

QSA'GBE SORO

**The international IFA/
ORISA PUBLICATION**

OSA'GBE SÓRÒ

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YORUBA WOMEN AND THE ORAL TRADITION: EDUCATIONAL TEXTS

Iyalosa Adetutu Adeyemon

As we approach the dawn of the twenty-first century, people in the Americas are increasingly turning to YORUBA theology for spiritual orientation. As significant as this is, disturbing misconceptions about traditional YORUBA society and culture doggedly persist. Whether people choose to adapt aspects of the religion or attempt to live a traditional lifestyle, an appreciation of the YORUBA worldview is essential in order to make informed choices. It is hoped that this article will be the first of many to explore the complexity and sophistication of the people whose genius beacons from the past, illuminates the present, and beckons from the future.

There is a saying among the YORUBA, "Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a nation." This adage goes

far in qualifying the influential and esteemed position that was held by women in classical YORUBA society. One of the many areas in which women had unparalleled influence was that of education, particularly early childhood education. From birth to the age of seven -- a child's most formative years -- women had primary responsibility for the formal instruction of all children. Secondary education began sometime after the seventh year, most often in the form of apprenticeships, at which time men assumed responsibility for the training of boys. However, no matter what interactive profession a child was destined for (politics, religion, arts, medicine, etc.), the basis for all subsequent training was the foundation laid by women during the formative years.

Most children spent at least their

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first seven years in their father's family compound, or housing complex, among extended family members.¹ Females in the compound included the child's mother (*mothers* in a polygamous household), grandmother, sisters, aunts, cousins, and so forth. While a mother was primarily responsible for the development of her children she could and did depend on other females in the compound for support. A woman was further aided by her own female relatives and by members of her various religious, professional, and social groups. Such support was necessary because at any given time, and in addition to family responsibilities, a woman might be actively involved in her career, in career training (apprenticeships), and have numerous civic and religious obligations as well.

Because of these well-developed and diverse support groups, most children were well-educated no matter what their social or economic status might be. They were taught basic skills such as communication and arithmetic while absorbing ethics and aesthetics, cosmology and theology, science and philosophy. One of the mediums which women used so effectively to make a child's educational experience cohesive was oral litera-

ture. With the world as a classroom, women used a variety of ITAN (oral texts) for teaching including biography, myths, fables, historical narratives, legends, and epics in either prose or verse format.² In acknowledgment of our great YORUBA oral artists and scholars, this is by no means meant to be a classification of the traditional literature. This brief description is intended only to indicate first, that there was institutionalized education in classical YORUBA society and, second, that there was a recognized body of material from which women could choose for instructive purposes. Following is a description of three of the types of texts mentioned above -- myths, history, and fables.

Most of the mythology that women taught was adapted from the sacred ODU IFA.³ Lessons about the nature of the universe and humanity's relation to the forces which shape and operate that universe are embedded in ITAN. Included in this category are such universally known ITAN as the QBATALA/ODUDUWA descent to Earth, and the establishment of ILE IFE, civilization. At the feet of their grandmothers, children first heard codified accounts of complex primordial processes and multifaceted cosmic phenomena. ITAN relate how and

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why the ORISA came to earth and created order out of chaos. From stories about how OGUN brought iron to the world, or why ORUNMILA gave humanity access to the science of divination, children learned that the universe is more than just a physical system, a body; they learned about the many entities, processes, and realities that give life to that body. As children matured and underwent various levels of initiation, the myths took on deeper meaning. For example, a classic theme in the mythology is the “separation between ORUN (Heaven) and ILE (Earth).” Among its many interpretations, the “separation” refers to the nature of the space-time continuum. The ITAN speak of many protagonists who are not restricted by the “separation” but are able to zap about space-time at will. For some of the young students, the symbology of myth was later translated into method (ritual).

At the break of day, as OBATALA's bell rings beneficently from his temple, a young lady, all big-eyed with anticipation, follows her mother to the family's ancestral shrine. Perhaps today would be the day that she would be called on by the assembled elders to relate her genealogy, in an unbroken line, all the way back to the holy city, ILE IFE! Like weaving cloth,

women deftly interwove genealogies, chronicles of heroes, towns, and empire into the rich fabric of early childhood education. Children gleaned a wealth of information from the texts: for instance, the significance of the intricate patterns of ILA (facial marks) worn by various ethnic groups; the reason that only particular rulers could wear beaded crowns; the order of succession in the royal family; the reason that the Head of Commerce (Market Head) was female; etc.

In the evening, in the central courtyard of the compound, a group of children might hear a narrative of Moremi, the heroine who saved ancient ILE IFE from capture by a neighboring city. Or, on a bustling market day, snuggled securely on his mother's back, a toddler would begin to memorize blood-racing ORIKI. ORIKI, praise-names, are given to people, places, and things and describe the very essence of the person, place, or thing being praised. (Some of the most exquisite ORIKI, of course, belong to the ORISA but everyone attached ORIKI from birth throughout life.)⁴ Accompanied by their drum orchestras, the city's most respected citizens would visit the market where their ORIKI would resound awesomely on the DUNDUN drum. ORIKI are often played on the DUNDUN (one of

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celebrated YORUBA “talking drums”) because of its ability to accurately reproduce YORUBA speech. An important part of a DUNDUN drummer’s training (apprenticeship) is the memorization of the ORIKI of the town and its inhabitants. Traditionally, DUNDUN drummers are among the most valued historians of their communities.

Can anyone appreciate the value of history more than Africans in diaspora who have been so traumatized by the lack of its spiritual nourishment? Centuries before the name YORUBA was arbitrarily assigned to the people, the family, communities, and nation were united by origin, world view, and value system. The social, political, and religious bonds of this unity were meticulously documented, preserved, and disseminated by historians who studied rigorously for years. The texts exist in many forms and, as is the case in most disciplines, there are many specialties and specialists.

Fables is a category that Westerners have theorized over for years; often they dismiss this dynamic art form as just “animal tales” or “children’s stories.” There is very little traditional literature that can uniquely be classed as “children’s.” Fables have applications from infancy

throughout the mature years. For instance, a clever raconteur might delight his companions with a colorful rendition of a fable while out-maneuvering them on the AYO board.⁵ Or, a skilled politician might soothe frayed nerves by injecting a fable with topical issues.

During the primary education years fables (including those which featured animals) functioned as guides to acceptable behavior and thought. YORUBA fables are not heavily didactic; rather, they teach by example. That is to say, the fables do not offer pat answers or cute morals but encourage the analyses of actions and their resulting consequences. Therefore, good storytellers stimulated much spirited debate in their youthful audiences. Children asked each other what motivated a character and why did he make the choices that he made. If it was determined that a character acted out of, say, greed and that the consequences were negative, then the youngsters were encouraged to examine their own motivations in similar situations.

Many fables feature a recurring character. Thematically, this technique sensitized children to aberrations in behavior and thought. The popular AJAPA, or IJAPA, series is an ex-

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ample. AJAPA (Tortoise) is lazy, amoral, greedy, shrewd, and solely dedicated to the art of self-preservation. (He is so tenacious that he journeyed the abyss with the YORUBA to the Americas where he camouflaged himself as Brer Terrapin and Brer Rabbit.)⁶ Although he is cunning, sometimes brilliant, AJAPA's manipulations often result in disgrace for himself and his family. Even though he usually escapes with his life, it is not without punishment and severe community censure. To make his escape, AJAPA usually withdraws into his shell. The lasting image that such an action evokes is one of utter isolation. Sitting enveloped in the security of the compound, surrounded by family and friends, basking in the blessings of the ancestors and the ORISA, AJAPA's fate is one that most children would fervently vow to avoid.

Even today, despite Western encroachment on the traditional institution of education, oral texts remain invaluable teaching aids. Through the centuries, women have used the verbal art forms to introduce children to the collective wisdom and experiences of the race and to help prepare them to fulfill their personal destinies. Thus, the role of women in the educational process is nothing less than

proverbial.

As has been pointed out by numerous scholars attempting to study classical YORUBA society, it is difficult to single out aspects of the culture because (perhaps paradoxically) there are no separate components. No one thing can be viewed separately because everything is so seamlessly integrated. Religion, government, ethics, social codes are so intertwined that it is, for all practical purposes, impossible to consider one without the other. Within this context, the dynamics of actions (whether negative or positive) and their resulting reactions were clearly understood. That is one reason that periodical ETUTU (atonement) ceremonies were performed community-wide and nationally. For, what one effected potentially affected all. This is not to imply that people walked around like robots strictly adhering to established codes. On the contrary, new experiences were encouraged; that is the stuff of IFA. It was only when one's actions (will) impacted negatively on the experiences of others that the continuity was disturbed. ETUTU restored the continuity. The ITAN also relate that many entities were so dynamic, so much bigger than life, that they necessarily transcended societal bounds. Rather

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than destroy the community by remaining within it, they chose to “enter the earth,” or “return to heaven;” in other words, to step outside the restrictions of human reality. Considering these many implications I do not believe that is an exaggeration to say that in classical YORUBA society, to be YORUBA, ultimately, was to be educated.

¹ Descent is patrilineal. The compound (AGBOLE) is comprised of connected apartments which house all the male descendants, and their families, of the founding patriarch. Many compounds are centuries old with huge populations. Compounds form wards and wards form towns.

² These Western literary terms do not adequately define YORUBA oral genres and are used very cautiously here.

³ "It is a complete system by itself in which all that the YORUBA consider valuable to them throughout the whole range of experience from very ancient times can always be found." Wande Abimbola, *Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, Nigeria, 1976), p. vi.

