies  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA

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**IN SHOOTINGSTAR REVIEW**

when  
children  
of Soweto  
are  
gunned  
down  
jelly beans  
pour from their wounds  
they fall  
shattering  
on the street  
like White House  
china

*Copyright Lamont B. Steptoe,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**PROVERBS****MANIPULATION**

*Guile exceeds strength.*

Fulfulde

**DEATH**

*The other world is a dwelling place of  
which this world is the vestibule.*

Berber

*Sleep, the near relative of death.*

Chuana

*It is not a person; it is only  
the grave of one.*

Sotho

*Death has no modesty.*

Zulu

**LOVE**

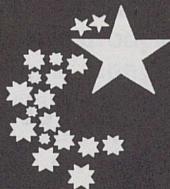
*Not her face, but her heart is comely.*

Chuana

*On the way to one's beloved  
there are no hills.*

Kikuyu





# ShootingStar

## REVIEW

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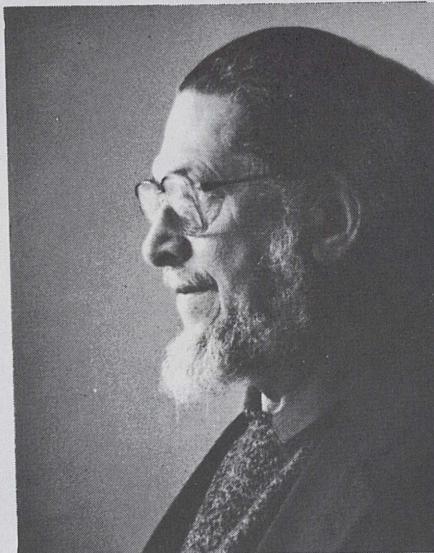
Dennis Brutus, recipient of numerous awards, including the prestigious Langston Hughes Medallion for Poetry, leads an extremely busy life. He has published eight books of poetry and serves on the Planning Committee for the African Literature Association Conference as well as Pittsburghers Against Apartheid and the Symposia on Post-Apartheid Africa.

For almost two years, he has headed the Department of Black Community Education Research and Development at the University of Pittsburgh while teaching African Literature courses. Incensed over the University's refusal to divest from companies with business in South Africa, Brutus regularly marched chanting protesters around the Chancellor's upper class home until the University voted to totally divest.

In October, 1961, the South African government barred Brutus from attending any kind of meeting. When he appeared at the South African Olympic Committee's meeting in 1963 to protest exclusion of qualified Black athletes, Brutus was sent to prison. Of this experience, Brutus remembers:

*I was transferred to the prison at McClean Square in a car guarded by two members of the Secret Police who were in plain clothes with guns in armpit holsters. When I got out of the car to go back to the prison, I was carrying my suitcase. It was the same one I had escaped to Mozambique with. I walked along carrying it as if it was very heavy, and when I got to the sidewalk in front of the prison, I put it down on the sidewalk. I was in a crouching position, like a sprinter, so I took off, and before they realized it, I was gone in the crowd. I knew they had guns, but I thought that in that crowd they would not shoot. This was five o'clock in the afternoon in Johannesburg and all the commuters and*

**"I knew they had guns, but I thought that in that crowd they would not shoot."**



*workers were going home. Well, I should have got away; except that when I turned the corner, I ran into the member of the Secret Police who was assigned to watch me, and he shot me straightaway without hesitation. I was running, and I saw the stain of blood spreading on my shirt, and I realized it was stupid to run myself to death. So I stopped, and I leaned against the wall, when these policemen who'd been pursuing me caught up with me. I said, "Hey, I've been shot." They said, "Now walk back to prison."*

*Walking, I lost so much blood that I collapsed on the sidewalk. As I lay there, I took my handkerchief and I plugged the hole in my chest to stop the bleeding. But then I discovered that I had this pool of blood under my back, and it was at that point that I realized that there were two holes in my body. The one where the bullet had entered. One where the bullet had come out. In prison, I was put to breaking stones.*

*There's just one more story to tell here to complete this facet of the South African experience. When I was in Pretoria, before I went to Robben Island (the maximum security prison for political prisoners), they kept us locked up in a cell for almost two months without ever letting us out. We never got to wash or exercise. We were just stuck in there. So, we complained because we weren't getting any exercise. It really was getting just impossible in that crowded cell. So they said,*

*"You want exercise, we'll give you exercise. And they would then take us out, every day thereafter, and they would make us run until we dropped. And then they would use clubs and batons and beat us, and compel us to get up and keep running again, even though we were exhausted."*

*I asked to see the prison doctor who came once a week, every Saturday morning. He said to me, "What's your problem?" I said, "I'm being made to exercise and to run until I drop, and I can't do it with this (bullet) injury." The doctor replied, "Brutus, aren't you the man who was so keen on the Olympics? You should be grateful for the opportunity to exercise."*

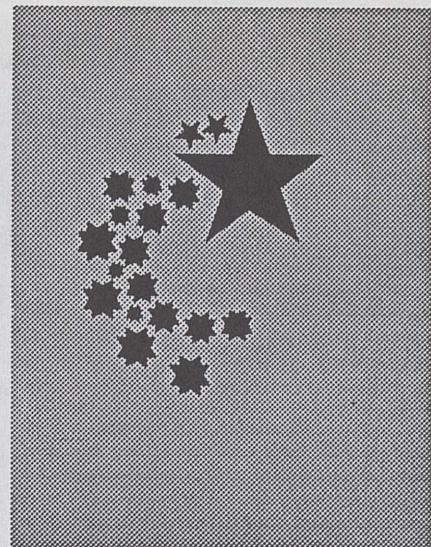
Brutus first came to the United States to testify at the United Nations and before a Congressional Committee. In 1970, he became a Visiting Professor in the University of Denver's English Department.

His life in this country has been as tumultuous as his experiences in South Africa. Not long ago, Brutus was embroiled in a battle to avoid return to South Africa. This summer, Brutus caused fireworks when he arrived at Heathrow Airport and England refused to admit him.

Of his work, Brutus says, "Much of my poetry deals with Africa but, since being exiled from South Africa, my poetry also incorporates material dealing with other countries where I have traveled — most recently Nicaragua and Austria."

**March 21, 1987**

As the seasons turn  
and summer droops to Autumn  
the dyings continue  
and resistance grows;  
there are still those  
willing to give their lives:  
Sharpeville, Langa  
you are sacred names;  
in the center of our brains  
the flame of desire for freedom  
fiercely burns



Logo by Walt Sims



Recently the African Literature Association held its 13th annual conference at the University of Pittsburgh. Dennis Brutus, a co-founder said, "ALA was founded because there was a need to assert the importance of African literature and creativity. Prior to its founding, African literature was greatly neglected. The ALA has helped bring international recognition to African literature."

Next year, the Conference will be held in Dakar, Senegal and this will be the first time that ALA has convened on the African continent.

ALA headquarters are at the African American Studies Department, University of Maryland, 5401 Wilkins Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21228, (301) 455-2158.

### **For Tejeda\***

*Icarus in reverse;  
This was not hunger for light  
soaring in a fierce obsession  
to end, after searing heat,  
disappearing unremarked;*

*here the horrific fall  
to the seething sulfurous cauldron:  
from the glowing maw of the volcano  
freedom, like a phoenix, soars.*

\* Tejeda was a poet who was dropped by a Somocista helicopter into a Volcano at Masaya.

**S**pring comes to England  
and my mouth is numb;  
the blight of Southern racist putrescence  
extends along my being like sheeted rust

my eyes, bleared with rim  
from an acrid sterile air  
are rheum-ettered to imperipience,  
my lips flake spittle scabs  
in creaky articulation

and the sap and blood run high in England  
fluttering green-moth leaves chrysalis  
from the black wooden branches  
gnarled and knotted and noded

## ESSAY

# Africa, for the first time

By Stephanie R. Grant

I was fifteen, and had just flown from Paris, France to Douala, Cameroon to spend six weeks with Kah Walla, a schoolmate, and her family. We arrived at night. The streets were alive, filled with people that I felt, but could barely see. Suddenly, a man ran, frantically, through the streets. People shouted and chased him with clubs and sticks. Kah said that he must be a thief. When caught, he would be killed. From the moment I stepped off that plane, there would always remain one strong impression ... nothing was as black and enveloping as night in Africa.

The Walla family's home had a houseboy, a cook, and a driver, though I and the other four children slept together beneath insect nets on one large bed.

When we arrived at her home, Kah's father spoke with her privately. We had not been in the house more than fifteen minutes when Kah's shrill screams cascaded from the other room. Kah had been the first of the returning children to learn that their maternal grandfather had just died.

The next day, we went to Kah's grandfather's house. We rose early for the long ride to his village. It was the early August season when rain fell treacherously for fifteen minutes, and then the sky turned crystal blue. Cameroon rests on the Atlantic ocean, and all around there were lush green fields. The air was dry, the breeze was potent.



When we reached the village where Kah's grandfather had been "chief," the people enveloped us. A roar went up that shook the heavens. I was dazed by the sheer volume of their weeping. Physically and emotionally, we were consumed.

When the family entered the wooden shanty where Kah's grandfather had lived, I sat outside with a two year old named Hannah. Hannah was the last child born of Kah's grandfather. Her head, like those of his wives, was shaved to indicate the loss of someone cherished. After the Wallas changed into formal attire, pictures were taken with their grandfather. Although I could not speak their language, I helped the women prepare food. We worked fast and hard in an assembly line fashion. At last, I felt like a part of their world. After a time, the Walla children joined me, and we went to the grandmother's to put on our black clothing. Her shanty was brick and perched up from the dusty road. She had been one of his first wives. Al-

though they had divorced years ago, she too was clean shaven.

Their grandfather was placed in a casket on a horse drawn cart. Villagers assembled behind the cart, preserving a space for the family. Our procession moved slowly from the house to the church.

The ceremony was Christian, very much like our own. Kah's grandfather was buried in the churchyard. As we returned to the heart of the village, the sun dipped beneath the horizon. In Africa, daylight eagerly succumbs to the night.

The people's exhaustive grief had taken them just short of spilling their blood. Now, wines flowed, and everyone within two miles of that village shared the fruits and vegetables, stews and rices, fish and fowl.

Five men, each with very different drums, set their instruments in the heart of the village. Each drummer produced a distinctive and enticing rhythm that, together, pulled mourners into a feverish, firelit circle. Villagers easily slipped into the circle, the ring, the beat, the mind ... and no one danced alone. Long after we children had fallen asleep the music continued.

Two years later, when my own maternal grandfather died, I remembered my first twenty-four hours in Africa. When my cousins and friends stood in front of my grandfather's house on the night of his wake, some fun-seekers drove up and asked, "What's going on? A party?", "Naw," we replied, "a wake!" And we, too, danced all night.

*Ms. Grant attends Slippery Rock College in Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania*

## ESSAY

MARCUS GARVEY IN HIS OWN WORDS

# A Journey Of Self-Discovery

ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN CURRENT HISTORIAN MAGAZINE, SEPTEMBER 1923

**I was born in the Island of Jamaica, British West Indies, on August 17, 1887. My parents were black negroes. My father was a man of brilliant intellect and dashing courage.**

He was unafraid of consequences. He took human chances in the course of life, as most bold men do, and he failed at the close of his career. He once had a fortune; he died poor. My mother was a sober and conscientious Christian, too soft and good for the time in which she lived. She was the direct opposite of my father. He was severe, firm, determined, bold and strong, refusing to yield even to superior forces if he believed he was right. My mother, on the other hand, was always willing to return a smile for a blow, and ever ready to bestow charity upon her enemy. Of this strange combination I was born thirty-six years ago, and ushered into a world of sin, the flesh and the devil.

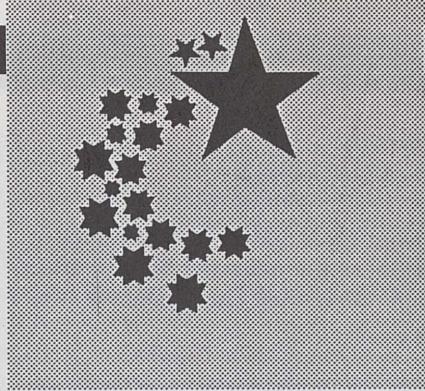
I grew up with other black and white boys. I was never whipped by any, but made them all respect the strength of my arms. I got my education from many sources—through private tutors, two public schools, two grammar or high schools and two colleges. My teachers were men and women of varied experiences and abilities; four of them were eminent preachers. They studied me and I studied them. With some I became friendly in after years, others and I drifted apart, because as a boy they wanted to whip me, and I simply refused to be whipped. I was not made to be whipped. It annoys me to be defeated;



hence to me, to be once defeated is to find cause for an everlasting struggle to reach the top.

