

KWEE

Liberian Literary Magazine

Feb Issue

0216

BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH

**Althea
Romeo Mark**

Author of
the Month

**LIBERIAN
PROVERBS**

**Liberian Classics
Gifts of the Masters**

Featured Poets:

Althea Romeo Mark
Richard Wilson Moss
Herbert Logerie
Aken Wariebi
Cher Antoinette
Josiah Joekai Jr.
Jack Kolkmeier
Matanneh Dunbar
Ngozi Olivia Osuoha
L. Christine Brownlee
Keith Osborne

Featured Poets:

Gwendolyn Brooks
Imamu Amiri Baraka
Maya Angelou
Langston Hughes
Rita Dove
James Weldon Johnson
Wanda Phipps
Claude McKay
Quincy Troupe
Phillis Wheatley
Etheridge Knight

Liberian Literary Magazine

KWEE



Liberian

Literary

Magazine

Overview:

New Look

Hurray! You noticed the new design as well right. Well thanks to you all, we are here today. We are most grateful to start our print issue. This would not have happened without your dedicated patronage, encouragement and of course, the belief you placed in our establishment. We look forward to your continual support as we strive to improve on the content we provide you.

Our Commitment

We at Liberian Literature Review believe that change is good, especially, the planned ones. We take seriously the chance to improve, adopt and grow with time. That said we still endeavor to maintain the highest standard and quality despite any changes we make. We can comfortably make this

commitment; *the quality of our content will not be sacrificed in the name of change.* In short, we are a fast growing publisher determined to keep the tradition of providing you, our readers, subscribers and clients with the best literature possible.

What to Expect

You can continue to expect the highest quality of Liberian literary materials from us. The services that we provided that endeared us to you and made you select us as the foremost Liberian literary magazine will only improve. Each issue, we will diversify our publication to ensure that there is something for everyone; as a nation with diverse culture, this is the least we can do. We thank you for your continual support.

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Overview

Segments

From the Editor's Desk

#Liberia Puzzle

Murder in the Cassava Patch2

Authors' Profiles

Althea Romeo Mark's Interview

Book Review

Black History Month:

Random Thoughts

Diaspora Poet - Althea Mark

The Bloodied Machete

Martina Nicolls' Interview

Book Review

Featured Article

Unscripted: Cher Antoinette

A Story of Courage and Pain

Ebidenyefa Nikade's Interview

Article

1st STEM Symposium @ LU

Mary William's Interview

Liberian Proverbs

Forgotten Heroes

Poetry Section

Gifts of the Master

New Releases

Meet the Team

Around Town

Liberian Literature Review

Segment Contents

Editorial

In our editorial, one should expect topics that are controversial in the least. We will shy away from nothing that is deemed important enough. The catch theme here is addressing the tough issues

Liberia Classic

This segment features classic Liberian poetry and prose by our greatest creative minds.

Contemporary Liberian Literature

As the name suggests, deals with *issues* in modern local or *diasporan* literature as seen by Liberian creative artists.

Risqué Speak

This new segment to our print covers the magical language of the soul, music. It will go from musical history, to lyrics of meaning to the inner workings of the rhythm, beats, rhyme, the way pieces connect and importantly, the people who make the magic happen.

Our host and or his guests will delve into the personal life of our favorite musicians, bands and groups like those that we have not seen. This is more than their stories; it is more like the stories behind the stories. They'd shine the spotlight on the many people that come together to make it all happen on and off stage. Watch out for this segment.

Diaspora Poet

The internationally acclaimed poet, Althea Romeo Mark hosts this segment.

Authors of the Month Profile

This is one of our oldest segments. In fact, we started off with showcasing authors. It is dear to us. Each month, we highlight two authors. In here we do a brief profile of our selected authors.

Authors of the Month Interview

This is the complimentary segment to the Authors of the Month Profile one of our oldest segments. In here, we interview our showcased authors. We let them tell us about their books, characters and how they came to life. Most importantly, we try to know their story; how they make our lives easier with their words. In short, we find out what makes them thick.

Articles

Our articles are just that, a series of major articles addressing critical issues. A staffer or a contributor often writes it.

Book Review

One of our senior or junior reviewers picks a book and take us on a tour. They tell us the good, not-so-good and why they believe we would be better of grabbing a copy for ourselves or not. Additionally, we'd print reviews by freelancers or other publications that grab our interests.

Gifts of the Masters

Our world have a way of shattering when we encounter masters of the trade. We bring some of the works of the greatest creative minds that ever graced the earth.

Short Stories

Well what can we say? They are short, engaging and we easily fall in love with them

Artist of the Month

We highlight some of the brilliant artists, photographers, designers etc. We go out of the box here. Don't mistake us to have limits on what we consider arty. If it is creative, flashy, mind-blowing or simply different, we may just showcase it.

We do not neglect our artist as has been traditional. We support them, we promote them and we believe it is time more people did the same. Arts have always form part of our culture. We have to change the story. We bring notice to our best and let the world know what they are capable of doing. We are 100% in favor of Liberian Arts and Artists; you should get on board.

Poetry Section

This is the marrow of the bone; the juicy parts we keep sucking on. We feature established and emerging poets in the array of their diversities. If you can imagine difference, chances are, this is where you will find .

Editor's Desk

The Year Ahead



2016 is swinging and thus far, things are on the up. This is our first issue and I am excited for many reasons. We have an improved line up, some segments have changed and others shifted, whilst yet others are, well, NEW.

It appears that we might outdo ourselves this time around. Each issue, we see a better [KWEE](#) and for that we remain thank to you. Yes you. All of you that have stayed by us, that take time off to read and support us in the different ways you do. Thank you once again.

I will try to let nothing out of the bag too early, although I can't promise. The excitement is too much to contain.

Oh here is a teaser, but I'd deny it if quoted ☺! Oops, did I just type that? There goes my plausible deniability.

Anyways, I'm one that likes my bad and not so good news first, that way, I can enjoy the good ones. So

here it goes. Our hot corner [Kulubah's Korner](#) by our sharp wit KLM will not be with us for a while. Sad right? Don't worry, she's not gone yet, trust me, she is on a refresher and will be back with more of her insightful, but truthful opinion bites. Quite frankly, am I the only one who thinks that at times she's just meddling ☺ [-I'm whispering here-]? We will miss you KLM, please hurry back.

We'd also be shifting some of the segments to the blog exclusively. Yeah, we know, but we wish to keep the magazine closely aligned to its conception- *a literary mag*. You will not lose your segments, they will only be shifted. The blog is also attached to the new website so you don't have to go anywhere else to access it. It is the last page of the site- [KWEE](#).

We have new segments hosted by poets and authors from all over the world. "I ain't sayin nothin' more" as my grandmamma used to say. You'd have to read these yourself won't say a thing more.

The Poetry section is our major hotspot. It is a fine example of how KWEE manages to be true to her desire of giving you the best form of creative diversity.

We have new poets still finding their voices placed alongside much more experienced poets who have long ago established themselves and found their

voice. They in a way mentor the newer ones and boost their confidence.

In *Unscripted*, as the name suggests, Cher gives it raw. The artist, the poet, the writer-anyone of her talented side can show up and mix the science geek. You never know really what will come up until it does.

Richard Moss goes about his randomness with purpose in his poetry corner, *'Twas Brillig*. He can assume the mind or body of any of his million personifications, ideas or characters or just be himself and write good poetry. I am sure you know what to expect there.

Well, I knew I said only tips I was giving but it is just hard to contain myself considering all the things that are in store.

If there is one message you want to take from here, let it be this-prepare for a roller-coaster this 2016.

We are bringing you a better KWEE every single issue. We will break the boxes, go on the fringes to find what it is we know you would love.... Creative Difference- the best of its kind.

From the entire team here at KWEE, we say enjoy the year, sit back, lay back, relax or do whatever it is you do when you hold a copy of our mag and feast along.

Read! Read! Read!

KWEE Team

Black History Month, Random thoughts

By D. Othniel Forte

February is designated as black in the US and Canada but where I come from, we don't have a Black History Month, everyday month is black history month. So when asked what do I think about the month, my approach is somewhat different.

Instead of doing a historical review [brief or in-depth], justifying the continual celebration or denouncing its value in this age of self-awareness and self-consciousness, I prefer to consider some issues in the black community.

For me, Black History Month, should serve as an opportunity to candidly introspect. Individuals, community leaders, families, etc., should address what is BLACK in the first place. What is the identity that they feel a need to celebrate or denounce.

Frankly, at the risk of oversimplification, I think one month a year where black figures, personalities, and issues are highlighted nationally, serves mostly to appease folks that they are making progress. It is a far too simplistic 'solution' to the major issues within the black community.

We risk sending the message that after the fifteen mites is over, life should go back to business as usual. This takes away from the fight, especially for those that are

making strives. During this time, every community is looking for the consolation black person[s] to celebrate with; to show their solidarity; to appease; to justify their 'non-racistness'. In as much as there are genuine concerns shown by many, a good lot is fake or automatic. This is one of the biggest issues I have with this. And if one month will cause more harm than good to the black issues, than it is better we scarp it. my intention is not to degrade or unappreciated the many who are dedicated to the improvement of the community; not in the least. If anything, it is to protect ad support their efforts.

Our problems don't go away after February now do they? They also don't just appear and need prime time consideration at the time either. Granted, that the national attention given to black issues can be positive, but my contention is that it is only briefly.

If you'd note, I'm using black, not African American. This is an over-generalization merely for simplicity. I am aware that there are African issues, African American issues and people of color in general issues. Some issues cut across all segments whilst others do not. But in this month of celebration, when folks are out for their complementary black friend or group, it doesn't matter, we are all one and the same. Not only is it unfair, but it is quite embarrassing having to tell folks that this is an African issue or an African American issue that hardly

affect me. It is also a promotion of a stereotype. We effectively condone a system that mixes every one of us, regardless of education, religion, sex. Well, it's that the same thing our ancestors marched for? I guess we should be happy that America finally sees us all as gangstas, or threats when we are up close in dark or secluded spaces right? I guess it is fine when cops think that every black kids make good target practice?

Do you see where this is going? The truth is, not every white person is a racist; nor is every cop out for target practice. The problem is complex- it is both systemic and individual. The sad part is, sometimes it may be too late to determine which is which.

For example, take a random survey of articles and programs related to the celebration of this month. You'd find that way too many treat the month as a time to address slavery-racial issues. They talk about how blacks were not free before and how things have improved for us now as compared to our ancestors. Let us prick that bubble some; I fail to see why we should be celebrating as if we were done a favor, when franchise and segregation were served.

Black America built America. I fail to see why we should be unduly jubilant when our kids get few scholarships to Yale when it names buildings after known slaver John C. Calhoun, whose ill-gotten wealth found its way there.

Black America did more than just built America. They were the engine that churned the darn concept of the great nation. Had it halted, America would not be as we know it today.

So yes, black history is not just embedded in American history, black America's story is the story of America, minus one major part, the riches... it has been a rags to rags for black America and dashing us one month is supposed to appease us or make us content? ;

Equally, it is foolish to feel owed by America when we can't address our own issues within our communities. America is there for the taking, African immigrants have shown that despite systemic hindrances, America can still be a rag-to-riches reality.

These people immigrate not factoring in welfare, not expecting hand-outs or reparations. They go the America with a focused goal of making the system work for them.

Unfortunately, their African American kin find reasons to dislike and whine at them. They feel these guys are placing an extra burden on us; they are forcing us to work harder, forcing us to take up responsibilities we would rather not take.

Until they can realize that they are owed nothing by the system and nothing will change by whining and furthering a tough guy stereotype, there's a long way of nothingness ahead for the community. It's a road stretched out into nowhere.

Random Thoughts

Religion. Uhm. Where do I start? A bulk of black America's problems start here, are groomed here; grow here; are fertilized here. We often hear of churches on almost every corner. The church is one of the greatest pimps in black America. From the low down street scam preacher to the sophisticated, smooth talking fancy car driving one. They take away from the poor and support a lavish life style. They peddle God for peanuts. But the poor does not feel it because it comes out in little bitty amounts; pinches. They overshadow the ones that are doing any meaningful work. They make them seem dull and outdated.

But why blame these guys? They are true hustlers who have found new ways to expand their hustles. I respect the creativity. And if one is foolish enough to be bought, then sell folks. That is my general approach. It may seem harsh but in an age of so much information and awareness, if one allows oneself to be had, why not let them be had? Eventually, they would realize they are fair games and change. Granted that may be late for some but one thing I know is that education only occurs when a learner is willing. Even with an unwilling tutor, a willing learner can learn something.

Until black churches can start doing the basic things to improve, we are set to dwindle herein this limbo. For example, instead of loading a church gather table full of

pork, bacon, ham, fried chicken , collard grains and split peas and corn bread and gravy [lawd knows I loves me some them things up yonder, but knowledge now abound to the harm most of them can do. One can't expect to eat all that-after downing pitchers of punches [what I refer to as sugar water] and walk away freely. There is bound to be consequences. They should focus on healthy eating and exercises. They should make conscious effort to provide healthy food.

Oops, I guess the Lawd will make a way when the members are diabetic. Or He will melt the fat away.... We now know better so let's us act better

Muslim clerics need to address the issues of women rights in their communities. They can't afford to subscribe to parts of the Koran that could be interpreted to subject women into modern slavery. At least it is safe to say the good prophet did not intend such.

You can't be fighting for your brothers' rights and denying same to your wives and sisters and daughters. How does that figure?

Black Muslims need to realize that a militant approach, no matter how appealing, can only go so far. One must admit, the holding hands Cumbaya King's approach isn't entirely working out well. The solution to black America's problem must be a mixture of things tried and untried. No one route is the panacea. Until known/unknown avenues are explored, things will remain.

Star Wars/George Lucas

Fewer names ring big in Hollywood than George's. But he recently found himself and his former enterprise in some mess. Was it a whine of a disgruntled spoiled rich kid or genuine? He surely sounded that way to some. As an insider, he knew exactly what he was signing away to Disney when he sold out his Star wars enterprise. To come out today and play on a critical issue of slavery is not cool at all. When did he know he had had his cake? After they told him off or when he sold off his baby? Did he simply wake up today and realize that he had supported 'slavery' by selling to the 'slaver' Disney? Or did he expect to deal with slavers and walk away a saint?

Frankly he should be the last one with any opinion on where the enterprise he sold out is going or expected to go. The time he had a say in that, he said what he wanted, which was, nothing. He agreed to have no say. Today to come and attempt to have one is not only unbecoming but outright premature. The half-hearted apology does not even cover the potential damage of his comments. I think he should wallow in his 4 billion and watch his baby being ripped apart or shifted anyway Disney feels she wants to do it. it is now hers and that should conclude the matter.

But somehow, Star Wars keeps finding its way into popular media and not necessarily because of the show itself. We find President Obama and FLOTUS being

linked to it; and then there is Senator Hilary Clinton's, "May the Force be with you" comment. This was perhaps one of her better days. With hubby Bill desperately trying to remain America's first black president, he seems to be shooting the Clinton campaign in a not-so-comfortable spot. For him to succeed, he must anger the black voters who are Obama diehards. I am not sure he wants to do that now; not when his wife is on accelerated life support that only the black vote can get her off. Where I come from, we say, don't anger the lion when your hand is in its mouth.

Ferguson and Cop Shootings

This one I'd keep short, not for lack of things to say, but to check myself from writing a whole book here. With the rise of cop shooting, the failed justice system and the fractured black response, are we surprised that Ferguson happens right under our noses? Ferguson proved that not only can Deputy Ben Fields, Eric Casebolt, and Officer Darren Wilson do what they do, but they can do so with impunity. It heightened the tension and exposed America for what she truly is, a nation struggling with its racial issues. As she goes about imposing democracy [more like the quasi one] on other nations, Ferguson explains why Ol' Trump is able to do what he is doing in 2016.

In almost any other nation, the US would be in arms and policymakers and scholars would be proffering solutions to their problems from thousands of miles away. The State department would be 'condemning or approving of leaders when in fact, she is only using the pretext of popular democracy to further divisive, repressive regimes around the world; regimes that will ensure her dominance through bribery, extortion and benevolence. The incidence shows how fragile the race issue is in America and why one month is not sufficient. It proves why new policies that are aimed at resolution need to be formulated. It speaks to a failing judicial system; one that has continuously misjudged, prejudiced and ill-treated the racial minority America.

Super Bowl & Cam Newton

Super Bowl, despite what Americans wish to believe, is not the biggest sporting event in the world now hold up, before the lynching starts, check out soccer, the original game of the world. And no, two teams in the US don't quite make up a 'world' series now do they? It is just a great game that makes a lot of money for some; lose countless more for others and have a world full of passion attached to it.

What is interesting is that the media seems to pick up only the walk out of the interview. They ignore the reasons or the moment when

Cam actually smilingly hugged and congratulated Peyton.



The irony is that, folks crying about being sore loser aren't any better. Who loves losing? Who loses the biggest game of their career and is all smiley and joyous? Like Cam said, "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser". People get so wrapped up in themselves and judgmental at times, they forget what it is to be human. They expect purity where none exist. They demand perfect when they are extremely faulty. But in all this, it is the hypocrisy that gets me. The fact that it should be better to pretend and be not oneself to please others. The fact that some would want us to think that being politically correct, or proper is better than being true to oneself and right. Since when did it not matter if one is honest? Since when did it not mean much to be human? Where is all this supremacism coming from? My closing thoughts on this issue is a quote from Cam Newton, "If I offended anybody, that's cool, but I know who I am and I'm not about to conform nor bend for anybody's expectations,

because yours or anybody's expectations would never exceed mine,"

The Conscious Black

Like many things, this is a misunderstood concept. Predominantly, the Hebrew Israelites have taken ownership of this philosophy. Ain't nothing anyone can say to make them release their grips. In fact, try talking reason to the that effect, and you would rather face the KKK than that lot. There are many seeking an alternative route to self-actualization, unfortunately, when they fall into bed with the more extreme bunch of Israelites, then just kiss their chances of redemption good bye for a while or eternity.

Here is the greatest issue with Hoteps is their false sense of self-realization of true existence. Their uncanny ability to read deep into the simplest of things often lead them way over the conspiracy line. I mean these guys can see beyond the beyond. And for the uninquiring minds, they hold little respect. This arrogance is often a result of ignorance. They see anyone and anything that is not subscribed to their ways simply as fools or foolish. There is no way around that.

Sadly, Hoteps seem to be drawing into its fold a bunch of lazy, racist black America who feel entitled and enlightened. Trying to call for reason in any situation, makes you a coon-agent of the system. Thus, within a mix of mixes, more layers get added.

The simplest of situations that could be explained away by a million logical ways, are seen racially. They don't play the racial card. They live the life. They embody it. mind you, they would hardly lift their finger and harm someone, but that does not make one any less racist. Racism is more than just violence. It is more than just outward interpretation. It is equally complacency; equally a state of mind, a philosophy that lingers; one in which everything is viewed. The world is black and white for them. There are no in-betweens. Their color spectrum creates a worldview of for-me-or-against-me. It translates into a them versus us mentality.

On the one hand, Hoteps acknowledge that black on black crime is a problem. They concede that inter gang conflict takes too many lives, but many would prefer to ignore these as byproducts of the problem that could be solved once we are free of white domination. interprets in essence, let's gang up and rid ourselves of the oppressor and then we can fix our issues later. This is the world through the lenses are simply bicolor.

Race Faker

Before the fiasco of Rachel, the "race faker", race faking was mostly a one sided thing. Just as the One-Drop rule worked against blacks, some were working it to their favor. Things were fine until

Murphy's crazy Law murphied.

Rachel Anne Dolezal, an American civil rights activist and former Africana studies instructor who was president of the NAACP chapter in Spokane, burst on scenes and shook things up some. It was easy for white America to pass her off as mental. After all, who does that? Black America, went up in arms. She had crossed a line, and she needed to be lynch. How soon we forget? But more important, it is the hypocrisy that bugs me. At every turn, we see blond, curly haired sisters or brunettes or half to fully bleached [oops, light] ones, yet folks have guts to jump down the sister. The most disheartening part is that any strives Rachel made in her short career was ignored. Folks that had no clue who she was, jumped in for the kill. The truth is Rachel did more for black America than countless of those that went about dissing her.

Rachel brought to the front not just the issues of identity, faith and perception, especially with a racial slant. It forced the topic of who we are, what we believe and what does society make of identity.

Liberal media prides itself on liberation. They promote freedom self-actualization, or at least claim to when it is convenient however, they failed Rachel. They were leading the parade. While in the next breath, they were hailing Bruce Jenner. One had lived a life of a lie; woke up one day of a lifetime of faking

who he was and changed. The other had only begun to be true to herself; the same thing they were hailing Caitlyn Marie for so why the different responses? In an environment where liberal media practically bullies anyone with faith and forces their perception of political correctness under the guise of freedom and self-actualization, why were they jumping off Rachel's boat?

In her April 24, 2015, ABC interview with Diane Sawyer, Caitlyn stated that, for her, "life as a woman is primarily a matter of mental state and lifestyle.' She also noted that, "for all intents and purposes, [she's] a woman."

Rachel in her interview with the Guardian [I wasn't identifying as a black to upset people] said, "I would have these imaginary scenarios in my mind where I was really a princess in Egypt and [my parents] kidnapped and adopted me. I had this thing about just making it through this childhood and then I'll be OK,"

She also says, "For me, how I feel is more powerful than how I was born. I mean that not in the sense of having some easy way out. This has been a lifelong journey." And then she makes perhaps the one comment that most glaringly exposes the double standard, "If somebody asked me how I identify, I identify as black. Nothing about whiteness describes who I am."

How is this any different than Caitlyn's transition and state of mind? I fail to see.

Books

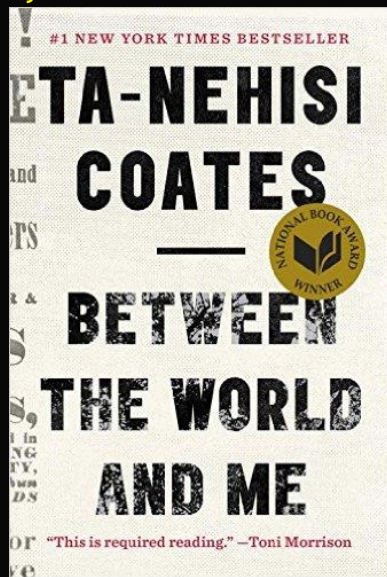
Of course, I should have started with books, but I love ending on a high note. Plus, there are quite a few juicy books lined up. We recommend these to enrich your experience

Books have always done many things, causing outrage is just one of them. In the black community, not many books have managed to piss off just about every sector in recent times like *A Birthday Cake For George Washington*. Normally, parents may get outraged and complain to teachers or school administration or teachers may be the ones uncomfortable and then some parents get on board, but with this book, it all happened at once. The idea that servants were running all over the place against all odds to bake Mr. Washington a birthday cake was appalling. More so, children were main characters. This meant that black kids were exposed to a concept that many parents felt strongly about. Even grade school educators could not help but their concerns.... Why don't you read it yourself and decide? Now check out these great books



Between the World and Me Hardcover -

by Ta-Nehisi Coates



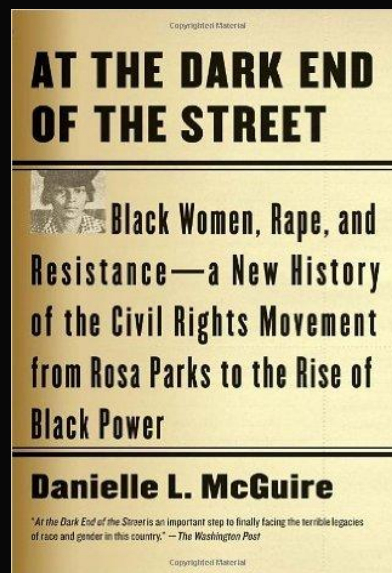
“This is your country, this is your world, this is your body, and you must find some way to live within the all of it.”

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation’s history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of “race,” a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates’s attempt to answer these questions in a

letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children’s lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

At The Dark End of The Street by Danielle L McGuire



Rosa Parks was often described as a sweet and reticent elderly woman whose tired feet caused her to defy segregation on Montgomery’s city buses, and whose supposedly solitary,

spontaneous act sparked the 1955 bus boycott that gave birth to the civil rights movement.

The truth of who Rosa Parks was and what really lay beneath the 1955 boycott is far different from anything previously written.