⁴ The act of naming a child is a complicated, celebrated process. Typically, a person has three names --- AMUNTORUNWA, the name one brings from heaven; ABISQ, the name which describes the family's circumstances at the time of one's birth; and the ORIKI, the attributive name.

⁵ AYO is a game of mental skill not unlike chess.

⁶ Most recently, I've seen him peeking out from behind Bugs Bunny.

Oloosa Adetutu Wright Adeyemṣon is Qlosun, a priestess of QSUN. Her Godmother is the venerable and renown Iya Kekere (Mama Keke Boyce) whose temple for QSUN in Harlem has given guidance, shelter, and nourishment to worshippers for nearly thirty years. Called Yeye by her godchildren, Oloosa Adetutu established one of the first temples for the worship of ORISA in Cleveland, Ohio. She is a student of traditional YORUBA literature and enjoys the flexibility that QSUN has given her as a university librarian. Oloosa Adetutu is currently investigating reinterpretations

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of YORUBA myths in the Americas.

FROM OUR EDITOR:

Welcome to our maiden issue of OSA'GBE SORO. OSA'GBE, as you know, is one of the 256 ODU of IFA. It is the ODU that blessed the birth of this journal and it has asked that its name be included in the title. "Soro" is a Yoruba word meaning "speaks." I cannot dare to be pretentious enough to even suggest that I may guess at what it is the ODU wants to say but I promise to remain as objective a conduit as is humanly possible in relaying the messages that are sent my way.

The birthing process of this endeavor was quite laborious as some of you may have guessed by now -- especially those of you who subscribed immediately, only to find yourselves wandering about in the waiting room. What is of special interest is that after all the birthing was done, not one, but three children emerged.

My son, Akingla Ifajemiduro Gonzalez, was born on May 25, 1994, weighing in at 9 lbs. 8 oz. He is my fourth and my husband's sixth child. On July 9, 1994, two new ORISA initiates were born. My husband is Iyawo Kahende Aganju and I am now Iyawo Taiwo Oya.

Birth is an interesting phenomenon. No two are ever alike. Akingla entered into the world gently and smoothly. My water broke at 12:10 a.m. and I was pushing by the time I reached the hospital. He was born at 2:20 a.m., giving my midwife just enough time to wake up. My son and I went home at 6:00 that evening. The easiest of my four deliveries.

The journal has had a rough time of it. There was a period of time, approximately a month before the baby was born and two months before initiation, that everything electrical I touched went

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haywire. My cordless phone died on me, past the needing a new battery stage. A new VCR went completely wacko. My car . . . we won't even talk about it. My poor computer went completely insane. I was working on three major projects -- this journal, a book I was preparing, and a newsletter for another organization. It would not allow me to load any program in order to work. Three days after the baby was born, I was able to finish two of the three projects when it once again let me know that the time for work was to be later. A few weeks after initiation and things were back to normal. What can I say?

There are no words to describe our initiation. It will just have to suffice for me to say that it was indeed the most beautiful and fulfilling experience I have had in this lifetime to date. Never before have I witnessed such a community of people coming together as strangers and leaving as family. Such loving care and focus were put into each effort that a smoothness of ritual half as effective will be sufficient for life. There was talk of signs indicating possible disruption but if it ever came, it never made it into the IGBODU and was, therefore, non-existent.

Cleveland's Awo Fabukola and Iya L'Orisa Osunkemi were impeccable

hosts who started preparing for the activities weeks in advance. It was through their graciousness and hard work that we were afforded an opportunity to experience IGBODU as close to Africa as possible. It was my first lengthy outdoor experience and was approached with more than a little trepidation. It was not long before I was playing with spiders. Those who know me well will understand.

My husband and I were extremely blessed to be in a position to have our throne clothes designed and created by Iya L'Orisa Osun Okantomi. Before seeing her masterpieces, I had the audacity to call myself a tailor, specializing in Iyawo clothing. I must now pack up my sewing machine. I am a seamstress. Osun Okantomi is a designer.

Our blessings continued with the expertise of our sister who ran the kitchen and those who assisted her. More than once were many surprised to awaken to a laid out table or find midnight eating available.

An unexpected pleasure were the "nurses" assisting in birth. Bobby and Steve -- their attuneness and efficiency were beyond my fondest dreams.

I entered my studies from a Lukumi perspective. I underwent my first ritu-

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als through a Santeria house. My initiation was Nigerian-based, Ode Remo style. The highest blessings received were in the shape of having four of the most knowledgeable and warmest priests I know as some of the elders present. Medahoci Koffi Zannu is one of the first African American priests to be initiated to Orisa. He is Lukumi based. He was initiated to IFA in Togo. Awo Fa'yomi is from Trinidad and received IFA in Ejigbo. Awo 'Fabukola was initiated into IFA in Rhode Island by a Nigerian BABALAWO and my godfather, Awo Fa'lokun, received IFA in Ode Remo. There were brief moments when quick consultations were done on points of differing views and more than once when it appeared that silence was the most appropriate space to fill. When all was said and done, the smiles and praise were as genuine as the congratulations for having made a smooth transition.

Ahhh, you say, we have finally come to the gist of the article. And you are correct. I discovered that one may walk, take a plane, swim, ride a bus, peddle a bicycle or hijack a turtle to get to where they are going and if they are supposed to get there, they will. And I discovered that the most productive choice we have, should I decide to swim and you decide to peddle, is to compare notes and keep on steppin'.

My having swam doesn't make my experience any more valid than your having walked. That would be like saying one is more pregnant than the other. How can I be anymore initiated than you?

And if we agree on that point, then what does it matter if I choose to continue to swim and you decide to continue footing it? I can help you through my domain and you can help me through yours as we continue to walk our path. I was confused before; I am even more so now.

More than one valid source has stated that our universe is in the midst of a great transformation -- a shifting of consciousness and desire. It is no mistake that we are here now. The time has come to overcome our re-birthing pains and begin the work we are here to do. Our diversity is our strength. It always has been. Someone asked me why I was not initiated in a black house. I'm not even sure I understand the term. I'm positive it's no longer relative. We bring who we are with us -- black, white, Santeria, Lukumi, male, female, young, old, grandparents, childless, in tune, out of synch, seeking, and already-found-it -- and we add it to the pot in order to facilitate that which has no other choice but to occur -- change.

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Pray for me, I have finally come to the beginning of my journey. I will pray that we all come to appreciate each other's uniqueness and allow it to work to propel us toward the future.

ASE.

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From Our Readers

I wish to give praise and thanks to OLODUMARE; to extend warm greetings to the EGUN; to all the BABALOSA and IYALOSA who have gone before us; warm greetings to the OBA of OYOTUNJI Village; to my godfather and godmother and to all my family there. Warm greetings also to all priests, priestesses and believers.

I humbly put forth these few words concerning "ethics," the system of moral standards and values. The essential quality of a person dealing with their character.

Moral: relating to, dealing with, or being capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct. The central theme within all religions is ethics. Ethics serve as the heart beat, that which keeps us alive. If the heart is weak, what we can do in life becomes limited. We may have the desire, the

need, and the will but based upon the conditions of the heart, obstacles have been imposed and our quality of life becomes greatly compromised. Our ethical behavior does much in determining our success as well as our failures in life.

As believers in IFA and ORISA, we have a responsibility to ourselves to be the best that we can be. To serve as living examples of wisdom, generosity and truth. There is no room for arrogance in relationship to our fellow men, women and children. Nor is there room for arrogance concerning any other forms of life. We only share but a small space here, the key word here is SHARE, an expression that comes to mind is "live and let live." Please keep in mind anything that has life has a purpose. IFA and ORISA believers have a responsibility to have an on-going relationship with all forms of life and to

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respect their place within this world.

Respect is the key word here. The respect paid helps to keep us humble, which deals with the issue of character. Each of us should be on the road of developing our character (IWA PELE). I come across so many of us who are just arrogant naturally, without cause or reason. Allow me to say that we are not special -- what we work with and who works through us is special. The ODUS with which we work are full of admonishments against lies, arrogance, theft, carrying weapons, talking too much, or too loud, just to mention a few. Our lives are to be clean, thoughtful, caring, loving, and defensive when necessary. Those of us who know the truth have a responsibility to share it with others -- to leave them uplifted and filled with life. If you are not doing this, you owe it to yourself to look within to realize your purpose of healing the sick and troubled in spirit. OLODUMARE requires it of us . . . the EGUN require it of us . . . the ORISA require it of us. It is up to us.

There is too much division within our house. Our young people are killing themselves and others at an alarming rate. Our communities are dying -- falling victim to drugs and false dreams. Our babies are having babies, our families are falling apart. We have allowed our values to be so greatly diminished

that the lives of our children have become as cheap and unfeeling as a condom. What do we do with what we have? Do we still play games of self-importance, of who comes out of the best house, of who knows the most ju-ju? It is time to do some serious work, people, past time to pull together. Each one teach one . . . those who know more must do more . . . it's time to work on ourselves and our ethics.

Orunmila mo yin buru, mo yin boye, mo yin bosise,

Sango Loke Ajala

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AFRIKAN SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION AND ITS SUBSEQUENT RECONSTRUCTION -

**AN OUTLINE BY MEDAHOCHI K. O.
ZANNU**

1. OUR SPIRITUAL DISUNITY

Our spiritual disunity preceded the rise of Judeo-Christianity and Islam. Indeed, our disunity precipitated the rise of this hostility towards Afrikan culture. Our spiritual division invited our conquest.