I became a printer's apprentice at an early age, while still attending school. My apprentice master was a highly educated and alert man. In the affairs of business and the world he had no peer. He taught me many things before I reached twelve, and at fourteen I had enough intelligence and experience to manage men. I was a strong and forceful character, and have maintained it still.

To me, at home in my early days, there was no difference between white and black. One of my father's properties, the place where I lived most of the time, was adjoining that of a white man. He had three girls and two boys; the Wesleyan minister, another white man whose church my parents attended, also had property adjoining ours. He had three girls and one boy. All of us were playmates. We romped and were happy children playmates together. The little white girl whom I liked most knew no better than I did myself. We were two innocent fools who never dreamed of a race feeling and problem. As a child, I



went to school with white boys and girls, like all other negroes. We were not called negroes then. I never heard the term negro used once until I was about fourteen.

At fourteen my little white playmate and I parted. Her parents thought the time had come to separate us and draw the color line. They sent her and another sister to Edinburgh, Scotland, and told her that she was never to write or try to get in touch with me, for I was a "nigger." It was then that I found for the first time that there was some difference in humanity, and that there were different races, each having its own separate and distinct social life. I did not care about the separation after I was told about it, because I never thought through all our childhood association that the girl and the rest of the children of her race were better than I was; in fact, they used to look up to me. So I simply had no regrets. I only thought them "fresh."

After my first lesson in race distinction, I never thought of playing with white girls any more, even if they might be next-door neighbors. At home my sister's company was good enough for me, and at school I made friends with the colored girls next to me. White boys and I used to frolic together. We played cricket and baseball, ran races and rode bicycles together, took each other to the river and to the sea beach to learn to swim, and made boyish efforts while out in deep water to drown each other, making a sprint for shore crying out "shark, shark, shark." In all our experiences, however, only one black boy was drowned. He went under on a Friday afternoon after school hours, and his

continued on page 10

*Journey -  
continued from page 9*

parents found him afloat half eaten by sharks on the following Sunday afternoon. Since then we boys never went back to sea.

At maturity the black and white boys separated, and took different courses in life. I grew up then to see the difference between the races more and more. My schoolmates as young men did not know or remember me any more. Then I realized that I had to make a fight for a place in the world, that it was not so easy to pass on to office and position. Personally, however, I had not much difficulty in finding and holding a place for myself, for I was aggressive. At eighteen I had an excellent position as manager of a large printing establishment, having under my control several men old enough to be my grandfathers. But I got mixed with the public life. I started to take an interest in the politics of my country, and then I saw the injustice done to my race because it was black, and I became dissatisfied on that account. I went traveling to South and Central America and part of the West Indies to find out if it was so elsewhere, and I found the same situation. I set sail for Europe to find out if it was different there, and again I found the same stumbling-block—"You are black." I read of the conditions in America. I read Up From Slavery, by Booker T. Washington, and then my doom—if I may so call it—of being a race leader dawned upon me in London after I had traveled through almost half of Europe.

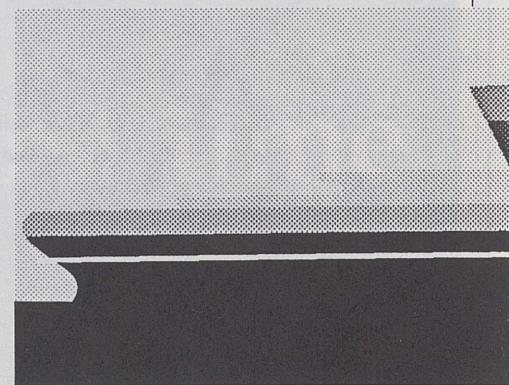
I asked, "Where is the black man's Government?" "Where is his King and his Kingdom?" "Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?" I could not find them, and then I declared, "I will help to make them."

Becoming naturally restless for the opportunity of doing something for the advancement of my race, I was determined that the black man would not continue to be kicked about by all the other races and nations of the world, as I

saw it in the West Indies, South and Central America and Europe, and as I read of it in America. My young and ambitious mind led me into flights of great imagination. I saw before me then, even as I do now, a new world of black men, not peons, serfs, dogs, and slaves, but a nation of sturdy men making their impression upon civilization and causing a new light to dawn upon the human race. I could not remain in London any more. My brain was afire. There was a world of thought to conquer. I had to start before it became too late and the work be not done. Immediately I boarded a ship at Southampton for Jamaica, where I arrived on July 15, 1914. The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities (Imperial) League was founded and organized five days after my arrival, with the program of uniting all the negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and Government absolutely their own.

Where did the name of the organization come from? It was while speaking to a West Indian negro who was a passenger on the ship with me from Southampton, who was returning home to the West Indies from Basutoland with his Basuto wife, that I further learned of the horrors of native life in Africa. He related to me in conversation such horrible and pitiable tales that my heart bled within me. Retiring from the conversation to my cabin, all day and the following night I pondered over the subject matter of that conversation, and at midnight, lying flat on my back, the vision and thought came to me that I should name the organization the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities (Imperial) League. Such a name I thought would embrace the purpose of black humanity. Thus to the world a name was born, a movement created, and man became known.

I really never knew there was so much color prejudice in Jamaica, my own native home, until I started the work of the Universal Negro Improvement Association... I had just returned from a successful trip to Europe, which was an excep-



tional achievement for a black man. The daily papers wrote me up with big headlines and told of my movement. But nobody wanted to be a negro. "Garvey is crazy; he has lost his head," "Is that the use he is going to make of his experience and intelligence?" Such were the criticism passed upon me. Men and women as black as I, and even more so, had believed themselves white under the West Indian order of society. I was simply an impossible man to use openly the term "negro"; yet every one beneath his breath was calling the black man a negro.

I had to decide whether to please my friends and be one of the "black-whites" of Jamaica, and be reasonably prosperous, or come out openly and defend and help improve and protect the integrity of the black millions and suffer. I decided to do the latter, hence my offense against "colored-black-white" society in the colonies and America. I was openly hated and persecuted by some of these colored men of the island who did not want to be classified as negroes, but as white. They hated me worse than poison. They opposed me at every step, but I had a large number of white friends, who encouraged and helped me. Notable among them were the then Governor of the Colony, the Colonial Secretary and several other prominent men. But they were afraid of offending the "colored gentry" that were passing for white. Hence my fight had to be made alone. I spent hundreds of pounds (sterling) helping the organization to gain a footing. I also gave up all my time to the promulgation of its ideals. I became a marked man, but I was determined that the work should be done.

## America's Earliest Back-to-Africa Leaders

by Terri Lewis

The war helped a great deal in arousing the consciousness of the colored people to the reasonableness of our program, especially after the British at home had rejected a large number of West Indian colored men who wanted to be officers in the British army. When they were told that negroes could not be officers in the British army they started their own propaganda, which supplemented the program of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. With this and other contributing agencies a few of the stiff-necked colored people began to see the reasonableness of my program, but they were firm in refusing to be known as negroes. Furthermore, I was a black man and therefore had absolutely no right to lead; in the opinion of the "colored" element, leadership should have been in the hands of a yellow or a very light man. On such flimsy prejudices our race has been retarded. There is more bitterness among us negroes because of the caste of color than there is between any other peoples, not excluding the people of India.

I succeeded to a great extent in establishing the association in Jamaica with the assistance of a Catholic Bishop, the Governor, Sir John Pringle, the Rev. William Graham, a Scottish clergyman, and several other white friends. I got in touch with Booker Washington and told him what I wanted to do. He invited me to America and promised to speak with me in the Southern and other States to help my work. Although he died in the fall of 1915, I made my arrangements and arrived in the United States on March 23, 1916.

Marcus Mozhia Garvey (1887-1940) later developed the most significant Back-To-Africa movement in this country's history. As part of the Universal Negro Improvement Association that he founded in 1914 in Jamaica, Garvey attracted a huge following when he relocated to New York City in 1916.

"We are organized not to hate other men," he said, "but to lift (Africans) and to demand respect of all humanity." Garvey wanted to unite people of African descent, and then establish an independent government in Africa. He raised over \$1 million to build the Black Star Steamship Line and take Black Americans back to Africa. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that UNIA received significant support from the Ku Klux Klan and similar organizations.

Although repatriation reached its peak with Garvey, Back-to-Africa movements actually began when British settlers brought the first Africans to the New World in chains. From that day on, dislocated Africans refused to give up their will to regain control of their human, civil, social and political rights through a government of their own.

Martin Delaney (1812-1885), a physician and religious leader of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was very active in the American Colonization Society. After this organization met in Canada in 1859, Delaney headed a delegation to the Niger Valley and signed a treaty with eight African kings who offered rich inducements to Black Americans who would settle in that region.

Unlike many Black children, Alexander Crummel (1819-1898) attended school and made many contributions in Africa and America. Crummell's father came from a tribe that had lived in the Timanee (now Liberia) region of West Africa. He believed that Africans in America had a "moral and Christian responsibility to return to Africa to rebuild and regenerate," that continent's religious, agricultural, political, economic and educational foundations.

Edward Wilmot Blyden was another significant figure in Black America's desire for repatriation. He was born in St. Thomas in 1832. When denied admission to several American theological seminaries because of his race, and after witnessing the horror of America's Fugitive Slave Law\*, Blyden became convinced that there could never be fairness for Blacks in this country. He devoted his life to encouraging African Americans to develop a nation in Africa, using Liberia as the point of departure.

Bishop Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1915) was born free in South Carolina because his maternal grandfather convinced a colonial court that he was the son of an African prince. English law at the time forbade the enslavement of Africans of royal blood and South Carolina was then a British Colony. Like Blyden, Crummel and Delaney, Bishop Turner felt there was no hope of liberation for American Blacks. "I'm taking the ground that we will never get justice here, that God is and will (continue to) withhold political rights from us for the purpose of turning our attention to our fatherland." He focussed on Liberia as a refuge, believing that people of African descent could only live out their potential as human beings in Africa.

Repatriation and African Nationalism (Pan Africanism) have, for centuries, called for the unification of African people as a vehicle for gaining dignity and self-respect. The philosophy voiced by these movements state that African-Americans are a people who can take destiny into our own hands and eventually control our land ... that is Africa. If the Chinese can have China, the Japanese have Japan, Europeans have Europe, why not Africa for the Africans?

\* The Fugitive Slave Law allowed southern planters to come into the "Free" states and take back into slavery any Black person that they said had run away from their plantation. Because the accused could not testify in his or her own behalf, and because the judges at these trials received twice as much money when they found in favor of the plantation owner, even legally free Blacks were in jeopardy of being sold down the river by this Law.



## FEATURED ARTIST

# Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

Hand-carved African art is an intriguing study in beauty, design and symbolism. One of the best African wood carvers today is Lamidi Olonade Fakeye.

Fakeye is a fifth generation Yoruba wood carver who was born in Ila-Orangun, Oyo State, Nigeria. His first lessons came from his father and senior brothers. After mastering basic wood carving techniques, lumberjacking and becoming a hand sawyer of timber into planks, Fakeye made ends meet with handiwork such as barbersing, tailoring and bicycle repair. A chance visit to the palace of Oloja of Oro introduced Fakeye to the work of the late Arowo-Ogun of Osi-Ilorin. Fakeye was so impressed with the masterpieces that he returned to wood carving.

In 1948, Fakeye was apprenticed to Bamidele, the son of Arowo-Ogun, and he met Bamidele's patrons. During this period, Fakeye carved doors, veranda posts and other major pieces for Catholic churches and government buildings. His first exhibition was in 1960 in Lagos. In 1962, he received a scholarship to study stone carving techniques in Paris.

Fakeye became a world-class artist during Nigeria's transition from colonial rule to independence. He had an exhibition in London in 1963 and then accepted a residency at Western Michigan University. From 1960 until 1978, he was a free-lance artist, accepting apprentices of his own and carving major pieces for the University of Ife, The U.S.I.S. Library in Ibadan, the J.F.K. Center in Washington, DC, Northwestern University and Western Michigan University.

By remaining true to his culture, Fakeye maintained Yoruba wood carving traditions and yet trans-





formed this artform by perfecting the essence of what was strong, vital and universally worthy of respect.