In this groundbreaking and important book, Danielle McGuire writes about the rape in 1944 of a twenty-four-year-old mother and sharecropper, Recy Taylor, who strolled toward home after an evening of singing and praying at the Rock Hill Holiness Church in Abbeville, Alabama. Seven white men, armed with knives and shotguns, ordered the young woman into their green Chevrolet, raped her, and left her for dead. The president of the local NAACP branch office sent his best investigator and organizer to Abbeville. Her name was Rosa Parks. In taking on this case, Parks launched a movement that ultimately changed the world.

The author gives us the never-before-told history of how the civil rights movement began; how it was in part started in protest against the ritualistic rape of black women by white men who used economic intimidation, sexual violence, and terror to derail the freedom movement; and how those forces persisted unpunished throughout the Jim Crow era when white men assaulted black women to enforce rules of racial and economic hierarchy. Black women’s protests against sexual assault and interracial rape

fueled civil rights campaigns throughout the South that began during World War II and went through to the Black Power movement. The Montgomery bus boycott was the baptism, not the birth, of that struggle.

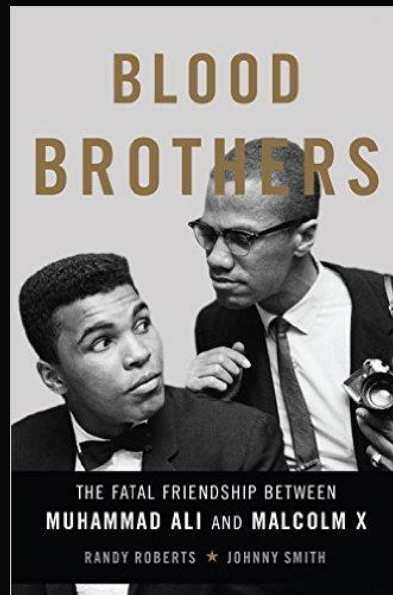
At the Dark End of the Street describes the decades of degradation black women on the Montgomery city buses endured on their way to cook and clean for their white bosses. It reveals how Rosa Parks, by 1955 one of the most radical activists in Alabama, had had enough. “There had to be a stopping place,” she said, “and this seemed to be the place for me to stop being pushed around.”

Parks refused to move from her seat on the bus, was arrested, and, with fierce activist Jo Ann Robinson, organized a one-day bus boycott.

The protest, intended to last twenty-four hours, became a yearlong struggle for dignity and justice. It broke the back of the Montgomery city bus lines and bankrupted the company.

We see how and why Rosa Parks, instead of becoming a leader of the movement she helped to start, was turned into a symbol of virtuous black womanhood, sainted and celebrated for her quiet dignity, prim demeanor, and middle-class propriety—her radicalism all but erased. And we see as well how thousands of black women whose courage and fortitude helped to transform America were reduced to the footnotes of history.

Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship Between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X
Randy Roberts & Johnny Smith



In 1962, boxing writers and fans considered Cassius Clay an obnoxious self-promoter, and few believed that he would become the heavyweight champion of the world. But Malcolm X, the most famous minister in the Nation of Islam—a sect many white Americans deemed a hate cult—saw the potential in Clay, not just for boxing greatness, but as a means of spreading the Nation’s message. The two became fast friends, keeping their interactions secret from the press for fear of jeopardizing Clay’s career. Clay began living a double life—a patriotic “good Negro” in public, and a radical reformer behind the scenes. Soon, however, their friendship would sour, with disastrous and far-reaching consequences.

Based on previously untapped sources, from Malcolm’s personal papers to

FBI records, Blood Brothers is the first book to offer an in-depth portrait of this complex bond. Acclaimed historians Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith reconstruct the worlds that shaped Malcolm and Clay, from the boxing arenas and mosques, to postwar New York and civil rights-era Miami. In an impressively detailed account, they reveal how Malcolm molded Cassius Clay into Muhammad Ali, helping him become an international symbol of black pride and black independence.

Yet when Malcolm was barred from the Nation for criticizing the philandering of its leader, Elijah Muhammad, Ali turned his back on Malcolm—a choice that tragically contributed to the latter’s assassination in February 1965.

Malcolm’s death marked the end of a critical phase of the civil rights movement, but the legacy of his friendship with Ali has endured.

We inhabit a new era where the roles of entertainer and activist, of sports and politics, are more entwined than ever before. Blood Brothers is the story of how Ali redefined what it means to be a black athlete in America—after Malcolm first enlightened him.

An extraordinary narrative of love and deep affection, as well as deceit, betrayal, and violence, this story is a window into the public and private lives of two of our greatest national icons, and the tumultuous period in American history that they helped to shape.

Gorilla, My Love -

by Toni Cade Bambara

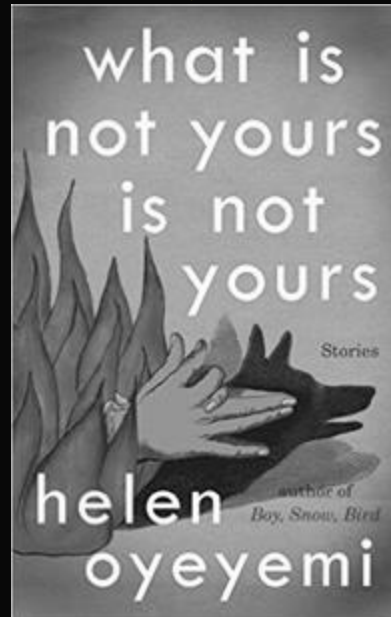


In these fifteen superb stories, written in a style at once ineffable and immediately recognizable, Toni Cade Bambara gives us compelling portraits of a wide range of unforgettable characters, from sassy children to cunning old men, in scenes shifting between uptown New York and rural North Carolina. A young girl suffers her first betrayal. A widow flirts with an elderly blind man against the wishes of her grown-up children. A neighborhood loan shark teaches a white social worker a lesson in responsibility. And there is more. Sharing the world of Toni Cade Bambara's "straight-up fiction" is a stunning experience. Whether they come from

What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours by Helen Oyeyemi

Playful, ambitious, and exquisitely imagined, *What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours* is

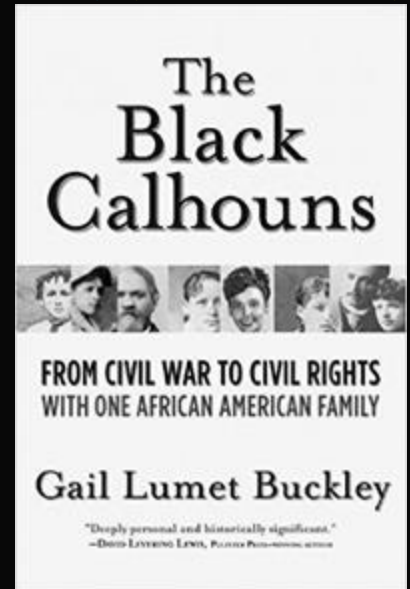
cleverly built around the idea of keys, literal and metaphorical. The key to a house, the key to a heart, the



key to a secret—Oyeyemi's keys not only unlock elements of her characters' lives, they promise further labyrinths on the other side. In "Books and Roses" one special key opens a library, a garden, and clues to at least two lovers' fates. In "Is Your Blood as Red as This?" an unlikely key opens the heart of a student at a puppeteering school. "Sorry! Doesn't Sweeten Her Tea" involves a "house of locks," where doors can be closed only with a key—with surprising, unobservable developments. And in "If a Book Is Locked There's Probably a Good Reason for That Don't You Think," a key keeps a mystical diary locked (for good reason). Oyeyemi's tales span multiple times and landscapes as they tease boundaries between coexisting realities. Is a key a gate, a gift, or an invitation? *What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours* captivates as it

explores the many possible answers.

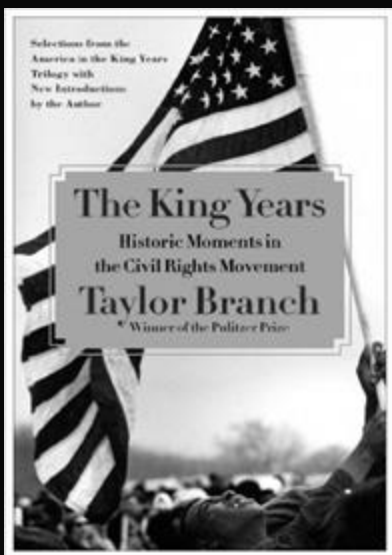
The Black Calhouns: From Civil War to Civil Rights with One African American Family by Gail Lumet Buckley



In *The Black Calhouns*, Gail Lumet Buckley—daughter of actress Lena Horne—delves deep into her family history, detailing the experiences of an extraordinary African-American family from Civil War to Civil Rights.

Beginning with her great-great grandfather Moses Calhoun, a house slave who used the rare advantage of his education to become a successful businessman in post-war Atlanta, Buckley follows her family's two branches: one that stayed in the South, and the other that settled in Brooklyn. Through the lens of her relatives' momentous lives, Buckley examines major events throughout American history. From Atlanta during Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow, to New York City during the Harlem

Renaissance, and then from World War II to the Civil Rights Movement, this ambitious, brilliant family witnessed and participated in the most crucial events of the 19th and 20th centuries. Combining personal and national history, *The Black Calhouns* is a unique and vibrant portrait of six generations during dynamic times of struggle and triumph.



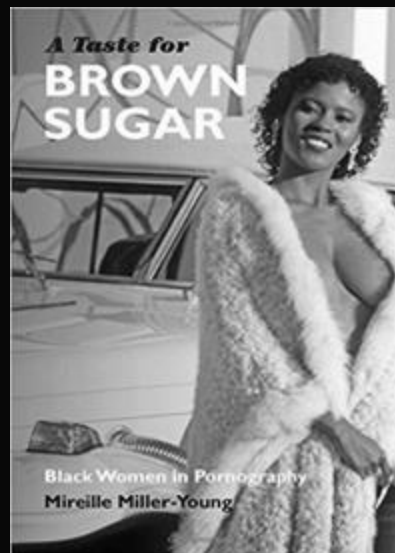
The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement-by Taylor Branch

Taylor Branch, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *America in the King Years* trilogy, presents selections from his monumental work that recount the essential moments of the Civil Rights Movement. A masterpiece of storytelling on race and democracy, violence and nonviolence, *The King Years* delivers riveting tales of everyday heroes whose stories inspire us still. Here is the full sweep of an era that transformed America and

continues to offer crucial lessons for today's world. This vital primer amply fulfills Branch's dedication: "For students of freedom and teachers of history."

A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography

By Mireille Miller-Young

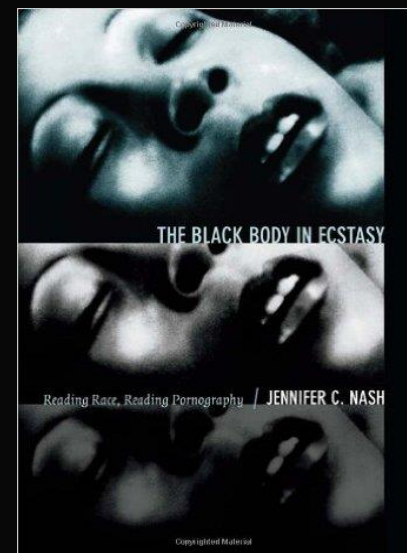


A Taste for Brown Sugar boldly takes on representations of black women's sexuality in the porn industry. It is based on Mireille Miller-Young's extensive archival research and her interviews with dozens of women who have worked in the adult entertainment industry since the 1980s. The women share their thoughts about desire and eroticism, black women's sexuality and representation, and ambition and the need to make ends meet. Miller-Young documents their interventions into the complicated history of black women's sexuality, looking at individual choices, however small—a costume, a gesture,

an improvised line—as small acts of resistance, of what she calls "illicit eroticism." Building on the work of other black feminist theorists, and contributing to the field of sex work studies, she seeks to expand discussion of black women's sexuality to include their eroticism and desires, as well as their participation and representation in the adult entertainment industry. Miller-Young wants the voices of black women sex workers heard, and the decisions they make, albeit often within material and industrial constraints, recognized as their own.

The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography (Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies)

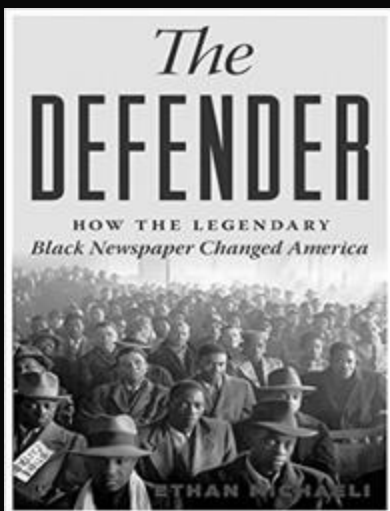
by Jennifer Christine Nash



In *The Black Body in Ecstasy*, Jennifer C. Nash rewrites black feminism's theory of representation. Her analysis moves beyond black feminism's preoccupation with injury and recovery to consider how racial fictions

can create a space of agency and even pleasure for black female subjects. Nash's innovative readings of hardcore pornographic films from the 1970s and 1980s develop a new method of analyzing racialized pornography that focuses on black women's pleasures in blackness: delights in toying with and subverting blackness, moments of racialized excitement, deliberate enactments of hyperbolic blackness, and humorous performances of blackness that poke fun at the fantastical project of race. Drawing on feminist and queer theory, critical race theory, and media studies, Nash creates a new black feminist interpretative practice, one attentive to the messy contradictions—between delight and discomfort, between desire and degradation—at the heart of black pleasures.

The Defender: How the Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America by Ethan Michaeli



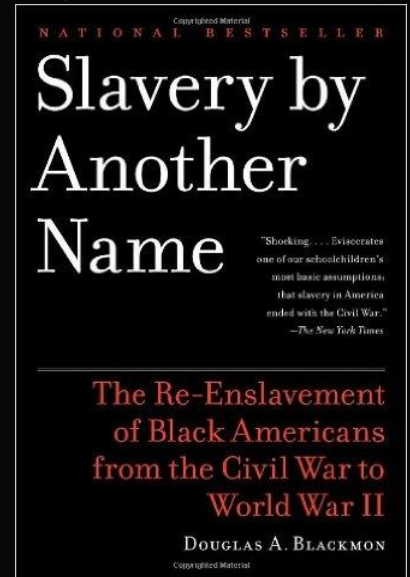
Giving voice to the voiceless,

the Chicago Defender condemned Jim Crow, catalyzed the Great Migration, and focused the electoral power of black America. Robert S. Abbott founded The Defender in 1905, smuggled hundreds of thousands of copies into the most isolated communities in the segregated South, and was dubbed a "Modern Moses," becoming one of the first black millionaires in the process. His successor wielded the newspaper's clout to elect mayors and presidents, including Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy, who would have lost in 1960 if not for The Defender's support. Along the way, its pages were filled with columns by legends like Ida B. Wells, Langston Hughes, and Martin Luther King. Drawing on dozens of interviews and extensive archival research, Ethan Michaeli constructs a revelatory narrative of race in America and brings to life the reporters who braved lynch mobs and policemen's clubs to do their jobs, from the age of Teddy Roosevelt to the age of Barack Obama.

Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II by Douglas A. Blackmon

In this groundbreaking historical expose, Douglas A. Blackmon brings to light one of the most shameful

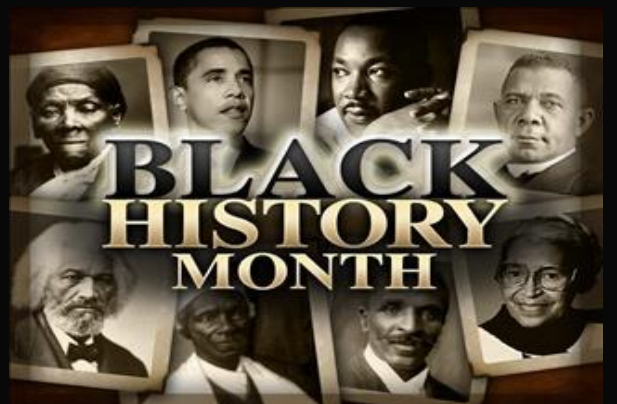
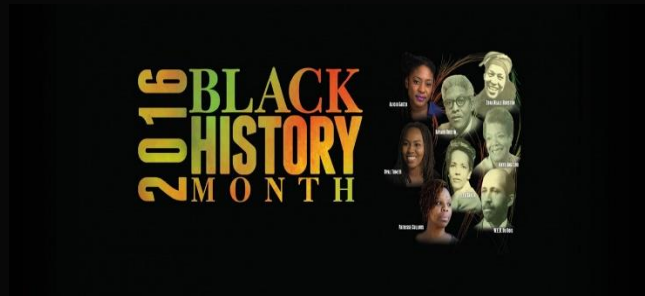
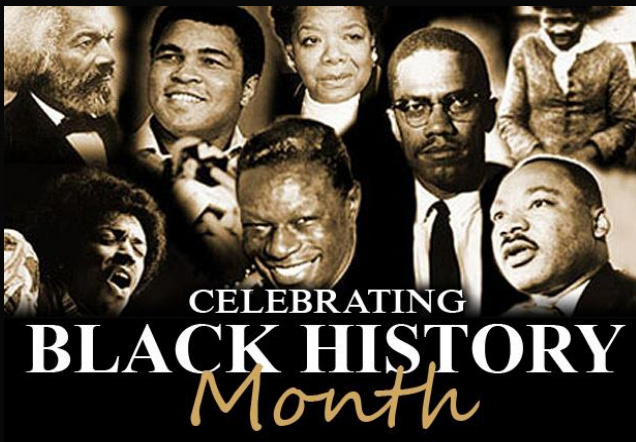
chapters in American history—



an "Age of Neoslavery" that thrived from the aftermath of the Civil War through the dawn of World War II.

Using a vast record of original documents and personal narratives, Douglas A. Blackmon unearths the lost stories of slaves and their descendants who journeyed into freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation and then back into the shadow of involuntary servitude shortly thereafter.

By turns moving, sobering, and shocking, this unprecedented account reveals the stories of those who fought unsuccessfully against the re-emergence of human labor trafficking, the companies that profited most from neoslavery, and the insidious legacy of racism that reverberates today.



Liberian Classic

Murder in the Cassava Patch II

Bai. T Moore

Early that evening, we were in the presence of the celebrated sand reader. Bleng was every bit the description Buu had given me of him; a short, stocky, bowlegged gentleman, with large bulging eyes planted proportionately between two huge curved ears. On one of the lobes hung a tiny brass earring. Around his neck hung a heavy necklace strung with assorted objects, including barracuda teeth, seashells, tiny copper spears and antelope horns. These adornments enhanced the sand reader's appearance.

"What wind blows my friend Buu to my humble abode this time of the evening?" The doctor man asked, waving us into two low stools in his crowded hut.

"First, I want you to meet Gortokai, a friend of mine. "

"And where do you come from?" Bleng cast his eyes on me.

"From Bendabli, on the Bomi Hills Road," Buu replied.

"It's been a long time since I was last in those parts.

"What's happening there?" He spoke slowly.

"I am sure this question was intended for me, so I answered, "nothing of any significance that is, up to the time I left there a few weeks ago."

"Now, what is your mission gentlemen, may I ask?" "The palava reach to you." Buu pointed to me.

"Go ahead and break word. You brought me here." I told my friend.

"All right," Buu agreed. "Bleng," he began, "my friend comes to you with a strong palava which catches his heart. He got his heart set on a woman and wants to have you look into it for him."

"Someone he wants to marry, I suppose?"

"Yes." Buu nodded.

The old man set for a few minutes looking into space. "What is the name of the girl?" He inquired.

"Tene," said we in unison.

Bleng reached for something under his bed. It was a rolled up mat with a bag inside. He spread the mat before us and pressed the small bag against his forehead. "Gortokai," the sand reader called, "touch this three times, and call the name of the girl three times to yourself.

Confide anything you wish, to the bag." I did so.

Bleng placed the bag on the mat and began to unfasten it. I had my eyes glued on every movement he made. After a few unsuccessful attempts, the sand reader poured the contents of the bag into the mat. They were an assortment of quartz crystals, large yellow beads, smooth pebbles and some strange-looking beans. One of the pebbles rolled under my stool. I tried to reach for it. Bleng stopped me.

"No one is allowed to touch these sacred objects unless I give them permission. God gave them to me in a dream and taught me how to use them to help mankind. He told me not to let anyone touch them, else they would lose their magic power."

The contents of the bag were collected and tossed into the air and allowed to scatter on the mat again.

Bleng viewed the objects with penetrating eyes for a minute or two without uttering a word. He broke the silence, by murmuring the word "Tene" to himself several times, nodding in between. The old man cleared his throat and offered to tell me what he saw in the crystals. For some reason which I cannot explain, I turned pale and felt nervous. Bleng looked straight into my eyes; "young man," he uttered. I felt a sudden thump against my chest. It was my heart, beating like a machine. "Tene's heart is divided." The old man revealed.

I felt a sudden jolt. I felt like the whole world had suddenly dropped from under me. I was unable to speak. In such a state of mind, the old man found it useless to continue telling me what he saw in the crystals. For true I was dumbfounded and numb all over. In his long experience as a professional diviner, Bleng had discovered a way of bringing clients like me back to reality.

"I think what you boys need right now is a good shot of St. Paul Lightning on roots." A good gulp of the hot liquor sent an exhilarating sensation through me. I felt better all of a sudden.

When the old man asked, "How you like my roots?"

I told him, "just fine. It has brought me around."

"I know it." Old man Bleng smiled. "Gortokai, when you have reached my age, you will agree that good rum, delicious food and some money, not too much, to keep you worrying, are to be desired more than a beautiful unfaithful woman."

Although I had not gone through some of the

experiences the old man was referring to, I found myself agreeing with him. "So you mean Tene will not be my wife?" I asked.

"I wouldn't say that, but ..." Bleng stopped suddenly and smiled. "You need strong forces behind you to win that woman, my boy. Someone who can make strong love medicines, so she can turn her heart solely towards you."

"I was just as blank I could possibly be. "Weil," I breathed heavily, "this is the reason why I am here old man, I want you to help me."

"What help can be given you must come very fast, because right now the family of the girl have four offers before them besides you."

Bleng got through telling me all what he saw in the crystals. Besides the urgency of moving fast in the Tene palava, he said, I had a long trip before me. That a tall fair woman close to Tene had so much influence over her, Tene dare not make a move without the approval of this person. About the short brown man who was making strong juju to win Tene, I had an inkling who it might be.

Before I left Bendabli, there was bush-bush talk of a secret love affair between Tene and a Bomi Hills fellow. They said, it was being engineered by Kema, her sister. I swear to God,

Bleng is a master zowo. His crystals confirmed all the rumours I had been hearing of this

Kema woman. That she was a snake in the grass is obvious, and a poisonous one at that. The whole while she was in Suehn she had been secretly drinking palm wine with Buu and going to be with him.

I had heard enough and wanted to get up and go back

to Suehn, or walk aimlessly the whole night. My friend Buu, sensing my feelings the whole while, avoided making any comments until we were on our way back home. He tried to console me when he said, "Kai, I have been through the same situation. Many men before us have been through it, and those who will come after us too, will go through it. It's one of those evils God put on earth. You know now what I mean when I say the secrets of a woman are deeper than the bottom of hell.

"Your part is a little better, Kai. The first woman I said I loved, my parents paid all the dowry at one sitting. At that time coffee was money. It was one shilling and six pence a pound. My folks had a sizable plantation and hence commanded a little money. So they thought that by paying the girl's dowry right down, they would make a favourable impression on the parents, and the girl as well. Besides that, I had made rice farms for three years for the girl's family to prove to them that they were getting a hard working son-in-law. When it was time to receive my wife, my parents again went to work and outfitted a round hut for us.

"Now here is the fun. On the day the girl was to be handed over, I invited several friends and entertainers for a big reception feast. Biekpakla was packed with people from every section of the Tee country, to witness my wedding.

"For the occasion, I was dressed in a white suit, with helmet to match, brown shoes and eye glasses. I got the nickname, Joa Kanda (a chief's son) that day. As

evening approached, the appropriate time to receive a wife, all the people started looking into the direction where my bride was expected to come from. At that moment, a friend of mine arrives in the village and invites me down the road to tell me something urgent. My heart at once begins to beat faster.

"Down the road," my friend says to me, "kengeo foe-e! I have just left the village. The young lady swears she does not want you. Her people are in tears."

"Kai, my friend, I didn't wait to hear the rest of the story. My bowels turned loose right there."

"God dammed," I shivered. "If Tene should disappoint me like that, I will do something to myself."

"You know Kai," Buu suggested, "the moon is shining bright, why not me go by the old lady in the swamp and get some palm wine to charge our roots?"

"And get drunk eh?"

"Yes." Buu replied excitedly.

"An excellent idea." I agreed.