The destruction of the Afrikan spiritual civilization was initiated by the "Afrikan Priesthood," and it will be rebuilt by the "Afrikan Priesthood."

The "Afrikan Priesthood" must look beyond historical records for a basis for its spiritual and theological unity. This unity is to be found only in the "mythological dreamtime" of the elders of the Afrikan race as well as the divine cosmology that was born from the cauldron of our enslavement and is continuing to evolve out of the syncretisms of our varied and diverse slave experiences in the Afrikan diaspora.

Each "Afrikan Priest" and each "Afrikan Initiate" must seek the higher initiation,

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where, on that plane and on that plane alone can one find unity in the Afrikan concept of deity.

But what is this higher initiation of which we speak? One can certainly reserve the word “initiation” for the privileged moment when the future “wife of the spirit,” the IYAWO, VODUNSI, etc., is symbolically returned to the original condition that the soul “experienced when it existed in the presence of the OLU-AWO-ORUN, in the morning of the world.

The initiation of which we speak is above all, in effect, the experience of renewing or reiterating the original pact that one’s ORI APERE made with the Owner of “souls” before we began our descent into the world of things, into IKOLE AYE.

II. THE ACCESS TO THE AFRIKAN SPIRITUAL WORLD CLOSED

We Afrikans in North America lost access to our divine cosmos, to our ancestral world when our languages were lost. The divine symbols of our spiritual reality were wrapped up in our languages.

With the recovery of our languages, we will recover our IMAGO MUNDI or our own image of the spiritual and physical

universe. With the recovery of our languages, our divine symbols will be restored and the access to divine cosmos will be “re-discovered.” With the recovery of our languages, we will recover our ITON MIMO, our divine history. (Languages can be maintained and spoken as a vernacular and the divine program can be replaced by another program. Our vision of the world can be substituted by an alien vision of the world. Therefore, languages alone will not suffice. We must not translate the alien vision of the world into our own languages.)

III. THE ILLUSION OF FORM

Many “Afrikan Priests” put more emphasis on form than on substance; however, the form has changed thousands of times, and changes with every individual, but substance never changes.

IV. THE SCATTERING OF THE DIVINE SEEDS

The religious rites that evolved in different ethnic communities that are tinted by local history, language and names of indigenous heroes are called forms. Cuban SANTERIA, Haitian VODOUN, Brazilian CANDOMBLE, MACUMBA, UMBANDA are forms.

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A number of diverse ethnic groups forcibly transported to Cuba, plus Cuban Catholicism equals SANTERIA and/or PALO MONTE - this is one form. Another number of diverse ethnic groups with one group dominant plus Portuguese Catholicism equals CANDOMBLE, etc.. Another number of diverse ethnic groups forcibly transported to Haiti plus French Catholicism plus a successful war of liberation equals to VODOUN composed of numerous rites.

To these ethnic religious forms are added the bigotry and prejudices as well as the ignorance and lies of the ethnic priesthood.

The Ancient Wisdom-Which-Comes-From-The-Mists-Of-Our-Antiquity is taken by each ethnic group and overlaid with the local ethnicity. The original drama of the divine cosmology is rewritten by each people. The players, the dramatis personae, are given new names, and sometimes new functions. This was done all over Afrika, as well as Asia and Europe. It was done in the Afrikan diaspora by each ethnic community except the Afrikan American community.

The Haitian community of exiled Afrikans took the retentions from many different, and diverse theological systems and produced a neo-Afrikan religion called

VODOUN. The cosmic beings were given, in many instances, new names or sir names. They also were given a new language. The cosmic beings of the neo-Afrikan religion evolved by the Haitian now speak Creole (French) and have been equated with certain Catholic saints. In addition to the transfigured spirit beings who were brought from Afrika, are new spirit beings born of the Haitian historical slave experience. These new spirit phenomena are called Creole LOA. Many of them were Haitian heroes who fought and died in the revolution of independence.

The Cuban community of exiled Afrikans also took the retentions from many different and diverse regions of Afrika but did not produce a single theological system with many rites like the Haitians, but several distinct ethnic religions that are sometimes hostile to each other.

The Brazilian community of exiled Afrikans had a somewhat different experience. Whereas the Afrikan captives of Cuba and Haiti were usually lumped together as one "social" phenomenon, the Afrikans who were brought to Brazil were separated by ethnic identity, as a rule. Although in Brazil each ethnic group had an opportunity to maintain their national cohesion, all the Afrikan "nations" brought to

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Brazil had one thing in common and that was the dominant cloud of Roman Catholicism.

No matter how impressive the “religious form” of the Afrikans in Brazil may be, it was still poured into the mould of Catholicism. ORISA are equated with the calendar of Catholic saints. No matter how beautiful the ceremonies are, they are impelled by a vision of an alien world.

In contrast to the Afrikan captives of Cuba, Haiti and Brazil, the Afrikans in North America are unique among Afrikans in the diaspora in that the others maintained sufficient retentions from Afrika to recreate an “Afrikan religion” no matter how watered down or tainted with alien theologies. On the contrary, when the Afrikans in North America were “emancipated” from chattel slavery, they stood before the word “deaf, dumb and blind” to everything Afrikan. The Afrikans in North America were deaf to their languages, meaning they could not hear them. They were dumb in the sense that they could not speak them. They were blind in the sense they could no longer see a vision of their world.

When we denounced or were forced by circumstances to denounce our spiritual legacy, the night fell on us and

seemingly it was never ending.

Medahoci Koffi Zannu, whose first name is actually a Dahomenian title meaning “My Elder,” is the third African American to be initiated to ORISA. He was initiated to SANGO in 1970 by Oba Osejeman, (his wife Iyalosa Omilade Toyivi was initiated to YEMOJA at the same time), and received IFA at Togo in 1977. His was the first visible presence of ORISA followers in the midwest which occurred during 1960 to the mid-seventies. While he initially was not initiated to ORISA, he functioned as a religious presence in that he was initiated to the Haitian system of Vodoun, and in 1969 received PALO. He had a rented storefront on 35th street in Chicago where those interested collected to benefit from his teachings. In 1974 he was the first to formally introduce the religious rites of the Dahomenian system which is known as ARARA in Cuba and JEJE in Brazil.

His interests currently lie with research and bringing religion to present life. “ORISA are not locked into time - they are what we have in the world today. My goal is to research and not be just another functioning ritualist.”

The Yoruba Religion: Introduction to Its Practice

By **AWO IFAYOMI**

The following is the last chapter of Awo Ifayomi's book by the same title.

Looking Forward

I had several purposes or objectives for the presentation of the material in "The Yoruba Religion."

My first purpose was to create an understandable, truthful, yet nonthreatening document for persons within the religion. A residual effect is understandable information for the uninitiated.

In most books written on LUCUMI or SANTERIA there are references made to the "mother" YORUBA religion from which it spawned. Usually the information that follows is not information on the YORUBA religion. When there is information, it is abbreviated or in some instance inaccurate. Most of the infor-

mation tends to speak of the fragmented YORUBA belief system after the diaspora and not of the religion that existed before in Yorubaland. It was my objective to create an accurate body of knowledge of the mother religion that New World Africans and interested others can objectively consider.

A second purpose was to afford my godchildren a document that they could read in the comfort of their homes. There are a few books written on the YORUBA religion, (tradition); on divination (IKIN, OBI, Coconut, and also 16 cowries); on Rites and Rituals and on ancestor communication, however, I found that they did not collectively satisfy the needs of my godchildren. Some were too dogmatic, others too frivolous. Some were written in such a way that they frightened or intimidated the reader, others were written in an advanced academic style that many fol-

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lowers needed help in understanding. Nothing can be gained by naming the books and I will not denigrate the authors because they gave knowledge to the unknowing. I can only comment that I believe this document will more readily meet the initial needs of my godchildren.

During the period when I was writing this book, I had been asked quite often by colleagues and interested parties, what did I think of the future of the religion. It sounds like a relatively simple question to respond to, but in actuality it probably one of the most complex of questions that one could ask. The answer cannot be based on an outcome of let's say man's interaction with higher forces but rather it lies with how man will interact with other men and his own ego.

Up until the last 1960's most New World Africans travelled to Cuba to become high priests of the religion, and the YORUBA tradition practiced by New World Africans had a distinct LUCUMI flavor. There existed language barriers between Spanish and English and LUCUMI. The LUCUMI that I speak of is "ritual YORUBA," an archaic and now somewhat distorted language of the YORUBA that had meaning three to four hundred years ago. It is no longer a language of communication nor con-

versation. There also existed some philosophical differences and ritual practice differences that will never be resolved.

Under ordinary circumstances these differences or rifts would be large enough to establish them as two separate religions, however the more in-depth the pursuit of LUCUMI or SANTERIA becomes, the more African and less Catholic it becomes, and one discovers that it is YORUBA.

New World Africans now travel to Yorubaland to receive IFA (to become BABALAWOS). The language barrier is lessened since it is now between English and twentieth century YORUBA. English is also the second language of choice in YORUBA Nigeria. Most New World Africans are re-assuming YORUBA traditions and are not only practicing rites and rituals, but also learning the YORUBA spoken language.

From these observations, one sees the emergence of two systems, based on two languages, one Spanish, the other English. The Spanish system has its rites and rituals based on LUCUMI, which few, if any YORUBA understand today, and the English system has its rites and rituals based on YORUBA spoken and practiced in Yorubaland today. This information does not desig-

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nate one system as being better than the other, but it facilitates the English speaking person to seek out the YORUBA spoken system.