Fakeye became a Muslim at a young age ... foregoing his father's traditional Yoruba religious practices. He balances his brilliant accomplishments with good friends, his family, his Yoruba identity, his Nigerian citizenship, his Africanness and, above all, his relationship to his God Whom he believes has chosen to bless him in this fashion.

Indeed, Lamidi Olonade Fakeye has lived up to his name. Olonade means "the carver has come."

Mr. Fakaye's work is represented in the United States by Dr. Ralph Proctor c/o Kingsley Association 6118 Penn Circle South Pgh. PA 15206 (412) 661-8751

## PROVERBS

### RELATIONSHIPS

Rivalry is better than envy.

Mongo

Ingratitude is sooner or later fatal to its author.

Twi

God gives nothing to those who keep their arms crossed.

Bambara

A sultan without the spirit of justice is like a river without water.

Egypt

He who chatters with you will chatter of you.

Egypt

He who does not travel will not know the value of men.

Berber

The mouse in his hole is king.

Berber

A man without a wife is like a vase without flowers.

Cape Verde Islands

## FICTION

# Aesop's Fables

Fables are a concise and effective method of teaching. Often, animals express human qualities. The greatest fabulist known was Aesop, also called Luqman (meaning "The Ethiopian"). His genius and strong moral character were sufficiently respected that a chapter in Islam's Holy Quran was dedicated to him.

Aesop had great difficulty talking and actually communicated his insights by gesture. He was born a slave and served several Greek masters before gaining freedom. Aesop's fables came from troublesome incidents that his highly principalled nature sought to correct.

Historians say that Aesop was deformed, with misshapen head, dwarfish arms and legs, a large belly and "swarthy" complexion. He was born about 620 years B.C. and was put to death as decreed by the Oracle of Delphi around 560 B.C.

Here are updated versions of five fables.

## "THE CITY MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE"

The little Country Mouse invited her svelte and very chic City Sister to visit. The Country Mouse provided the modest comforts of her threadbare home beneath the steps of an old farmhouse. The Country Mouse also offered her fashionable guest the best foods that she could find... weathered corn kernels,

molded bread crusts, cheese scraps and dried beef fat. The City Mouse, dressed in silk and fine brocades, loved her Country Sister dearly and did not want to offend. She said gaily that her home had many grand and exciting things to offer. She urged the Country Mouse to come and enjoy the good life.

Once they reached the City, the City Mouse showed off her home's big and well-stocked pantry, the satin-covered furniture, the polished crystals and gleaming floors. Well after midnight, the City Mouse promenaded her Country Sister out for succulent delicacies. Suddenly, two cats, with jeweled collars and sharp teeth flashing, leaped on the table.

The City Mouse streaked across a well-beaten path to her hole behind the china closet. Panting, and with a scratched tail, the Country Mouse scurried to safety. After catching her breath, the Country



Mouse said, "I think I'd rather nibble tough bread and dry corn, and wear these simple cotton dresses in safety and with peace of mind, than dine in splendor and in fear."

## "THE JACKDAW AND THE DOVES"

The jackdaw, a brilliantly black bird, was searching for food when he saw doves clustered at a well-stocked cote. His favorite seeds filled the small bins. To gain the dove's acceptance, the jackdaw painted himself white. For a brief while, the jackdaw's scheme worked. The doves paid little attention to the quiet newcomer, thinking that he was someone's relative. Half filled with food,

the jackdaw started chattering.

The doves, shocked at his true identity and angered by the deception, fluttered their wings and pecked at him ... forcing the jackdaw to leave. Still hungry, the jackdaw returned to his own kind. But, because they did not recognize him with the new coloring, the jackdaws drove him away from their food too.

### "THE LION AND THE BOAR"

It had been an exceptionally hot day when the Lion and the Boar arrived at a small oasis. "I got here first, so you'll have to wait until I finish," said the Lion. "Oh, no. I got here first and I'll drink first!" replied the Boar.

Their argument became quite fierce. They ripped and slashed at each other. After a while, they fell down exhausted. While gingerly licking their wounds and waiting to regain enough strength to battle again, the shadows of two vultures moved across the dusty ground. Watching the birds settle in the distance, the Lion and the Boar said almost at once, "I think we'd better settle this matter peacefully, or we'll both be buzzard bait."

### "THE COCK AND THE JEWEL"

A fine, young rooster, strutted to a new part of the barnyard with three of his lady friends. While scratching for food, he unearthed a sparkling jewel.

"Ah!" he said. "What a treasure you'd be for someone like the farmer's wife." As he and his pullets watched the jewel twinkling, the cock said, "The farmer's wife would display you with great pride. But," he said tossing the gem away with a shrug, "I and my lovelies would prefer a pearl of barley."

### "THE HALES AND THE FROGS"

A community of hares gathered to voice their grievances beneath palm trees not far from a lily pond.

"I'm fed up!" said one.

"Everything picks on us."

"Yes! Dogs! Eagles! Men! They hunt us, and what can we do about it?"

"Nothing at all," shrieked another!

"How can we go on living like this generation after generation?"

"Yes," cried one, "we're always in danger. We'd be better off dead."

Approving murmurs spread through the crowd.

"All in favor of ending this misery say 'Aye'!"

The positive response was overwhelming.

"All opposed, say 'Nay'."

Only the songs of the frogs at the lily pond could be heard.

"Let's go! Let's all drown ourselves!" When the hares rushed to the pond, hundreds of frogs leaped into the water with great and nervous splashing.

Startled, the hares paused, and one of their elders said, "It appears that there are some who are just as afraid of us as we are of others, and yet they survive."



## POEM

(For Winnie Mandela)

*Her Eyes*

*mirror*

*her people's suffering;  
their will to resist  
apartheid injustice*

*compassion and hope  
light her  
vigilant gaze —*

*faithful, strong  
under yellow, green,  
black banners*

*her eyes  
blazing life's  
challenge to  
death*

*bear the dream  
of her people's  
shared destiny:*

*a land of equals,  
a free Azania*

**Ellen Mark**  
San Francisco,  
California

## FOLKTALES

# Gather Near! Gather Near!

Temujin's colorful clothes hang loosely from him six-foot, 200 pound body. He explains to enthralled audiences that the clothes "represent a certain ethnic group, the Yoruba people who exist in South West Nigeria, the Republic of Guinea, Togo and parts of Ghana, and as a result of the slave trade," Yorbua people are also found in, "Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Trinidad, Surinam and the United States."

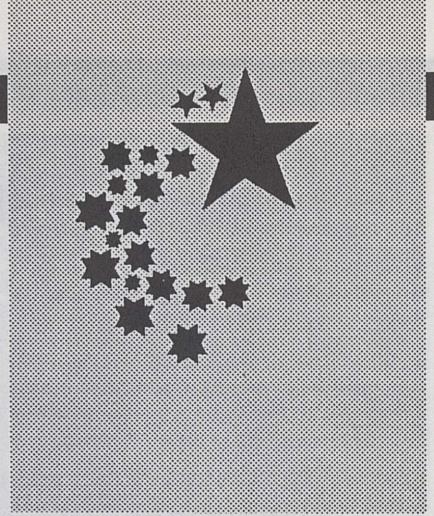
Temujin says, "Both my father's people and my mother's people are Yoruba, and I am a Yoruba by practice. I am a traditional Yoruba story teller." With a voice that booms, squeaks, snorts, whoops and completely carouses across the spectrum of vocal possibilities, Temujin enchants and teaches at the same time. His generously gesturing hands entice audiences into his realm of make believe for-realness. Taps on a small, decorated drum hanging at his side punctuate his stories. Dozens of beads shining on his chest and bangles ringing his wrists and fingers, dazzle Temujin's listeners.

Highly prized among Temujin's many treasures is the horse's tail that hangs from a beaded handle and wrist strap. This artifact is a symbolic acoutrement of the Black StoryTellers Association. He jabs it like a teacher's pointer and sweeps it like a maestro's baton. But, beyond the tail's theatrical possibilities, Temujin re-



cently asked a bright brown skinned girl, "Now what do you think this might be used for besides pointing and waving and making it flap in the wind?" And when her sparkling eyes indicated that she did not know, Temujin slapped the tail against his shoulders, and said "It's a fly swatter!"

After declaring, "True to the nature of story telling, I never tell a story the same way twice," Temujin shared these two



African tales with *Shooting Star Review*.

## A Pot that Boils Over Only Makes a Mess of Itself.

Once, there lived a poor and struggling hunter. So poor, in fact, that he had only the clothes on his back, and they were pitifully ragged. His wife had abandoned him. His house had burned down. The animals that had once been plentiful had disappeared from his forest. It seemed a

cloud of misfortune followed him everywhere until, one day, he went into the forest to find food. He was desperately hungry and hoped to kill an animal. Unfortunately, every time he thought he heard an animal's footstep or a bird's wings flutter, the man found nothing at all ... no matter how fast he turned and how far he searched.

Finally, his feet aching from the long walk, his eyes tired from searching through



the tall grass, and his stomach moaning from emptiness, the man sat beneath a tree and began designing ways to end his life. "I could hang myself," he thought. "Or I could jump into the next river I find. Or I could have the man in the hut near the maize fields make a poison."

Suddenly, an old woman appeared. She reached out to him and said gently, "I bring you good news. Have faith in your future. Remember, the rain is never as black when it falls as it looks while in the clouds. Does not our God provide for those who cannot provide for themselves?"

"Kind woman," he said, "what can I hope for in this life? I have worked very hard, and yet I have nothing." "Be patient," she said, "and mindful. Give me your weapons."

The hunter obeyed. "And now," she said, "give me your clothes." Again, the

hunter obeyed.

"Now," said the woman, "climb this tree." The hunter climbed as commanded, and when he reached the top the old woman called up to him saying, "Good man, I have one last request for you. Sit on the furthest branch hanging downward with your arms extended and your hands open."

The hunter was frightened but had gone so far in following the old woman's or-

*Temujin travels quite a bit. During a recent, two-week period, he shared stories in New York City, and Philadelphia. The listeners are at the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh.*

ders that he would not stop. "I can lose nothing more than my life," he reasoned, "which is what I was planning to do when she found me." He hung by his knees and extended his arms with his hands open. Needless to say, this caused him to fall a great distance to the ground.

But, much to his surprise, when the hunter landed he was unharmed and had somehow arrived in the middle of a large city. Merchants and shoppers and children, even the dogs, surrounded him and greeted the hunter with great joy. "Our king has returned," they cheered!

The people carried the hunter, naked as a bird, to the palace. They clothed the hunter in luxurious robes and crowned him the same day.

The hunter was amazed at his good fortune. The room was beautiful and the food that they brought him was bounti-

ful and delicious. Later in the day, the new king's head slave came and showed the former hunter every room in the vast building. The head slave presented the rooms where the king's wives resided and the chambers for the eunuchs that served them. The head slave took the king to the shrines of the gods that they worshipped and to the rooms where the crowns and scepters and seals and other royal trappings were stored.

After dozens of doors and rooms and chambers had been opened, and they had been walking for several hours, the head slave came to one plain, little door in the most distant part of the palace. "This door," he said, "is called 'Over Doing.' But remember always that if you want to remain a happy man, you must never touch this door. Everything in this town and in this palace is yours as long as you never open this door."

The king was well satisfied with what his head slave had shown and told him. He looked forward to a great new life and, for a whole year, ruled his subjects well. The people loved him and, on the anniversary of his arrival in their town, a great celebration was held.

Musicians came from many miles away, playing their drums and other instruments. Food was set generously on countless tables and flavorful wines flowed freely. The king, himself, fully enjoyed the day. He partook of everything offered by his happy subjects ... especially the wine.

Ahhh, the wine. It glided so smoothly down his throat. The delightful concoctions warmed his stomach and filled his head with hot and unusual thoughts. "I am the king of this town," he said! "I am wise and powerful and owner of all that is seen and not seen. Do I not rule these streets and the people who use them. Do I not have command over all that they own? Yes, these words I speak now are true, and yet," he scowled, "those that I rule would try to rule me by telling me what rooms in my palace I can and cannot enter! No longer will I be bound by



## FOLKTALES

such foolishness. I am the ruler here. I shall decide what is opened and what stays closed. Tonight I will see what is behind that small door at the farthest point in my palace. There is no one to stop me, for I am the king. Thus, late in the night, long after the musicians had carried their instruments home and the fires that had been lit were embers, just before the first hint of dawn was about to lighten the sky, the king slipped past his servants and went alone to the door called 'Over Doing.' Knowing the many treasures and great happiness the past year had brought him, the king trembled with excitement as his eager hands pulled open the door. He rushed across the threshold. His eyes were bright with anticipation as the door closed gently but firmly.