For three days I was useless to myself. I avoided revealing to my landlord and his wife what old man Bleng told me. Although I did not show it, I also tried to avoid my friend Buu. I was not pleased with the way he had made love to Kema behind my back.

I waited one week and went to the old man. This is what Bleng himself had suggested. To turn Tene's heart solely towards me, he said, was an easy job, but pointed out that it would require patience and a series of sacrifices. Bleng was not at home when I got to the village. He had left word

that if anyone wanted to see him they should follow him to his fish-trap. I was directed to the place, a makeshift shed, where the old man spent the night when it was not convenient to return to his village. He was accompanied by his grandson, a child of ten. The little boy was the first to see me. He ran to tell the old man. When Bleng saw me he called,

“Kai friend, where is your shadow?”

“Old man, it is not all the time friends must know what you are doing.”

“You are right.” The old man agreed. “Some people who pretend to be your friends are the very ones who help to spoil your palava.”

After the usual greetings, the old man offered me a seat. He wanted to know how Buu's old lady in the swamp was coming on.

“The old lady had a misfortune for some reason,” I informed the old man. “I understand that

Buu permitted a novice to attend it.”

“What a pity,” Bleng admitted.

“The fool cut the heart of the tree too far back and she refuses to leak.”

The sand reader grinned. “When I was making palm wine, I never permitted anyone to go up in my trees. Everyone in this country knows this. Some people got bad luck and when they go up in a palm wine tree, they cast an evil spell on it.”

We soon got to the problem which brought me to the old man. The first thing I did was to reach in my bag and hand Bleng a big bottle of cane juice.

“Old man,” I told him, “my heart is heavy. I love Tene too

much. God knows it. I have slaved all my life for her. I can't sit down and see another man get her.”

“Of course not.” The crystal reader agreed with a deep voice.

“Bleng I beg you, do it for God's sake, make all the strong medicines you know to make

Tene's heart turn towards me alone.”

I noticed old man Bleng commenced thinking very seriously. His ears began to move up and down as if they were being pulled by some mechanical device.

“Gortokai,” he raised his head, “for true, the palava don't reach a man's kinja. We got to put fire behind turtle's behind to make things move. I can try to help you, but this will cost you plenty money.”

“Old man, I don't care what the cost is, if I get Tene, I am willing to enslave for myself for the rest of my life to pay you.”

“Young man, are you serious about this woman?”

“Yes.” I assured the old man.

“The things I need to make the love medicines for you are difficult to obtain. For instance, I need right away, a braid of Tene's hair, a piece of her garment, three of her toe nails, a piece of otter skin, particularly from the breast section, some gun powder and other odds and ends.

But some of these I believe I can get locally. The immediate needs are the hair, nails and garment. “

“I think I can get you these easily.”

“That's how I like to hear a man talk. I see that you are brave my son, how long you think will take you? “

I pondered over my reply. “In seven days. You see Bleng,

I cannot trust anyone with a mission as delicate as this. I must go myself.”

“Weil Kai, my son, as soon as you can bring the items I need for your job, I will fix Tene's heart in such a way she will eat out of your hands.”

I felt relieved for the first time in days. I asked the old man about his fee, and how he wanted it paid. “Kai, I like you as my own son. I understand your Problems. When we get our hands on all the things I have asked for, I will want an advance of sixteen dollars in America money.

When the work is finished and you are satisfied, I will demand an additional sixteen dollars and wave the balance. Some people pay me one hundred dollars for jobs like this.”

I thanked the old man for his generosity, handed him fifty cents and bid him goodnight. I reaffirmed my promise that I would see Bleng in seven days. Back in Suehn, I met my landlord, his wife and my friend Buu sitting on the veranda with some of Kema's concoction.

I could just imagine what they were talking about - me and Tene of course.

I wanted to avoid them and go straight in my room, but this was not feasible. Buu had seen me. He called, “Kai, come here and join us! Your landlord has found something new to add to the Kema concoction.”

“And what is this new invention?” I asked.

“A big secret,” my landlord said with a broad smile. I tasted the stuff and found it even superior to Kema's brand.

“Come from old man Bleng, I suppose?” Buu inquired inquisitively.

I wish he had kept his big mouth shut. But since he had opened it, I was left with no other choice but to frame up a quick reply. "I went in that direction to get my cutlasses repaired."

"So you didn't get to see the old man?"

"No," I said, "I learn that he had gone to his fish trap."

"That is Bleng all right," my landlord remarked. "He used to be the best man in this area for leaves. But, his reputation is waning somehow."

I was taken aback when my landlord said this. Buu who had introduced me to the old man did not put up any defense for him. In fact, he added, "that old man, he drinks too much. St. Paul

Lightning these days."

Nevertheless, I decided to place complete confidence in the doctor man. I figure out, that if the old man manipulated the right leaves, I had no doubt he could bring Tene around.

While my landlord and landlady were about, I thought it an appropriate time to frame up an excuse to run to Bendabli for the parts of Tene I needed. I had to present a convincing lie.

I told them that I had just received an urgent message from home, saying that old man Joma, my foster father was at the point of death, and that whatever I was doing, I should drop it and come to Bendabli at once.

"What a pity," the landlord sympathized. "How long has he been ill?" He inquired seriously.

"The person who brought the message did not say."

"Kai, I sympathize with you for your sudden misfortune," Buu remarked. He offered to accompany me. I told him it

was not necessary at the moment. I woke up with the pepperbirds the following morning and started my journey.

My mission was of such a delicate nature, I had to be extremely careful to avoid being seen in villages where people would recognize me. I decided therefore, to take a different route which lead through a high forest. I got to Bendabli earlier than scheduled, hence I had to conceal myself until I could achieve my objective.

Most of the people in the village were engaged on the other side of the town, removed from our quarter. Now and then, children I recognized ran between the banana orchard where I secreted myself and our big square house. When I was certain that no one had detected my presence, I crawled on my belly carefully, until I got within hearing distance of the people in the open kitchen opposite our house.

Tene and Kema were sitting there running their mouths. The other members of the family, the old man and his wife, were sitting on the far side of the kitchen. Tene was telling Kema of her experiences with one Bioma Chachi, a pursuant from Bomi Hills.

I heard her say, "Sister Kema, you should see his house. It has four large sleeping rooms, a big hall, kitchen and wash house. And, o!" Tene continued. "Water is no problem, for right in front of the house is a pump which supplies water to all the other quarters in the area."

Kema sat attentively listening to her sister. "Ain't I

told you so? Chachi is the man for you.

Only thing, his wives. How many has he got?"

"Plenty o!" Tene explained. "The head wife, she is an ugly thing. I don't know what he's doing with her."

"Old thing like that, she's just there to take care of his children by his other wives, what do you expect?"

"That's what you think, Kema, the old hag dogs the poor boy around like you do a child."

"With all that Tene, wouldn't you like to be one of his women?"

Tene hesitated for a moment, then said, "Sister Kema, my eyes are just opening. You and the old folks have tried your best so bend me, to make me decide on a man. But, the more I look around, the more I feel that I should be left alone to make my own choice."

"This is the difference between the young people of your age and those of my generation, at your age."

My foster mother spoke up. "When I had matured, my parents came to me and said that a man wanted me to be his wife. I had nothing to do with the proposal. One morning, while taking my bath, my mother summoned me and told me that the man who wanted to marry me had come to our quarter. Everyone told me to say that the proposal met my approval, and that was all there was to it."

"Mother, that was in your days. From here to Gbarnga took weeks, when you were a girl; places like Tapeta, Saniquellie, Juarzon, sounded like names in fairy tales. Today, visit these far off places and meet new friends

with ease. I feel that a girl should be given a

chance to look around before she decides on one man.” Tene told her mother.

With what had heard and seen with my own eyes, I must admit now that I have the greatest admiration for Bleng's crystal reading. Something else I noticed, Tene carried a little air of sophistication about her. She was not the same beautiful little girl I had been knowing all my

life. Bomi Hills had done something to her. The more she spoke, the more I was determined to get her by any means, foul or good.

I waited until the attention of the family was concentrated on the evening meal, to undertake my delicate mission. Unnoticed, I slipped from the banana orchard and made straight for the window of the room in which Kema and Tene slept. Fortunately there were no utensils under the window sill for me to step over, to attract attention. I had been in this very room so many times that everything was familiar to me. The wooden chests and beds were occupying the same spot where I left them. I wondered whether the contents of my trunk were still intact.

I managed to ease myself under Tene's bed in a comfortable position where I could remain unnoticed. I made sure that the new razor and scissors I brought along were sharp enough to achieve my objective as quickly as possible.

While I was reflecting on how best to get the parts of Tene I needed, I heard footsteps at the front door. A gush of blood rushed to my

head, rendering me nearly blind. I immediately reached in my pocket for a vial containing a syrupy concoction Bleng gave me to lick to quiet my nerves.

From the sound of the footsteps, I could tell it was Kema, who came into the room. I heard her ask, “Tene! Where is the lantern! I want to light it!” Tene told her it was sitting by the head of the bed where I was secreted.

“Bring a torch, it's too dark for me to see!” Kema demanded. I didn't know exactly how this would effect my safety. A bright light, and ill luck, could expose me and turn my mission into a complete fiasco.

Tene came in with the torch. But it turned out that the lantern had no wick. Kema remembered throwing a piece of felt hat under her sister's bed which they had been using whenever the wick was finished. “Reach under your bed and fetch the piece of felt hat!” The older sister ordered.

When I saw the light coming under the bed, I became very tense, in fact rigid. What if the girls should discover me and alarm everybody in the village? What, if all the men in the village overpowered me? Yes, what excuse would I have for being under the bed? These and other questions passed through my mind so hurriedly, there was hardly time to figure out any quick solutions.

When Tene put her hand under the bed, her palm swept my face. She felt the movement of my eyelids and yelled, “Kema! There's a rat under the bed! I felt its tail.”

“That's nothing unusual, Tene. This house is full of

them. I thought you knew this. One thing

I miss old Kai for, when he was here, he killed them in his rat traps. “

“Don't know it Kema. Many days rats were all we could find for making domboy soup.”

“Tene, the kind of men we will be associating with from now on look down on women who eat rats.”

“Who would eat those dirty things if they can get cow meat and fresh fish all the time? That's one thing I enjoyed when I was in Bomi Hills. Our dryer was forever full of fresh meat or fish.”

My body remained rigid while this dialogue was going on. I did not dare move a muscle. The girls lit the lantern and never bothered to look under the bed.

Kema and Tene were fast asleep by midnight. Bendabli was enveloped in total darkness and silence. Now was the time to execute my delicate mission.

The first thing I reached for was the lantern at the foot of Tene's bed. I turned it off, to render the room completely dark so that if the girls did detect my presence, they would not be able to make me out. I had figured out minutely how to go about getting the things the crystal reader needed.



Authors of the Month Profiles

ALTHEA ROMEO MARK



Althea Romeo Mark

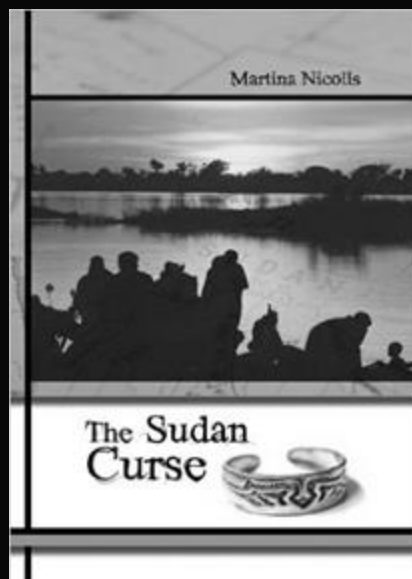
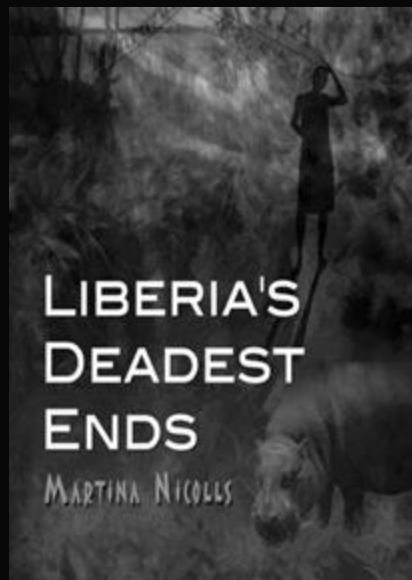
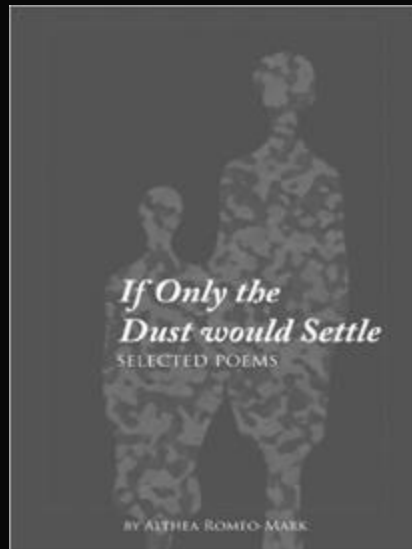
Born in Antigua, West Indies, Althea Romeo-Mark is an educator and internationally published writer who grew up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She has lived and taught in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA, Liberia (1976-1990), London, England (1990-1991), and in Switzerland since 1991.

She taught at the University of Liberia (1976-1990). She is a founding member of the Liberian Association of Writers (LAW) and is the poetry editor for *Seabreeze: Journal of Liberian Contemporary Literature*. She was awarded the Marguerite Cobb McKay Prize by *The Caribbean Writer* in June, 2009 for short story "Bitterleaf, (set in Liberia)." *If Only the Dust Would Settle* is her last poetry collection.

She has been guest poets at the International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Colombia(2010), the Kistrech International Poetry Festival, Kissi, Kenya (2014) and The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books 10th Anniversary Conference, Antigua and Barbuda(2015)

She has been published in the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the USA, Germany, Norway, the UK, India, Colombia, Kenya, Liberia and Switzerland.

More publishing history can be found at her blogsite: www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com



MARTINA NICOLLS



Martina Nicolls is British, residing in Australia for most of her life. She is now quite nomadic as she works overseas in humanitarian and development project, and is currently based in Tbilisi, Georgia. She has a Master of Science Communication, Bachelor of Education, and Diploma of Teaching, in mathematics, science, and literature. She has 30 years' experience in education and training, with over 15 years' experience in research and evaluation. The evaluations of international development projects range from assessments of economic growth, health, education, child labour, infrastructure, gender, institutional support, community development, media, peacebuilding, stabilization, and countering violent extremism. She has taught in primary and secondary schools, and universities, and has written five books: *The Sudan Curse* (2009), *Kashmir on a Knife-Edge* (2010), *Bardot's Comet* (2011), *Liberia's Dearest Ends* (2012), and *The Shortness of Life: A Mongolian Lament* (2015). She has also written a children's poetry book called *The Komodo Verses: Dragon Poems* (2011) about the Komodo Dragon of Indonesia, the world's largest lizard. All her books can be found on Amazon. She is a member of the Migrant and Refugee Women's Alliance, as well as science communication organizations, and literary clubs.

**Our Spotlight author of this issue is an internationally acclaimed poet, a scholar and a woman of many passions-
Althea Romeo Mark**

Author Interview

ALTHEA ROMEO MARK



Liberian Literary Mag conducted an interview with

Althea Romeo Mark,

LLR: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you telling us a little about you- your early childhood, upbringing, education.

My name is Althea Romeo-Mark. I was born in Antigua, West Indies, a former British Colony. My mother was born in St. Croix, US, Virgin Islands and my father in the Dominican Republic. My family immigrated to St. Thomas, US, Virgin Islands when I was eight years old. It is where I grew up and was educated.

I come from a line of immigrants who are of West

African and British/Scottish ancestry. There might be tiny strands of Carib, or Arawak- Taino (the indigenous people of the Caribbean archipelago) according to my DNA sample. My maternal grandmother was born on the island Nevis to a mother of Scottish and West African ancestry. My mother's paternal grandfather was a Black South African who settled in Antigua. My father's mother was of British and West African ancestry. His father comes from the Dominican Republic.

My family is a product of colonial history. This is typical of many Caribbean families. My extended Caribbean family live in Antigua, St. Kitts and Nevis, the Dominican Republic and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Also typical of Caribbean people is immigrating to other islands to seek work. The flow of people between islands is very common.

I consider myself, first a poet, but I write short stories and essays. Growing up in the Caribbean and Liberia, and living in the USA and Europe compel me to write about my experience. I say that I grew up in Liberia because I became a proper adult there. At age 26, I arrived in Liberia, and left around age 40. In between, I met my husband, had three

children, taught many students and witnessed Liberia go through a revolution.

Why writing?

I was told at the age of thirteen that I had a gift. My 7th grade teacher, in the US Virgin Islands, uncovered my gift in an essay I wrote about my pet dog. She encourage me to enter my essay in a contest, but I was too shy, a complete introvert. In high school I turned to another medium of creative expression: painting and drawing. Then I entered a painting competition and won first prize for my painting of a moko jumbi (the Caribbean version of the country devil).

When I got to university, my desire to write was woken again, when my Professor of Caribbean Literature, Dr. Gershator, gave his class an assignment— to write a poem about what it means to be a "West Indian." He asked me if I had ever written a poem before, and I replied, no! He didn't know that he had tapped a deep well. I started writing prolifically from then. I am not a natural conversationalist. I am better at painting with words. This sort of painting in my mind creates a more accurate picture of the world that I interpret and share.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

I think my strongest influence when it comes to writing fiction is Ernest Hemingway. The simplicity of his dialogue in the short story, "**A Clean Well-lighted Place**," made a potent impact. Then I read his novel, **A Farewell to Arms**, which influence me even more. My short stories are dialogue driven. But I am better at writing poetry. My poems tend to be concise, and filled with imagery. I am painting with words, you see. I am blessed to have done poetry workshops with Allen Ginsberg, the famous beat poet and Judson Jerome, at the University of the Virgin Islands around 1969-70, and with Maya Angelou, in Liberia (LAW poetry workshop). From them I learned that a raw poem is like a chunk of wood or marble that must be chiseled down until it reaches its perfect form. So I have learned to write concise poems that can evoke a response in the reader. There are many schools of poetry.

I am often drawn by the poetry in the title of novels and to writers who write about their immigrant experiences. For example, the Japanese-German-Mexican-American, Sigrid Nunez, **A Feather On the Breath of God**, or Jhumpa Lahiri, **Interpreter of**

Maladies, Chimamanda N. Adichie **Americanah**, and then there are novels about other cultures, Arundhati Roy, **The God of Small Things** (India); Ben Okri, **The Famished Road** (Nigeria), Isabella Allende, **The House of Spirits** (Chile) and **Claire of the Sea Light, Breath, Eyes, Memory** by Edwidge Danticat (Haiti). I have just finished **Bound to Secrecy** (Liberia) by Vamba Sherif.

How do you approach your work?

I have different approaches. (1) Sometimes I am inspired by reading other poets' works; (2) if there is a competition that is theme driven and I feel I have something to say, I can be inspired by that; (3) or I often download topics from the National Poetry month website. There are up to thirty different topics to choose from; (4) I can be inspired by something I see while walking or riding in a bus or tram and finally; (5) I can sit myself down and say today I am going to write a poem, and that poem can be influenced by events that are happening right now. Sometimes I write because I see a blank page that needs to be filled with words destined to tell a new or an old story

What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work? At present, the predominant

themes in my poems are the immigrant experience and the plight of refugees. I come from an immigrant background, and I have had the refugee experience—learning how to survive; starting life all over again with nothing but hope and determination.

Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.

Shu-Shu Moko Jumbi: The Silent Dancing Spirit, (Department of Pan-African Studies Monography Series, Vol. 1, No. 3, Spring, Kent State University, 1974) was a compilation of the work which my creative writing class and I had done. It consists of different themes.

The second collection, **Palaver** (Downtown Poets Co-op, New York, 1978), is written mostly in English creole and focuses on Caribbean folklore and way of life still influenced by some form of colonialism. There is a poem in the book called "Sukanah," Sukanah is a mythological Caribbean creature similar to Dracula. It is human during the day but can slip out of its skin at night and suck the blood of its victims. Another poem, "Overstay" is about an illegal immigrant who has to hide from the police. I was living in Liberia when **Palaver** was published in New York.

Two Faces, Two Phases (*Speed-o-graphics, Liberia 1984*) includes poems that reflect my first impressions of Liberia. "Tropic Dimension" a poem from this collection was republished in **Sisters of Caliban: Contemporary Women Poets of the Caribbean**, a multilingual anthology, edited by M.J. Fenwick, Azul Editions, 1996.

In **Beyond Dreams: The Ritual Dancer** (*Sabanoh Press, Liberia 1989*), there is a poem about a market woman called "Ma Massa," which has been republished in **Yellow Cedars Blooming: An anthology of Virgin Islands Poetry**, 1998, and another entitled "The Sande Bush Graduate," republished in **An Anthology of Pan-Caribbean Poetry**, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995, and **Liberia: Leben wo der Pfeffer wächst**, Bremen, Germany, 1989.

If Only the Dust Would Settle, is my last poetry collection, which was published in 2009, UK. This collection is semi-autobiographical. It is about my journey as an immigrant from the Caribbean to the USA, Liberia England and Switzerland. The title, **If Only the Dust Would Settle**, is inspired by the section on Liberia and Liberian Civil War. Aren't we still waiting for the dust to settle? In it is a poem entitled "Revolution and Reggae" which is inspired by the

General Quiwonkpa's failed attempt to overthrow the Doe's regime.

I no longer have copies of **Shu-Shu Moko Jumbi**, and **Two Faces, Two Phases**. Somehow, they were forgotten when we fled Liberia at start of the civil war, but I managed to pack a copy of the others.

The next poetry collection, entitled, **The Nakedness of New**, could be out next year. The cover has been designed. It consists of poems and essays. The title comes from the section on the immigrant and refugee experience.

What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?

The Nakedness of New is inspired by some of my own experiences as an immigrant child, and being a refugee/immigrant in England after fleeing Liberia, and the experience of living in a culture alien to you—culture shock really. I have addressed these issues in essays as well as in poetry. **The Nakedness of New**, picks up where **If Only the Dust Would Settle** leaves off. It continues the subject matter of how unsettling the life of an immigrant or refugee can be. You can be empowered or defeated by this experience.

Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?

You can be empowered or defeated by this experience. In the end, it is up to you not to allow circumstances, no matter how overwhelming, to beat you down.

Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?

If Only the Dust Would Settle can be ordered on Amazon.com, Author House.com, and other publishers.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

If you have something to say, say it well. Your work once it is out there will be your representative, your ambassador to the writing world. No one is perfect. Writing groups and writing workshops have served me well and have made me a better writer today than I was twenty years ago. Be willing to learn and grow. Your next work should be better than your last and should reflect your growth as a person and a writer.

What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?

I have just completed **Bound to Secrecy** by Vamba Sherif, and reading **See, Now, Then** by Jamaica Kincaid.

Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.

I recently presented a paper and read some of my poems at the Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books Tenth Anniversary Conference in August 2015.

Poems published in 2014-2015 include "Lost Love," **Women in War**, Advocates for Gender Balance, 2015, "Like Mami Water in Hiding," **Kaleidoscope**, Writers Abroad, 2015, "New World Bouillon," and "Now Massa Loved Some Hunting," **The Caribbean Writer**, vol.29, 2015, "Departure and Arrival," **Persimmon Tree** (www.persimmontree.org/v2/summer-2015/international-poets), "The Vengeance of Gods and Spirits", **Caribbean-American Heritage Month Literary magazine**, (www.issue.com/instituteofcaribbeanstudies/docs/cahm_magazine_2015),

"Neighbors Sanderson," poem, in **Moko Magazine**, November 2014 issue, and poems "Unwanted Visitors," and "Small Island Deprivations," in **Tongues of the Ocean**, special feature on Antigua Writers, Winter, 2014. Fitting into One's Skin," A review of Joanne Hillhouse's novel, **Oh Gad!** in the **Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books**, summer 2014, "A Story of Immigrants," personal essay, **The Caribbean**

Writer, Volume 28, Autumn 2014, **Poems for the Hazara: An Anthology and Collaborative Poem (multilingual)**, ed. Kamran Mir Hazar, Winter, 2014, several poems and an essay in **WomanSpeak: A journal of writing and Art by Caribbean Women**. Ed. Lynn Sweeting, Vol.7, 2013-14

What are your current projects?

I am preparing my next book of poems and essays, **The Nakedness of New**.