Collectively, SANTERIA is considered the worship of saints. This would encompass both Cuban and Puerto Rican practice; but there exist subtle differences between Cuban and Puerto Rican practice of the religion which is popularly known as SANTERIA. This information does not designate one system as being better than the other, but it facilitates the English speaking person to seek out the YORUBA spoken system.

Collectively, SANTERIA is considered the worship of saints. This would encompass both Cuban and Puerto Rican practice; but there exist subtle differences between Cuban and Puerto Rican practice of the religion which is popularly known as Santeria. This allows for several Spanish-speaking enclaves, similar, but not the same.

The English system is also producing its enclaves. Primarily because there does not exist a society for BABALAWO to exchange information and hence, we will form enclaves based on where we received IFA. There will be an IFE enclave, ODE REMO enclave, EJIGBO enclave, ABEOKUTA enclave, a

LAGOS enclave and an ISEYIN enclave.

All outward signs will show growth and proliferation of the religion, but I do not know how healthy this growth will be. The religion will be growing without communication or order. The religion will be growing without quality control. The religion will become global without being universal. The religion may grow without being able to monitor the purity of certain practices. If there is no positive intervention soon, it could become large and unmanageable and will further splinter and disintegrate as major religions did two to four hundred years ago.

Yorubaland is experiencing its own problems. I've mentioned the impact of Christianity and Islam on the tradition and the steady decline of practitioners. But there is the additional threat from within, whereas independent churches have risen that have taken over the functions of the traditional religion. These churches have grown at geometric proportions since the early 1980's and are numerous. They include the Apostolic Church, the Church of the Lord, the Cherubim and Seraphim, and the Celestial Church of Christ. Their practices are similar to LUCUMI, SANTERIA and CANDOMBLE. They display the Christian cross on the out-

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side and practice ORISA on the inside.

IFA can now be gotten in America. It is in Miami and apostles of ORISA and IFA are spreading the word. As African-Cubans were the keepers of the Tradition for 400 years in Cuba, Cuban-Americans have now transplanted their old traditional faith to a new country and will keep it in existence for at least another 400 years. There's talk of bringing IFA from Yorubaland, but so far it is only talk.

What can we expect from our present situation? We can expect further growth and proliferation of the religion, which will call for more priests and priestesses, and that will come. But where is our quality control? How do we police our religion?

We YORUBA have a king in the United States. Born an African-American and initially adopting LUCUMI, he is without a doubt, the greatest spearhead of the YORUBA culture that has taken hold in the United States. Oyotunji Village in Sheldon, North Carolina is Yorubaland in America. The king, Oba Oseijeman Adedun Adefunmi I, is genuine. As a king, he is respected by all YORUBA, and is seen as both a spiritual and cultural voice of the YORUBA; but there are so many issues at hand, that he will need massive help and strong leader-

ship in bringing together the various factions to discuss the issues and reach decisions that will be binding. This can be done if men will remain of good will.

The overview that I present for the religion is one of growth. I foresee in the United States a continuous influx and expansion of houses on the east coast added to a revitalized west coast. The south, motherland of former slaves, will continue to experience reunification with their African past. Many professional African Americans after identifying with African art, music, and dress will investigate further and upon enlightenment will then seek their spiritual and religious heritage. For others, I do not see language, ethnicity nor color as barriers to participation. If the efficacy of ORISA and IFA are to be preserved in the New World during this proliferation a concerted move must be made now to obtain global association and communication with the independent enclaves that presently exist.

Awo 'Fayomi is an African-American of Caribbean heritage (Trinidad). He is the founder of Ile Orisa Sango of Mount Vernon, New York. Awo 'Fayomi is the author of The Yoruba Religion: Introduction to its Practice, The Yoruba World of Good and Evil and a series of

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booklets on the recitations of the Odu Corpus. The English translations of the sacred verses are called Odu Ifa. Odu Ifa: Book One (Eji Ogbe) is presently on the market. The series will include books with verses from all of the major Odu.

Awo 'Fayomi received Ifa in Ejigbo, Nigeria and belongs to the lineage of the Agbede's. He is a retired Marine Colonel, a former Corporate Executive and former professor at Lincoln University Graduate School.

His major thrust is to bring knowledge and better communication within the Ifa/Orisa community of North America.

Art Works: Art, Faith and Vision

By Olusina Michael D. Harris

A KÌ ÍFÌ OJÚ-OLOJÚ SÒWÒ KÍ
JÈRÈ

**We do not trade with other
people's eyes and have any gains.**

- YORUBA proverb

Our lives are filled with literal and metaphorical references to the impact of vision upon consciousness and identity formation yet so many people in the African American community, even many of our leading intellectuals, still separate art from these notions. How many references have been made in the popular media or in public dialogues about "positive images" or its synonym, "role models?" The clenched fist power sign of the late 1960's symbolized the consciousness in the urban North, Midwest, and West Coast during the period. The television news images of non-violent marchers being attacked

by waterhoses and police dogs became the catalyst that sparked national sentiment in favor of the Civil Rights struggle during the 1960's. Symbols, signs and images have power -- definitive, efficacious power!

During the post-Civil War 19th century, negative, exaggerated plantation images solidified the racist stereotypes devised by white supremacists in the mind of the American public. These images supported ideologies that had been developed to maintain power and advantage over people of African descent. The misrepresentation of African Americans in the popular media, on commercial products like Aunt Jemimah's flour, and in art images like the Currier and Ives Darktown Series of prints, helped establish the negative characterizations of African Americans as an American norm. These types of images aided in the drive for the South

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to end Reconstruction and institute virtual slavery through sharecropping and terrorism. They helped justify the brutal system of segregation that became legal through the Supreme Court's *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision of 1896.

Any widespread movement among European Americans toward more enlightened attitudes toward African Americans in the early 20th century were quashed by D. W. Griffith's racist film, *Birth of a Nation*, a film which used the destructive power of images to establish a solid perception of the African American male as an ignorant brute in the European American psyche. That film was a catalyst for the unprecedented growth of the Klan in the years immediately following its release, and it helped secure de facto sanction for Klan violence in the South among the general white population, and it undoubtedly contributed to the continuation of primitivist stereotypes about blacks in the American consciousness.

Most of the African American artist active in the New Negro and Negro Renaissance periods prior to the second World War fought personal or artistic battles to establish their humanity and identity and that of their community in response to the objectifying imagery of Uncle Tom, coons, Sambo, minstrels, mammies, and Jumping Jim Crow that

had prevailed during the previous eighty years or so. Many of the works exhibited in the Harmon Foundation exhibitions or those organized by Alain Locke in the 1920's and 1930's were portraits or humanizing depictions of African American life. Locke had issued a challenge to African American artists to look to their ancestral heritage for inspiration in the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* he edited; a challenge he reiterated when that journal became the foundation for his important book, *The New Negro*, published later that year. Locke's call amounted to an aesthetic response to the crisis of identity that had developed within the African American community due to the oppressive assault articulated by the debilitating images surrounding the community.

Art is a weapon of oppression, a tool of liberation, the carrier of culture, and a force in constructing identity. As African art scholar Henry Drewal pointed out, Africans "think with art" and the objects and images created represent concepts and systems of thought. The cosmologies that many West Africans use to identify themselves and gauge their relationship with the reality in which they find themselves are articulated through matrices of artistic expression. Complex systems of signs, gestures, colors, icons, symbols, oral literature,

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music, language, performance, clothing, proverbs, rituals, religion, and sculpture combine to present aesthetic manifestations of their ontological system. Religion is expressed through art. Social status is expressed through art (i.e. kente cloth in Ghana). Collective identity is reinforced through art. Values are articulated through art.

The YORUBA have constructed visual articulations of their identity, both personal and communal, through facial marks, geles or hats, clothing, jewelry, and women's hairstyles. Many feel that the decoration of certain religious objects enhances their potency. In Mali among the Bamana, the makers of art, the blacksmiths, are felt to have particular access to the animating force of existence, *nyama*, which enables them to manage the materials and forces they encounter in creating those objects they make. At the end of the 19th century, the Bakongo of Zaire used a ritual expert to charge an art object called a *nkisi nkondi* with the spirit force to make the object effective in its purpose. Creative expression is valued and found in almost all aspects of life in most African communities. It is through culture that African societies express what is important, beautiful and unique about themselves.

Despite this background and tradition,

many African American artists are seen as interesting sidelights by members of their own community. Most African American artists can only make a reasonable living if they are patronized by leading mainstream institutions, patrons, and galleries because their own communities neglect them. One of the few historically black colleges with a significant art program is Howard University and their program needs more facilities, faculty, financial support, and students. Hampton University is one of the only black colleges with a significant museum structure, though several have important collections. Many black colleges do not teach jazz as a serious music form, opting instead to promote European classical music as the standard. In fact, it is nearly impossible to find an Afro-American Studies program, department, or major at these institutions. Afro-American Studies is a wonderful generating source for cultural scholars who add insight, analysis, or historical information to our knowledge about African American expression.

African American institutions like churches and schools would do well to patronize artists to provide images, icons and designs that reinforce the messages the institutions wish to convey. Too often African American young people do not see themselves in stained

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glass, find their cultural forms adding *nyama* to structures in which they must spend their weekdays, or learn aesthetic acuity through positive creative images in their homes. Many successful African Americans devote great amounts of energy and resources to consuming products that symbolize success and status, but patronizing those creative talents producing expressions of culture especially for and from the African American community would contribute to psychological stability in their homes.