Inside, if that's what we could call it, the king found the old woman he had met a year before. She was beneath the same tree that he had climbed and, much to his amazement, the man stood naked before her.

As she handed him his arrows and bow and tattered clothing, the old woman said, "When will men learn that the pot that boils over only makes a mess of itself?"

## PROVERBS

### EGO

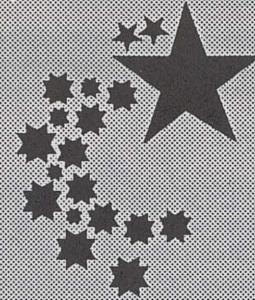
A big head is a big load.  
Hausa

Pride only goes the length one can spit.  
Congo

### FAMILY

Hit one ring and the whole chain will resound.  
Sotho

Who touches a father touches the son.  
Amharic



## DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR 40x60"

pencil drawing by Jimmy Mance, an oil painter and pencilist who received his Fine Arts degree from Temple University's Tyler School of Art. Mance's intricate borders and varied drawings create movement through contrast and repeated patterns.

As with much of his art work, *DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR* describes a period in his life. During 1981, Mance was an art teacher by day and an exotic dancer by night. Mance's female fans established "The Magnificent Black Prince" as a semi-celebrity, and Mance began to believe he actually was a royal prince ... even creating a princely decor in his apartment. The resulting narcissism became the concept for *DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR*.

In this artwork, Mance combines reality and fantasy. Stevie Wonder's album "Journey Through the Secret Life of Plants" inspired the foliage development. He researched extensively to develop realistic plants, hummingbirds, snakes, monkeys, butterflies, flies, grasshoppers, dragonflies, beetles and honeybees.

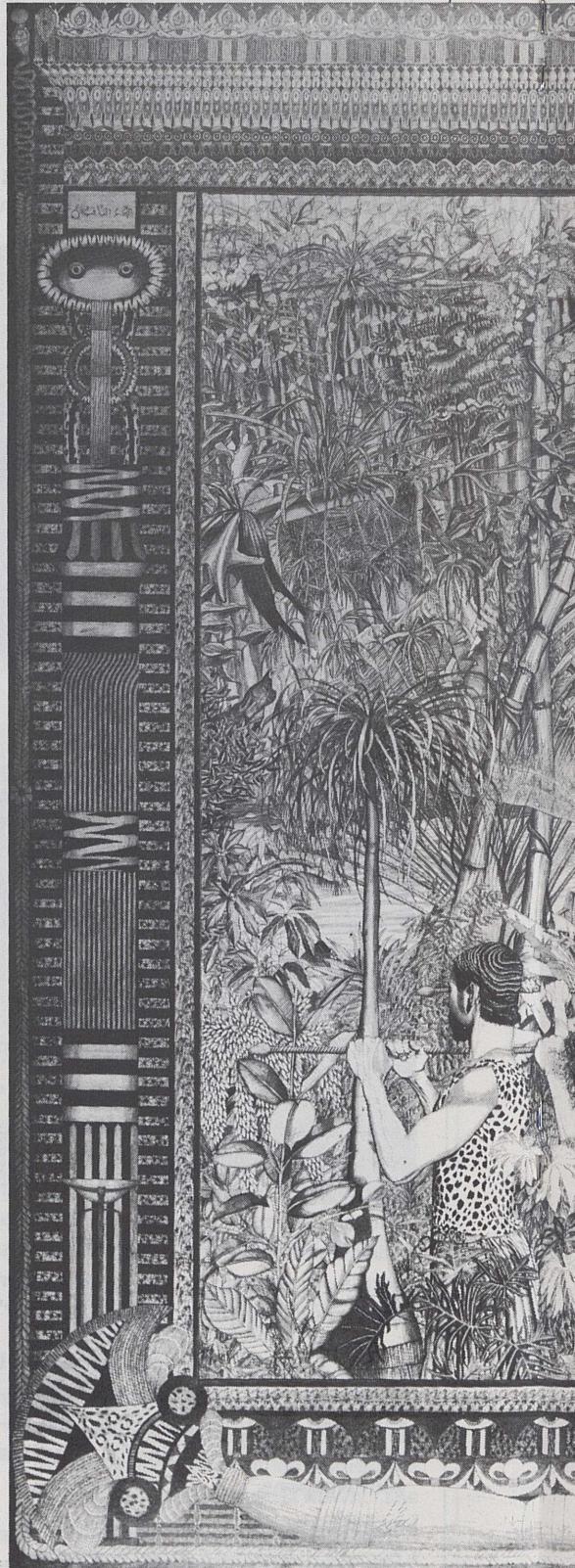
The picture's intricate border contains Afro-Egyptian and art-deco motifs of Zulu soldiers and war shields, Ashanti stools, African idols and an Egyptian papyrus boat. Across the top is a row of fetuses, eyes, snakes and leopards.

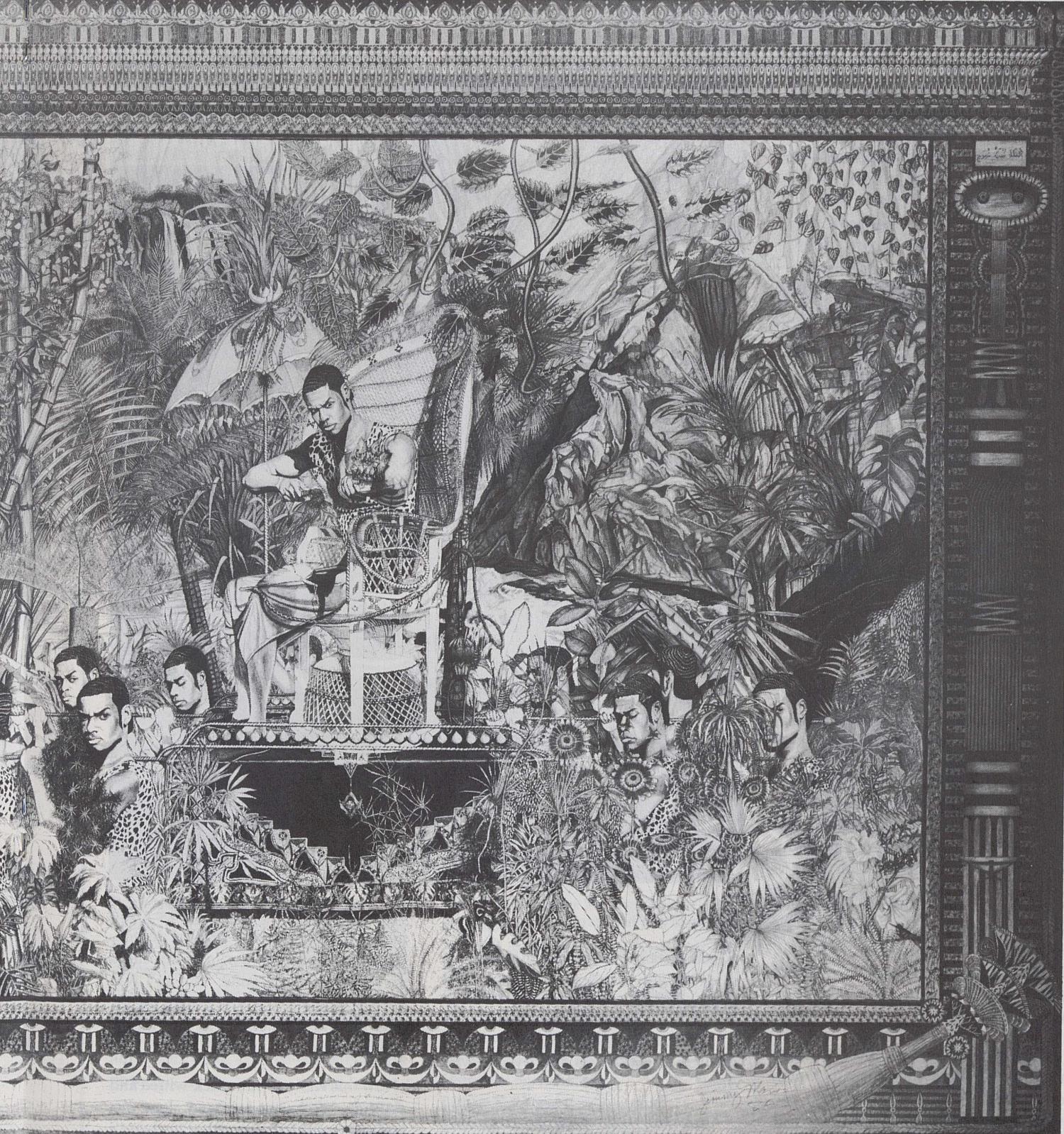
Inside the right border is a plaque inscribed with the Arabic words: "Magnificent Black Prince." The Arabic words in the left border say: "Star of the Shining Brightness."

A limited edition of 500, 24"x30" prints of *DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR* are available from:

**Jimmy Mance**  
6209 N. 16th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19141  
(215) 548-6892

Cost, including postage and handling, is \$55. Mance also has a limited edition of hand-colored prints available.





## FOLKTALES

For adults ....

# Even the Gods Cannot Catch a Woman in Love

*Have you ever heard of the man who loved his wife too much? Well in a small village nestled near a tall mountain there lived just such a man. His feelings for his wife were so strong that her absences from him were causes for worry. He thought about her day and night. Wrinkles formed in his forehead from thinking that she might share her affections with another man.*

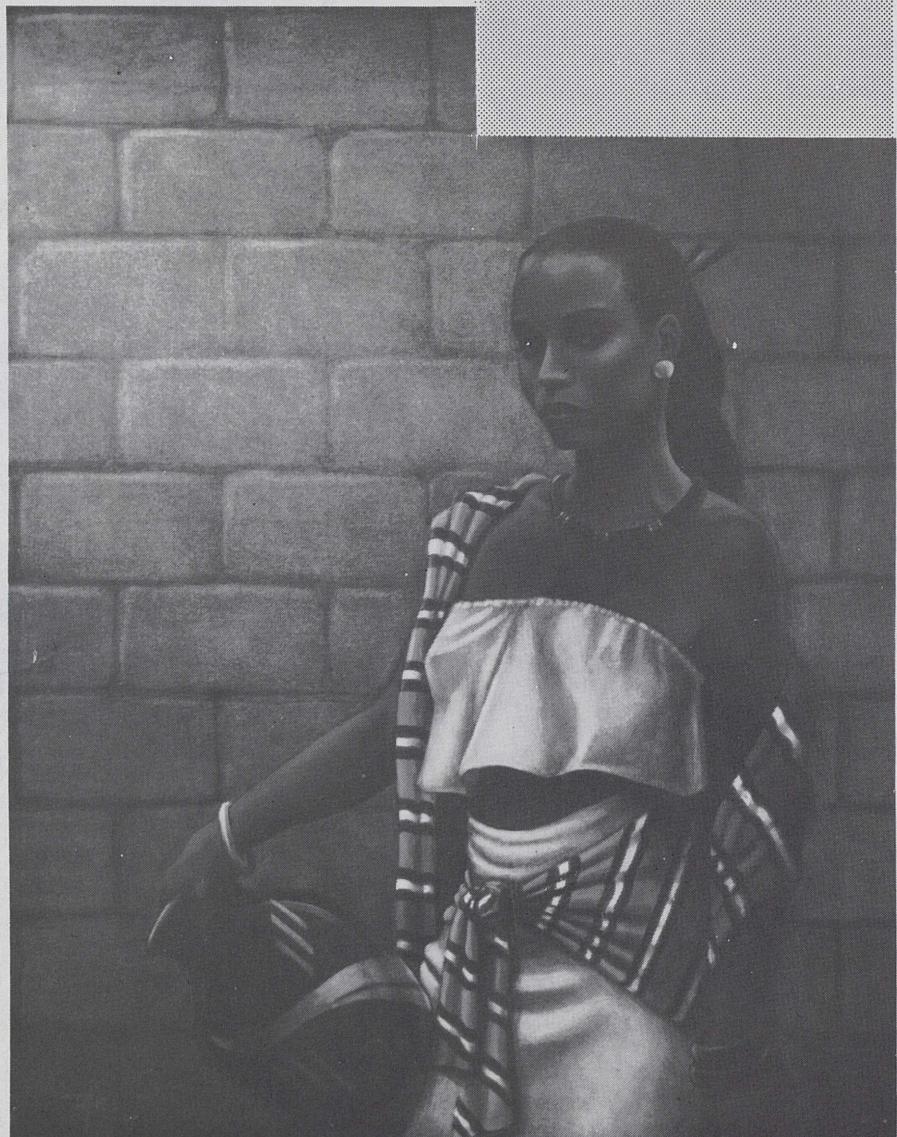
In time, the wife became quite bothered by her husband's attentions. When she went shopping, he followed. When she was cooking, he was there. One day she said, "Husband! Love of my life! Why do you behave like this? I am tired of your following me everywhere. Your behavior is causing me embarrassment. I can't even empty my water without your wanting to come with me! Why do you do this?"