What are some of your favorite books by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

As I mentioned earlier, I have just completed, Vamba Sherif's novel, **Bound to Secrecy**. I have read of all Dr. Patricia Wesley's books of poems, **Before the Palm Could Bloom, Becoming Ebony, The River is Rising**, and **Where the Road Turns**; I have read Bai T. Moore's poems, and his novel, **Murder in the Cassava Patch**; Wilton Sankawolo's, novels, **The Rain and the Night, Sundown At Dawn**, his folktales, **Nobody Knows When He Will Die**, and a new collections of folktales, **Tales of West Africa**, that he planned to publish, before his death; Robert Brown's novel, **To Seek A Newer world**, and short story

collection, **After Long Silence and Other Liberian Short stories**, many of which were republished in **Short Story International**; Moses Nagbe's poems, and his first collection of short stories (**We Are One?**); C William Allen's **The African Interior Mission**, Jeremiah B. Menyongai's, **Poems from Ashes of War**, and **A Look in The Rear View Mirror**. I have also read the work (short stories, poetry, essays) of some of the younger Liberian writers in **Seabreeze: Liberia Journal of Contemporary Literature**, an on-line journal that now on a hiatus.

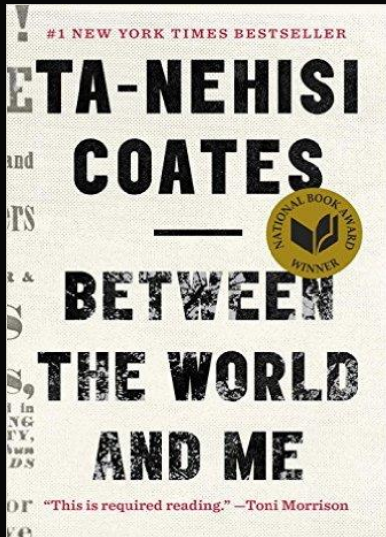
Any last words?

Well, I think I have said enough already, but I would like to emphasize that writing requires great discipline and if you want to be a great writer, you have to get feedback on your work. You can't just publish work because you think it's great. You have to keep your ego in check.



Book Review

Between the World and Me



Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates review – a now exalted writer and spokesman for black America

**Reviewed by:
Sukhdev Sandhu**

The prominent journalist has issued a passionate call for change. But where are the discussions of class, and is he guilty of parochialism?

Ever since 1976, when the US government officially recognised Black History Month, February has been a time – especially in state schools – to celebrate the emancipatory struggles of runaway slaves, pioneering medics and lawyers, and poets and “freedomriders”. For the young Ta-Nehisi Coates, growing up in Baltimore, it was also a time of mystification and shame. Watching newsreel footage of the civil rights movement, he got the impression that “the black people in these films seemed to love the worst things in life – love the dogs

that rent their children apart, the tear gas that clawed at their lungs, the firehouses that tore off their clothes and tumbled them into their streets”.

These days, Coates is a prominent journalist for the Atlantic where his tendency to puncture sunny-side-up political platitudes has not abated. In “Fear of a Black President” (2012) he wrote of Barack Obama’s “remarkable ability to soothe race consciousness among whites” and how “this need to talk in dulcet tones, to never be angry regardless of the offence, bespeaks a strange and compromised integration”. In 2014 he published “The Case for Reparations”, a lengthy and widely debated essay in which he argued that reparations would mean “a revolution of the American consciousness, a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer with the facts of our history”.

It is understandable, then, that there has been a lot of fanfare for *Between the World and Me*. It appears at a moment when, thanks to mobile phones and social media, the ghastly spectacle of black Americans – many of them young and unarmed – being strangled, clubbed or shot by police officers has created a cacophony calling for change. Black Twitter, Black Lives Matter, hashtag activism: it is a marvellous noise, an Occupy-style swarm energy that, for veterans of

an older media imperium, can appear befuddling. What they want is a figurehead, a mansplainer, a gravitational node amid all these centrifugal conversations.

They could certainly do a lot worse than Coates, whose book has already been lauded by Toni Morrison (“I’ve been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died”), and helped him to win a prestigious MacArthur “genius” award. A self-conscious step back from a present whose crimes and bloodiness it sees as consistent with American history, the volume is a rather strange blend of epistolary non-fiction, autobiography and political theory that has at its heart a simple message: “In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body – it is heritage.”

Many of the ideas Coates rehearses here are associated with the school of thought known as Afro-pessimism. Black Americans were enslaved longer than they have been free, and as a result the deaths of Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin are “merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include friskings, detainings, beatings and humiliations”. Later he argues: “The plunder of black life was drilled into this country in its infancy and reinforced across its history, so that plunder has become an heirloom, an intelligence, a sentience, a default setting

to which, likely to the end of our days, we must invariably return.”

These are all forceful claims – ones made with a characteristic pivoting towards the (male) black body and the frequent use of words such as “plunder” or “shackle”. They are accompanied by vivid recollections of growing up in gang-ridden West Baltimore where the local lads’ uproarious nihilism is ascribed to the knowledge that “we could not get out” and that “the ground we walked was tripwired”.

Coates is at his dreamiest when evoking his time at Howard University, a historically black college in Washington, DC, that he calls “the Mecca”. Cosmopolitan, teeming with “Ponzi schemers and Christian cultists, Tabernacle fanatics and mathematical geniuses”, it’s a place of self-discovery and self-invention, “a machine crafted to capture and concentrate the dark energy of all African peoples”. It is here that he immerses himself in black literature and history, meets his future wife and befriends a middle-class student called Prince Jones who is later unlawfully killed by an undercover police officer.

In part, the book is an ode to writing itself. Coates includes excerpts from Baldwin, Richard Wright and Sonia Sanchez as well as Nas and Ice Cube. He describes “the art of journalism” as “a powerful technology for seekers”.

And he remembers his time at Howard as being one where he learned the power of poetry as much as of slogans, and that “The Dream thrives on generalisation, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers.”

The Dream is something Coates often invokes and damns as psychically disfiguring. The Dream, he explains, is “perfect houses with nice lawns. It is Memorial Day cookouts, block associations, and driveways ... treehouses and the cub scouts. The Dream smells like peppermint but tastes like strawberry shortcake.” It’s hardly news that there are many tens of millions of Americans – of all colours – who have rarely had a whiff of this aroma. As such, the passage merely highlights the inaudibility of class in this book. There is also precious little about Asians or Latinos, two other groups whose national identities have been scrambled and redefined by imperialism, internment and legally sanctioned alienation.

Between the World and Me apparently came about when Coates asked his editor why no one wrote like Baldwin anymore; his editor suggested he try. Borrowing the epistolary form of Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time* (1963), he addresses it to his 14-year-old son Samori. But Coates doesn’t write like a father so much as an apprentice theologian or a sophomoric logician. Sentences begin

with “Thus”, “I propose”, “This leads us to another equally important ideal.” The tone is consistently one of aspirational gravitas, of bewhiskered patriarchs and dollar-bill overlords.

A comparison with Coates’s previous book, a 2008 memoir entitled *The Beautiful Struggle*, is telling. There he wrote about the world into which he grew up: “cable and Atari plugged into every room, juvenile parenting, niggers sporting kicks with price tags that looked like mortgage bills”. He believed in structural racism and enforced underdevelopment, but he described those forces in less portentous language: “We thought all our battles were homegrown and personal, but, like an evil breeze at our back, we felt invisible hands at work, like someone was still tugging at levers and pulling strings.” In 2015, Coates is a more exalted writer, but his prose seems increasingly ventriloquised and his insistence on Afro-American exceptionalism a kind of parochialism.



Ta-Nehisi Coates

Diaspora Poet

At the Mercy of Gods

We come in waves.
Our boats, tiny specks
on dark, fathomless
oceans.

Driven away by devouring
drought,
scattered by quakes,
typhoons, cyclones, wars,
we flee, fish in a storm.

Propelled by dreams,
we would walk on water
if miracles could be
bought.

We are swallowed
by sea gods demanding
sacrifices.
Our dreams are coveted by
Agwé, Osiris, Poseidon
who wish to conquer man
and land.

Do the gods conspire?

Jealous Wind and Sea
pillage our crops
withhold rain, wake
Vulcan, fan his flames.
Belligerent Mars whispers
in man's ear,
demands he bathes in his
brother's blood.

Gods cackle at fleeing
men.

Ants in their eyes,
they set howling death
upon us.

Our exhausted Creator
sleeps.

© Althea Mark-Romeo

Althea Romeo-Mark



Born in Antigua, West Indies, Althea Romeo-Mark is an educator and internationally published writer who grew up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She has lived and taught in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA, Liberia (1976-1990), London, England (1990-1991), and in Switzerland since 1991.

She taught at the University of Liberia (1976-1990). She is a founding member of the Liberian Association of Writers (LAW) and is the poetry editor for *Seabreeze: Journal of Liberian Contemporary Literature*.

She was awarded the Marguerite Cobb McKay Prize by *The Caribbean Writer* in June, 2009 for short story "Bitterleaf, (set in Liberia)." *If Only the Dust Would Settle* is her last poetry collection.

She has been guest poets at the International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Colombia(2010), the

Kistrech International Poetry Festival, Kissi, Kenya (2014) and The Antigua and Barbuda Review of Books 10th Anniversary Conference, Antigua and Barbuda(2015)

She has been published in the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the USA, Germany, Norway, the UK, India, Colombia, Kenya, Liberia and Switzerland.

More publishing history can be found at her blog site:

www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com



The Bloodied Machete

Short Story 2

Prologue: Tap, Tap, Tap. 3, 2, 1, Tap, Tap, Tap. Blood dropped from the rustic machete.



He lay spread over the couch. One hand still clutching the bottle; the other, swollen, slung over his bare chest. "Grrr. Grrr" he snored loudly. He was out cold and would remain for the next few hours.

Over in the kitchen, under the sink, she snuggled, also asleep with her black eye, bruised nose and bloodstained lips. I tiptoed across the room to collect my siblings- Blojay, four and Youjay six. Both are sobbing in a corner by the window. Days like these, everyone gets flogged- a few slaps or lashes before sending them off. Today was relatively good.

They hid when they sensed my approach and only came out upon seeing me. I checked Youjay's face; half of it is red, but no swelling. I clean it. My brother wasn't that lucky, his upper ribs were swollen. He flinched when I applied the damp, warm cloth to it. I felt his pain with each stroke I made no matter how gentle but I must

attend it. I know his pain all too well.

I am almost nineteen but I had a few broken fingers, ribs, dislocated shoulders, a missing tooth and that is just in two years. They pass my accidents off to my being tomboyish. Mostly, it is my wrist, which is my first line of defense. Today, I feel the sprain, perhaps a torn tendon, but who cares? In about twenty minutes, I would be unable to move it around so I have to hurry.

We must hurry to find food. Our window is fast closing. I hurriedly get them ready before I enter my parents' room next door. This is where they start and end their battles. Clothes, papers and bottles were all over the place like landmines. I rummaged through the messy room for cash; searching as many pockets and under anything I could lift. The kids are on lookout in the hallway.

We live in an old house; there are holes in the roof, the walls, everywhere. This means the slightest sound travels everywhere. We quietly went out the back door. I found less money than I expected but that would have to do. We bought food for one person. I fed them after taking only a few spoons. We hurried back home just in time to find Mama waking. She barely recognized us as she struggles to get to her room only to fall on a pile of clothes, knocked out.

I tucked them in and had just turn around when he

entered the room. He had his menacing stare. He stumbled over to me. His breath reeks. I am frozen. Even if I could, I know better than to move. Moreover, I didn't have it in me today to fight, not in this state. I just stood there.

Large hands dragged me on the cold floor. He swears a lot at these times; each day, nastier words. I hold my breath in angst; waiting for it. The alcohol-disgusting odor suffocates me. Just when I can take it no more, there it comes; I puke. He doesn't notice.

"Breathe," I tell myself! I try to inhale but I choke.

Suddenly, he falls over me. His full weight knocks the air out of my stomach. I exhaled and muffled my scream. He goes limb/numb; deadweight. I shifted, struggled finally and I pulled free. I'm too weak to roll away. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the bloodied machete. I gathered my strength and lifted my head to see beyond the blade. My sibling's tiny frame holding it shocked me.

Epilogue: Tip, tip, tip.... Blood dropped to the floor. The face etched in my mind was unbelievably calm, resolved. I blocked out!



By Herty Duah

Author Interview 2

Spotlight Author

MARTINA NICOLLS



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with **Martina Nicolls**, an aid consultant who has worked in several troubled spots.

LLM: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you telling us a little about yourself....

I was born in the countryside of England and my parents migrated to Australia when I was two years old. I was the second of six children. My schooling was all in South Australia. At university I graduated in mathematics and education, but I also studied English literature, Australian literature, German literature, French literature, and Russian literature. I was a schoolteacher (primary, secondary, and special education) and I worked in

vocational training units of the Education Department before **working** in universities in Australia.

For more than 15 years I have been working as a humanitarian and aid development worker in developing countries.

Why writing?

I was always reading as a child, and I have never stopped. Words and the construction of sentences fascinated me, and I was always amazed at how words could have multiple meanings. Professionally my writing was non-fiction, but when I started working overseas my friends wanted to know more about the places and cultures, so they encouraged me to write about my experiences from a fictional perspective. I started writing my first book in 2005.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

Travelogues, memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies have influenced my work and my writing, because the people I read about are strong, courageous, adventurous, and determined problemsolvers in spite of many challenges.

Books that span many genres and cultures are of interest to me and shape my own writing.

How do you approach your work?

With my fictional stories about different countries, I start by research and planning the outline of my book. I conjure up characters and generally organize my work in historical periods or themes. I write when I can, in between my mainstream employment, sometimes for long stretches of time and sometimes only in the evening. I always write down ideas too as I think of them. I edit a lot – and in fact I seem to do more editing than creating.

What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?

The themes I continually explore in my writing include individuality, friendship, solidarity, charity, truth, conflict, peace, family relationships, patience, transformation, purposeful work, life challenges, and life solutions.

Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.

I have written a fictional story, called Bardot's Comet, about a female mathematician in the 1960s. My other fictional books are about countries where I have worked, such as The Sudan Curse, Kashmir on a Knife-Edge,

Liberia's Deadepest Ends, and The Shortness of Life: A Mongolian Lament. Liberia's Deadepest Ends is set in Liberia from 2004 to 2012 after the declaration of peace, as the country recovered economically and psychologically through stabilization programs, truth and reconciliation, and community development. Hence the characters are based on real events and situations over the many times I visited Liberia and worked there.

For me, the book is about the end of the 'deadepest ends' (a term that the writer Graham Greene used when describing Liberia) and the beginning of its rebirth, recovery, and reconciliation. I love hippos so I also added the theme of Liberia's hippopotamus population returning to its homeland when peace was restored. I even have a giant wooden carving of a hippopotamus in my home.

What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?

The title 'Liberia's Deadepest Ends' is a reference to the Graham Greene novel, Journey Without Maps (1936) about his travels in West Africa.

When I started my research, and told people that I was writing about my work in Liberia, they would quote this phrase. It was a starting point in the novel, representing the past that is

behind the country and the peaceful future that lies ahead.

Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?

I think there is a message in the Liberian book for readers around the world to take courage from challenging situations, no matter how impossible they seem, even if they seem to go on endlessly. There is an end to hardship – 'this too will pass' is a phrase I use often. Conflict will end and peace will endure. Liberians have learned this through extreme suffering, but they have endured and shown extreme resilience through faith, solidarity, love, family, friendships, trust, truth and reconciliation. In misfortune, loss, and in tragedy, people find their own strength, their own truth, their own inner sense of peace and comfort, by reaching within or by reaching out.

Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?

Life is a long journey. And as Graham Greene's title says, it is a journey without maps. There are u-turns, wrong turns, misguided turns, intentional distractions, unintended side trips, sudden disasters, unplanned godsend, a myriad of challenges, and even dead ends. By stopping, slowing down, breathing, and being grateful for everyday life

experiences, we can take each step forward on a peaceful and meaningful course.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

Writing is usually a solitary experience and one of concentration and determination. Write with at least one person in mind, and don't worry whether the rest of the world appreciates your work or not.

If you write with passion, from the heart, there will be an audience. For practical advice I think writers should be readers. Read, read, and read some more. I read books from authors of various nationalities, experiences, and ages, because every author is unique with their own interpretations of their lives.

Reading gives a writer a whole larder of techniques, styles, character definitions, genres, and plots to draw inspiration and energy from.

I also believe that nature is a source of inspiration, because it emits peace and creativity. Culture is also inspirational for me - all arts, such as music, writing, drama, dance, poetry, and painting.

I surround myself with wonderful people, invigorating nature, and beautiful art for happiness, contentment, inspiration, and creativity.

What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?



I am currently reading Max Tegmark's 'Our Mathematical Universe: My Quest for the Ultimate Nature of Reality' because I love books on mathematics and science. I am also currently reading Charles Timoney's 'An Englishman Abroad: Discovering France in a Rowing Boat' because I love travel stories and adventures.

Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.

I have recently released my new publication, *The Shortness of Life: A Mongolian Lament*, which I am promoting and publicizing.

What are your current projects?

The beginning of the year is a time for me to plan my future consultancies in aid development around the world. I have also conceptualized a new

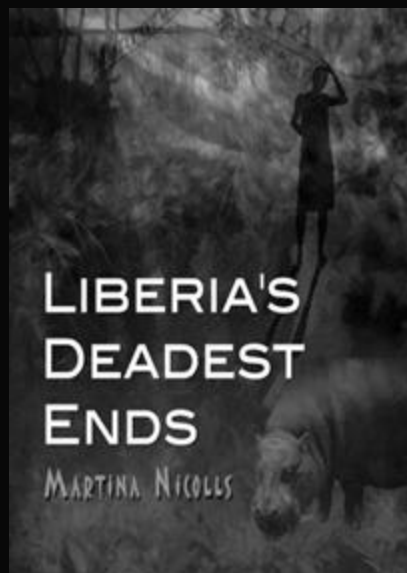
book, although I have not started writing yet – I am in the research phase, so it is too early to reveal it. I can say that it is not related to a country. I am also working on my blog, *Feast or Famine*, which I try to update every day with news, articles, and photography.

Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

I have read quite a few works of Liberian poetry and songs, such as Bai T. Moore's poetry anthology called *Ebony Dust*, and contemporary poets, as well as Bai T. Moore's novella *Murder in the Cassava Patch*.

Any last words?

May 2016 be a special year for everyone, transforming dreams into reality.



Liberia's Deadest Ends is a novel based on fact. It is about trust and truth: what or whom to trust, and when. Truth in

Liberia during the civil war had become distorted, embellished, abandoned, and abused out of bravado, fear, shame, or self-protection. No one seemed to know the difference between truth and rumor anymore. The novel is set in Liberia from 2004 to 2012, after the declaration of peace and the end of two protracted and bloody civil wars: December 1989-1997 and 1999-2003. The country is recovering economically and mentally through government stabilization and services; recording Truth and Reconciliation statements of human rights violations; and the criminal trial of former president, Charles Taylor. Jorja Himmermann, an international aid worker, monitors the resurgence of education programs, peace building, community development, child labor, and the protection of former child soldiers. As the country's past truths are revealed, Jorja seeks her own truths: of elusive pygmy hippos; the burns on her driver's body; the extradition of her British friend; and her relationship with an enigmatic Moroccan journalist. It reveals whom Jorja can really trust. Martina Nicolls writes from her own experiences as an independent aid worker in developing countries, primarily in post-conflict countries and those with transitional or emerging governments. She advises donor agencies, provides technical assistance, and evaluates humanitarian and development programs. She lives in Canberra, Australia. Publisher's Website: <http://sbpra.com/MartinaNicolls> Author Websites: <http://www.martinanicolls.net> and <http://martinasblogs.blogspot.com>

Book Review 2



LIBERIAN GIRL
The play made its debut in 2015 at the ROYAL COURT

By Diana Nneka Atuona

Reviewed by
BEN LAWRENCE
SEPT. 5, 2008

Between 1989 and 1996, the first Liberian civil war claimed the lives of 200,000 people. The country was turned on its head in a conflict of unspeakable violence and Diana Nneka Atuona's assured, provocative debut takes you into this world of perpetual danger. It's a brutally immersive production, directed by Matthew Dunster, in which the audience are required to stand throughout and confront the drama's many horrors up close. The actors playing the soldiers shout abuse at audience members and herd them into different corners of the stage, at one point separating the men from the women.

Martha (Juma Sharkah) is a bright, bookish 14-year-old who is forced, alongside her wise, crotchety grandmother, Mamie Esther (Cecilia Noble), to flee their village as rebel soldiers approach. Mamie has made the reluctant Martha disguise herself as a boy in order to avoid being raped, but this sage move gets complicated when they are ambushed. Martha is forced to join a rebels' unit full of trigger-happy teenage boys, coked up to their eyeballs and fuelled by dreams of glory which have been put in their heads by the Commander (Fraser James) who has, in reality, robbed them of their childhoods.

All of a sudden, village life seems very far away and Atuona adeptly shows how Martha (now known as Frisky) becomes inured to her new, volatile world. In one utterly shocking scene Frisky is forced to witness the murder of one young girl and then join in the rape of the dead girl's friend, Finda (which she of course has to simulate). However, Atuona has skilfully created a heroine who never completely

surrenders her femininity and we later see Frisky protecting the abused Finda who is heartbreakingly grateful for being spared further sexual violation.

The acting is uniformly strong but particular praise must go to Weruche Opia who gives tantalising glimmers of optimism as the abused but dreamily defiant Finda and, above all, to the Sierra Leone-born Sharkah. This is her professional stage debut and it is an extraordinary performance, characterised by an unerring stillness as Frisky witnesses atrocity after atrocity, hardening her body but always giving you a subtle glimpse of Martha's innate kindness.

Atuona's play may be rooted in a particular conflict but in its depiction of how war makes men barbarians, and women and children their slaves, it is timeless. There is no doubt that Liberian Girl won't be for everyone – at times you have to look away and at others you are goaded into angry impotence, unable to intervene as another poor boy is beaten within an inch of his life. Yet it is vital to point out that it is not a depressing experience. Despite the many horrors witnessed, the residual feeling you have is of the human capacity for hope.

- **Series:** Modern Plays
- **Paperback:** 104 pages
- **Publisher:** Bloomsbury Methuen Drama (January 27, 2015)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1474218245
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1474218245
- **Product Dimensions:** 5.1 x 0.3 x 7.8 inches



Liberian Girl. Play by Diana Nneka Atuona performed at The Royal Court Theatre, London UK
Photo: Alastair Muir

The father of my country was a slave

Jeffery Blount



Monday, February 15, 2016

Today is President's Day. Through ceremony and remembrance, we celebrate our commanders in chief with a particular emphasis on the first, George Washington. Most Americans refer to him as the father of our country, but not me. The father of my country was a slave. I may not know his name, but I feel him. I do not know the plantation on which he labored beyond reason, hope and dignity, but I am with him there. His contributions are substantial but they are buried. But I have a shovel, and I dig.

The earth I turn is rich, moist from tears. It easily gives way, as if weary from covering up the innumerable stories of the unheard.

After the father of my country made cotton king, he was promised 40 acres and a mule. After all, his drudgery accounted for more than half of his nation's exports and built the northern textile industry, U.S. banking and an extraordinary portion of the British economy. Who has his land? Where are his mules?

Eight U.S. presidents went to Harvard. Five went to Yale. The schools educated 21 Supreme Court justices. The father of my country helped make that all possible. Profits off my father's life of unyielding toil funded Harvard Law School's first endowed chair. Profits from the trading of his and other precious human lives helped found Yale University and

provided for the first scholarship there and the construction of the university's library. A continued sizable portion of our nation's brain trust is groomed for leadership at the expense of the father of my country.

I live in our nation's capital. So did the father of my country. He worked without any choice in the quarries near the city, digging stone and hauling it, carrying the lumber that would be fashioned into the great symbols of our nation. The father of my country represented half of the workforce that built the Capitol and the White House. He was not paid, but his owner was. I look up at the statue atop the Capitol's grand dome, and I think about Philip Reid, the slave who helped to create it. The figure is called Freedom. Such ironies are never lost on the father of my country.

The father of my country is man and woman, field hand and mammy. The father of my country has many names. Most of these names we will never know. But I am proud of the ones — Sojourner Truth, Nat Turner, Harriet Jacobs and others — that we do. Turner and the Sons of Liberty fought for the same thing, did they not? Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Freedom.

The father of my country was not a slave owner. He did not name someone else's child, or rape or maim without conscience. He did not sell lives. He built a nation.

I love my country and, like my father before me, I would put on a uniform and defend her if necessary. Still, like the father of my country, I am not blind.

Credits: the Washington Post ran this piece. This is a rerun.