African American artists focus a bit too much on their personality and individuality, concerns which are too prominent in this society, at the expense of a sense of their collective and spiritual identities. There is a need for artists to concern themselves with the expression of deep, lasting concepts through the medium of their individual expression. As Africobra artist Nelson Stevens has suggested, artists have not created an iconography for African Americans. This is particularly true with regard to the development of symbols and images for the Church. Of course Stevens was not suggesting popular denominational imagery but alluding to something more akin to John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme."

Ideologies, values, concepts, and strat-

egies need to be made visible through creative expression. There are concepts and values appropriate for African Americans which are not being produced and consumed through mainstream American culture. Because this is so, sociologists, historians, psychologists, and theologians need to dialogue with artists, musicians, writers, critics, art historians, and dramatists. Social theories and inspirational speeches disappear into the air in time. Images and symbols iterate and recreate the inspiration or the concept daily. As Dr. Jeff Donaldson, Dean of the School of Fine Arts at Howard University, stated in a recent interview, visual images are more powerful than even music or literature.

Of course, African American people have long shown an awareness of the importance of representations. Beauty parlors have been prominent in African American communities for generations and have been joined of late in certain areas by a growing number of fingernail shops. Men wore diamond pinkie rings, stingy brim hats, and silk suits in my childhood era. Hairstyles like the Afro, corn row braids, and dreadlocks have been visual signs of an inner consciousness or attitude since the 1960's, and young men in recent years have invented uncountable variations of decorative haircuts. African American people

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have been warring visually with the misrepresentations and resultant low self-esteem that has plagued them in American society by making their bodies living works of art.

The preceding article was reprinted, with permission, from Charles Ede's April issue of "Freedom's Journal" in Canton, Ohio.

The English language provides a great testimonial for the importance of vision in our thinking. Words like *visionary*, *insight*, *foresight*, *hindsight*, *clairvoyance*, *seer*, *perceive*, and *review* suggest how closely we ally vision and understanding. Do you see what I mean? How one is seen and sees oneself has a powerful impact upon the psychology of a person.

The slogans "Black is Beautiful" or "I'm Black and I'm Proud" were responses to the use of a visual sign -- dark skin color -- as a negative indicator of status and potential in this society. The discourse about "race" is a visual discourse. Through the power of images, the force of visual expression, African American people can define the future direction of that discourse. If we are to see a brighter future as a people, we must image it, adorn it, enhance its potency, and express and affirm it when the brightness arrives. We must commission and create art with substance. We must image ourselves, our potentials, our past achievements and achievers, and our positive future. We must *envision* it.

CASTING PEARLS

By iyanla vanzant

When properly understood and utilized, power creates transformation. True power cannot be contained, and sometimes not defined, however, the presence of power influences and eventually transforms the environment. Power will lay dormant until it is called forth for use. When you plug in an iron or flip a light switch, power supports and assists you in making the transformation from wrinkles to creases; from darkness to light. If you stick your finger in a socket or cross the wrong wires behind a switch, the power surge will kill you. It would not be considered the fault of the power, it is resistance or miseducation or ignorance of the power which will cause you harm. The power of ORISA is no different than the power in a light switch. Proper use creates transformation from darkness to light. Resistance, ignorance and miseducation causes destruction. To whom then shall we distribute the responsibility for so

many ORISA worshippers living in the darkness of ignorance, resistance and miseducation of their individual and collective power?

Although it took some time, I eventually got to the place of understanding that the ORISA with which I had been entrusted (notice I did not say “my ORISA”) were the foundation of power in my life. The moment that understanding seeped in, I took a totally different approach to my worship and reverence of the ancient forces. Where and how they were housed; how I approached them; the issues I presented to them took on a new depth and meaning. Where I was at one time quite comfortable complaining to ESU about lack of money or a wayward love interest, I eventually became aware, as the embodiment of ORISA energy, those issues were my responsibilities, not the ORISA. Where I once believed that unless I dressed a

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certain way and performed certain rituals, ORISA would not respond, I now believe that every thought I think, every word I speak and every deed I perform is a function of the power of the ASE of ORISA.

Darkness lives in fear. Fear is born of lack of information. While we are certainly moving to a place where it is acceptable to share information about ORISA, IFA and the other intricacies of this spiritual tradition, there is now a great deal of infighting about right, wrong, who is who and what is what. When fear meets darkness the result is ignorance. Some fear that they will be called “wrong.” Some fear they will be proven not to be “right.” Some fear they are not good enough, smart enough, old enough to share what they see when the light hits them. There is a funny thing about light, it will hit many objects from many directions, at the same time. Depending on where you are, you will see the object differently. To discount the view of another from where you sit indicates there is still some darkness on your side of the room. A more apt description is there is still a great deal of unresolved fear.

I often wondered why so may ORISA worshippers lived in poverty; why so many seemed to lack moral standards, personal philosophies and behavioral

discipline. I wondered why more ORISA worshippers were not involved in the elevation of the communities in which they lived. Why there was still so much crime, drug traffic and poverty where ORISA is housed and worshipped. I thought having ORISA meant having the power to transform energy. I came to understand that ORISA were universal forces to be used for the power of good on earth. I just could not for the life of me understand why you could get a reading to tell you what to do if your boyfriend/girlfriend was fooling around but no one ever mentioned what to do about drug dealers in the school yard. I came to realize this as the impact of lack of information.

When you do not know what to do, you cannot do it. When you do not know what to ask, you will not ask it. When you do not have a true interpretation of the essence of the universality and transformative power of ORISA, you will not seek to use them in that way. You will be enslaved by the narrowness of your world, your issues and your fears. Many ORISA worshippers do not understand themselves. They therefore cannot understand their impact on the world; or appreciate their ability to contribute to the world order. The information has been hidden, stolen and held at bay by those fighting over right and wrong or living through their fears.

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In the meanwhile, those who are ignorant to the power keep sticking their fingers in the ORISA sockets, without being able to figure out how not to get fried by the mandates of ITA, the warnings of IBI and the taboos of protocol. This confusion perpetuates the fear.

There is a part of us that is drawn to the light. The light of peace. The light of love. The light of giving and sharing information. There is a part of us which is ready to surrender, to give of the self for the betterment of the whole. The part of you that knows the light knows exactly what to do, how to do it and why it must be done. At constant battle with the light in your soul is the darkness; the things you believe you do not know; the things you believe you cannot do; the things you believe others can do to you. This darkness is fed by the fear which pervades your thoughts; the fear of death; of isolation; of bodily or spiritual harm; and, the fear of being found out. The biggest fear most people live with is the fear that someone will find out that you are a being of light, sent to earth to do good; sent here to heal. If people find out who you are then you will be held responsible for the wise and prudent use of power. Who wants to be responsible for that???!!!

The one important piece of information which has been withheld from ORISA

worshippers is that we *do not have to do the work*. We are the conduits through which the work will be done. We are of the power, we are the switches. In the argument of “rightness,” someone forgot to tell us, if we surrender the human fears to the power of ORISA, the light will come on and the work will get done. There is so much work to do, it will look different from where you sit, however, all work is necessary and purposeful. Different people are on different levels of development and the bringers of light must meet the people where they are. Some will speak. Some will teach. Some will write. Some will serve drinks in a bar. Those who carry the power touch the people with their thoughts, words and actions. Wherever they go, whatever they do, ORISA worshippers have the ability to bring the light. Or, through fear and ignorance, they give power to darkness.

The challenge many ORISA worshippers face is to make an effort to understand the powers with which we are entrusted; and to use them, not to benefit the personal self, but to elevate the world out of darkness. That requires that those entrusted with power become universally responsible and accountable. The issue is not right or wrong, better than or knowing more than, the issue is acknowledging the

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power of ORISA and learning how to utilize that power without fear, without resistance. That requires those who are entrusted with the power to do the work required to get and share the information because it is the responsible thing to do.

Oh, this sounds so heady. Almost spacy and totally off the beaten path. The alternative is to continue to initiate, giving power to fear and witness the death and destruction of the keepers of the power. The alternative is to continue to ration tidbits of information to the chosen few so they can hold their chests out because of who they know and who taught them what they know. The alternative is to continue vying for the power and prestige in small bite size groups while the forces of darkness eat the majority of the pie. The alternative is to run from the darkness, get the ASE of ORISA only to live in the fear that you might be found out.

I, for one, have been struck by the light. I have no choice but to tell everyone I know about a better way, a way to the light. To some, it may appear that the light has blinded me; or perhaps fried my brain. It has even been said that I cannot see at all. I recently read a marine biology report which said that the bottom of the ocean is pitch black. Many of the fish who live at the bottom

of the ocean have no eyes. They cannot see in the darkness, so they do not need eyes, but, they have very sharp teeth. I may be among the fish who are not able to see, but I know, through ORISA, I have been graced with the ability to take a pretty bite out of fear, ignorance and miseducation. I also know, the time for ORISA worshippers to buy stock in a toothpick company is quickly approaching.

When Iyanla Vanzant was 21 years old, she had three children, a violently abusive husband and a desire to die. Having survived two suicide attempts, an incestuous rape, a childhood of abuse and multiple homes following the death of her mother, Iyanla truly believed that her life was hopeless. In the early morning hours of one of her darkest days, a small voice from deep inside cried out to Iyanla, "Don't give up five minutes before the miracle." Later that morning she took her three children, three shopping bags of clothing and walked away from misery.

Five years later Iyanla graduated Valedictorian, Summa Cum Laude from Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, New York. Four years after that, she earned a law degree from the City University of New York Law School and moved on to

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Philadelphia to join the staff of the #1 ranked Public Defender Association in the country. Today, Iyanla is a talk show host, doctoral candidate, a spiritual life counselor and the author of several articles and a book on self-empowerment.

