

= Fatima Massaquoi =

Fatima Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbulleh (1904 ? 1978) was a pioneering educator in Liberia . After completing her education in the United States , she returned to Liberia in 1946 , where she contributed much to the cultural and social life of the country .

Born into a family of African royalty , Massaquoi grew up in the care of an aunt in Njagbacca , in the Garwula District of Grand Cape Mount County of southern Liberia . After seven years , she returned to the northwestern part of the country in Montserrado County , where she began her schooling . In 1922 she accompanied her father , a diplomat , to Hamburg , Germany , where she completed her studies in medicine at the University of Hamburg in 1937 . She moved to the United States for further education , studying sociology and anthropology at Lane College , Fisk University and Boston University . While in the US , she collaborated on a dictionary of the Vai language and wrote her autobiography , though a legal battle ensued over the rights to her story . She won an injunction barring others from publishing and returned to Liberia in 1946 , immediately beginning collaboration to establish a university there , which would become the University of Liberia .

Committed to national cultural preservation and expansion , Massaquoi served as the director , later dean , of the Liberal Arts College and was the founding director of the Institute of African Studies . She co @-@ founded the Society of Liberian Authors , helped abolish the practice of usurping African names for Westernized versions , and worked towards standardization of the Vai script . In the late 1960s , Vivian Seton , Massaquoi 's daughter , had the autobiographical manuscript microfilmed for preservation . After Massaquoi 's death , her writings and notes were rediscovered , edited and published in 2013 as *The Autobiography of an African Princess* .

= = Early life and education = =

Massaquoi was born in Gendema in the Pujehun District of southern Sierra Leone in 1904 , the daughter of Momolu Massaquoi , who in 1922 became Liberia 's consul general in Hamburg , Germany , and Massa Balo Sonjo . At birth , she was given the name Fatima Beendu Sandimanni , but dropped the Beendu before it became part of her records . Her paternal grandfather was King Lahai Massaquoi of the Gallinas , and her paternal grandmother was Queen Sandimannie (or Sandimani) of Sierra Leone 's aristocratic Vai family . She was also the great @-@ great @-@ granddaughter of King Siaka of Gendema who ruled over the Gallinas in the 18th century .

Massaquoi spent her first seven years with her father 's sister , Mama Jassa , in Njagbacca in the Garwula District of Grand Cape Mount County . While she was there , one of her father 's six wives , Ma Sedia , seriously injured Fatima 's hands for a misdemeanor . This caused her considerable pain throughout her childhood , hampering her ability to play the violin . She later became a highly competent player , though she remained self @-@ conscious about the scarring even as an adult . After elementary school , she was sent to boarding school at Julia C. Emery Hall , attached to the Bromley Mission near Clay @-@ Ashland in Montserrado County .

Momolu Massaquoi sought to give his favourite child , and only daughter , the very best education . She went with him to Hamburg in 1922 , where she lived at the consulate at 22 Johnsallee . Receiving her primary school education at St. Anschar Höhere Mädchenschule , Massaquoi quickly mastered German . On the recommendation of the consulate 's housekeeper , Gertrude von Bobers , to whom she became very attached , in 1932 she spent some time in Geneva , Switzerland , where she learnt French at the École Supérieure et Secondaire . The same year , she returned to Hamburg , attending the Helen Lange Schule , where she received her school leaving certificate in 1935 . She then went on to study medicine at the University of Hamburg graduating in 1937 .

Hans J. Massaquoi , her nephew , who was in Hamburg during the same period , recounts that " Tante Fatima " dressed exotically in African clothing , proudly maintained her African habits and spoke the Vai language . One of her fondest friends in Hamburg was Richard Heydorn , a pianist , with whom she gave many recitals . An opponent of Nazism , when war broke out he was sent to Russia , and was later reported missing in action . Being part of the first black diplomatic family in Germany had always been challenging , but with the rise of the Nazi regime , Massaquoi 's father

began fearing for her safety . With the assistance of friends , he helped her relocate to the United States to avoid the Aryan policies and restrictions placed on women .

= = Years in the United States = =

Massaquoi arrived that same year in the United States and experienced the racial segregation and Jim Crow laws of the Southern States . She first attended Lane College in Jackson , Tennessee , graduating in sociology . Two years later she moved to Fisk University in Nashville earning two master 's degrees , first in sociology and then in anthropology in 1944 . She assisted her professor , Mark Hanna Watkins , in his understanding of the Vai language , cooperating with him in compiling a Vai dictionary . She agreed to accept a fellowship as a linguistic advisor , after her father died in 1938 . She taught French and German at Fisk and also paid her way by giving instruction in African and European folk dancing , as well as teaching the violin , thanks to her own competence on the instrument .