Jeffrey Blount is a Washington writer and television news director.

Unscripted

Cher Antoinette



February is celebrated as the month of Love and reaches its climax on the fourteenth day, Valentine's Day. Even though we all know that this day is among the list of overly commercialized events that merchandisers take advantage of, we still LOVE the idea of that one special day where we take the time to show our loved ones how much they mean to us. So to you the readers of KWEE I give you my love and gratitude in the form of poetry taken from my 2013 anthology – My Soul Cries. Oh, by the way, its's also my birthday this month (smiles!!!).

I LOVE YOUR WAY

I love the way
your hand
glances across my skin
the way
your fingers caress
each fine silken hair
standing erect
in the follicles of my back
the way
eastern breezes
embrace
as your whispered breath
cools
falling
on the curved arch of my spine

I love the way
you hold me close



rocking
swaying
perfect rhythm
to the beat
of evening's lullaby
bodies bathed by moonlight's
kiss

I love the way
you push up to me
lips nuzzled
against my neck
my heart
jumping
skipping
playing hop-sotch
in my chest
pounding
so loud
you feel it
thru my back

I love the way
you make me forget
the crickets
the whistling frogs
who watch
from the windowsill
moths flitting
circling
gecko reaching
belly flattened on the screen
heart beating
synced with mine
ours

the tick tock
of the analog clock
the siren's wail
high, low, fading

labored breathing
escalating
sliding into
murmurs
sound of lids
closing
darkness
midnight's symphony

toes exposed
intertwined
arms, legs, fingers, minds,
finds comfort
peace in sleep
each night
I love your way

WE LIVE, WE LOVE, AS ONE

wide smiles heart swells warm
my lover calls my name
I am complete now

strong embrace dark knight
free me from my troubled
space
I am at peace now

secure in our strength
lives entwined loves
interlocked
We walk hand in hand

LUNA AMORE

perfect sphere silver
tidal pull ebb low and far
time for sand in toes

hot body cool waters
dipping toes in frothy waves
sizzling couple re-engage

eastern breezes touch skin
swollen mouths cool souls
refreshed
love burns hot again

SERANADE

So mellifluous oh
Whispers soft as silken thread
Rhapsody sings true

© "Architects of Destiny" 2014
– Cher-Antoinette

Cher-Antoinette is a mother of two, a forensic scientist and is a multiple silver and bronze award winner at the Barbados National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA) in Photography, Visual Arts and Literary Arts.

Cher-can be contacted at cher.insight@gmail.com and has a social media presence at <https://www.facebook.com/CorbinGirl> <http://cher-insight.blogspot.com> and on Twitter @cherinsight Instagram @CherAntoinetteStudio



Writer | Publisher | Project Manager

Ophelia S. Lewis

KEEP IN TOUCH



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Contact Person: **Elma Shaw**

Author Interview 3

SPOTLIGHT AUTHOR

EBIDENYEFA T. NIKADE

talk show host/advocate



Ebidenyefa Tarila Nikade

Thank you for taking this time with us, we appreciate it. Let us kick off by you telling us a little about you- childhood, education, upbringing etc. Tell us a little about yourself

My name is Ebidenyefa Tarila Nikade.

I hail from Ukubie in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. Nigeria.

I'm married to Dr. Tarila Nikade and we are blessed with a daughter. I'm an educationist every other day but I go to the studio on Wednesdays to host my personality programme 'Creative xpressions' creating a platform for creative entrepreneurs to express their creativity.

I don't have a favourite colour. I love blue, green and red a lot.

Why writing?

I just wanted to tell a story and express my thoughts in poetry. I found myself writing .

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

Books authored by Pst Sam Adeyemi, Bishop David and Pst Faith Oyedepo and David Abioye. Also, Chimamanda Adichie's 'Purple Hibiscus' and Sefi Atta's 'Ev'erything Good will Come'.

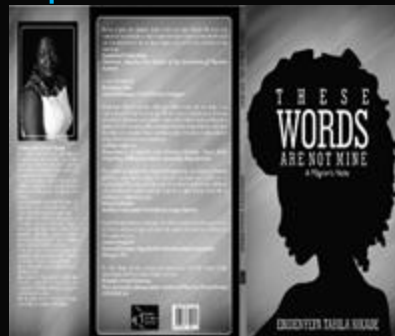
How do you approach your work?

I have my writing seasons. Those seasons are sacred to me. I lock myself indoors and flow with the inspiration.

What themes do you find yourself exploring in your work?

Themes centred on Rape, Abuse, Motherhood, and Teen related issues.

Tell us a little about your book[s]- characters, themes, inspiration etc.



My first book, *These Words Are Not Mine; A Pilgrim's Note* is a collection of poems majorly themed

around womanhood, love, life and rape.

It is a collection of 58 poems in five parts.



Vulnerable Chronicles is actually my first work but my second published book.

It tells the story of growing up mirroring the lives of four girls- Ayaere, Angela, Daniella and Pauline who were an awesome foursome in school but began to disintegrate shortly after secondary school to tow their varied destinies.

Ayaere gets raped by a supposed friend and later discovers she's not alone in the abuse trauma as Angela has had a bout of incest; being defiled by her uncle at nine.

Together they bemoan their chastity which was hitherto their maiden treasure.

It's a book that highlights the life before the abuse, the abuse and life after the abuse.

What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?

Growing up! As a parenting/teen and sex education coach, I discovered that a lot of parents grow up and forget that they were once

teenagers hence they expect their teens to just grow up and behave; forgetting that the teen age is a delicate and precarious one that should be handled with caution.

So I decided to take parents back to their days in secondary school ,in reminisce .

For the youngsters, it was the desire to relate with them at their own level. They need to know that they are not alone in their traumatic predicament.



Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?

Yes. That there is a life after the abuse and for the abuser, the consequences of any action is inevitable. That's why I croon #boysdontrape

An abused child or rape victim can have a normal life

Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?

That my books are written mainly to console and comfort hurting people. They serve as healing balm, bringing hope to, especially the sexually abused.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

There is something that distinguishes your writing from others, find it.

What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?

Making your life count By Faith Oyedepo, Sexual Purity by Tekena Ikoko. White Places by Merit Gogo-fyneface

Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.

My latest news! Liberian Literary Magazine. Book tours and promotions are subject to my work schedule but a book launch is in view -April 1,2016

What are your current projects?

I'm currently working on my third book- Tales of Motherhood, Spelling Bee Bayelsa and my pet project, an endrape campaign #boysdontrape; girlsarediamonds!

Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

None yet.

Any last words?

A writer's reward is not necessarily in the financial proceeds from his/her writing but the impact on the reader.

Ebidenyefa Tarila Nikade

is a wife, mother, Educationist, Parenting/Teen/Sex Education counsellor, broadcast Journalist and public speaker who believes in creating platforms for young people to express themselves.

Ebidenyefa who authored 'These Words Are Not Mine' a collection of poems majorly themed around womanhood, is passionate about women and children, especially the sexually abused; hence her writings are centred on such themes. She runs an anti-rape campaign #boysdontrape;

girlsarediamonds' as part of activities to curb the rape menace.

Ebidenyefa holds a B.ed and MA from the then Rivers State College of Education and University of Port Harcourt respectively.

She is the presenter of an award winning Radio Programme' Creative Xpressions on Gloryfm97.1.

She is a staff of Bayelsa Senior Secondary Board, presently working with Ekpetiama Comprehensive High School Tombia, Yenagoa, and is also the Organizer of 'Spelling Bee Bayelsa' targeted at improving the vocabulary of children and encouraging the spirit of sportsmanship.

She is a member of Yenagoa Book Club.

She presently lives in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, with her husband and daughter.

Vulnerable Chronicles is her debut novel.

She lives in Yenagoa with her husband and daughter.

February's Puzzle

Showcasing Author's Titles

Find their last names hidden in the puzzle

N Q M Z L M N R N F R F G P V K K K T F F F D G G Z
 R Z K C X K R I L E T N V P M A P F L W C X K C R R
 D A O U S T K D P N I R R F L K N M H N M C D L G N
 N H M N P A U O A L J X E D V T R G A P N T L P G M
 S A W V D N O M P Y K G R N P M Y W E I S K O O R B
 T R K E B C R I W R C R O E P A K R T L L G W Q N L
 A R J A N E K S A L M C O R S N I K L E O L M T F D
 E I R L M C K M E R D Q M U L T B V L L N U I N L L
 K S M M M P O B G W Y D P D D O K L K A Y J W W D D
 W Q I S H E R I F X O Y W A T I C C L X R M G R M C
 C Z J L M W D R N D M R K L Z N G A T W G N J V X R
 A L C O T T Q I D W N R R T L E W O L L E F G N O L
 N Z R N T Y M Z C N L T F U Z T S V J P V K Y T K K
 N A M T I H W W A K R M E M B T T R L S B O C A J W
 K O L K M E Y E R T I B N A T E A E D Q B N M K L W
 N V Z J M H G L X H K N S M S L E P T E X N P L M A
 D L M Q G X F M B T A O S E P D Y R D R W E N L K R
 U M X T X N U E K M Y R L O K T A F J H O H J H K I
 D F U M J R S O Q C Z N D L N R O L E N Y F U T Q E
 U P X L K M U P V W T W G Y I R A A E C O G R Z K B
 L E R L U S D X O M S Q G B D E T P B N H S T Z L I
 V L W T S B A T H Q O V H M L L K N P E K L N E K R
 G B W O L M A K K J R Y M N E T J R S L Q Y W H N F
 D L M F L J H H E Z F P N Y M Q K C N R T I K N O F
 F M K W F T B C H P V M O U S T D W Q H S L N B N J
 G U E S T X L Z C L J Z H K X N O L A M A Y N M P F

Nene Tetteh - Yesterday
 Richard - The Last Train
 Louisa May - Thoreau's Flute
 Maya - Still I Rise
 Cher - My Soul Cries
 Ruth - The Witches Song
 Gwendolyn - We Real Cool
 C. Patrick - Black Christian Republicanism
 Anton Pavlovich - The Bet
 Helen - The House at Sugar Beach
 Dr. Bette - Blueprints for Success
 Emily - Hope Is The Thing With Feathers
 Momoh - Harrowing December
 Matenneh-Rose - Never Grow Old
 Caroline - Imperial Reckoning
 D. Othniel - Portor Portor

Robert - Stopping By Woods
 Varney - A Whole New Level
 Edgar Albert - Hard Luck
 Thomas - Drummer Hodge
 Yu-jay - Liberia's Son
 Langston - I Too
 W. W. - The Monkey's Paw
 Henry - Asking For Trouble
 (John - When I Have Fears
 Rudyard - If
 Jack - Small is Beautiful
 Martin - Liberia's Future On The Rope
 Nvasekie - Going to War for America
 Ophelia - Liberia Unscrambled
 Henry - The Old Bridge At Florence
 Katharina - My Liberian Memoirs
 Bai T - Ebony Dust

Richard - Prophecy
 Anony - Why I Broke the Stove
 Berenice - Purple Honey Lips
 Pablo - If You Forget Me
 Edidenyefa Tarila - Vulnerable Chronicles
 Lekpele - I Wouldn't Be If You Didn't
 Bessie Rayner - Absence
 Edgar Allen - A Dream Within A Dream
 Althea - We Do Not Cry For Meat
 Vamba - Bound to Secrecy
 Sara - Advice To A Girl
 Aken - Living Through Poetry
 Phyllis - The Death of a young lady
 Walt - A Noiseless Patient Spider
 Carlos Williams - Young Woman At A Window
 William Butler - A Crazy Girl

Answers To Last Month's Puzzle

Liberian Tapestry

Created by Ophelia Lewis
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Solution: Liberia Tapestry

MJ TY XK MWDCWDPSKKSAMLA INOMERECORXP
 CRTPT XUNZJRJEXSRAEGDAEQNXBCNRG
 GMMMNDWKQNYVZTGDTTDJOETGBAGBAGH
 LACCXCENADCGXCOCALJKQKNJKNTZHDZG
 QYRNWYLYKTBJMBJQALRGDHRMDMYNMGZ
 RLBTHMTCOXOBNHLEALOMRWRKZPMLGF
 EYTKIVTBHUGNDDLKFEEMALJUBVNXGKMY
 LNKHTSTHEBGOAKFVARRBMLNRLBNHKY
 LOPREATDVAJAHNIJGOHAMLGLODEVILT
 ESAJCHLSENDKRAFQVTOEBWARCSJDROM
 TNRUHSLAHHKNSPLYRGRTOQMDCRMNDVUH
 YHGLAMTWWKKEAUAWSRSAYROI PZNRTE
 ROBILMZOAALOFCDUBZEMYBDOGSRPGDR
 OJOEK TZMRRLANIKEBIKAJAGHFBUQCOO
 TIRNPKANTILATLALRBSNSHLRFRMMOO
 SABDMRUSMAEIBTEWASGSNANMNRENARM
 EBAEACQSLJOSSAOEACARPLBKT XWPJST
 RAREYDGLANVBACLBAEOMLTCVQNBETI
 TKCYRBDNAHOYDNGAMROSZAPKXYCMDHA
 ANLRPTALRIKNDADAWRTRKBYZLNNDNEB
 EAANNBSVTPAAMCLSTAJIFRMRMTNAEAM
 HTYTGO LAESBZNAGLOLLVSELJWNDNKTR
 TMRENDBT DCTVROAFMN MAYTXLNDTCBER
 OMLGFOJIMZXUBRKYGGGCMESPPPVETR
 MGS HRVAFKBT LUZRREKRSXPNRRTTNJVPM
 OPZCRRRGDLP TTRADITIONALSYMBODHQ
 LYAJBQHKUMLRKSNGI SEDLANOITIDART
 FFLKLQYCOUNWJFLOMOTOGBAWMTDNDVT
 FRVJDM MCCJHL LGCLSUMEROIKLOPCLWJ
 TDJALBAGNHAMI OBSTFARCDNASTRADMM
 NNORALTRADITIONRNQTMJQNNTMLTWRJ

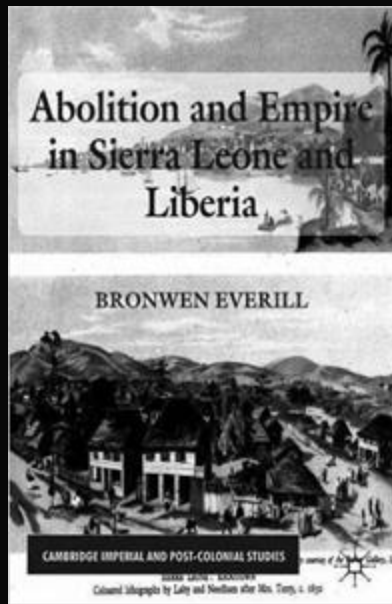
Book Review

Reviewed by: Christine Whyte

The past year has seen an embarrassment of riches for those interested in the history of slavery and abolition. The complexity of connections between the British Empire and anti-slavery have come to the fore-front, while in the US the cinema releases of Lincoln and Django

Unchained have launched a new popular interest in the legacies of North American slavery and abolition.(1) A new volume on the origins of international law in the abolition of the slave trade highlighted the transnational nature not only of the humanitarian movements, but also of government activity and pro-slavery lobbying.(2) The history of the abolition movement has benefited from the 'new imperial history' approach, which takes empire and colony in a 'single analytical field', first proposed in 1951 by George Balandier, but elucidated and popularised in recent years by Catherine Hall, Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, among others. These 'new imperial histories' have intersected with some of the preoccupations of identity politics, producing interest in how ideas about race, class and gender were constructed in empires.

The publication of *Abolition and Empire*, which takes a comparative approach to the colonisation schemes of the 19th-century British and American abolition movements, is therefore timely, and this detailed archival study fits



well into this landscape. The broad topic of the study, anti-slavery colonisation, is not a new one but, as Bronwen Everill argues, the entanglements and competition between Liberia and Sierra Leone have gone almost unmentioned – despite their geographical and political proximity. Her main argument for re-examining their 19th-century history together is the importance of the interaction between the two settlements as well as their impact on metropolitan politics. Neither settlement fits

comfortably into the traditional imperial conceptual framework: Sierra Leone 'has frequently been treated as an anomaly', while Liberia 'is generally rejected outright' (p. 7). These fascinating questions: why these colonies have been left out of imperialist narratives and how (or indeed, if) they fit into the story of empire are, necessarily, glossed over in one page. Further study of these theoretical questions would add greatly to our understanding of the role of the 'humanitarian interventions' like these colonies in African history.

The main research questions of the study reflect the interest of the past two decades in reworking imperial history to demonstrate the impact of the colony on metropole (p. 8).(3) Everill's questions add complexity and nuance to the idea of a monolithic anti-slavery movement, asking how Sierra Leone and Liberia served to fracture consensus and intensify competition amongst anti-slavery networks. These questions are served well by the comparative approach, which emphasises the interaction between the colonies.

The second approach explicitly laid out in the introduction is Frederick Cooper's suggestion to use processes of 'identification', rather than the more flat and worn-out concept of identity, to explain how the settlers shaped their respective colonies.(4) More detail on this section would have been appreciated – since Cooper and Brubaker's article first came out, academics have tiptoed around the minefield of identity, but more precision is needed about what 'processes of identification' means and how it substantially differs from simply analysing identity.

In terms of source material, students and researchers of West African colonisation will find much useful guidance. The book is based on the author's PhD thesis, with some minor changes to the content and structure. The bibliography reflects her empirical approach, and while the secondary literature list may seem less weighty than comparable volumes, the four-country archival range and extensive use of published primary material more than compensate. Her archival work took advantage of the wide range of resources available in American archives on Liberia, to balance the sad lack of archival material in Liberia itself following the civil war. Both local newspapers and letter collections are also used to give an idea of settlers' views. The wide range of archives consulted reflects the diversity of actors and contexts touched on throughout the work, which ranges freely from Freetown to Washington, from Monrovia to London and even as far as Texas. The difficulty in this kind of wide-ranging approach lies in the danger of obscuring or eliding elements of resistance, co-operation and interaction between different groups within the settlements, and Everill takes time to make it clear that she focuses solely on those who 'do engage with the imperial government'. This is particularly pertinent in the case of Liberia,

where relations between settlers and local communities were especially fraught in ways that had long-lasting repercussions. However, this declaration left the question hanging of what happened with those who, like West Indian Pan-Africanist Edward Blyden, rejected the Western models of the colonisers and sought a more 'authentic' African lifestyle or experience.

The work is divided into two sections: 'Foundations' and 'Interactions'. The first three chapters detail the make-up of 'Transatlantic anti-slavery networks', the emergence of 'An African middle class' in the early colonial history of Sierra Leone and the first, less directed, emergence of settlements of 'Americans in Africa' in Liberia. The second section is structured more ambitiously. Its four chapters each deal with both colonies on the themes of 'The abolitionist propaganda war', 'Slave trade interventionism', 'Commercial rivalry and Liberian independence' and 'Arguments for colonial expansion'. These two sections together cover the period from 1822 to 1861 in detail. A brief epilogue looks forward to '1861 and beyond', and lays out some future research questions and potential areas of study.

The first chapter on 'Transatlantic anti-slavery networks' sets the scene for the rest of the book by highlighting the conflicts between the British and American projects in West Africa. She emphasises the economic threat a second colony posed to Freetown, though the level of antipathy towards the American settlers seems extraordinary, for example, she quotes the Sierra Leone Gazette as early as 1822 as condemning the 'fatuity' of both the settlers and their American sponsors (p. 29). Further conflicts emerged from religious, organisational and personal differences between the two

competing networks. The strange geographic proximity of the two colonies, Everill argues, is due both to this rivalry and pre-existing networks of knowledge and trade.

The next two chapters sketch a picture of settler life in the early period of each colony. Chapter two, 'An African middle class' largely confirms, in great archival detail, the image of the Freetown Afro-Victorian described by Christopher Fyfe and others. She defines this emerging 'Sierra Leonean identity' as 'pulling together elements of British identity with an amalgamation of West and Central African traditions' (p. 33–4). At the same time, the Freetown colonists are characterised as developing 'a hardening of moral expectations linked to a fear of "going native"' (p. 41). This fear, surely exacerbated by the shared skin colour of the settlers and the indigenous population, led Freetonians to an obsession with the outward performance of 'Britishness', which Everill demonstrates through the use of material culture evidence. The British imperial values of 'civilisation, Christianity and commerce' were then institutionalised and passed on to new settlers through a well-organised and near-seamless educational system and used to apply pressure to the British government.

The third chapter, 'Americans in Africa', applies the same kind of institutional and material culture analysis to settler society in Liberia. Unfortunately, due to the relative paucity of sources in comparison, the coverage is necessarily less detailed. The chapter also emphasises the contingent and ad-hoc nature of many of the Liberian assertions of cultural difference in Africa – most strikingly in the dearth of colony-wide organisation of education or missionary work. From the first section, then, the reader gets an

impression of two settlements differing not only in metropolitan goals, but also in the incipient settler culture and society. Later, in the concluding paragraph, Everill refers to these as 'cultures of modernity that were exported and invented in colonial settings' (p. 180).

Part two of the volume launches into the more detailed comparative work. 'The abolitionist propaganda war' concentrates on the metropolitan anti-slavery movements, emphasising the relative strength and cohesion in Britain, compared with the fracturing of opinion in the United States. American anti-slavery activists were forced to confront the risks of abolition in their own territory, while the British, more removed from the practice of slavery, were able to grant more effective support to the settlement. The failure of the American Colonisation Society (ACS) to truly comprehend the regional differences within the United States provides an insight into the unevenness, not just of imperial spaces, but within the metropole itself. This is mirrored, though less sharply by the differences with the UK, between English, Scottish and Irish concerns.

Chapter five, 'Slave trade interventionism', launches from the successes of 1838, the abolition of apprenticeships in the West Indies for the British anti-slavery movement and the ratification of a new constitution and unification of most state colonies in Liberia. The early 1840s also marked a period of renewed interest in slavery and the slave trade in Africa and the peak of Anglo-American co-operation. The curious case of the Amistad forms a central part of this chapter. Everill rightly observes how impotent the ACS appears to be when the Mende captives from the Amistad are re-settled in Sierra Leone, instead of Liberia. This resettlement accompanied the founding of the Mende Mission,

later taken over by the American Missionary Association. The chapter concludes with a seeming contradiction, that anti-slavery activity on the ground was revived 'as a result of the negative public perceptions of their efficacy' (p. 127). This renewed vigour and energy would ultimately lead to increased tensions between the colonies.

In 'Commercial rivalry and Liberian independence', Everill shows how the diverted focus away from African intervention on the part of metropolitan actors, led to new, vibrant roles for settler leaders. From the outset, anti-slavery colonies were intended to demonstrate the benefits of 'legitimate trade' with Africans over the evil trade in Africans. The proximity and overlapping aims of Liberia and Sierra Leone naturally led to conflicts between traders. However, while Sierra Leoneans remained firmly enmeshed in the networks of the British Empire, attending British universities, working up through the ranks of British trading houses and serving ably in the Colonial Service; Liberians faced a period of rejection from the United States, prompted by a perceived lack of strategic value and exacerbated by growing racial tensions. This slow dis-coupling was officially cemented by the Liberian declaration of independence in 1847. Again, the key theme of the work is clear, the development of distinct settler cultures in Sierra Leone and Liberia had a profound impact on the development of the colonies, their relationships with their respective metropolises and practices of anti-slavery.

The final substantive chapter, 'Arguments for colonial expansion', highlights the extraordinary efforts of Sierra Leoneans to expand the British imperial remit in West Africa. These expansionist and imperialist visions were accompanied by even more organised and strenuous

demands for rights and privileges within the colony. Meanwhile, in Liberia, the declaration of independence seems to have marked continuity rather than dramatic change. While Liberian and American missionaries also embarked on expansionist missions in surrounding areas, the Liberian government was stymied by its lack of formal recognition on the international level. Again, the complex rivalries and divergent interests in the colonisation movement in the US would result in a lack of effective support for the settlers. Only in their trade efforts did they receive backing from Americans and, in that, they often lost out to British competition.

In general, section two offers a strong argument regarding the diverging fortunes of Sierra Leone and Liberia, which manages to incorporate metropolitan debate as well as the anti-slavery practice and settler activities in West Africa. Everill's overall thesis, that a comparison of Liberia and Sierra Leone reveals important lessons about the relationship between imperialism and humanitarianism, is convincingly argued and this work not only builds on the current revival of interest in the settlements but also provides a launch for further investigations into humanitarian intervention, civilising missions and the role of empire in the history of the African diaspora. The power of this argument, though, may overwhelm some of the interesting and somewhat contradictory detail of the period. While, in the epilogue, she emphasises the role of 'civilisation, commerce and Christianity' as the metaphorical tools of imperialism for both Sierra Leone and Liberia, the evidence suggests that not only was Christianity a 'broad church' but the role of Islam and animist religions also figured prominently. The promotion of Islam, particularly, would form an interesting thread with which to

link these histories to later Pan-African discourses. Civilisation is also an umbrella term, and further attention to the different meanings of the word is needed. Reading the work, the reader also might wish to add 'education' to the tool-box. New work on the history of transfers of knowledge about education, child-care and training for work and domestic labour could provide useful insights.