**that I am,
And all that I will be.”**

When her story appeared in ESSENCE magazine (October 1989), it received one of the highest responses in the magazine's history. Iyanla is now a Yoruba Priestess. Her goal is to revitalize and employ the wisdom, wealth and power hidden in the traditions of African culture. Iyanla admits that she is vibrantly alive, healthy and powerful because of the wisdom of the ancestors. ~~She is thankful for all the experiences and opportunities she has had in this lifetime.~~ Iyanla is sharing the secrets of her survival, re-birth and growth -- she is sharing the power of “spirit.”

**“I received the strength from my
ancestors;
the approach from an African
perspective of life;
the courage to struggle in my faith
that I would survive;
and, the direction I needed from
the spirit within me.**

I am thankful for all I have been, all

Excerpt from Chief FAMA's book -
FUNDAMENTALS OF THE YORUBA RELIGION
(ORISA Worship)

INITIATION OF WOMEN INTO IFA

By Chief FAMA

o oo
o oo
o o
o o

“...IFA MO SA DI E; IFA MO PON
LEHINRE...” IFA I seek your protection;
IFA I cling to you tight for health, strength,
and life...”

The first time I was told that I
had to have my own IFA was in 1985
when I went to a highly respected
BABALAWO, Chief Okemuyiwa
Akinyomilo, for my routine IFA divination.
During the reading, BABA Okemuyiwa
told me that ORUNMILA wanted me to
be initiated into IFA. This IFA message
sounded strange to me because prior
to that message, my belief was that a
woman could not have her own IFA, or
be initiated into it. I thought of probing
the rationale behind the message but
decided against it. I reasoned that BABA,
being a genius, knew better, and if a

woman could not be initiated into IFA,
he would not have told me to have IFA
in the first place. Moreover, I resolved
that the message was from ORUNMILA
and if ORUNMILA says I had to have my
own IFA, that was exactly what it had to
be. However, much as I revered this
spiritual injunction, I could not receive
the IFA at that time due to some personal
reasons. Amazingly, this message to
receive IFA kept appearing from different
IFA sources.

The constancy of this message
prompted a new wave of thinking in me.
One day, I went into mental seclusion
and reminisced about my journey into
IFA. I thought about my inner spiritual
drive, devoid of any external influence,
that motivated me to see IFA in the first
place. I thought about the first time I
experienced a wakeful trance and saw
about five BABALAWO in festive moods
doing spiritual work. I recalled the
manifestation of different messages
that IFA revealed to me in my dreams

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and while I was in trance. I remembered being told by some BABALAWO to whom I narrated my trance and dream experiences, that the occurrences were true messages from ORUNMILA.

In particular, I remembered two such striking IFA messages. The first one was when the late Pioneers of Indigenes' Faith of Africa (IJO ORUNMILA ATO) an IFA temple in Lagos, Nigeria, demanded a memorial service from the temple...Initially I did not want to tell these messages to anybody in the temple; however, when I remembered that I might suffer a reprisal from the departed souls if I chose to keep the message to myself, I reluctantly told it to Chief Adeboye Oyesanya, the Chief Priest of the Temple. Happily, a memorial service was duly conducted. Before this message however, Chief Oyesanya had become aware of the fact that IFA had been speaking through me because I had contacted him for advice on other crucial IFA messages that concerned some living members of the temple.

The second instance was when I was directed in my dream to propitiate my grandfather, Chief Alamana Akenyonowa, for my well-being. At that time, I was living in Lagos, and Lagos is about 400 miles from Emure Ile, my village. I went to Chief Oyesanya to ask IFA if I could do the ETUTU (offering) in Lagos. Chief Oyesanya consulted IFA, and through him, ORUNMILA said I

should travel to my village — Emure Ile in Owo division, Ondo State — for the ETUTU. I did everything according to the directive given to me in my dream, and positive things started happening in my life.

I remembered when one of my children, Ayobami, then four years old, changed form into a brand new baby in my dream. On consultation with IFA, I was complimented for my gift of dreaming because by that baby-form revelation, IFA was telling me of an impending danger threatening Ayobami. True to fact, Ayobami fell seriously ill shortly after the EBQ. By virtue of the EBQ that I made, Ayobami's illness changed from catastrophic to mild. In another dream, I also remember I was inside a hall full of BABALAWO with an ARABA of Ile Ife (in the dream) telling me, "Yes, you will all travel; irrespective of obstacles, you will travel."

These types of experiences are referred to in IFA language as "IFANRO ENIYAN—IFA wants a person to receive initiation." Therefore, when I came out of my mental seclusion, I concluded that sure enough, ORUNMILA wanted me as his initiated disciple and that there was no point delaying his injunction any further. I said to myself that it was time for me to be formally introduced to ORUNMILA. I therefore went to BABA Okemuyiwa for directives as to the things that I had to provide in order to receive one hand of IFA (referred

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to in IFA language as ISE'FA). ISE'FA is the first step into IFA initiation, and it means receiving 18 to 21 IKIN IFA—16 for divination, 1 as ADELE (guard), and the remaining IKIN IFA to represent EṢU during divination. BABA Okemuyiwa told me to bring a white bowl with a lid. I provided the bowl and lid. On the day that I was to see BABA again, my IFA was ready. BABA gave me my one hand of IFA with lots of prayer chants. I was overwhelmed by my new experience with IFA and was grateful that eventually, my spiritual reenactment with IFA was growing a strong root.

Receiving the one hand of IFA was the beginning of my deep spiritual journey into the richest religion in the world—the YORUBA religion. Having found my deep spiritual bearing, I became actively involved with the IFA crusade. I travelled all over Yorubaland meeting with highly respected BABALAWO, ORISA priests and priestesses, and different recognized IFA groups. I also attended worship at the different IFA temples spread all over Yorubaland. I was lucky to meet with many aged ARABA including the last two successive ARABA of Ile Ife, Nigeria—ARABA Awosope Awosade and ARABA Fasuyi Omopariola. These respected BABALAWO and all the ARABA taught me, at different levels, some IFA wisdom.

happened in my life. Before then, IFA had predicted it but I thought I could prevent it from happening through my strong will. My strong will was not strong enough to prevent the prediction from becoming a reality. The event soon became history in my life. With the reality of this prediction, I became jittery of what might happen to me if I kept postponing my initiation. Therefore, to get the money for my initiation, my one hand of IFA became my most trusted friend, companion, and confidante. I spoke to IFA almost every minute of the day about my needs. I prayed to ORUNMILA to protect me and my family and to provide the money for initiation. I also prayed to Him to properly direct me in regard to the initiation.

Meanwhile, I had been actively involved with ORUNMILA Magazine and through my research for the magazine, I got to know another genius BABALAWO, Chief Ifagbemi Alabi Ojo, late ARABA of Ayetoro town, and the OLUWO of Ogun State of Nigeria. BABA 'Fagbemi joined the IRUNMOLE on January 27, 1993. BABA 'Fagbemi divined for me, and the same message—that I needed to be initiated into IFA—was revealed. Getting home, I went directly to my IFA and implored ORUNMILA reverently to provide the instant money for my initiation. This prayer manifested and, within a short time, I got the money for initiation.

Early in 1988, something dramatic

Something interesting about the

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mysticism of ORUNMILA in regard to my one hand of IFA and my eventual initiation, was that He directed me to BABALAWO who are geniuses. I mean BABALAWO who are institutions in IFA in their own rights. BABA Okemuyiwa and BABA 'Fagbemi provided the best IFA services for reasonable amounts of money for both my ISE'FA and ITE'FA (one hand of IFA and IFA initiation). In the case of my one hand of IFA, BABA Okemuyiwa did everything for the ISE'FA. All that I provided was the bowl with the lid. For the initiation, I can say that, save for the necessary sacred items for which I paid, the initiation was OLUWO - TO - OMO - OKO'FA (OLUWO/IFA student) type of initiation where the OMO OKO'FA pays for, and buys the necessary items and the OLUWO takes over the rest. That was exactly the case with my initiation.

In November of 1988, I was initiated into IFA by Chief 'Fagbemi Ojo Alabi. Present at my initiation were five elders and high ranking BABALAWO— Chief Ojerinde, the OLUWO of Ayetoro; Chief Kekereawo, the OLUWO of Saala village; Chief Fadeyi, the OJUBONA of Ayetoro; Chief Qaonipekun, the ERINMI Ope of Ikereku Abeokuta; and Chief Olu Adeoye, the OLUWO Iledi Aborigine, Abeokuta. Other respected BABALAWO present were: Awo Owolabi Oke, my Ojubona; Awo Akanbi Qjoawo; Awo Ogun Abiose; Awo Anininuolu Ajani; and Awo Ayo Familusi. There were four IFA students present, two of whom

were Rasaki and Awolowo 'Fagbemi Alabi. In the background during the initiation were six Apetebi (BABALAWO wives) who took care of the cooking of some of the foods for the initiation party.

Coming out of IGBO'DU (IFA Sacred Grove) is a joyous occasion in IFA circle. In my own case, there was a lot of AGOGO IFA (IFA gong) music backed by sonorous IFA lyrics and complimented by IFA dances. The time then was about 4 a.m. The singing and dancing had awakened all the children in my OLUWO's compound. Having been used to such spiritual reawakening, the children joined in the dancing. At this stage, I was happy, I was jubilant, I was ecstatic. I felt a new me. I knew I was reborn and that the initiation was a milestone in my life. I congratulated myself for having performed one of the most tasking events in my life — IFA initiation. I thanked by OLUWO for the initiation. I thanked ORUNMILA, my guardian angel...