"It is my right, is it not, to enjoy you and watch over you, and to make sure that your affections do not wander."

Angered, the wife replied, "Oh, ho! Let me tell you, husband, if a woman desires another man, even the gods can't catch her. Besides, I see no fault in loving others. I was not created to hate people."

Hearing this, the husband became even more concerned. He built a special chamber on the top of his house and, every morning when he went to manage his farm, he locked his wife in that chamber.

One day, the wife was looking down from her window when she saw a man who appealed to her. She called him, and when he saw her high above, he was smitten by the radiance of her skin and

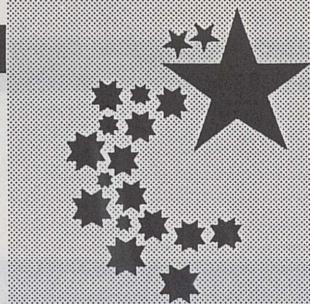


the beauty of her face.

"I would come to you in a moment," he said, "but how can I leave your high place in safety."

"I will show you how, if you are brave enough to climb this tree by my window."

"Ah, beautiful woman," he said, "they say that mountains will one day become



flattened meadows, and that those green meadows may one day become deserts. Death awaits all creation, and this climb may well produce mine. But as I was born of woman, it is fitting that I die for one. It's worth the risk to be near one as lovely as you."

Now this woman was quick-witted and skillful. While her husband slept, she had pressed the shapes of her husband's

keys in soap. She tossed down that bar of soap to the man, saying, "There is a blacksmith nearby. Have him cast keys from those impressions and return to me tomorrow."

The keys worked beautifully, and every day the man and woman enjoyed each other. One day, the man carelessly forgot to lock one of the doors. When the husband returned, he became very suspicious. He raised such a ruckus -- fussing and fuming and fretting and accusing -- that his exasperated wife said, "Husband! Love of my life. You are ruining my reputation with this foolish speculation. Let's go to the Divine Rock and then we can talk. There'll I'll bear witness that I've shared no other's kisses. If I lie, you will see. Divine Rock will make a pale and bloated woman of me."

The husband was quite satisfied with this offer. Since before people could remember, Divine Rock was known for turning people's skin pale and causing them to sweat and swell up and die if they took a false oath at that location. The husband and wife agreed to journey to the Divine Rock in five days.

At this point, the woman began to worry about her fate. After a sleepless and worry-filled night, she had an idea. When her lover visited the next day, she shared her predicament with him. Immediately, concern shadowed his face, his hands trembled and sweat poured from him brow. "How can I help you," he asked?

"In four days' time, take a donkey to Divine Rock and allow him to feed along the way. Leave the rest to me."

At last, the day for the trip to Divine Rock arrived, and the husband and wife began their journey. The longer they travelled, the more the wife sighed and wiped her forehead and rubbed her feet until, at last, she saw her lover in the distance. At that point, she slipped down by the roadside and told her husband, "I am so very tired. I can go no further right now."

The husband, although he did not say so, was convinced that his wife was afraid of taking the oath at the Divine Rock and was trying to stop the trip.

He spotted the man feeding a donkey in the distance and told his wife, "If you cannot walk, I will hire that donkey up ahead and you can ride to Divine Rock." At that point, the husband called out to the lover, who had put on ragged clothes, and arranged to have him take the wife to Divine Rock. The lover then helped the wife onto the donkey and began leading the way up the road.

The wife then called her husband to her side and whispered with great concern, "Oh, how can I tell you this? I am so ashamed. This morning, I was in such a hurry to prepare for this trip and to be ready with you, I didn't take the time to put on anything under my garment. And now," she sobbed, "when this ragged and lowly man lifted me onto the donkey, my garment lifted and he was able to see what none but you should see."

"Seeing and tasting are two different things," the husband said. "I am not bothered by this incident. Now, let us hurry to Divine Rock so that we can get home again before night."

When they reached Divine Rock, a smooth stone that was taller than two men, the woman knelt and offered a sacrifice of yams, nuts and sweet fruit. Then, she touched her hands and forehead to the stone and said,

*Oh, Divine Rock  
Possessor of the Wisdom of the Ages  
Knower of What is Seen and Unseen  
Protector of the Innocent  
Persecutor of the Unfaithful  
You were here before the Beginning of  
Beginnings  
And will be here after the Ending of all  
Ends  
So I come to you today my husband  
To put his mind at ease  
By swearing that only he  
And this man with the donkey  
Have seen my nakedness  
I swear that these words are true  
With you as Witness  
Knowing that if I lie before Divine Rock*

*My skin will turn pale,  
My body will bloat  
And I will surely die within the hour.*

After an hour had passed, the husband was delighted to see that his wife remained as healthy and lovely as before. They returned home. The wife continued to enjoy her lover, and proved again that:

Even the Gods Cannot Catch a Woman in Love.

## PROVERBS

### FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Evil deeds are like perfume -- difficult to hide.

Grebo

A powerful friend becomes a powerful enemy.

Amharic

Self-defense is not fear.

Bondei

Self-defense is not fear.

Kikuyu

Caution is not cowardice; even the ants march armed.

Ganda

Make conversation with one who surpasses you, not with one who quarrels with you.

Mongo

## Q&amp;A

# QUIZ

Census figures show that people of African heritage comprise about fourteen percent of our population. The figure is growing. Yet, most public schools have nothing about West African history or culture in their curriculum.

Do you really know it all? Test your knowledge.

1. West Africa was mapped: a.) ca. 1478 b.) ca. 1820 c.) ca. 1948 d.) not yet completed

2. Portuguese explorers to West Africa were seeking: a.) gold b.) a short route to the east c.) slaves d.) a legendary medieval king, Prester John

3. During the European slave era, West Africa's languages numbered: a.) more than 3,000 b.) about 30 c.) 3 main ones d.) about 30

4. In 1066 A.D., West Africa's largest city held about: a.) one million people b.) five thousand people c.) ten thousand people d.) There were no cities

5. The conquest of West Africa by European nations was completed: a.) 1950 b.) 1850 c.) 1750 d.) never done

6. North African slave markets were closed by the: a.) Turks b.) British c.) Arabs d.) Americans

7. West African slave markets were closed by the: a.) Americans b.) British c.) Arabs d.) Portuguese

8. In Roman times, the most important export from West Africa was: a.) cloth b.) slaves c.) gold d.) dye

9. Modern Ghana is famous for its export of: a.) gold b.) palm oil c.) magnesium d.) cocoa

10. Many scholars believe that the lost works of Plato and Aristotle which sparked the beginning of Europe's Renaissance came from a library in: a.) Cairo

b.) Rabat c.) Timbuktu d.) Kano

11. Si is the nickname of an infamous: a.) witchdoctor b.) Gold Coast slave fort c.) Portuguese d.) Hausa ruler

12. Fu-Fu is: a.) a child's nickname b.) a staple food c.) a fetish d.) tribal jewelry

13. The final West African tribal war with the British in Ghana was sparked by Britain's seizure of: a.) Ashanti's golden stool b.) the Benin Bronzes c.) Accra's fetish rock d.) the golden Oba

14. The Nile river flows north for more than a thousand miles, as does this West African river: a.) Niger b.) Volta c.) Benue d.) Gambia

15. On early mariner maps, the coasts of West Africa were named for their: a.) discoverers b.) exports c.) imports d.) tribes

16. In the Middle Ages, the Pope at Rome issued a Papal Bull that gave Africa to: a.) England b.) Portugal c.) France d.) Spain

17. In West Africa, vodun (voodoo) is: a.) witchcraft b.) obeah c.) religion d.) mojo

18. Orisha refers to: a.) tribes b.) places c.) battles d.) gods

19. In West African folktales, the hare is a: a.) rabbit b.) dog c.) antelope d.) snake

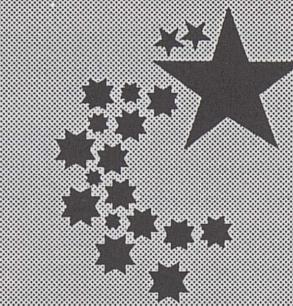
20. Your house pet in ancient Dahomey was the: a.) cat b.) snake c.) dog d.) goat

21. Ananse, a West African folk character, is a: a.) rabbit b.) snake c.) spider d.) chigger

22. Slavers listed Black people for sale by naming: a.) their tribal origin b.) their language c.) West African holding fortress of origin d.) any one of these

23. French West Indian masters preferred to buy: a.) Yoruba b.) Dahomean c.) Ashanti d.) Fula

24. English West Indian masters preferred to buy: a.) Mandingo b.) Yoruba c.) Dahomean d.) Ashanti



## Do You Know West Africa?

25. Spanish West Indian masters preferred to buy: a.) Yoruba b.) Dahomean c.) Ashanti d.) Mandingo

26. South Carolina Sea Islanders preferred to buy: a.) Fulla b.) Mandingo c.) Ashanti d.) Hausa

27. The Ashanti were also known as: a.) Bushongo b.) Kongo c.) Dogon d.) Koromantee

28. The tribe who have herded their stock along the Niger River for more than a thousand years are the: a.) Ibibio b.) Ibo c.) Fulani d.) Fanti

29. Jamaica's 'John Canoe' fete is named for: a.) a British soldier b.) an African demon c.) a Carib Indian d.) an early planter

30. Gullah, an English Creole language, is difficult for non-speakers to understand because it has African: a.) words b.) sound pattern c.) structure d.) all of these

31. The most important commodity in West Africa has always been: a.) salt b.) timber c.) gold d.) palm oil

**ANSWERS ON PAGE 24**



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## PROVERBS

### REGRETS

May God preserve us from "if I had known."

Hausa

A heavy burden does not kill on the day it is carried.

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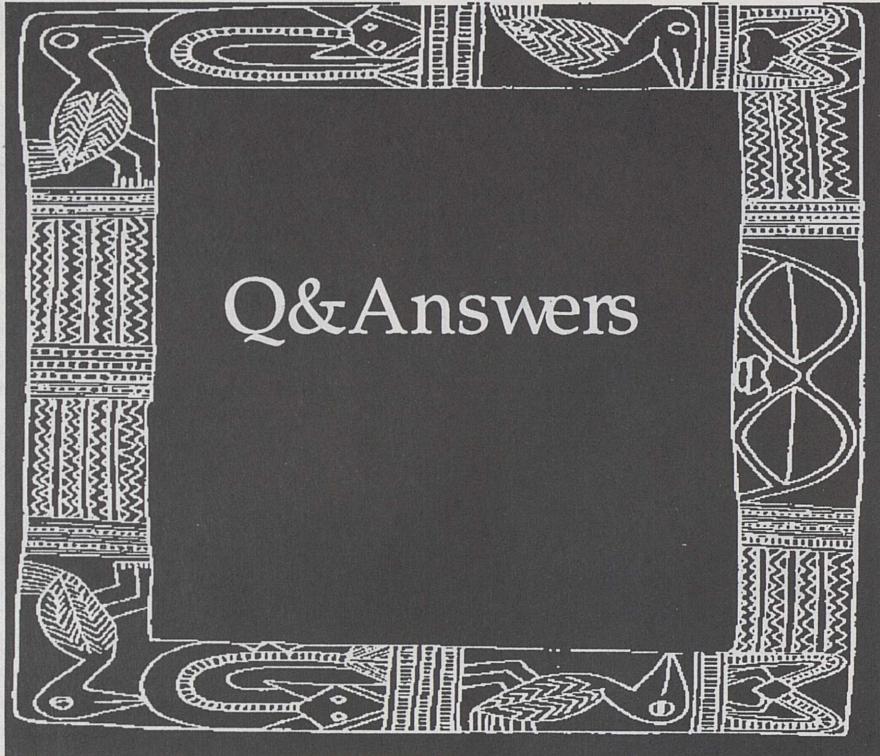
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## Q&amp;A

From Quiz Questions on page 22



## Q&amp;Answers

1. (d) Africa is 11.5 million miles, 1/5 of the earth's surface, and the complete distance of West African nations' borders have never been "walked." Although surveyed by air, vast, barren and hazardous areas of the Sahara are unexplored. In addition, there are very few all-weather roads in this region. Those roads that exist extend only a few miles from major cities.