The work touches on a number of areas of concern to students and teachers of history. It adds to a growing historical literature on humanitarian intervention in Africa, sheds new light on the early expansion of Western colonial powers and, rightfully, focuses attention on settler communities that existed outside the standard mould of white, elite adventurers. For those reasons it would work perfectly as a course reading on imperial history and the history of humanitarianism as well as in West African studies. For students of African history audience, though, it would need to be carefully contextualised in the broader historiography of Sierra Leone and Liberia, to balance the emphasis on settlers at the expense of indigenous inhabitants. Some of the notions of 'hybridity', for example in religious belief, need to be handled with care in order to prevent the presentation of African ideas as an unchanging 'traditional' backdrop to the action in Freetown and Monrovia.

In proposing his co-operative scheme to the enslaved Django in *Django Unchained*, German bounty hunter Dr. King Schulze says, 'On one hand I despise slavery, on the other hand I need your help, if you're not in a position to refuse, all the better.' His words illustrate the, sometimes murky, relationship between humanitarian impulse and selfish expediency. The abolitionist cause in the mid-19th century was no different. So many people's lives were touched by slavery in the Atlantic World,

that it comes as no surprise that the motivations and goals of abolitionists were complex and contingent. Breaking down the rigid differentiation between 'humanitarian' and 'imperial' should not mean resorting to apologetics of empire, but rather doing the most important work of history, explaining seeming contradictions and restoring the vibrant detail of the past. *Abolition and Empire* makes precisely this type of intervention, and illuminates 'the ideological, nationalistic, and practical forces that precluded international co-operation' (p. 180) on the universal moral imperative to end slavery and the slave trade.

Book: *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia*

Author: Bronwen Everill

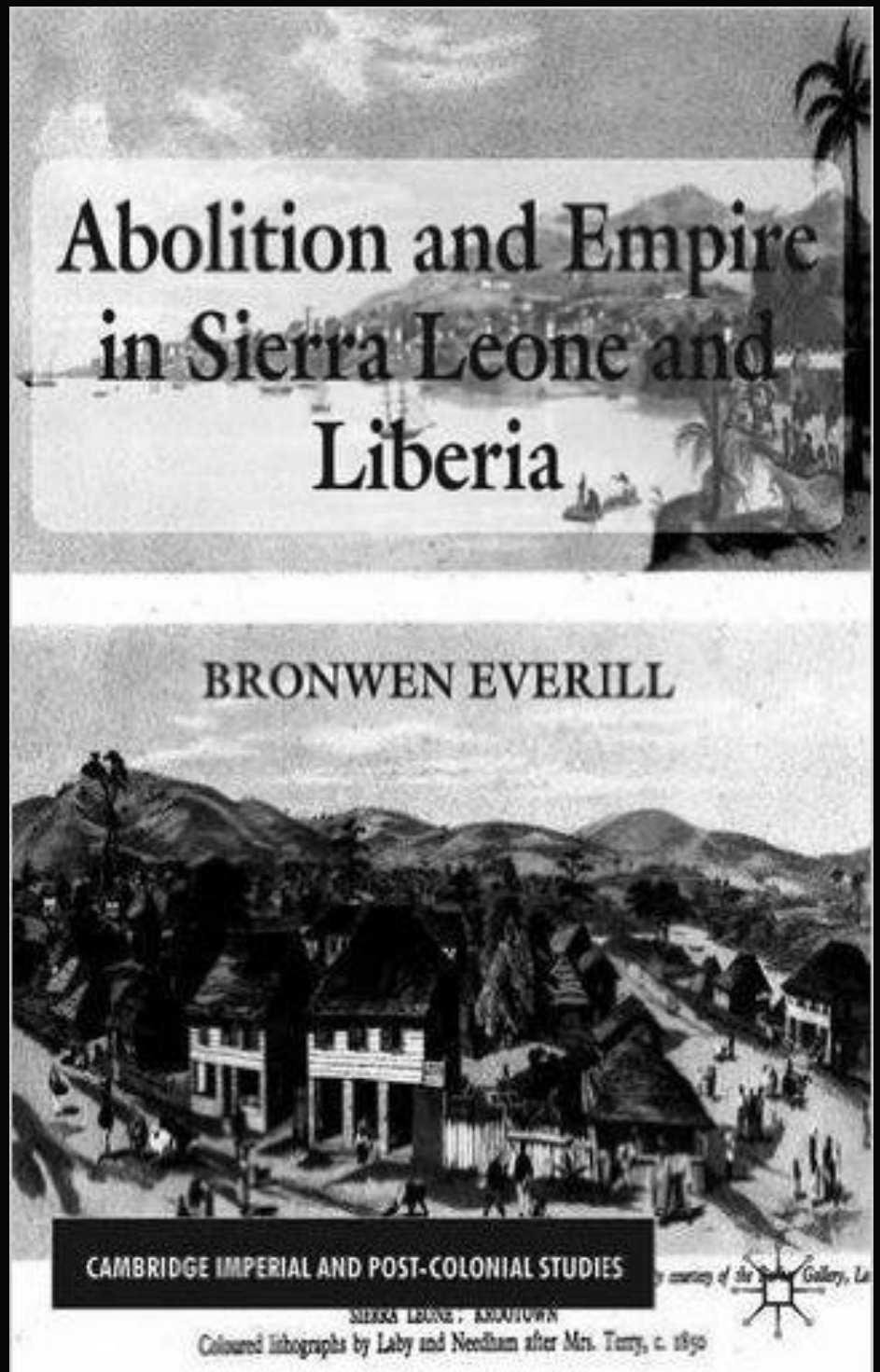
Publisher: Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, ISBN: 978-1137028679; 248 pp.; Price: £55.00

Reviewer: Ms. Christine Whyte

Citation: Ms. Christine Whyte, review of *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia*, (review no. 1385)

<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1385>

Date accessed: 5 February, 2016



University of Liberia First STEM Symposium

Emmet Dennis & Preston Tulay

On January 8, 2016, the University of Liberia – T.J.R. Faulkner College of Science and Technology held its first Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Symposium on the Fendall Campus. The STEM Symposium was a showcase of the love and understanding of the natural and applied sciences by students in the eight major departments within the college.

The STEM Symposium presenters were students from the Biology and Chemistry Departments representing Team Science, students from the Civil and Electrical Engineering Departments representing Team Technology, students from the Geology and Mining Engineering Departments representing Team Engineering, students from the Mathematics and Physics Departments representing Team Mathematics, and selected students from the eight departments representing Team Convergence.

Each team delivered an audio and visual presentation detailing background and definition of their subject areas; the importance and benefits to the individual, the society, and for the national development of Liberia. They also had to give a persuasive analysis and display of available science and engineering educational support materials or resources to encourage members of the audience, especially primary school and high school students and females to develop interest and do well in the science courses early on in school, and dare them to consider advance education in the natural and applied sciences. Each team detailed some general and specific challenges faced by university students in the sciences everywhere, especially students at the University of Liberia T.J.R. Faulkner College of Science and Technology. The Convergence Team representing the eight departments in the College of Science and Technology summarized the links and interdependence of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and emphasized the very

importance of STEM to the individual and national development of Liberia, while providing some salient recommendation to the challenges detailed by the other teams and also lauding the efforts and supports to the engineering department by international donors like the USAID Excellence for Higher Education for Liberian Development (EHELD) project. Following their presentations, the presenters entertained questions and answers from the well inspired student audience.

The auditorium was filled to capacity, with a standing room crowd on both the sides and back room of the auditorium. There were excited and enthused students represented from some primary and secondary schools, as well as the University of Liberia students, staff, faculty members, the College of Science and Technology Dean, Associate Deans, and Department Chairpersons. They were also enlightened by faculty guest speaker Dr. Eugene Shannon (Geologist) who spoke on the topic Climate Change and its Impact on Liberia – observing that Liberia is currently in

the dry-season, but because of imminent climate change, the residence of Monrovia or the entire country is experiencing two days of nonstop rain in this dry season with expectation of more rain to come. Faculty guest speaker Mr. D. K. Johnson (Associate Dean, Dept. of Mathematics) discussed mathematics as the universal language and made the audience aware that we all speak this universal language in our everyday activities. He also challenged all, especially the female students to increase the numbers of those speaking the language of mathematics in order to enhance their participation in the science and engineering fields, and to help solidify their roles in the national development of Liberia.

Dr. Ophelia Weeks, Dean of the T.J.R. Faulkner College of Science and Technology thanked the students and expressed profound appreciation for a job well done by all of the student presenters. She welcomed and thanked the primary and high school students and their chaperons for being present. There were five schools with 85 students represented from 1) the

Lott Cary Mission School from Brewerville, 2) Len Miller High School from Monrovia, 3) Confidence School from the Cooper Farm Fendall Community, 4) School of Prime System in Paynesville City, and 5) Rick Institute in Brewerville. The Dean also thanked all the professors present and encourage everyone both teachers and students to become active supporters of STEM education and encourage others to do so in the interest of adequate participation in the sciences by all and for the development of Liberia.

The day long first University of Liberia STEM Symposium ended with the five hundred plus students in attendance taking full advantage of item 13 on the agenda commonly referred to in Liberia as the “food to eat time”. STEM in Liberia, the first of its kind, was the most well attended academic event I have ever attended since coming back to Liberia four years ago. And believe me, I have attended several educational events – but this one was special since it was planned and implemented by students. The students at the University of Liberia, especially the ones in the

natural and applied sciences have what it takes to be the best students in Liberia. All they need is our show of interest and commitment to support them in their pursuit of academic excellence.

Primary sponsors of the STEM Symposium were:



Dr. Emmett C. Dennis (Southern Connecticut State University Mathematics Department) and



Mr. Preston M. Tulay (University of Liberia Engineering Division)

The STEM Dare to ALL Liberians here and abroad.

Contact:
STEMDareYou@yahoo.com

Cross Section of Photos

Team Science (Biology and Chemistry)



Cross-Section of Students



Students - Far left center Dean Weeks, and Dr. E Shannon (Prof. Geology Dept.)



Students



From left: Dean Weeks, Dr. Shannon, Prof. K. Johnson, and High School Students.



Team Convergence - Presenters.



Audience - Claps for presenters.



Team Technology - Presenters



Students



Team Technology - Presenters



Students



Recognizing the High School Students



Students



Team Science



Lunch with High School Students



Students



Dr. Chris Dennis with few organizing students.

Author Interview 4 SPOTLIGHT AUTHOR

MARY WILLIAMS



Mary Williams

Thank you for taking this time with us, we appreciate it. Let us kick off by you telling us a little about you- childhood, education, upbringing etc. Tell us a little about yourself

I was born, raised and live in Washington State, USA. (With a few detours in between). I have a degree in photography. It never became a profession, but it is a wonderful hobby. I've been a rancher, a bartender, a salesperson and an aspiring writer.

I have a loving and supportive family. You need one when you decide to spend hours and hours alone, in the basement, with nothing but you and your computer.

2) Why writing?

I'm probably like ninety percent of all writers. It is something I've always wanted to do. Actually doing it was another matter. I started dozens of times, but nothing came out besides the occasional incoherent sentence. On a good day I might get a paragraph. There was no flow or ideas. Until one day it all changed. I can't say why. A shift in my

chemical make-up? Was I hit by lightning and didn't remember? As unlikely as that seems, it would at least be an answer. All I know is that I sat down and the words came to me. Many, many words. And, thankfully, they haven't stopped.

3) What books have most influenced your life/career most?

I write romance novels. Proudly and unapologetically. Though not a romance in the traditional sense of the word, Little Women was the first book that made an impact on me. The love and support between these women has carried over into my books. I believe in strong women. Friendship is the big theme in my Harper Falls series. It is the bedrock of that holds the stories together.

4) How do you approach your work?

With determination and dedication. It has truly become my passion and I take it seriously. Every day, without fail, I write something. Sometimes ten pages, sometimes a few paragraphs. I refuse to slack. Fail to write for one day and it could easily lead to two. I won't go back to regretting the books I haven't written. The stories are in me. I can't wait to get them out.

5) What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?

The strength of women and how important it is to support not undercut another woman. It isn't the center theme of every book, but it always creeps in. A supportive mother figure, a friend.

Somewhere in the book, you find women helping women.

6) Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.

I started with the idea of a series set in a small town much like the one I grew up in. Harper Falls is fictional. Affluent. Quirky. An idealized version of my hometown. The idea for the series came to me from a song called If You Only Knew. This turned out to be book three. Teenagers who are torn apart because one is trying to save the other from hurt and heartache. Ten years later, in order to win back the woman he has always loved, he has to tell her the truth. Why did he break her heart? If she only knew, would she understand and give him a second chance? The other books flowed from that one idea. Three women, friends from childhood, who left Harper Falls to pursue their dreams. Now they are back—where they truly belong.

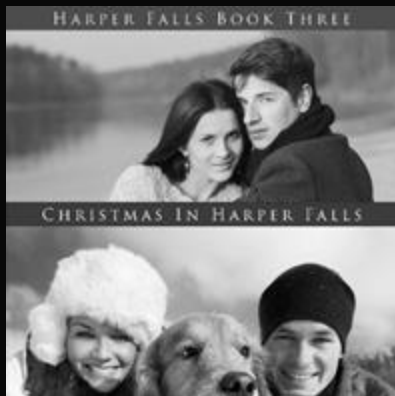


My second book series, Hollywood Legends, stems from my love of movies. The characters in Harper Falls were always quoting from one movie or another. I decided it would be fun to set some books in the film industry. **DREAMING WITH A BROKEN HEART**, book one, is about a

woman who has lived with abuse - both mental and physical. It her journey to happiness that centers the book.

My **One Pass Away** series taps into my love of sports. The setting is the NFL. **AFTER THE RAIN** is the story of a man who suffered a terrible injury and lost his dream. Now he's getting a second chance.

I love books that deal with overcoming some kind of adversity against all odds. Add a sexy romance, and I'm all in.



7) *What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?[1]*

Too often, I read books where women are the victim. She waits around to be rescued. None of my women are passive. They find a way to be the heroine, not the sidekick. And definitely not the victim.

8) *Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?*

These are love stories. It is never about having sex. It is about connecting with another human being on a deep level. I have no problem with racier books, but that isn't what I write. Yes, you will find love scenes - emphasis on the love.



9) *Do you have any advice for other writers?*

It's never too late. And don't sweat the small stuff. Sales will fluctuate. Don't worry about that. Finding your audience takes time. Writing should be about the love of telling the story. The rest is important, but it can't be the reason you write.

10) *What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?*

I adore **J.D. Robb**. She combines a futuristic setting with a police procedural and a kick-ass heroine in **Eve Dallas**. Then there is **Roarke**. The greatest romance hero ever written (in this writer's opinion). I just read her latest and it is great, as always.

11) *Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.*

Book one of my Harper Falls series, **IF I LOVED YOU**, is available for only \$0.99 at all major ebook outlets. Subscribers to my newsletter receive exclusive giveaways and contents. It is my way of saying thank you for their amazing support. You can sign up for my newsletter at my website, maryjwilliams.net

12) *What are your current projects?* I am writing the second book in my **One Pass Away** series.

13) *Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?* I am reading **My Dear Liberia** by **Ophelia S. Lewis**. I love the heart she puts into her prose and I am enjoying getting to know about Liberia from her perspective.

14) *Any last words?*

Thank you for allowing me to tell you a little about myself and my work.



Mary Williams

Want to know how to motivate yourself to write a book? Have your favorite football team lose the Super Bowl. On the last play. With an interception. The next day I was so depressed I tuned out all media. No TV, no internet, no newspapers--nothing. And I started to write. I'm still writing. As you can see, a little motivation can do wonders. Football will play a big part in a series of books due out next year. And since I'm writing the ending? No interceptions. Guaranteed.

Forgotten Heroes

William D. Coleman

(year of birth: 1842-- died 1908)



..

Vice President from (Jan. 1892-Nov. 1896)

David was the second son of Kentucky to become Vice President in Liberia. And as if by coincidence he also ascended to the post after his boss left office. This time, unlike Russell, his boss died in office, making it a first in Liberian history for a sitting president to die in office. This unique piece of Liberian history these two Kentucky sons share.

William was born in Fayette County, Kentucky in 1842. When they migrated to Liberia he was almost in his early teens. His mother was a widow but she traveled with her four kids. They arrived in Liberia in 1853 and settled in Clay Ashland a settlement bought by the Kentucky Colonization Society.

It is a tribute to the man's hard work that he rose so far. He came to the colony poor and broke, he could hardly continue his education like other regular kids. He had to abandon the process as a youth and find other means to live. He was at one time a carpenter, then master workman,

farmer, and finally a successful trader. When he got hold of some money, he went back to school but this time in the evenings and at night. He went on to be a lawyer and worked along with C. King long before either of them became President.

He entered politics and rose through the ranks. He was a staunch member of the TWP a party of which he was the Chairman. He was elected to the House as a Representative of Montserrado in 1877 and was selected by members of that body to become its Speaker. In the next election, he ran for the Senate and won. It was this position he was holding when he was elected as Vice President in 1892 (the 13th VP).

Somehow, he made some powerful enemies over policy when he became President. When his interior policy of peaceful negotiation failed, he opted to use force. This put him at odds with some powerful men in his cabinet and outside of government. Most notable of these were A. Barclay, C. D. B. King, D. E. Howard, and G. W. Gibson Surprisingly though each of his most noted opponents went on to become Presidents themselves. Each of these men took the opportunity of the moment and spoke out against Coleman's policy.

An interesting aspect of the Coleman saga was the fact that his Vice President (J. J. Ross) had died in office. It can be remembered that a succession problem arose in 1883 and since there were no laws then on succession confusion arose. However, this time the law existed but politics took primacy. The rightful successor should have been the Speaker Robert H. Marshall. However, Marshall had too many powerful enemies in the TWP -amongst his colleagues, he was not much favored. In the end, the Legislature amended the succession laws (in effect denying Robert the chance to become President) to favor the Secretary of State who happened to be Gibson. By changing the order of succession, the lawmakers got rid of Marshall and the confusion that arose. This made Gibson (then 70 years old) the oldest person to hold the presidency.

Coleman left office but remained active in politics and switched parties and ran as the candidate for the People's Party in 1901, 1903 and 1905 but fail to beat his old party.

Liberian Proverbs

- Fly was living before dog ear cut.
- Monkey works, baboon draws.
- The walkabout child can't see their mother's grave.
- A snake cannot give birth to a worm.
- A lizard cannot give birth to alligator.
- Rotten banana can break an old lady's teeth if her fortune turns.
- A Goat cannot sell cassava leaf.
- A monkey cannot sell bananas.
- The lion is not the best person to safe guard a bush meat.
- The turtle wants to box, but it's hands are too short.
- A billygoat sweats, but because of the hair, people can't see it.
- Through the crab, the crawfish drinks water.
- A town trap is not for the rat alone.
- A child's that says the mother won't sleep, will also not sleep.
- An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb.
- A person who pays respect to the great paves the way for his/her own greatness.
- A monkey that decides to play with an alligator, can't live long.
- Only a fool jumps from the pot into a frying pan and thinks it is colder.
- A dog that makes sacrifices for its maters, never goes hungry.
- Do not look where you fell, instead, look where you slipped.
- A child that washes his/her hands clean, he could eat with the elders.
- A wise man does not test the depth of a river with both of his feet at the same time .
- When a crazy persons runs away with your clothes while you are in the bathroom, don't run after him/her naked.
- A bird and a fish can get marry but where will they live?
- You should never play in the river and tease the alligator.
- For the deer to circumcise leopard is not the thing, but who will hold it down?
- Little drops make a mighty ocean.
- If you don't know where you came from, how can you know where you are going?
- A hen that turns it behind (butt) to the wind, is certainly looking for disgrace.
- The hen that never stays at home can't expect her chicks to be safe. .
- A visitor is a guest only for two days. On the third day give him or her a hoe.
- Education is like an ocean, it has no end.

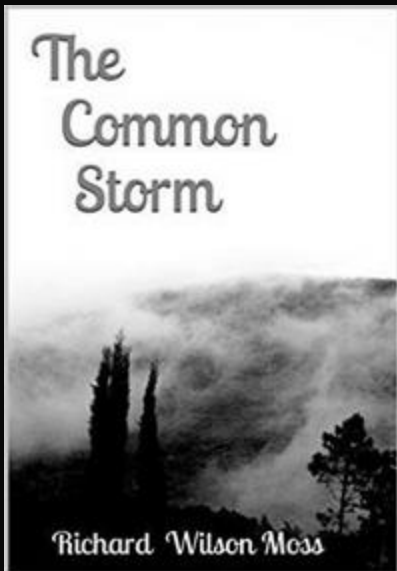
Excerpted from Proverbs From Liberia

'Twas Brillig

Richard Wilson Moss

Gift

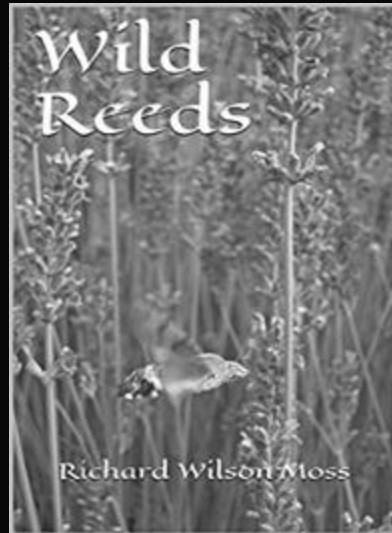
Come and let us give, as
 we gather
 The heart of god, its blood
 The core of the earth, its
 iron
 The sky, composite of sun
 Its darkness.
 Unsightly is the time
 Of the day weighed
 On scales fixed, the false
 weight
 We give to passing hours.
 Like rainbow bursts of
 raindrops
 On service station islands
 In heavy showers
 Let us give to barren fields
 Of our years
 Its different flowers.



Movements Of Cigarettes

Taking my next to last drag
 Walked to bum another
 smoke
 But avoid asking
 Those I shun
 And those I admire

Wanted to invoke fire
 Of none.
 Begged a cigarette
 From an insolent child
 Skipping to his grave
 Across parking lot gravel
 Worked long ago from
 mountains
 Crawling across the world
 At one inch a year.



Diamonds Are Lies

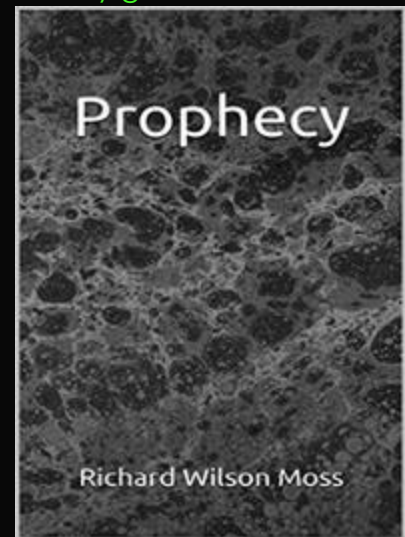
Diamonds are lies
 Nothing sparkles
 Not even stars
 Nothing gleams
 Not high lighted crystal
 glasses
 On blue shelves behind
 dark bars
 This luster of things
 In guarded eyes
 Is the fracture of beauty
 By hammers of ashes.

Although I Am God

Although I am god
 I rake leaves and trim trees
 And then rest.
 I wash clothes and dishes
 I change the bed
 And lie down on clean
 sheets
 To die alone

The White Man

Watched the Iroquois
 dance
 Around fires and told the
 tourists
 Would soon join in
 Listen for the big drum
 And there it is
 But I hesitate, undecided
 Remain seated beyond the
 ring
 Passion within demanded I
 dance
 Dance around fires, leap
 and turn
 Before the flame
 Before it burns out
 But I dare not
 Oh, by god, I dare not.



Our People

When it rained the sinks
 were still dry
 In camp houses, dark work
 horses
 Left in damp fields, they
 shook
 Their bronze heads almost all
 at once
 Fires flared and smoked from
 leaks
 In rusted stovepipes
 And those inside, our
 people
 Had suppers of bread and
 beans.