I went to my OLUWO, Chief 'Fagbemi Ojo Alabi, with an audio tape and a video recorder to interview him about prohibitions against a woman being initiated into IFA. The interview was conducted in November of 1990 and it was as follows:

Chief Fama:

BABA, ever since the publicity of

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my ITE'FA (IFA initiation) there have been questions from some quarters as to whether or not a woman can TE IFA (be initiated into IFA). BABA, is there any ODU IFA that says a woman can or cannot be initiated into IFA?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

In the first place, there is no ODU IFA that says a woman cannot TE IFA, much as there is no ODU IFA that says only men can TE IFA. It is the same principle that guides a man into ITE'FA that qualifies a woman to TE IFA. ITE'FA is for anybody that IFA wants to be initiated (ENITI IFA BANRO). Whoever has IFA blood flowing in his or her veins is qualified for ITE'FA. The only exception for women's initiation is if the woman is an APETEBI (a BABALAWO's wife), in which case, the APETEBI cannot make IFA because her BABALAWO will take care of her spiritually. The big clause is that a woman initiated into IFA cannot see ODU.

Chief FAMA:

BABA, my understanding now is that a woman can TE IFA but she cannot see ODU.

Chief 'Fagbemi:

Yes, a woman initiated into IFA cannot see ODU.

Chief Fama:

BABA, I understand that there is a special ritual call IPA'NA ODU that goes with IFA initiation, can the ritual be performed for a woman IFA initiate?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

The ritual for IPA'NA ODU can be performed for a woman initiated into IFA.

Chief FAMA:

Can such a woman partake in the sacred IPA'NA ODU food?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

A woman initiated into IFA who has also performed the IPA'NA ODU can eat from the sacred IPA'NA ODU food.

Chief FAMA:

Can a man initiated into IFA who has not performed IPA'NA ODU eat from the sacred food?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

Whoever has not performed IPA'NA ODU after IFA initiation, be he a man or a woman, cannot eat from the sacred ODU food.

Chief FAMA:

BABA, can a woman initiated into IFA participate in IFA initiation of another

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AWO?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

A woman already initiated into IFA can participate in IFA initiation but she cannot see ODU.

Chief FAMA:

BABA, you had kindly allowed me to witness and participate in other IFA initiations after my own ITE'FA, was that right?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

It was okay because you were initiated into IFA. The big BUT is that you did not see ODU during those initiations.

Chief FAMA:

BABA, this is valid information from an institution like you that is worth being published. BABA, can I publish it?

Chief 'Fagbemi:

You have my authority to publish it.

Chief FAMA:

ABORU, ABOYE BABA. (Meaning: "may all offerings be accepted; may he [BABA] live long in his sacred duties to ORUNMILA.")

Chief 'Fagbemi:

OGBO ATO. IFA A GBE E. ("May⁴³ you live long; in good health. May IFA

ESU
USE

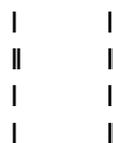
AWO FA'LOKUN FATUNMBI

The following comes from a lecture Spiritual Force we call ES _U. That is the most immediate and tangible manifestation of ESU as a Force in Nature.
Awo Fa'lokun gave on August 20, 1993 in Oakland, California.

ES fulfills the role of the Divine Messenger. Every earth-centered tradition believes that there is some Force in Nature, or Spiritual Presence, or some Power that allows humans to communicate with Nature and allows Nature to communicate with humans. It is the function of translation. The Divine Messenger translates the language of Nature into the language of humans and the language of humans into the language of Nature.

If you have ever gone to the beach feeling depressed and come away feeling better just by being in the presence of the ocean, then we can say that you have had some kind of exchange or communication with the ocean. The translating factor in this interaction is a

The most abstract manifestation of ESU is as it comes into being in the ODU OSE 'TURA which appears as follows:



This is the symbolic representation of the energy pattern that incarnates ESU. This ODU is used as a magnet to invoke the power of the Divine Messenger. In IFA Creation Myth, the Eternal Rock of Creation is called OYIGIYIGY. This Rock separated into four Calabashes of Creation. These four calabashes interacted with one another to form sixteen sacred principles called OLU ODU or the primal principles of

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Creation. In IFA, the sacred number seventeen represents the sixteen primal ODU plus OSE'TURA which is the seventeenth ODU of IFA. This ODU has the function of causing the OLU ODU to copulate, generating the two hundred and forty ODU that are generated by the first sixteen ODU.

ESU, then, in addition to being the Divine Messenger, is also the primal seed of generation.

IFA is the religious tradition of YORUBA culture. It is the parent religion of all the different spiritual societies, fraternities and sororities that exist within the culture. The reason that IFA is considered the source of all the other forms of worship within YORUBA culture has to do with the role of ESU and OSE'TURA in relationship to the primal OLU ODU. In essence, when an IFA priest is initiated, they invoke the first sixteen ODU, then they invoke OSE'TURA. This is the ritual enactment of the original moment of the Creation of diversity within the Universe. This ritual event gives the initiate a glimpse of the primal event that generated Being as we experience in human life. It is the mystical vision of that event that gives the Prophet ORUNMILA the praise name "ELERI-IPIN" which means "Witness to Creation."

The opening invocation of IFA is always 'ORUNMILA ELERI-IPIN" meaning "The Realm of the Immortals is our salvation, the Witness to Creation." The mystical invocation of this event occurs through the invocation of OSE'TURA. It is out of this primal event that all the other subgroups within IFA emerge. Every ORISA, every ancestral lineage, every society, every vocation are all manifestations of one ODU, or a grouping of several ODU. It is understood that all of these groups come into the world through the Divine interpretation of OSE'TURA.

In addition to being the Divine Messenger, ESU has several other functions. ESU is the Divine Enforcer in issues of Justice, ESU has a role as the Divine Trickster and ESU is the ORISA which opens doors.

We all understand the idea of ESU as the Divine Messenger. If you can communicate with the ocean, if you can gain inspiration anywhere in Nature, you have established a relationship with ESU as Divine Messenger. This is true whether or not you have received some symbolic representation of ESU that you use in a ritual manner. For those of you who are familiar with chakras, ESU communicates through the third eye. In YORUBA we say IWAJU. The word "IWAJU" means "The Eye of Charac-

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ter,” and is used commonly to mean forehead.

In order to communicate with EṢU there has to be an unbroken connection between the head and the heart. If you are in YORUBA culture and you hear someone say “Think about what you are doing,” they do not point to their head. They point to their heart. The reason is that they understand the link between the third eye, the brain and the heart. So in YORUBA there is a link between IWAJU, ORI and OKAN. That link is at the back of the neck. In the West they call this link EṢU NI BA KO. In IFA, we say IPAKO which literally means “not disjointed.” No matter what phrase you use, the back of the neck is still the link between the head and the heart.

If you only look at the world through the power centers in your head, you have shut down the power centers in the rest of your body. When this occurs, your shoulders tense up and you get a pain in the neck. This tension leads to agitation and the development of illness and is considered reflective of bad character. IFA tradition describes this lack of connection by saying that the hands and the feet are moving in different directions. Therefore, if there is no unity between what you feel and what you think, which is a fundamental issue of psychology, you have a problem. The

image of hands and feet suggests that hands bring what you need to survive and feet take you out in the world. You need to have your hands and feet motivated by the same program in order to function with efficiency.

In the role of EṢU as Divine Trickster, most of the anthropological literature identifies the Trickster as a random form of harassment. In some literature, it is described as an “evil” phenomena. But there is a very sacred function for Tricksters in all traditional cultures. That is to bring to each one of us the truth that we are all interconnected and interrelated. It is the Eternal Truth that no one can be totally self reliant. Once you have the idea that you can handle all of your problems, that you’ve got it covered, you’ll never cry, you’re the tough guy, the role of the Divine Trickster is to let you know that this self-perception may not be true. Occasionally things occur and we don’t have all the answers. So there is a spiritual influence that pushes us all towards the idea that one tree does not make a forest and no man is an island. It is pushing us towards the idea that we are interrelated, that the more we take the solitary approach, sooner or later reality is going to greet us on the street.

I am not just speaking here of other people. We are dependant on other

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people to survive in the world, and we are dependant on communication with Nature to survive in the world. The Divine Trickster slaps us up side our head when we empty too much garbage in our water. When we eliminate waste in our drinking water, eventually it tastes funny. As George Carlin said, the whole purpose of life on earth is to feed Mother Earth styrofoam cups. That may be true, but until we know for sure, that could be disruptive and if it is, we can expect a wake up call from ESU.

The Divine Trickster is not some arbitrary, malevolent Force that is out to get you if you don't behave. That is the Christian bogey man model. The Divine Trickster is a fundamental principle of the structure of reality, based on the idea that if you see an egg that hatches and something comes out with wings, there's a pretty good chance that it's a bird. The universe is not arbitrary.

The great African Shaman Malidoma has said that rocks, trees and animals are much smarter than humans, and that humans are the lowest rung on the consciousness scale. He said that because birds always act as birds, you rarely find a bird trying to be an elephant. You rarely find a tree trying to be a rock and you never find a rock being anything but a rock. That is one of the

reasons rocks are sacred. They are inflexible in their insistence on maintaining their intrinsic identity. A rock is very evolved spiritually because it always functions in perfect alignment with its destiny. Humans, on the other hand, are constantly trying to be birds and elephants and whatever else they can imagine. It is the role of the Divine Trickster to suggest that we might have a personal destiny and that we may have a purpose for being on earth and that we may have some eternal essence that the Universe is guiding us towards bringing into Being. So the Divine Trickster has a very important and very sacred function.