2. (b) Following the exploits of Marco Polo and other Italians, the Portuguese sought a sea route to China. Land travel for Europeans was treacherous as the Islamic nations were still hostile following the Crusades. Until the early 1400s, the Portuguese — who were great map makers — never sailed beyond the equator because they needed to steer by the North Star in case the wind blew their ships beyond sight of the shore line. In 1441, the Portuguese took their first slaves from Africa. The slaves were actually musicians who became "pets" in the Portuguese royal court.

3. (a) Professor Greenberg, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan, did comprehensive research and developed a hierarchy map that divided Africa's many languages into categories. There are more than 250 languages in Ghana alone. The eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica provides further information.

4. (a) The city was Timbuktu. 1066 AD was a date that could be compared with European populations.

5. (d) Although the British and French established strongholds along the coast, they rarely travelled more than 60 miles inland. Those trips were usually fast forays and demonstrations of strength. Africa's interior goods were brought by Africans to the coast where European forts were established on rented land.

*A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FORTS AND CASTLES OF GHANA* by Albert Van Dantzig (History Department at Legon) and Barbara Priddy (National Museum at Accra) provides additional information.

6. (d) The United States marines closed the slave markets on "the shores of Tripoli" because whites seized from American ships were being sold. The last slave ship came into the United States in 1853 in a Georgia coastal town.

7. (b) The British blockaded the African coast line and ran down ships in the Caribbean that were carrying slaves.

8. (d) The color of the dye was indigo.

9. (d) In modern Ghana, cocoa [the plants were imported into the country] is the national drink.

10. (c) When Ceasar burned the great library in Alexandria, Egypt, books were loaded onto caravans and carried to the great institutions in Timbuktu. The scholars there preserved any knowledge; thus allowing this wisdom to resurface for Europe during the Byzantine era.

11. (a) Witchdoctor King

12. (b) Fu-fu is a root vegetable that is peeled and pounded in a big wooden bowl with a huge stick. It makes a sort of poi.

13. (a) The British made a punitive expedition, capturing the Ashanti king and family at Kumasi until just before World War I, when the royal family was moved to the Seychelle Islands just north of Madagascar

14. (a) Niger

15. (b) Exports

16. (b) Portugal

17. (c) Religion

18. (d) Gods

19. (c) The hare in Africa is a small antelope, unlike the English "hare" that connotes a rabbit.

**Q&A**

**20. (b)** Snakes captured rats which were troublesome among waterfront towns. In addition, they were considered sacred. Snakes are the only animal that can form a perfect circle with their bodies — symbolizing eternity.

**21. (c)** This spider is actually a thin, stick-like man who appears often in comic strips. Unfortunately, he has a mean and nasty nature.

**22. (d)** Any of these.

**23. (b)** French West Indies were Haiti and Martinique

**24. (d)** The English West Indies Barbados and Jamaica (Barbados was the first landfall for slave ships making the middle crossing, and these people got first pick of slaves entering this hemisphere)

**25. (a)** The Spanish West Indies included Cuba, Trinidad and Puerto Rico

**26. (b)** Mandingo

**27. (d)** Koromantee

**28. (c)** Fulani

**29. (b)** "John Canoe" is actually folk etymology — an example of how English translators took the native word "Djon Kanu" and gave it English (and unrelated) meaning. The English farewell "So Long" is a similar example of what happened to the Arabic "Salaam," meaning peace. The Djon Kanu fete is celebrated by the Dogon and Mende people in Jamaica. In the Bahamas, the event is called Goombah.

**30. (d)** Gullah is found on the South Carolina coastal islands, while a similar phenomenon called "Geechee" exists on the Georgia islands.

**31. (a)** salt

This Quiz was prepared by Professor Susannah Norton who is teaching a course in "WEST AFRICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE" at Edison Community College, Fort Myers, Florida. Professor Norton is retired from the Miami-Dade Community College where she developed courses in Afro-American Dialects, Afro-American Folklore and Caribbean Literature.

**POEM****SOWETO, THE PRESENT TENSE**

By the power lines, their long catenaries dipped with copper,  
we stop at the clearing mid-June  
in the patch of sorrel and grass  
and watch how the telephone cables trail off in the talk  
between sender and receiver.  
Farther, we find a city paper,  
the stories breaking into black and white patterns on the page,  
the news blowing bad and bitter.  
The news is the codes themselves,  
strange absences always adding up  
silently, like it never matters  
the consciousness Biko brought

beaten into just black names, pieces the word the world's dark skin the letters the language didn't think proper— signs for its complexion or its state.  
I am reading between the lines, how uluating Zulus uttering blood is a message that carries weight.  
After this this afternoon under the wires the dark outlines of the telephone poles will sag towards each other like closing sides of a drawbridge.  
My friend will pick and eat some sour grass and listen to the humming overhead, and lean where the utility poles press in the earth from this weight.

Chris Gilbert

## BOOK REVIEW

Book Review by Maisha Baton, Ph.D

# Translated From The Night

by Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo

What is poetry but a song. A never ending song that each poet takes his or her turn at singing. In his book *TRANSLATED FROM THE NIGHT*, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo listens to the music of the darkness and sings; a soft song full of color and images. It is the music of a far off island. Madagascar, a world people with gentle shepherds and fishermen who rise early to fill their nets with small fishes.

Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo was born in 1901 in Antananarivo five years after Madagascar became a French colony. There is little in this volume that speaks directly to his birth to an unwed mother of noble heritage whose family wealth had been lost, his forced separation from school at twelve to support himself, nor his fourteen years of employment as a poorly paid proof reader. These things Rabearivelo sets aside as he sings of the nobility of small things.

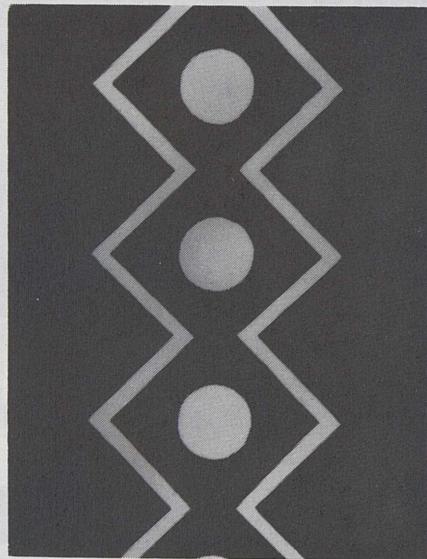
"The flowers my lips have lightly touched, mixed in the breath of grasses."

"A large black spider lingering like a lame cow or a powerful bull."

"The invisible rat that nibbles the milky cake of the moon."

There is a kind of wonder in the poetry of Rabearivelo, the wonder of flowers "... who haven't anything but their beauty and solitude.", The wonder of winds, "How long are they twins, the winds? They're mischievous children..."

Through his eyes we see young Madagascar at the turn of the Century, the clash of religions in a place... where Christians taken by the shade sing Mohammedan sauras under a peaceful



sky." On the shores, he tells us.

"Fishers without number align themselves and cast their lines....not anxious about anything."

Like a large picture book of far-off places, *TRANSLATED FROM THE NIGHT* is full with colors and sights.

"A purple star evolving in the depth of sky - What flower of blood blooms in the prairie of night?"

While much is made visible in the works of this poet, much remains hidden.

"A bird without color or name has folded its wings and wounds the sky's single eye."

"The black glassmaker whose body has even yet to shrug its shoulder."

And somewhere in his lines is the pain, the awful sadness that is the mystery of the poet's death; a suicide at the age of thirty-six.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE NIGHT* gives a strong sense of musical voice that sings of why Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo is recognized by many as Africa's first modern poet.

From *TRANSLATED FROM THE NIGHT*: #24

*For what fruits, for what cluster fallen to the grass and hidden by twigs?*

*For what cut gems to be confused with pebbles covered with thick fog?*

*Between the hands calloused and hard like bread devoured by sun, the hands made of fingered palms without colors, behold the myriad torches of the search for what was lost upon the earth and that seed in the midst of the prairie's grass that has become all of whom can embrace its gaze.*

Reprinted by permission of, Soma Press.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE NIGHT* is available from Soma Press, P.O.Box 7242, Rochelle Park, NJ 07662. Cost is \$7 plus \$1 for postage and handling.

Dr. Maisha Baton is a poet and playwright who received the Pennsylvania Council For The Arts Playwright Grant in 1986

## BOOK REVIEW

# Kaffir Boy

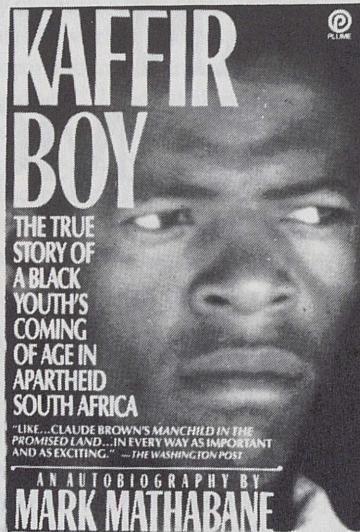
(AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY)  
BY MARK MATHABANE

## REVIEW

BY KATHRYN L. JACKSON

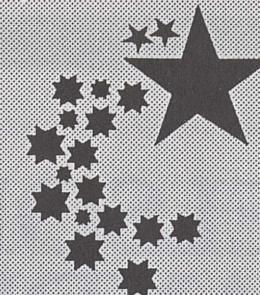
In this riveting exposé of Black African life under South Africa's apartheid system, Mark Mathabane transports us to a dour world of perpetual repression, degradation, humiliation, hunger, ignorance, fear, brutality, and defeat. We are, for 300 pages, captured within a virulent nightmare ingrained with pass laws, Influx Control laws and arbitrary Draconian laws, that shackle and shamelessly try to keep each Black man a Kaffir (Nigger) Boy.

Mark Mathabane vividly recreated the entrapment of abject poverty, powerlessness, and hopelessness in the Black ghetto of Alexandra where he was born and raised; where match-boxed, dirt-floor, rat-infested shacks void of running water or electricity were homes to thousands of Black families (a hundred sometimes sharing the same yard); where midnight and early morning raids by Peri-Urban (the Black police squads) constantly terrorized men and women with detainment or deportation if their passbooks were not in order, sending them scurrying from their shacks, sometimes naked to hide in bushes and ditches; where tsotsis (gangs) and other hoodlums launched gruesome attacks against their fellow brothers, robbing them of their hard-earned pittance and murdering them indiscriminately for the sake of assuaging their own hopeless end; and where, from the vortex of this nightmare, the birth of Mark Mathabane's dream was conceived: to live in a land where hopes could be realized - to live in America.



It was through books and a tennis racket, given to him by his grandmother's employer, that Mr. Mathabane mentally escaped the mire and monotony of shantytown life. He soon discovered that if he became a prolific tennis player, associated with the right people in tennis circles, pursued all contacts and opportunities, and continued to believe in himself and his dream, he might win a tennis scholarship to an American college - and he did.

Of course, it wasn't as simple as that. The author describes with stark crispness the deliberate setbacks imposed by the Pretoria government. He also delineates his alienation from his own people - those who viewed him as an Uncle Tom and traitor for associating with white men. But even more hurtful to him was his lost relationship with his father who, had become a sullen, bitter man and saw his son's western ideas as treasonous and unforgivable. Yet, the strength in Mark's beliefs and his mother's supportive love pressed him onward.



Mr. Mathabane tells his story with poignant literary precision, forcing the reader to emotions of shock, anger, sadness, and relief. His honesty is naked. His search for a panacea to his tortured life, sometimes, however, created idealistic and idyllic views of Black life in America. Too often, this reviewer heard the suffering woes of American Blacks when reading of the subservience and "slavery" of the South African Black in his own land. Perhaps now, though, given the opportunity that Black slaves and their descendants in this country have fought for and are continuing to fight for, Mark Mathabane will be able to rejoice in the meaning and application of the words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness..."

Perhaps, one day, we will ALL be able to rejoice.