Where are they now, our people
 Are they simply rust of iron dreams?
 No, I have seen them, I have
 They pick up litter in the malls
 They sell things, they are these things sold
 Our people, our kind, us I have seen them.

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Two of the Seven Adventures

As one of the seven adventures
 To help earn the bright orange
 Tiger badge
 I chose to climb
 A tall, american oak
 In backyard woods
 My mother watching, the den mother
 To verify, stopwatch in hand
 It had to be timed
 This feat of woodsmanship
 And I looked down only once
 At the worry in her face.
 Unable to afford the uniform
 I had only the blue and white scarf
 And had to teach myself how to fold just so
 And tie around my neck
 (In Russia of that time
 Scouts wore a red scarf
 And earned red badges)
 Soon I was pretty good at it
 And very proud.
 This was one of the adventures
 But later I knew it was only

The first noose
 Designed for my departure.

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Richard Moss is the author of numerous full length poetry books. You can find his books on every major platform.



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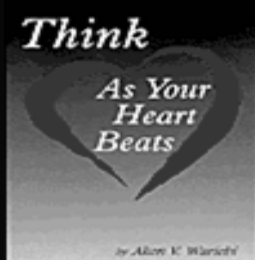
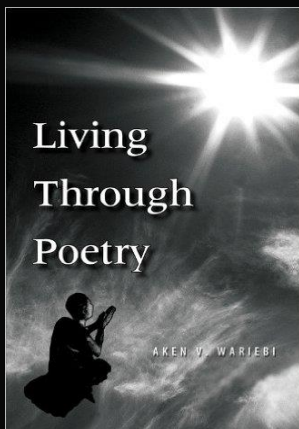
Aken-bai's- A Flow of Thoughts



Aken Vivian Wariebi is an avid reader and writer and the latter began more frequently since grade school. A graduate from both Rutgers and Syracuse Universities, respectively, she never left a book nor a

pen behind. Today, a Poet and Advocate for the most vulnerable, Ms. Wariebi finds joy in inspiring and helping others in any positive way that she can. Some say her Poems speak to their heart and soul and for Ms. Wariebi life speaks to her pen. Others describe her writings as life short stories. No matter how it is felt, Ms. Wariebi speaks to your heart and soul from hers and hopes that all can find a little more light along their journey of life in her work as she has in her writings. She is originally from Monrovia, Liberia and currently resides in the USA.

www.facebook.com/inspirewithlove



God has you where you belong

Oh soul, God has you where you belong
In his bosom to be strong
To be safe and sound
To me protected from harm
To be elevated
To be saved in his arms

He has you where you belong
Right now this moment
Be happy and sing a song
One of gratitude, one that shows you're strong
Because he has you where you belong

Take a minute to praise him
For all that he has done
Take a moment to thank him
To you he belongs

Take a moment to worship
Pray and be grateful still
For you are his precious jewel
And you are what he wants

Draw nearer to him
since where you belong
Is where you should be at this very moment
No quarrels nor questions asked
No anger or genocide

Accept the gift of placement
Since where you belong is where you
must be for your space, your path, your time to
be well spent
Where your victory may start or continue and
you will be a winner
at the end



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Herbert Logerie

Mignonne, I Can' Leave

Mignonne, my honey, I
cannot leave
Without you
Darling, there is no doubt
that I live
Every day for you.

Let me reveal
How I deeply feel
The emotions are real
And my thoughts are
surreal.

I love you more
Than you can imagine
My heart is sore
Come to soothe my pain.

Darling, my shooshoo, I
will not leave
Without you
Mimi, I am staying, I want
to live
And breathe for you.

I love everything
About you
The way you sing
The way you groove.

Sweet honeydew
I love how you swallow
my lips
How you blandly move
Your tongue, arms, and
hips.

I enjoy being in your
company
I love everything about
your body

You're ravishing, classy
and sassy
You're stunning, strong
and sexy.

Mignonne, my Venus, I
cannot leave
This world without you
Darling, my sweetheart, I
happily live
Every day for you.

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Chocolate And Vanilla, Nice Dream

A beautiful Sunday
afternoon
Amid the festival breeze
of a silent moon
You and I did enjoy a few
scoops
Of our favorite dessert;
oops, oops
We hugged, kissed and
teased each other
And uneventfully realized
when mixed together
Chocolate and vanilla
esthetically are wonderful
Miraculous, incredible,
visual and sensual.

Voluminous kisses,
voluptuous hugs
Velvety waves and
intermittent moaning
Of ecstasy until the next
morning

Surprisingly, mosquitoes
and bugs
Stayed away, where we
became one
Darling! We do know how
to have fun
Chocolate and vanilla
are two vital ingredients
That nourished bodies
and soul, soil and plants.

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Herbert Logerie

is the author of several
collections of poems.
Alumnus of: 'l'Ecole de
Saint Joseph'; 'the
College of Roger
Anglade'in Haiti;
Montclair High School of
New Jersey;
and Rutgers, the State
University of New Jersey,
USA.

He studied briefly at Laval
University, Quebec,
Canada. He's a Haitian-
American.

He started writing at a
very early age. My
poems are in French,
English, and Creole; I
must confess that most of
my beauteous and
romantic poems are in
my books.

<http://www.poemhunter.com/herbert-logerie>

<http://www.poesie.webnet.fr/vospoemes/logerie>

Matenneh-Rose L. Dunbar

Power In The Voice

Speak respectfully
Speak out of pain
Speak to violence
Speak to register
Speak for marriage
Speak for vision
Speak for liberty
Speak for rights
Speak over failure
Speak to live well
Speak to disasters
Speak to weak hearts
Speak to slowly within
Speak new heights
Speak much health
Speak long life too
Speak and claim all

THOSE LITTLE SMILES

They are formed from deep inside our chests
They paint a curvy line on our outer expression
They fill our void with warm and happy thoughts
They dance on our brains to stir it right to action
They trigger our weaken souls to stand strong
They wipe the stain of letdowns off you cheeks
Those long little smiles

They present in the time of deep hurt and setbacks
They cushion the effect of burn emotions and shame
They rise high the faltering ebbs we rustle with daily
They like the blown wind erases all the bitter taste
They are moments words and tongue cannot cast
They sculpt a lifted cheek that says I am so thankful
Those long little smiles

Jack Kolkmeier

Mending The Fence Day

today is mending the fence day
walking along the barriers between us and
them
and plugging holes along the system
designed
to let in or keep out something or someone
you have a particular attitude about both
then and now

here is the opening where the possum
sneaks through
late at night
to come and eat the cat food on the patio
and walk around in a daze a bit of a fool
and it's where the big black snake sticks its
head out
looking around for the danger of me with
shovel in hand
and slithers into the garden growing or
fallow
to find its morsel there to ensnare and
swallow
we let that entrance stay
allowing for an occasional fool or slimy one
be that as it may

and then there are the creeping vines and
shrubs and bushes
innocent at first
but when left alone
they find an obsession with taking over
and under
and all around for that matter
sometimes they fool you with their aromatic
beauty
and their lilting curves and siren ways
and some are truly that in their splendor of
hues
and their bonnets of orange and blues and
reds
but then there are those with thorns
that prick you till you bleed
and a drop of your own blood
colors the sister seeds buried along the way

but then there are the birds that perch on
top
who come and sit and watch and sing
they come from different tribes and climes
orioles doves jays thrushes and crows
singing their own songs of joy and love
and whispering secret bird migration sounds
birds of a feather who like this stop
until the hawk watching from above
swoops in to leave but a pool of wings
ominously fluttering birdless on the ground

these are some of the pains and blisters
of mending your fences

People of a Different Mind

the process of thinking along the lines of
obtuseness
and differences of opinion
or
simply having regard for a different
perception
involves a subtle shift of view
because seeing is not always believing
seeing can even be deceptive
refracting reality into prismatic fragments
that crash against our daily discourses
and strangle strange angles of light
that can redirect a sight line into another
version
of reality in a different drop of dimension
where down is up
and uptown is downtown
and bad is goodly and good is badly
this is the way it can sometimes come to
pass
by us

when strolling in the neighborhood
with people of a different mind

Jack Kolkmeier a Delray Beach-FL resident,
writes poetry amongst other things. His
chapbook, Higher Glyphs coming out soon

Josiah F. Joekai, Jr.

The Courage to Love

There are times we are emotionally captured,
Captured by affection and adoration,
An uncontrollable feeling that consumes us,
It is inherent, it is deep-down within,
It is invisible, it is called love.
When it strikes, everyone falls prey to it,
The young, the old and the disabled
deserve love,
Even the poor, the rich and the dejected
yearn for love,
Indeed, everyone has the courage to love.

Oh for sure, we all have the courage to love,
Love is contagious, love is dynamic.
Love affects every living soul, male and female,
Whoever, wherever, whenever and however,
Wonderfully unraveling its many faces.
Even in good times and in bad times,
Love is kind, love is sweet and love is peaceful,
Oh yes, love is fair, love is just and love is cheerful.
No matter the circumstance,
Everyone has the courage to love.

But amazingly, Love does not exist in isolation,
No! Not in vacuum, not in space, not in cosmos,
Love is deeply rooted in our hearts,
Love is carried within our inner world silently,
But enslaved by our own consciences,
Love faces undeserving consequences,
Love is robbed and love is duped.
As carriers and agents of love,
We are victims of fear, pain and disaster.

When love is raided, we are weakened,
Yes, weakened by arrogance and by pomposity,
Facing our enemies, we lack the courage to confront,

And then, hate and deceit invade the heart.
When trust and confidence are subjects of the lips,
Hopelessness and despair become alternatives,
But when love rekindles, we regain strength,
We are revived and we are resuscitated,
Oh yes, we become fearless and we become resolute,
For love heals, love reunites and love transforms,
Love is humble and love is understanding,
Indeed, it takes courage to love.

Josiah Joekai Jr. is a public servant and development practitioner with more than a decade of professional service, particularly, in the areas of education management, democracy and governance.

He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Liberia in political science with emphasis in International Relations and is currently a graduate candidate in Conflict Transformation at the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation at the University of Liberia.

He is also the author of three books.

The Cove

Rivulet
ripples
mellifluously
surreptitiously
lilt.
Conflating
into
a
demure
lagoon

Keith57

Emily, Oh, Emily

Quiet, sentimental Emily,
Who wrote so beautifully,
Yet tenderly touched everyone's heart,
With the beauty and humor,
About which she wrote.

Her garden of flowers,
That brushed the air,
With its gentle, yet sweet scent.
Blanketing the earth with her words.

Emily paused to enjoy,
The simple things that life offered,
While silently writing,
What her heart revealed.

Emily, Oh, Emily,
You gave to us a trove of beauty,
Written to be shared,
With all the world,
As you now watch from above.

Each rosebud speaks your name,
As it unfurls its soft petals,
Releasing a unique scent,
While the birds take-in that aromatic air,
On their travels.

The gentleness of the woods,
Where birds perch,
High up in the trees,
Watching our every move,
To ensure we capture all beauty.

©December 31, 2015 by Lee Christine Brownlee

Lee Christine Brownlee



is a freelance writer and poet. Was born and raised in San Francisco. She was married and raised her two children, Christine and Timothy, now grown adults. Lee worked in the San Francisco Bay Area for

many years before moving to New York to write and study poetry, most recently attending the Gotham Writer's Workshop in New York. Her supportive

husband, Dick, passed away due to cancer in 2009, as she began her poetry journey. Now bringing together a lifetime of memories and dreams, beauty and sadness, putting it all together in poetry to share with others. Other than writing, she enjoys the outdoors, gardening, and cooking, taking in all the art and beauty New York City has to offer.

Lee expects her book of poetry titled *Heartfelt Emotions* to be released in March 2016, published by Tate Publishing.

Written by 14 yr. old Daughter

"He has cancer. "
The words ingrained in my head
This couldn't happen
Those words I would dread

I cried and I cried
I fell to the ground
People were talking to me
But I didn't hear a sound

We got in the car
And drove to the vet
I couldn't bear the pain
He couldn't die yet

The room was cold
And so was he
I laid down next to him
"Not today, please?"

I wanted more years
I needed more time
You think you have problems?
Too bad, get in line

I laid in my bed
With my thoughts astray
I knew our separation wouldn't be long
I will see him again one day

Oscar, his name
There was nothing we could do
I just need to say
Oscar, I miss you

Wanted to get thoughts for my daughter's budding muse. Any help for her is appreciated. Thank you. [sad poems](#) © keith osborne 2016

Keith57

Gifts of the Masters

In this segment, we run poems from some of the greatest African American poets that ever lived.

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Primer For Blacks

Primer For Blacks

Blackness
is a title,
is a preoccupation,
is a commitment Blacks
are to comprehend—
and in which you are
to perceive your Glory.

The conscious shout
of all that is white is
"It's Great to be white."

The conscious shout
of the slack in Black is
'It's Great to be white.'

Thus all that is white
has white strength and yours.

The word Black
has geographic power,
pulls everybody in:
Blacks here—
Blacks there—

Blacks wherever they may be.
And remember, you Blacks, what they told
you—

remember your Education:
"one Drop—one Drop
maketh a brand new Black."

Oh mighty Drop.

_____And because they have given us
kindly
so many more of our people

Blackness
stretches over the land.
Blackness—
the Black of it,
the rust-red of it,
the milk and cream of it,

the tan and yellow-tan of it,
the deep-brown middle-brown high-brown
of it,
the "olive" and ochre of it—
Blackness
marches on.

The huge, the pungent object of our prime
out-ride
is to Comprehend,
to salute and to Love the fact that we are
Black,
which is our "ultimate Reality,"
which is the lone ground
from which our meaningful metamorphosis,
from which our prosperous staccato,
group or individual, can rise.

Self-shriveled Blacks.
Begin with gaunt and marvelous concession:
YOU are our costume and our fundamental
bone.

All of you—
you COLORED ones,
you NEGRO ones,
those of you who proudly cry
"I'm half INDIan"—
those of you who proudly screech
"I'VE got the blood of George WASHINGTON
in MY veins"
ALL of you—
you proper Blacks,
you half-Blacks,
you wish-I-weren't Blacks,
Niggeroes and Niggerenes.

The Change

Tony Hoagland, 1953

The season turned like the page of a glossy
fashion magazine.
In the park the daffodils came up
and in the parking lot, the new car models
were on parade.

Sometimes I think that nothing really
changes—

The young girls show the latest crop of
tummies,
and the new president proves that he's a
dummy.

But remember the tennis match we
watched that year?
Right before our eyes

some tough little European blonde
pitted against that big black girl from
Alabama,
cornrowed hair and Zulu bangles on her
arms,
some outrageous name like Vondella
Aphrodite—

We were just walking past the lounge
and got sucked in by the screen above the
bar,
and pretty soon
we started to care about who won,

putting ourselves into each whacked return
as the volleys went back and forth and
back
like some contest between
the old world and the new,

and you loved her complicated hair
and her to-hell-with-everybody stare,
and I,
I couldn't help wanting
the white girl to come out on top,
because she was one of my kind, my tribe,
with her pale eyes and thin lips

and because the black girl was so big
and so black,
so unintimidated,

hitting the ball like she was driving the
Emancipation Proclamation
down Abraham Lincoln's throat,
like she wasn't asking anyone's permission.

There are moments when history
passes you so close
you can smell its breath,
you can reach your hand out

and touch it on its flank,

and I don't watch all that much
Masterpiece Theatre,
but I could feel the end of an era there

in front of those bleachers full of people
in their Sunday tennis-watching clothes

as that black girl wore down her opponent
then kicked her ass good
then thumped her once more for good
measure

and stood up on the red clay court
holding her racket over her head like a
guitar.

And the little pink judge
had to climb up on a box
to put the ribbon on her neck,
still managing to smile into the camera flash,
even though everything was changing

and in fact, everything had already
changed—

Poof, remember? It was the twentieth
century almost gone,
we were there,

and when we went to put it back where it
belonged,
it was past us
and we were changed.

Ka 'Ba

Imamu Amiri Baraka

A closed window looks down
on a dirty courtyard, and black people
call across or scream or walk across
defying physics in the stream of their will

Our world is full of sound
Our world is more lovely than anyone's
tho we suffer, and kill each other
and sometimes fail to walk the air

We are beautiful people
with african imaginations
full of masks and dances and swelling
chants

with african eyes, and noses, and arms,
though we sprawl in grey chains in a place
full of winters, when what we want is sun.

We have been captured,
brothers. And we labor
to make our getaway, into
the ancient image, into a new

correspondence with ourselves
and our black family. We read magic
now we need the spells, to rise up
return, destroy, and create. What will be

the sacred words?

Million Man March

Maya Angelo

The night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

Under a dead blue sky on a distant beach,
I was dragged by my braids just beyond
your reach.

Your hands were tied, your mouth was
bound,

You couldn't even call out my name.
You were helpless and so was I,
But unfortunately throughout history
You've worn a badge of shame.

I say, the night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark
And the walls have been steep.

But today, voices of old spirit sound
Speak to us in words profound,
Across the years, across the centuries,
Across the oceans, and across the seas.

They say, draw near to one another,
Save your race.
You have been paid for in a distant place,
The old ones remind us that slavery's chains
Have paid for our freedom again and
again.

The night has been long,
The pit has been deep,
The night has been dark,
And the walls have been steep.

The hells we have lived through and live
through still,
Have sharpened our senses and toughened
our will.

The night has been long.
This morning I look through your anguish
Right down to your soul.
I know that with each other we can make
ourselves whole.
I look through the posture and past your
disguise,
And see your love for family in your big
brown eyes.

I say, clap hands and let's come together in
this meeting ground,

I say, clap hands and let's deal with each
other with love,
I say, clap hands and let us get from the low
road of indifference,

Clap hands, let us come together and
reveal our hearts,

Let us come together and revise our spirits,
Let us come together and cleanse our souls,

Clap hands, let's leave the preening
And stop imposter our own history.
Clap hands, call the spirits back from the
ledge,

Clap hands, let us invite joy into our
conversation,

Courtesy into our bedrooms,
Gentleness into our kitchen,
Care into our nursery.

The ancestors remind us, despite the history
of pain

We are a going-on people who will rise
again.

And still we rise.

I, Too, Sing America

Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
 But I laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong.

 Tomorrow,
 I'll be at the table
When company comes.
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to me,
 "Eat in the kitchen,"
 Then.

 Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed--

I, too, am America.

Adolescence II

Rita Dove

Although it is night, I sit in the bathroom,
 waiting.
Sweat prickles behind my knees, the baby-
 breasts are alert.
Venetian blinds slice up the moon; the tiles
 quiver in pale strips.

Then they come, the three seal men with
 eyes as round
 As dinner plates and eyelashes like
 sharpened tines.
They bring the scent of licorice. One sits in
 the washbowl,

One on the bathtub edge; one leans
 against the door.
"Can you feel it yet?" they whisper.
I don't know what to say, again. They
 chuckle,

Patting their sleek bodies with their hands.
 "Well, maybe next time." And they rise,
Glittering like pools of ink under moonlight,

And vanish. I clutch at the ragged holes
They leave behind, here at the edge of
 darkness.
Night rests like a ball of fur on my tongue.

Lift Every Voice and Sing

James Weldon Johnson

Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past
 has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present
 has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had
 died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers
 sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears
 has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through
 the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is
 cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the
 way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God,
where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land

Morning Poem #1

Wanda Phipps

floating gray web pages
step into a crowded vacuum
clouds sweating

there's a gauzy scrim
in front of my eyes
between me and
the rest of the world

Afternoon birds

Heritage

Claude McKay

Now the dead past seems vividly alive,
And in this shining moment I can trace,
Down through the vista of the vanished
years,
Your faun-like form, your fond elusive face.
And suddenly some secret spring's released,
And unawares a riddle is revealed,
And I can read like large, black-lettered
print,
What seemed before a thing forever sealed.

I know the magic word, the graceful
thought,
The song that fills me in my lucid hours,
The spirit's wine that thrills my body through,
And makes me music-drunk, are yours, all
yours.

I cannot praise, for you have passed from
praise,
I have no tinted thoughts to paint you true;
But I can feel and I can write the word;
The best of me is but the least of you.

In Bondage

Claude McKay

I would be wandering in distant fields
Where man, and bird, and beast, lives
leisurely,
And the old earth is kind, and ever yields
Her goodly gifts to all her children free;
Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,
And boys and girls have time and space for
play
Before they come to years of
understanding--
Somewhere I would be singing, far away.
For life is greater than the thousand wars
Men wage for it in their insatiate lust,
And will remain like the eternal stars,
When all that shines to-day is drift and dust
But I am bound with you in your mean
graves,
O black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.

Poem Reaching For Something

Quincy Troupe

we walk through a calligraphy of hats slicing
off foreheads
ace-deuce cocked, they slant, razor sharp,
clean through imagination, our
spirits knee-deep in what we have forgotten
entrancing our bodies now to
dance, like enraptured water lilies
the rhythm in liquid strides of certain looks
eyeballs rippling through breezes
riffing choirs of trees, where a trillion slivers of
sunlight prance across
filigreeing leaves, a zillion voices of bamboo
reeds, green with summer
saxophone bursts, wrap themselves, like
transparent prisms of dew drops
around images, laced with pearls &
rhinestones, dreams
& perhaps it is through this decoding of
syllables that we learn speech
that sonorous river of broken mirrors carrying
our dreams

assaulted by pellets of raindrops, prisons of
words entrapping us
between parentheses — two bat wings
curving cynical smiles

still, there is something here, that, perhaps,
needs explaining
beyond the hopelessness of miles, the light
at the end of a midnight tunnel —
where some say a speeding train is bulleting
right at us —
so where do the tumbling words spend
themselves after they have spent
all meaning residing in the warehouse of
language, after they have slipped
from our lips, like skiers on ice slopes, strung
together words linking
themselves through smoke, where do the
symbols they carry
stop everything, put down roots, cleanse
themselves of everything
but clarity — though here eye might be
asking a little too much of any
poet's head, full as it were with double-
entendres

On Being Brought from Africa to America

Phillis Wheatley

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan
land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour
too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negro's, black as
Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

Feeling Fucked Up

Etheridge Knight

Lord she's gone done left me done packed
/ up and split
and I with no way to make her
come back and everywhere the world is
bare
bright bone white crystal sand glistens
dope death dead dying and jiving drove
her away made her take her laughter and
her smiles
and her softness and her midnight sighs--

Fuck Coltrane and music and clouds drifting
in the sky
fuck the sea and trees and the sky and birds
and alligators and all the animals that roam
the earth
fuck marx and mao fuck fidel and nkrumah
and
democracy and communism fuck smack
and pot
and red ripe tomatoes fuck joseph fuck
mary fuck
god jesus and all the disciples fuck fanon
nixon
and malcom fuck the revolution fuck
freedom fuck
the whole muthafucking thing
all i want now is my woman back
so my soul can sing

Masters and Master Works: On Black Male Poetics

Monday, February 15, 2016

Afaa Michael Weaver

Credits: Academy of America Poets and Poetr.org

Black Male Poetics as a title begs and defies definition. Langston Hughes set himself the task of being the architect of a culture's literature, a culture that developed against the antagonism of racism. In the Harlem Renaissance, some black artists were achieving the unthinkable, but on the whole, they were a curious subset in the eyes of the dominant culture. So does black male poetics suggest an examination of the obstacles in a black male poet's career? Perhaps. Does it suggest there is still a choice to be made regarding the role a black male poet should choose? Perhaps, but that implies the ideal of leadership, which is a problematic holdover from centuries of male domination. The black poetic tradition is defined, to a large extent, by the accomplishments of black women, accomplishments that never came to black men. Phyllis Wheatley published the first book. Gwendolyn Brooks received the first Pulitzer. Rita Dove became the first Poet Laureate of the United States. Hughes might have been the architect of the first half of the twentieth century, but the first major award for poetry went to Brooks at the end of those first fifty years. Brooks was encouraged by Hughes during a reception she attended with her mother as a teenager. Brooks notes in her autobiography just how significant that encouragement was to her.

So in a poetic tradition figured by racially-based political oppression and distinguished by the achievements made first by black women, what is a black male poetic? I would like to consider this question in terms of "Masters and Master Works," alluding to the tradition exemplified by Pound but referring to the black male poets Langston Hughes, Robert Hayden, and Jay Wright. Hughes believed in the necessity of affecting the whole of African-American culture in a manner echoing Joyce's annunciation in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Hayden arrives as the craftsman more concerned with his immediate and intimate connections in lyrical expression, and Wright resumes the role of speaker to a culture but to

the whole of human culture out of a spiritual wellspring that moves out of an African-American base to multiple cultural references in multilingual expressions. If we pose the question of what constitutes black male poetics, we might also offer a circuitous response in quoting the title by Wright, namely "What Is Beautiful."