In 1940 , Massaquoi finished writing an autobiographical account of her early life as a tribal child , her life experiences with Europeans and education in Germany and Switzerland , and impressions of America . Watkins told her the English was too poor for publication , but later he claimed in a 1944 letter that she had written the account upon his insistence . While awaiting the editing , Massaquoi continued helping the school prepare a dictionary on the Vai language , teaching cultural dance and language , but was unhappy with the arrangement which paid only a small sum . When she attempted to retrieve her manuscript , Watkins refused and she sued the university for its return and to bar them from publishing her works . In 1945 , she won a permanent injunction against Watkins , Dr. Thomas E. Jones , president of the university , and Fisk University prohibiting them from publishing or receiving any financial rewards from any publication of the work . Massaquoi felt that she had been " conspired against " because she was foreign and a presumption that she did not have the strength to fight for her rights .

In 1946 while at Boston University , Massaquoi completed editing the autobiography (which was originally titled *Bush to Boulevard : The Autobiography of a Vai Noblewoman*) . Thanks to her extensive travels and education , by this time , she spoke several languages ? at least eight and four tribal dialects . In addition to her native Vai and Mende , she spoke English which she had first learnt at school in Liberia , German from her many years in Hamburg , and French from her schooling in Switzerland .

= = Return to Liberia = =

Upon the invitation of President William Tubman , Massaquoi returned to Liberia on 13 October 1946 to help him establish a university in Monrovia . She became Professor of French and Science in March 1947 at Liberia College , later the University of Liberia (UL) . In 1956 , she became director , then dean (1960) , of the Liberal Arts College and was a co -@- founder of the Society of Liberian Authors . In 1962 Massaquoi founded and directed a programme for African Studies , which would evolve into the Institute of African Studies at UL .

During her term at the university , Massaquoi succeeded in overcoming the requirement that students should adopt foreign names rather than keeping those of their indigenous families . In connection with this , when she married Ernest Freeman on 26 July 1948 , Massaquoi adopted his tribal name Fahnbulleh , calling herself Fatima Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbulleh . Her husband also changed his own name back to Fahnbulleh . To further contribute to the cultural and social development of Liberia , she organized a seminar through the African Studies Program in 1962 to promote the standardization of the Vai script .

With a view to enhancing educational developments in Liberia , in late 1963 and early 1964 , Massaquoi spent six months in the United States on an education scholarship , visiting fine arts colleges and university departments of anthropology and sociology , mainly in the east and mid @-@ west . In 1968 , while living in Monrovia , Liberia , with her daughter Vivian Seton and her grandchildren , Massaquoi suffered a stroke . This pressed Seton into having the 700 pages of her

mother 's unpublished autobiography microfilmed , calling on the assistance of colleagues at the University of Liberia . Massaquoi retired from the university in the summer of 1972 , receiving an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree . She was also decorated as a Grand Commander of the Grand Star of Africa by the president of Liberia .

Fatima Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbulleh died in Monrovia on 26 November 1978 . Posthumously , her microfilmed manuscripts were discovered by German researcher Konrad Tuchscherer , while conducting other research . Arthur Abraham , a historian at Virginia State University , Massaquoi 's daughter , Vivian Seton , and Tuchscherer , edited the accounts of her early experiences in Germany and the United States . The book , *The Autobiography of an African Princess* , was published in 2013 and was well received by critics . Tamba M ? bayo of West Virginia University , stated : " The strengths of this autobiography could be gauged at two or more different levels . First , its down @-@ to @-@ heart and honest account of even the most disturbing personal experiences ? Second the larger canvas of Sierra Leonean and Liberian cultural and ethno @-@ linguistic history in which Fatima ? s story is told . Rich in content and well orchestrated ? " .

= = Accolades = =

Throughout her life , Massaquoi received a number of awards and honors , both locally and internationally . She was bestowed with the Tricentenary Bust of Molière by the French Government in 1955 . In 1962 , she was honoured with the Großes Verdienstkreuz erster Klasse from the Federal Republic of Germany by President Heinrich Lübke . Upon her 1972 retirement , she was granted an honorary Doctor of Humanities from UL and awarded the rank of Grand Commander of the Grand Star of Africa by President William R. Tolbert , Jr . When Massaquoi died , a tribute was held at the University of Liberia . Mary Antoinette Brown @-@ Sherman , who up to that time was the only woman to have served anywhere in Africa as a university president , proclaimed , " Hers was a life of dedication to the Liberian nation and to the cause of education . "

= = Selected works = =

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Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbulleh , Fatima (1973) . *Writings and Papers of Fatima Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbulleh* . African Imprint Library Services .

Massaquoi , Fatima (1961) . *The Leopard 's Daughter : A Folk Tale from Liberia* . Bruce Humphries .

Massaquoi @-@ Fahnbullet , Fatima (1953) . " The Seminar on Standardization of the Vai Script . " *University of Liberia Journal* , 3 / 1 , 15 ? 37 .