*Kathryn Jackson lived near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and now lives in California. She has published in BITTER-ROOT, AN INTERNATIONAL POETRY JOURNAL, OFF THE RECORD, a supplement to the Chico Inquirer, a newspaper in Northern California, and "THE BLACK VOICE", as well as several anthologies and chapbooks. Her first short story will appear in "THE LIQUORAN" magazine this spring.*



## BOOK REVIEW

# NELSON MANDELA

## NELSON MANDELA

The Man and the Movement



MARY BENSON

Foreword by Bishop Desmond M. Tutu

*Review by Michael Trotman*

"...the Voortrekkers, from whom the present Afrikaners descend," says Michael Trotman who holds a degree in political science from Rutgers University, "are a tough, zealous people and the parallels between their habitation of South Africa and the European settlement of America — right down to their treatment of the aboriginal peoples — are grim and frightening."

# THE MAN THE MOVEMENT

Mary Benson Norton,  
New York, 1986, 254 pages  
with reading list and index

Nelson Rolihlala Mandela, born in the Transkei in 1918, was born royal and bred to lead.

In his youth he decided he would not lead a bowed people and from that point, leaving his sheltered beginnings for the heterogeneity of Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela wedded his character and his fate to history, and to a painful, inevitable struggle for the soul of South Africa.

Mary Benson, a South African writer, has authored a terse record of Nelson Mandela's life in the African National Congress, the "government in exile," as it is called by Nelson's wife, Winnie. Benson has also written a record of the ANC, conciliatory once, now uncompromising.

There is no clear division between Mandela's life outside the ANC and his life within it. But Benson, in carefully observed accounts of Mandela's character manages nonetheless to show us what kind of husband, father, leader and friend is the tall, striking, slyly humorous lawyer who has risked death and weathered imprisonment and separation from his family for a South Africa free of apartheid.

NELSON MANDELA is at once history and profile, personal and analytical. The text is illustrated with several photographs of Mandela, Winnie, their children and

important players in the struggle against apartheid

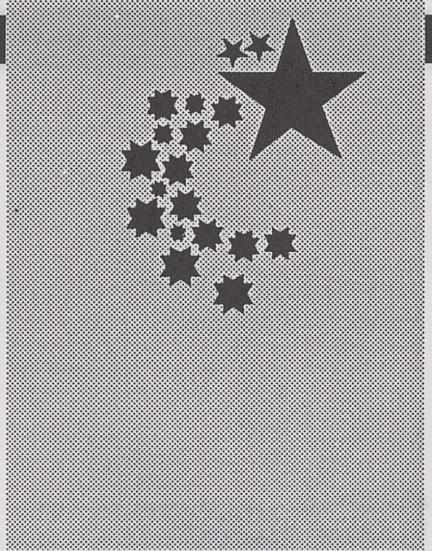
The book is based on a series of interviews Benson had with Mandela before he was imprisoned—for life—in 1962. These interviews are woven into a traditional chronological narrative of dates and events, from 1918 to 1985, out of which emerges a clear and reliable image of South African society, and of the character of those who rule and those who contest them.

Benson is white, which becomes a fact of curious and elusive significance as one gets deeper into the book. For she has chosen to explain her country not so much by the history it claims for itself but by the history it has unevenly and fretfully suppressed: that of its colored peoples, the submerged black nations, the immigrant Indians and Asians.

A book about Mandela and the ANC is a political act in South Africa laws Mandela is a veritable non-person, a declared enemy of an anxious state. Just publishing his photograph is an illegal act.

To write and publish a book that is, for all its subtlety, proud of Mandela, what he's done, what he's meant, is to raise the pen in defiance. It is unlikely Benson's book will be available to South Africans in their own country.

But then Benson needs set the record straight only for those of us who don't know much about Mandela beyond what



our media tell us. Within South Africa Mandela is a constant force subtending and increasing desperation of the Nationalist Party government and the rising boldness and determination of the Black masses—the mothers, the miners, the schoolchildren, the furious poor in the cities.

Nelson Mandela's life separates roughly into at least three parts: his youth and education, when he received training to practice law and discovered for himself the necessity of joining the organized struggle against apartheid; the middle period in which the newly active Mandela learned to temper his vision for the good of the cause; and the later, present period in which he appears as we now know him: irrefutable, noble and elegant.

His necessary ordeal seems to have extended to those closest to him a similar endowment of character. Winnie Mandela, his second wife, whom we meet as a beautiful bride on Nelson's arm in 1958, has ripened in his absence into an indomitable woman. She and Nelson embody the virtue and humaneness of the struggle.

And there is, even under the straightforward, reporter's tone of *NELSON MANDELA*, a personal story, a kind of Odyssey to tug on our feelings. Mandela is, it becomes clear, a man who a long time ago took a strenuous journey into the world in service to a cause. Meanwhile his home is besieged and his loving wife sorely pressed to endure and to wait. His children become adults in the absence of their father. His household, the African National Congress, continues but misses his sure hand and seemingly infallible guidance.

You anguish to read of Winnie's account of seeing him in prison after 22 years without him (now, three years after the book was written, 25), of her first "contact" visit in which she had a chance to hold him, to kiss him after a generation without him.

And there is, finally, perhaps unavoidably, a foretaste of sorrow when you add up the years of Mandela's life and the years of his struggle. You realize he is

now 69, that life sentences in South Africa mean exactly that. That so cruel and penitent is the South Africa state that it would demand the ashes of a prisoner who died and was cremated.

You look, in short, to Mandela's mortality and wonder where the struggle goes from there. Oliver Tambo, now president of the ANC, is an exile, floating and plotting somewhere on the bristling periphery of South Africa proper. The outside world shrinks back in horror and inconvenience from apartheid. Labor strikes there are dear and not always fruitful and the solidarity among South African blacks that Mandela had pressed for over such a long time seems to have fractured.

The most heart-rending sight out of South Africa today is not that of the South African police and defense forces going a crowd with their whips and guns, but that of a mob of blacks surrounding one of their own, while amid the taunting and the fury someone steps up from behind with a fire to light the "necklace" hung from someone's luckless neck.

There is less documentation of this disorder in Benson's book than one might expect. The corruption of the movement into a kind of freelance violence by mobs seems to have begun and spread after her book was written.

Benson's book is modest. In many ways a primer, she has appended a reading list to her book, 33 titles, Mandela's writings among them, and you sense, once you have finished that there the real understanding of the struggle in South Africa begins.

You sense also that whatever is written, whatever course events in the Republic of South Africa take, the heart of the movement and the just heart of a people is prisoner number D220 in Pollsmoor

Maximum Security Prison in a white suburb.

Still, the signs are hopeful and proud. In Soweto the people still mark the walls:

## MANDELA IS WITH US STILL.





## FORUM FOR WHITE THOUGHT

# THE FICTIONAL AFRICAN WOMAN

by Monika Idehen

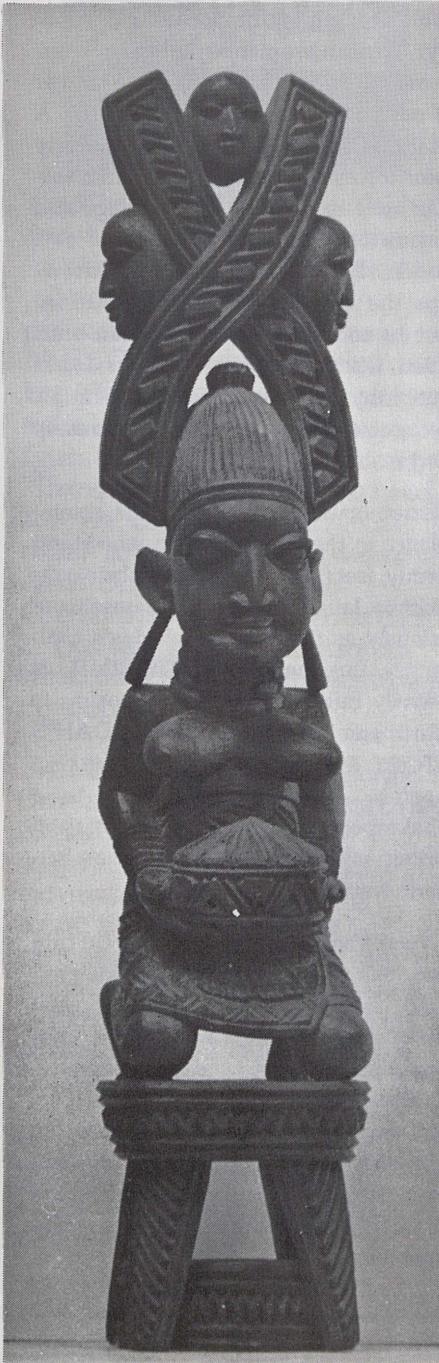
Molare Ogundipe-Leslie, in THE GUARDIAN, lists four stereotypes of African women:

**SWEET MOTHER —**  
*a creature of fecundity and self-sacrifice, accepting all hardship, living only for her children and her family, often endowed with great wisdom.*

**SOPHISTICATED CITY GIRL —**  
*often a prostitute who has broken with the old customs and inherited taboos, looking only for her own benefit and well-being, often trying to copy Western women in life-style, dress, etc.*

**RURAL WOMAN —**  
*uneducated, embodies certain traits of the 'Sweet Mother,' but without intelligence and capability; this rural woman is overwhelmed when confronted with "modern" gadgets.*

**EDUCATED WOMAN —**  
*intelligent, politically aware, this woman tries to change her lot but more often than not is defeated by circumstances.*



The conclusions and assumptions of non-African writers about African women are often foreign to the African reality and disappointingly inaccurate. African women are often depicted as the victims of male oppression, traditional customs and an inability to speak or even think for themselves. The writings imply — with scant appreciation of social and traditional circumstances — that African women are unconscious of their predicament and need contact with Western women to arouse this awareness.

In pre-colonial times, African women were important narrators of oral literature. However, until recently, female illiteracy limited African women's literary contributions. Now that large numbers of talented women writers are emerging, their images of African women are quite revealing.

For example, childlessness appears often in modern African writing. Many African societies consider a childless woman an anomaly. Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye takes up this subject in COMING TO BIRTH where Paulina is subjected to her husband's violent anger and is the butt of a neighbor's jokes.

Flora Nwapa's novel ONE IS ENOUGH also develops this theme. Amaka, the protagonist, is driven out of her matrimonial home because of her inability to have children. Amaka's mother confirms that to have at least one child would fulfill Amaka's natural role as a woman, and make her a useful member of the husband's family by assuring

## FORUM FOR WHITE THOUGHT

support in old age. In this kind of fiction, readers find women who make great sacrifices to conceive and raise children.

Sometimes, as in Aidoo's TWO SISTERS and NO SWEETNESS HERE, the literature of African women suggests that the only way out of this cycle is to become the mistress of an old, rich man. The stories imply that no other way exists for a woman, no matter what her potential. The modern woman who lives a life different from the conventional, virtuous and devoted mother is also portrayed as a prostitute or as one who abandons traditional lifestyles to copy European mores. Inevitably, even in the writings of African women, these educated and socially astute characters are defeated.

The notion that the woman's place in society is less important than the man's is also confirmed by some African women writers. In Emecheta's novels, the woman's position depends first on her father and later on her husband to the extent that a woman's only remedy is to look for a man with enough money to offer luxuries that make this kind of life bearable. In NAIRA POWER, Emecheta presents a woman — the youngest of three wives — who is totally dominated by her husband and accepts this situation as natural and right. Only her submission guarantees her a roof over her head, food for her and her children and acceptance within society.

While Emecheta paints the picture of females who complacently accept their lot, other African women create characters who are capable and self-willed. They change or at least improve their situations. As in Macgoye's COMING TO BIRTH, these women stand on their own feet, make their own decisions and achieve economic success. Their men are usually overpowering and insensitive. Thus, the women accomplish their feats without husbands noticing any change in domestic life until the woman frees herself from the conjugal relationship. As in Nwapa's ONE IS ENOUGH, women are counseled, "never depend on your husband. Never slave for him. Have your own business, no matter how small."

This kind of thinking in African women is not new and was not begun by contact with Western thought. African women always held significant roles in their societies. The advice of African women has historically been valued, and the women were often the subject of worship. In Aidoo's ANOWA and Nwapa's NEVER AGAIN, the African woman is shown as a fully accepted member of society whose rights, although different from those of men, are not questioned.

In the work of African women writers, women who at first appear uneducated, at least in the Western sense, show admirable strength, endurance and adaptability. African women writers also overcome the notion that women are forever at each others' throats. In Appiah's A SMELL OF ONIONS, a woman cleverly joins forces with husband's desired second wife to prevent the marriage and ensure that the girl marries her true love. Aidoo's DILEMMA OF A GHOST develops the conflicts between an African family and their son's American wife. Even when misunderstandings breed antipathy and hatred, the mother-in-law recognizes the other woman's misery and rushes to her aid.