In the first volume of his seminal biography of Hughes, Arnold Rampersad notes the poet's inability to express anger. Rather than do so, Hughes internalized the emotion until he became physically ill. That in conjunction with the fact that no one knew Hughes as a person speaks to the price of being an architect, a denial of intimacy to one's self for martyrdom in poetics. Had it been Rilke or Neruda, or even Stevens, we might have the poet's work as a suggested intimacy, but Hughes' self-denial was deeper. He opted to serve black folk and write out of his imaginative and empathic force, however accurate that might or might not have been to the people he observed. The lyric content he thus denied himself so he might experience giving love to black folk and enjoying whatever signs of adoration from reading audiences, however imaginary it might have been. It is too easy and simplistic to say that racism denied him lyrical expression as we really can only surmise what Hughes would have written had the quotient of freedom in American society during his lifetime been much higher than it was. He may not have had that gift. His gift instead might have been just what he gave to African-Americans, a hero's faith in all our ability to be creative, which translates as an enhancement of the will to live in a world that all too often would have us die.

Hughes subjected himself to a rigorous honesty as much as he could, and that challenge is part of a poet's life, no matter the race, ethnicity, or gender. Those who would parade a lack of talent as instead a self-chosen leadership role have, I argue, failed the test of this necessary and rigorous honesty, brutal as that test may be.

Langston Hughes was not pretentious about the tenor of his work. In choosing to be an architect, he had to imagine his role. That imagining is never accurate. All too often any poet will simply not know who cares whether he lifts pen to another page ever again in life. How else was Hughes to be famous given the exigencies of the blatant racial hatred during his lifetime? What are the requirements for fame today?

If American society has progressed, it should have done so such that fame has other requirements and, concurrently, poets such as Hayden who are more interested in simply being poets have more space to be, although there is no such thing as “simply” being a poet. Critical specificity requires more. Hayden and Wright are poets who write with less concern to the complexities of race and racism, and some consideration of this choice of theirs might illumine this idea of *black male poetics*.

Conversely, there is the black constituency that believes the urge to use one’s gifts with a focus on craft is whiteness and cultural betrayal to an ideal of blackness. This notion of betrayal is nonsensical and steeped in a lingering anxiety born in the space between black and white as evidence shows that the desire to have fame and greatness extend over the globe, even as they manifest differently according to cultural difference. The urge does live. The more sensible line of questioning out of all of this, I maintain, is whether we as citizens in an increasingly smaller and complex world need poets to continue with phallic notions of conquest inherent in greatness or aspire to newer notions of community, notions made possible by concentrating on one’s own development first, that kind of selflessness. The desire to fame and greatness is exploration of the opportunities to extend one’s self, which is not ascension to the sublime. If we look at the movement from Hughes to Hayden to Wright in this way we might see a journey toward selflessness in this thing we call black male poetics, selflessness as opposed to the quest for greatness that is more an earmark of patriarchy than anything.

Of the central conceits in Hughes’ work, that of the “genius child” is more useful to a discussion of the poet’s need for an audience and his desire for greatness in choosing such a challenging leadership role. As much a grieving over tragic failures in his relationships with his parents, a father who disliked black people and a mother who gave an envious rather than a supportive love, Hughes’ was orphaned into the vanguard of the black poetic tradition with an undeniable literary gift in a society ripe with blatant abuse and hatred of blacks and blackness. A poet has no way of shaping and shifting such tectonic plates surrounding his life, and he can be so unlucky as to be helpless over his own personality, that is personality and not self. I take the two entities to be quite different. In fact, I suppose personality to be an obstacle

to realization of self and that realization of self prerequisite to a poet’s ascension to the sublime.

Greatness can bloat and in that way enlarge the personality, or it can lead to a distillation of the same.

So Hughes’ petitioned America, his white family, for membership in poems such as “I, Too,” where he writes “They’ll see how beautiful I am/And be ashamed—.” Forty years later, the strategy of shaming America would be abandoned by many poets who saw it better to arm the culture and engage in constructive combat, however metaphorical, rather than constructive conversation. The 60s afforded a perverse path to fame, which is to say poets were caught in the nuclear breaking open of over three centuries of separation and cast into this space of supposed opportunity that was as much confusing as it was exciting. The shift in generations is often full of the kind of anxiety where the young people cannot readily assume strategies set forth for them by their elders because the elders could not see the societal shifts in which they themselves were often unconscious participants.

One of the pinnacles of Hughes’ work as a leader, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” contains his prophesy of a self-confident poet arising from the masses to be the first manifestation of the great black poet. However, Hughes could not foresee the birth of an entire generation of poets from the working classes as a result of opportunities afforded their parents and thus themselves by the post-war industrial boom of the 1940s, the tireless work of A. Phillip Randolph and others, and, of course, the Brown decision. Whereas postal workers had been a solid line in the black middle class despite working class appearances, the 1950s would see the rise of the children of sharecroppers whose families flooded America’s major cities as late as the 1960s. All this was beyond Hughes’ vision, and the inability of most people to fully comprehend this at the time that it was happening left black male poets to once again consider leadership as greatness.

Considering the level of confusion at that time in American history, leadership seemed the only logical choice for several of the key players.

The word “perverse” might apply to the 60s literary circumstance for black men as per Hughes’ legacy. Societal pressures created such an enormous anxiety that the composure needed to maintain Hughes’ genteel positioning was nigh impossible. In the wake of the illusory opening

of the gates and the illusory “freeing” of black people, such genteel demeanor looked too much like whiteness. Poets moved to cradle the culture in their arms. It was a time of actual combat, the police and military in gun battles in black neighborhoods, helicopters overhead, black children shot dead in the streets, underscored by Johnson’s deployment of a unit of the U.S. Airborne soldiers to Detroit in 1967. Poets born in the late nineteen sixties and afterwards, who are now in their mid to late 30s and early 40s can only imagine this history, and that experiential gap makes for some of the current anxiety.

The 60s contained a literary moment that was *perverse* inasmuch as the choices made by these revolutionary poets made them famous, a fame that troubled and confused them more than it excited and fulfilled them, a cruel fate.

Hayden made different choices. Born thirteen years before the publication of *The Weary Blues*, Hayden was approaching his sixties in the 1960s, a poet with his feet firmly planted in the fields of craft. If his work invoked shame in the dominant culture’s literary community, it was due more to the power of his craft, poems well-wrought, carefully conceived and painstakingly revised. There is the classic photograph of Hayden in his very thick eyeglasses as he examines a poem during the time that he was the first black consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress, a position that later became U.S. Poet Laureate, to be assumed by Rita Dove two decades later.

In what seems to be a supreme understanding of charity, Hayden constructed “Middle Passage,” the African-American epic commemorating the African holocaust. With a publication date of 1962, this towering poem is the annunciation of a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. Hayden approaches the subject with a courageous forgiveness and a level of self-awareness not available to Hughes, whose forgiveness was evident but troubled, mired in the tragedy of his childhood. “Those Winter Sundays” is a balm for Hughes’ terrible wounding. As an adopted child, Hayden had a more concrete break perhaps. Whatever the interstices of his mind, it gave us “Middle Passage.”

“You cannot stare that hatred down,” he writes. Hatred is a terrible and seductive force, and the younger poets who surrounded Hayden in the 60s had to hold this force in their hands, as one would hold a fire. Earlier in that same section of the poem Hayden writes, “...the dark

ships, the dark ships move/their bright ironical names/like jests of kindness on a murderer’s mouth.” The 60s was likewise a time where irony was raised to exponential dimensions, and only one gesture could have a predictable outcome. Hatred brought more hatred, and the quality of the writing was sacrificed as much as Hughes sacrificed his chances for genuine love and intimacy in his personal life.

Hayden had no pretensions to leadership. He simply wanted to write, but there is never such a thing as simply wanting to write, or simply wanting to be a man. Hayden was crucified by some of the younger revolutionaries, but to some degree it was only in effigy as Hayden would never be bound actually to anyone’s cross. As much as some of these revolutionary poets wanted a Cultural Revolution of their own, it was not possible in America, another and completely “other” country. Although Mao’s little red book was popular in the sixties, the sixties’ activist poets had little access to a realistic understanding of Marxism, let alone China’s specific and unique problems.

Despite their different choices, Hughes and Hayden had one thing in common. They loved living the life of the poet. No matter his political consciousness, Hughes saw himself as a poet and artist, and his life is a blessing still unattainable to many living poets, namely enjoying a life based on one’s writings, sans teaching with its limitations and yet full of all the excitement and indeed romance of that life, the travel, the joy of being in the midst of exciting times. When it comes to living in exciting times, we are all bound to history’s roulette wheel of chance.

Jay Wright lives another life of the poet. In the 20 years that I have had the privilege of knowing him, I have made several meccas to his private home, full as it is with books and all the matter one would expect the most erudite living African-American poet to possess, all in the most overwhelming lack of pretension. Respectfully, I refrain from any surmise about his inner life and take minor liberties in discussing his work as it pertains to my exploration of what this thing might be, *black male poetics*.

In an early interview in *Callaloo*, Wright commented that if black poets have any “mission” it is a spiritual one. I offer that as insight alongside what I know to be his aversion to envisioning reality along the lines of race. It is, therefore, a bit of an entanglement to include his work in this essay, but I take the risk. Wright’s opus has been my primary mentoring light over these twenty years. My meditations on

the works of Jay Wright and Sharon Olds have been my guides through my own project.

One of the few contemporary poets who still subscribe to the ideal of masterworks, Wright's poetic project is conceived in total, which is to say he moves along a path to the completion of a work as a painter or sculptor or composer might organize his various opuses around a core piece or set of principles. This is in opposition to the poem by poem investigations of confessional and more solipsistic projects, or the silly mistake of writing to trends and thus chasing stardom. The masterworks ideal requires an envisioning or omniscience that can consume a lesser poet.

For example, Wright explains his series "Love's Dozen" as the reconstitution of love in the world, a global project. Wright's graduate preparation in comparative literature and his facility in several languages secure the inner structures of his works, and his grounding is distinctly different from Jean Toomer's. Toomer's *Blue Meridian* is more of an escape from race than a conscious working through the same.

In this comparison it is possible to glean also an understanding of *self* as I attempt to use it here in the context of *selflessness*.

For Toomer, the escape from race made it all the more inescapable. His selflessness was complicated by an obsession with wanting to be free of self, and this is a comparable paradox to that of revolutionary 60s' poets whose commitment to ideals of justice caught them in the ironic mire of the time. Whatever they saw as the achievement of selflessness through a compassionate commitment to community proved to be only a compounding of the same. Selflessness could only have come in the complete turning away from the traditional ways of literary life, a more cruel fate and thus impossible.

America's northeastern cities were no place to live a real revolutionary's life. New York and New Jersey were galaxies away from Cuba and Angola. It was in those areas during the 60s that Wright attended seminary and did graduate work at Rutgers in comparative literature. His understanding of charity was already profound.

In "What Is Beautiful" Wright names beauty as the body of love, and love as the realization of the divine.

He writes "Here, there is no form untuned by eye, or voice/there is no body waiting for its metaphor."

Imagine this as the critical space that has confounded those living in the stream of black

male poetics. Imagine it as the awesome weight Hughes assumed, the painful and solitary path Hayden chose, the tragic and ongoing loss suffered by revolutionary poets. Imagine it as those things, but see it as Jay Wright's naming of a place of genuine selflessness, a commitment to language and learning with a willingness to tackle the inhumanity of racism, to throw a larger net over the thing, a net capable of dissolving this social construction it catches, of erasing the spaces where it might opt to live, knowing the first space to be removed is that inside one's own heart and cranium.

Later in "What Is Beautiful," he writes "This is the gift of being transformed/the emptiness that calls compassion down." The charity we see in Hughes is deepened in Hayden and taken to levels approaching the sublime in Wright. Charity informed their choices as it did the choices of Amiri Baraka, Haki R. Madhubuti and Askia M. Toure. I see them all as *noble*.

However, the choice now for black male poets is to embrace this space where they can ask themselves this question of what constitutes beauty and ask it in terms of their own lives, and not those lives weighed by the suppositions of group identity. Time has moved on, and if black male poetics is to assume a more manifest place, even as poetry itself is marginalized in exponential leaps in every waking second, then black male poets must explore the beauty of the quality of being human. Assume that humanity and not the task of proving the same. Black male poetics must upend and suspend the idea of race.

There is now no more greatness for a black male poet to assume other than a commitment to reality and the investigation of that reality arising from a deeper self-awareness. Racism is not dead, but we are now in a vortex of confluences, where the black male poet can opt to free himself from freeing the race. The first person he can save is himself, perhaps the only person. Another set of literary choices waits for black male poets as a prize, not a predator in the grass, if they can see the current vortex or junction in time as an invitation to be free to be poets and to have a greater freedom as human beings.



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To the people of
Liberia**

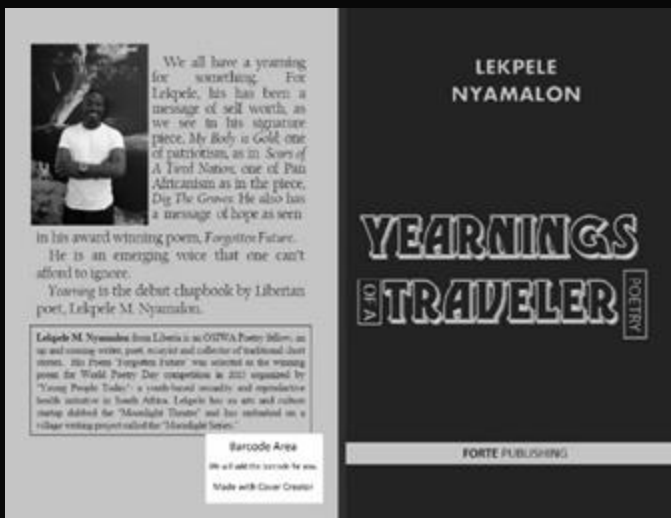
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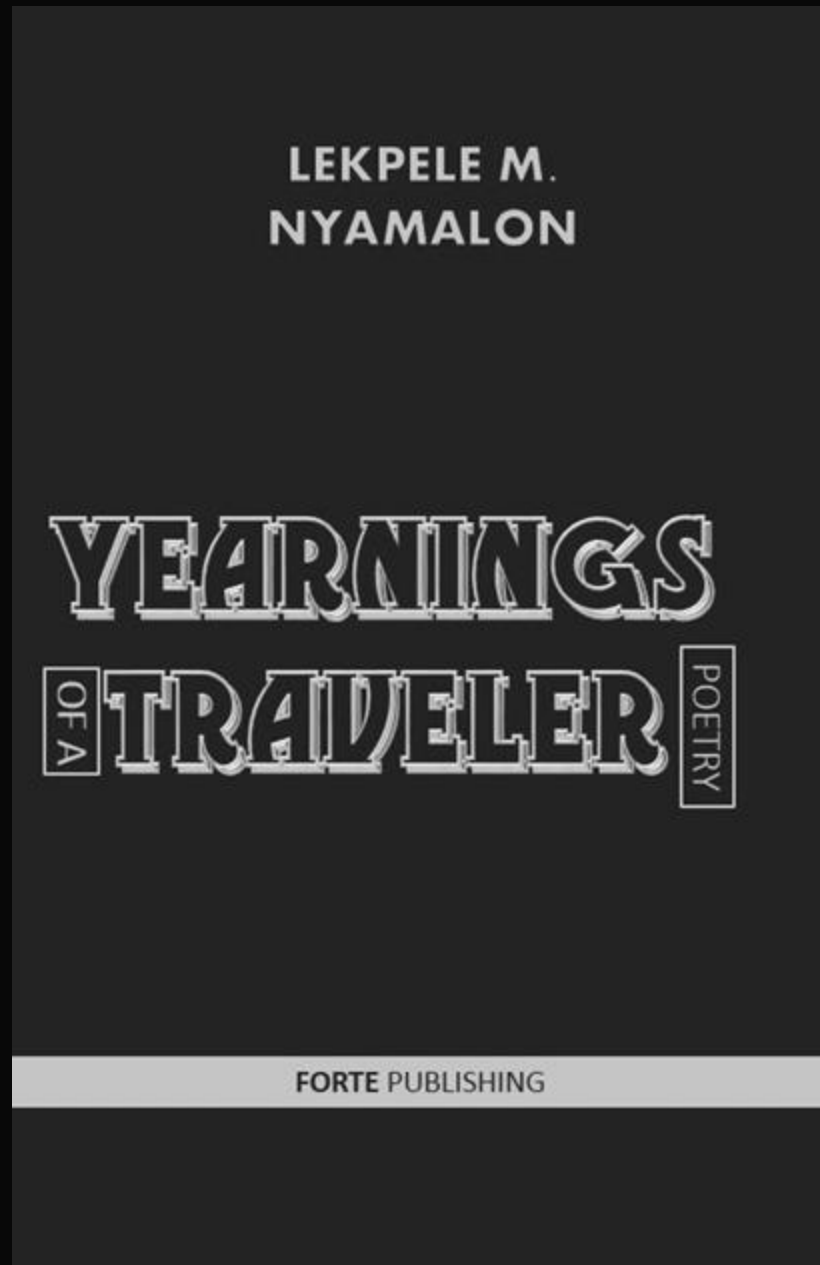
Recommended Reads

Yearnings Of A Traveler

We all have a yearning for something. For Lekpele, his has been a message of self worth, as we see in his signature



piece, My Body is Gold; one of patriotism, as in Scars of A Tired Nation; one of Pan Africanism as in the piece, Dig The Graves. He also has a message of hope as seen in his award winning poem, Forgotten Future. He is an emerging voice that one can't afford to ignore. Yearning is the debut chapbook by Liberian poet, Lekpele M. Nyamalon.



Recommended Reads

Portor Portor

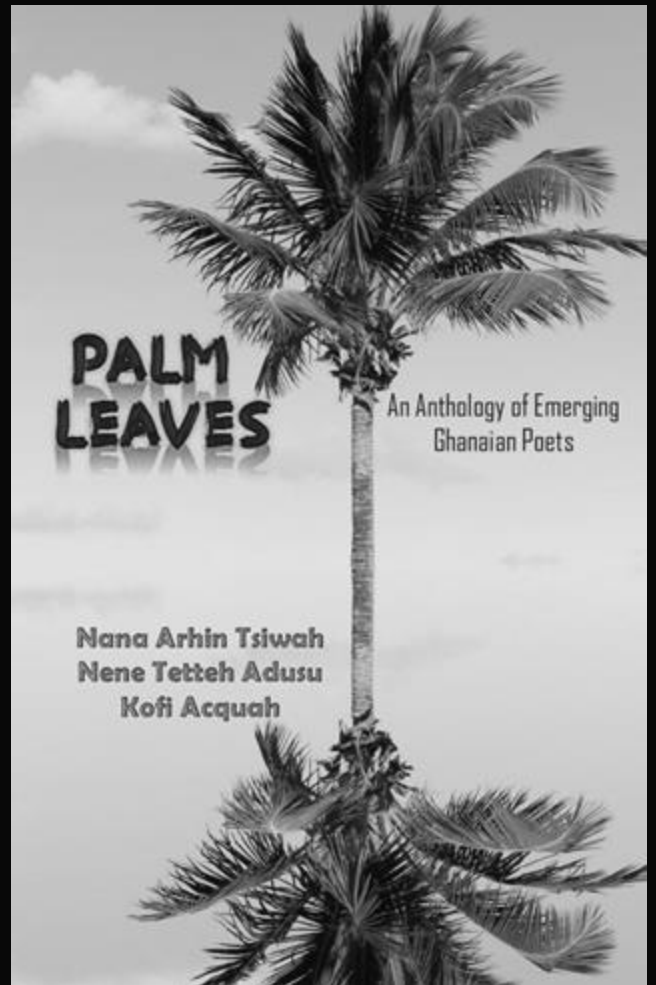
Introduction by: Elma Shaw

Portor Portor is an anthology of emerging and established poets from Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Botswana. Portor-Portor, a Liberian concept, refers to a pot of unevenly cooked rice-soft, sticky, grainy and lumpy. Within a single pot, is the embodiment of the notion of unity in diversity.

Portor Portor features 12 African poets whose poems cover a wide range of topics- from daily life issues to religious, traditional and contemporary issues plaguing the continent. They offer us a rare glimpse into a diverse modern Africa. Portor Portor, in this edition, presents a unified voice amidst that diversity.

KWEE: Liberian Literary Magazine

Edited by: D. Othniel Forte



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LIB Style

Pro Black Doesn't



Mean Anti White

Happy Black History Month note the Message



Country Dancer from the Gio Tribe-Gio Devil



A Powerful message in support of arts/artists



Kids sporting attires made using the Liberian Flag



A bunch of kid messing around in a wheel barrow



Anglers owning the beach; playing with canoes



Making a living is a tough deal for some



Scenic: River snaking its way to the sea, Maryland Co.



Down Town Traffic and Hustle



Oldma taking it light...quenching her thirst



Beautiful Street Art [Graffiti]



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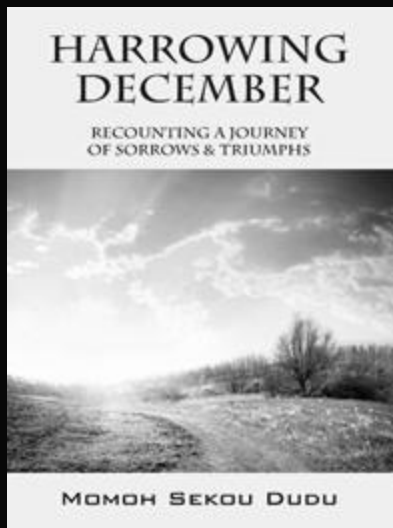
VAMBA SHERIF
Editor - Short stories

He was born in northern Liberia and spent parts of his youth in Kuwait, where he completed his secondary school. He speaks many languages, including Arabic, French, English and Dutch, and some African languages like Mande, Bandi, Mende en Lomah. After the first Gulf War, Vamba settled in the Netherlands and read Law. He's written many novels. His first novel, *The Land Of The Fathers*, is about the founding of Liberia with the return of the freed slaves from America in the 19th century. This novel was published to critical acclaim and commercial success. His second, *The Kingdom of Sebah*, is about the life of an immigrant family in the Netherlands, told from the perspective of the son, who's a writer. His third novel, *Bound to Secrecy*, has been published in The Netherlands, England, France, Germany, and Spain. His fourth *The Witness* is about a white man who meets a black woman with a past rooted in the Liberian civil war. Besides his love of writing and his collection of rare books on Africa, he's developed a passion for films, which he reviews. He divides his time between The Netherlands and Liberia. You can see more of his work on his [website](#)



MOMOH DUDU
Editor- Reviews

Is an educator and author. For the last decade, he has been an instructor at various Colleges and Universities in the Minneapolis metro area in the state of Minnesota, U.S.A. At present, he is the Chair of the Department of Business and Accounting at the Brooklyn Center Campus of the Minnesota School of Business at Globe University. His works include the memoir 'Harrowing December: Recounting a Journey of Sorrows and Triumphs' and 'Musings of a Patriot: A Collection of Essays on Liberia' a compilation of his commentaries about governance in his native country. At the moment, he is at work on his maiden novel tentatively titled 'Forgotten Legacy.'

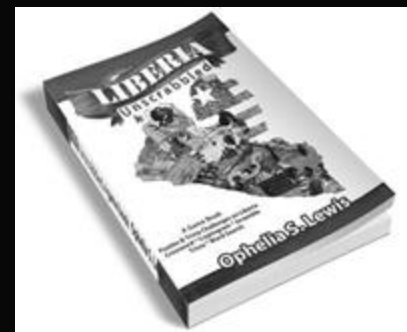


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OPHELIA LEWIS
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The founder of Village Tales Publishing and self-published author of more than ten books, Lewis is determined to make Village Tales Publishing a recognized name in the literary industry. She has written two novels, three children's books, a book of poetry, a book of essay and two collections of short stories, with the latest being *Montserrado Stories*. As a publisher-project manager, she guards other authors in getting their work from manuscript to print, using the self-publishing platform. Self-publishing can be complicated, a process that unfolds over a few months or even years. Using a project management approach gives a better understanding of the format process and steps needed it take to get an aspiring writer's book published.



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For too long the arts have been ignored, disregarded or just taken less important in Liberia. This sad state has stifled the creativity of many and the culture as a whole.

However, all is not lost. A new breed of creative minds has risen to the challenge and are determined to change the dead silence in our literary world. In order to do this, we realized the need to create a *culture of reading* amongst our people. A reading culture broadens the mind and opens up endless possibilities. It also encourages diversity and for a colorful nation like ours, fewer things are more important.



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