Emecheta's women bear little resemblance to the Lagos women who stand firmly, feet flat on the ground, their arms akimbo, laughing noisily and unselfconsciously as they meet each day's challenges. Emecheta's AUNTIE BINTU is heavily influenced by her exposure to European civilization. In ADAH'S STORY, Emecheta shows a heroine who prefers reading the Bible and Shakespeare and who feels her stay in Britain saved her from her people's barbaric ways.

Nwapa's women are of a different caliber. She presents the "Cash Madames" who, independent of any man, make their way in business and finance, raise one or more children and enjoy life abundantly. Nwapa also creates women who, amid fear, hunger and deprivation of the Nigerian Civil War, cope with difficult and dangerous situations and often show greater endurance and courage than men.

Fortunately, womanhood in Africa has many different manifestations. Independent of Western influences, African women share strength, courage, endurance and capability — not only as wives and mothers with important roles to play in African society — but as human beings who will be instrumental in shaping Africa's future.

*Monika Idehen lives in Kassel, West Germany. She spent several years in Lagos, Nigeria with her Nigerian husband. She writes for AWA and FINNABA, a journal of African writing published in Bonn, West Germany. She has worked on children's literature for over ten years. Idehen is also a translator for DOKUMENTA in West Germany.*

**African American Art**

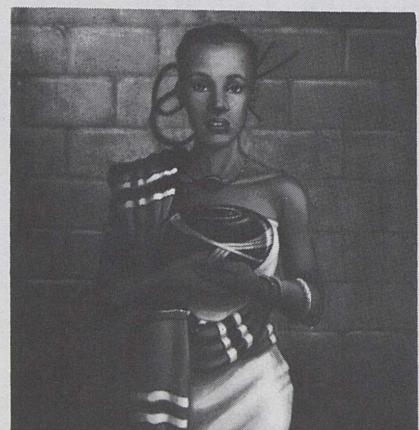
*Jay Allen attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania and the Ivy School of Art and the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. Despite the formal training, Allen feels that his independent study Renaissance, Impressionist and Oriental artists made the biggest contribution to his evident talent. Allen specializes in oil painting, pen and ink and pencil and charcoal drawing as well as graphic design.*

*Allen's African American ladies included in this issue are oil paintings. In linking Black women to our African heritage, he wanted to go beyond the stereotyped characteristics so often presented by creating what he calls, "more realistic" portraits of our widely varied beauty and inherent glamour.*

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## BOOK REVIEW

# They Came Before Columbus

Review by Mike Whitely

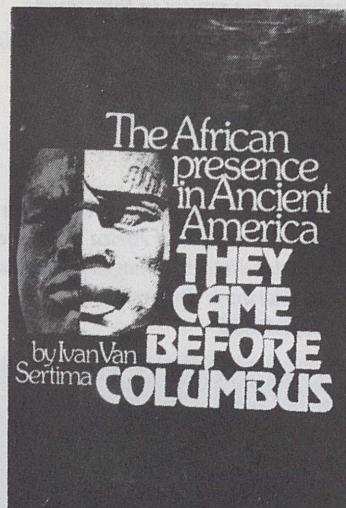
THEY CAME BEFORE COLUMBUS  
Ivan Van Sertima  
Random House, 1976  
288 pages

Ivan Van Sertima calls us to a new vision of history. A history that includes the African presence in America long before the sailing of the Pinta, the Nina, and the Santa Maria. A history that dispels a number of misconceptions and notions about Black inferiority, and that renews an important link between Africa and America that has long been "ignored and suppressed."

THEY CAME BEFORE COLUMBUS was published in 1976; a bi-centennial year for American history in general, and a time when Black history and its African roots became popularized. But Van Sertima meant the book to be much more than a cultural entertainment. He had a point to make; a point which he felt, if proven, "could have far-reaching consequences for both American and African history."

In 1970, Ivan Van Sertima was a respected university professor living in London. It was on a trip to America that he came upon three volumes in a private library called AFRICA AND THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA. The book indicated the presence of African and Arabic influences on the languages of Mexico and South America. He writes in the introduction: "I was fascinated by the subject. The thesis was revolutionary, the evidence novel and startling." And yet, despite the tantalizing possibilities, Van Sertima remained unconvinced; "I was intrigued and impressed but very skeptical. I felt like a man who had come upon a dozen clues to a sensational murder...the smell of the blood, even the marks of the bullets were there, but far more important things - the body and the gun, were missing."

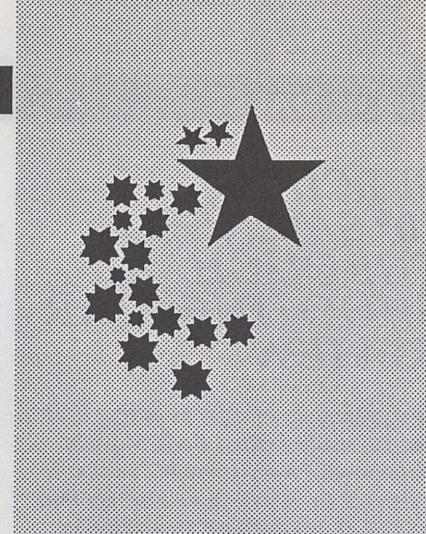
Later that year, after moving to the United States, Van Sertima began a closer look at the book and its primary sources. He was convinced the material was valuable and



should be circulated even in its unfinished state. It was then, that he came on the "smoking gun" ... the hard evidence that pulled all of the threads together. A professor at the University of America, in Mexico City, had unearthed artifacts crafted long before Columbus sailed the oceans, that included a large number of "negroid" figures fashioned from earth and metals. "Their negro-ness could not be explained away nor, in most cases, their African origin," he writes. "No longer was the African chapter in American pre-Columbian history an irrecoverable blank ... Here were the visible witnesses of a vanished time and they were telling us a remarkable story."

The Mexico find was just the beginning. Over the years, Van Sertima's research has led him into a number of far flung disciplines where recent discoveries have been made independently including botany, archaeology, art, history, and many others. He writes, "what I have sought to do in this book ... is to present... all of the facts that are now known about the links between Africa and America in pre-Columbian times."

In THEY CAME BEFORE COLUMBUS, Van Sertima uses all of the tools of drama and science to achieve his goal. In the first chapter, 'The Secret



Route From Guinea," we meet Christopher Columbus as he wheels and deals in the Royal Spanish Court to finance his next exploration. And we are there as Columbus hears tales of African mariners who travel to the "new world" and the route they use. Other chapters rely less on dramatic re-enactment and more on tracing the African influences in American and Mexican art, language and culture back to their origin.

In other chapters, Van Sertima efficiently and effectively debunks the misconceptions that Africans did not have the boats or navigational skills to cross the oceans. "...the major inventions in maritime navigation...had been made before Christ and were completely lost to Europe during the Dark Ages," he writes. All of the chapters are heavily footnoted and followed by pages of references to back up each dramatic moment and technical point. It is an inspired blend of storytelling and research.

History, after all, is a story which, depending on the definition used, is either an account of something that happened or a fictitious tale. A lot depends on who is telling the story. In this case, Ivan Van Sertima has set the record straight for all time.



THEY CAME BEFORE COLUMBUS can be ordered through Shooting Star Review. See the special, discount offer on page 34.



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Arthur C. Ford

Arthur C. Ford, Sr. of Newport News, Virginia produces THE POET BAND, a publication "Where Words are Wonders."

### Fear

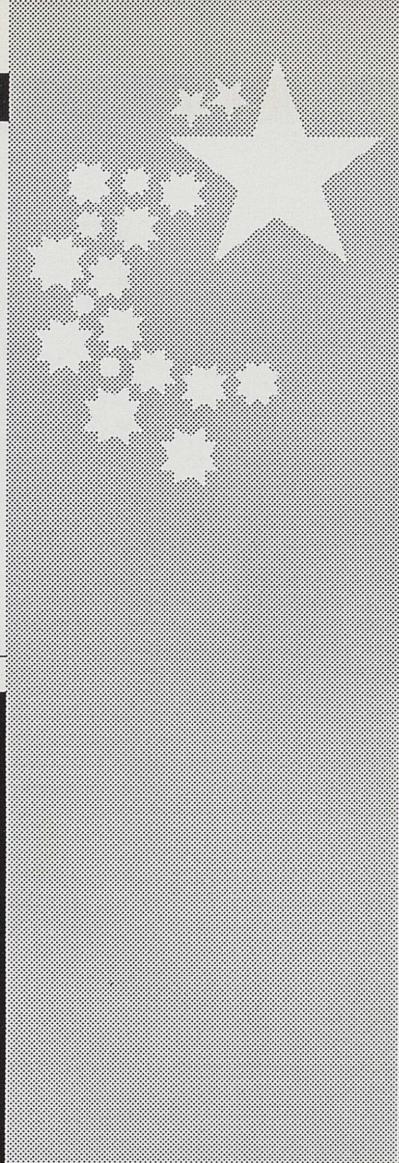
It's sensation  
a vibration of pain in the gum  
a grit in the eye  
fear is

a sting  
twinkling in the blood or breath  
when blood is mute and breath  
as loud to the mind as  
sightless eyes or the skin of  
teeth murmurs

amid purrs of plane and jazz of  
rain  
on rusty roofs  
it feeds on the heat of hours  
unknown  
sigh of a shell that mourns  
itself  
fear

fear the spirit  
of freedom fears not

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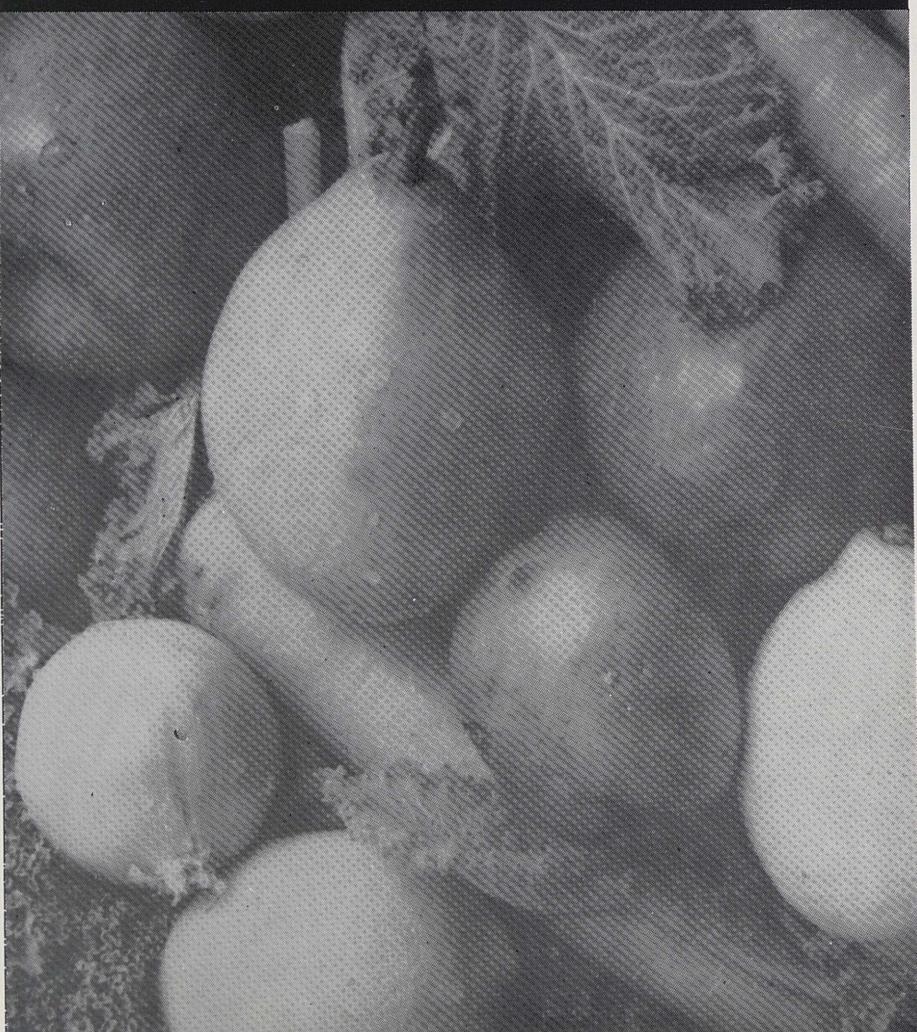


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