This leads us to the idea of opening doors. You read time and time again that ESU opens doors. That sounds good, but what does it mean? Let us consider what door it is that ESU opens. And when in the course of your life it is important to have that door open.

In IFA they say initiation is the process of elders guiding the novice up the seven steps of initiation. They knock on the door and kick it open, then step back. This is the door that they are talking about. I am not just speaking of the door that is kicked open during ritual. It is a bigger door than that. Initiation occurs every time we expand our own consciousness. This can be in the

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context of a communal ritual or it can be in the context of overcoming difficulty in the world.

IFA says that we can draw a map of consciousness through the use of a circle that contains an equal armed cross. Let's imagine a circle with a cross that is the size of a baseball. Let's say that this circle represents the consciousness of a young man the day before puberty. Then puberty kicks in and your consciousness is forced to deal with the issues of being an adult, raising a family, finding a productive role in society and so on. Let's say the consciousness of the man who has assimilated these new roles is represented by a circle the size of a basketball. To get from the baseball to the basketball requires the death of the old self. The boy no longer exists and in his place stands a man. This shift in consciousness can only occur if we tear down the parameters of conscious that define how we see ourselves in the world.

When this barrier breaks down we go through a period of death and rebirth. The death of the old self and birth of the new self. This process always involves walking through some doorway, some portal, some barrier that leads us into the realm of the unknown. This is always true, there is no exception. This

occurs daily if you are in tune with it. IFA says that once we are initiated it is our task to re-initiate ourselves every day. Each day you have to incorporate, assimilate and integrate the life lessons that have occurred in the world. Otherwise you become stagnant, you regress and the circle that represents the parameters of your consciousness becomes smaller.

There is a doorway that we walk through, then, that allows us to make the leap into the next level of consciousness. The key to unlocking that doorway is the willingness to confront the fear of the unknown. It always involves embracing the need for change. The doorway that ESU opens is that doorway that exposes a mirror that allows you to see yourself. When you see yourself clearly, you grab yourself by the lapels, you look yourself in the eye and you say, "Who I am in this moment isn't going to cut it, what do I have to do to take the next step?"

ESU as the ORISA that opens doors, really becomes the primal source for the confrontation with fear. Historically, then, one of the reasons why ESU tends to be described as "evil" or "negative" is because he brings us face to face with our fears. If you don't like this experience, or if you can't handle it, the tendency is to blame ESU rather than

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admit to your own lack of courage.

it's not all that scary.

If you are unwilling to walk through the door that ESU has opened, the common human response is to blame the door keeper. ESU as the opener of doors is that which we invoke so that we can confront our fears. The point being, don't invoke ESU unless you are ready to deal.

All this to answer the question what doorway does ESU open -- the doorway that allows you to confront your fears.

What happens is that people come to me saying they are ready for growth. We invoke ESU and they blame me for all the problems that greet them in the street. But I am not the one who is causing the problems. The problem was caused by asking the Universe to open the door. The key point here is that IFA is not about sprinkling juju dust over your head and washing away all your problems. Anybody that tells you that may be doing something wonderful, but it isn't IFA.

There is an idea in IFA that appears in every earth-centered religion that I have ever encountered. It is the idea that everything is interconnected. If you read all the great mystical writings in literature, they are all about trying to explain how it feels when you really get the idea. The point is, we can sit here and talk and say "Oh yeah, we're all interconnected, I can get with that, we're all connected to the Source, so we're all the eyes of God, sounds good." It's a wonderfully noble and universally recognized idea. But it remains an idea until you really experience it. Now, all the folks who write about experiencing it say that the prelude to that experience is what I call the Mother of all Fears. IFA literally calls it "Fear of the Mothers." It is the fear of total loss of self, which it is, followed by a sense of we're all interconnected.

Even if there were juju dust to give you courage, you would just create a reliance on the juju and not the ability to work through the fear. Fundamentally, cosmologically, psychologically and spiritually that's just the way it is. In fact, most initiations include a healthy dose of time to allow you to experience your fear. This is the primary reason why initiations are secret, because if you really figured out what they were doing

How does this relate to the idea of the Divine Enforcer? You can only move so far away from this idea before Nature itself, and human beings who are in the process of becoming conscious, create counterbalancing forces to guide

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you back to center. EṢU has the function of Divine Enforcer but many ask what about the tragedies of the world. That is a difficult question to come to terms with objectively. As an aspect of faith in IFA there is the belief that within the bigger picture, Divine Justice is at work. This is based on the belief that it is possible to get along, that it is possible to relate.

The symbolic analogy that IFA uses is "IFA OLOKUNO SARODAYO," meaning the ocean always provides for those who live in the sea. Every fish that lives in the ocean has a home and food to eat. So they have it figured out in the ocean — we just haven't figured it out yet on land. That's probably because they've had more time in the ocean to work on it. The idea of EṢU as the Divine Enforcer is that the ground rules for figuring it out are in place. When we get too far away from that, things occur that bring the truth back to us.

This is all related to the Chaos theory. Western science has a discipline called Chaos theory which postulates the idea that things which seem to be symmetrical in the universe have a range of variation when viewed at a distance. Things which appear random have a degree of symmetry when viewed at a distance. The issues of justice and randomness are issues of perspec-

tive. If you get the big picture the pieces start to fall in place. EṢU as the Divine Enforcer is what we invoke to get the big picture. You can do things on the short term that feel effective, righteousness and ethical that can have long term negative effects. You can do things that seem negative in the moment and end up having positive results. It is EṢU that we invoke to get a clue where we are in that polarity.

TO BE CONTINUED

Awo Fa'lokun Fatunmbi lives in Oakland, California where he works as a writer and businessman. He is the co-founder of Ile Orunmila Oshun and the Awo Study Center. Awo Fa'lokun was initiated into Egbe Ifa Ogun ti Ode Temo in 1989 and has written several books about his experiences as a student of Ifa. For those interested in Ifa - Orisa training material, Awo Fa'lokun can be reached at Box 28, 2550 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704.

PERSPECTIVES

With **BABA TENU LERI**

This concludes our introduction of the viewpoints of Baba Tenu Leri, an QBATALA priest currently residing in northeastern Ohio.

PART II

Afro Cuban jazz came here. Olotunji introduced it in 1949. We started hearing a name or two . . . YEMOJA . . . SANGO . . . SEKERE . . . BATA. Nobody had any reference to it. Harlem is divided by Fifth Avenue. A lot of the African Cuban, Yoruba and Congolese people settled in East Harlem, in what they called El Barrio, one block over from Lenox Avenue. There were a lot of them on Lenox Ave. who our fathers and mothers worked along side at the Harlem hospital and different institutions in our community. They didn't even know that they were Cuban or Yoruba until they spoke. We still didn't know what they were, we called them

Puerto Ricans. We really didn't understand. We were still sleeping very much at that time.

Dizzy Gillespie, one of the certified African Americans of our times, crossed the line into Afro-Cuba. Olotunji, who was a Nigerian, also crossed the line into Afro-Cuba. Dizzy crossed the line with Chano Pozo and then applied it to his music and exposed the world to it. We heard the chants of the African Abakwa -- the north Nigerian society for men, but we never knew what it was. All of this mix was going on, all the ingredients were being dropped into the mondongo -- soup. Our black men and women were being exposed little by little as we went on.

There was no complete package making itself available to any of us. You had different pockets of dancers and drummers and people who were interested

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in magic or healing and things like that emerging in different parts of New York City. Some were exposed by their parents who listened to African Cuban jazz at the Village Gate when they went to see Arthur Prysock and they had cultural exchange with Mongo and Celia Cruz. We took a chance and put a song here or there that we never knew the meaning of.

There were only four or five major groups that were taken out of Africa that make up this thing we are talking about here. The major group is the so-called YORUBA. Then the Congolese -- a very deep tie to that, where we get our so-called PALO religion. Then we have the ABAKWA, a north Nigerian people. The Dahomey people were made up of many regions, the strongest being the FON. When they went to go rob Africa, it was very calculating. They didn't take the weak part. They took the strong stuff and brought it here; so, the FON made a strong impression, as well as the CONGOLESE and the OLODUMARE or YORUBA. They all made a very strong impression in Cuba, Brazil, and Haiti.

At the same time, all these people were filtering all around us as African Americans without showing themselves. We were surrounded and never knew what we surrounded by and it wasn't until 25

years ago that it began to define itself. The spirit is so strong and you've got intelligent, Black people who have been through many experiences are not dumb. They put it together that the spirit is trying to speak through us. There is a myth in the way they were portraying Africans to us. And the Americans fought for a way of participating in some worship that was very African and really sincere and they called it DAMBALLAH WEDO. It was a mixture of the Haitian, African Cuban, the love for the Abakwa and the love for the Congo all rolled into one. ORISA VOUDOUN, in other words. "VOUDOUN" is the word the FON give for OLODUMARE. The way the FON present ORISA is different from the way other Nigerians present ORISA, as do the other states but they are talking the same derivatives of OLODUMARE.

We have been through a century or two with Congolese and other groups from Nigeria, all making this culture. They brought out a whole other experience. They held on as long as they could to the pure vein of their culture but they began to merge and then it began to filter into New York, through the music mostly. There was Symphony Sid who was very much in love with African Cuban music, as were Raymond Burr, John Cassavetes, Jayne Meadows, and Frank Sinatra. These were the people that made it possible for us to get expo-

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sure to African Cuban music. Dizzy Gillespie brought Chano Pazo, not just his music, but him, the Yoruba man, right into Harlem. So we got the tail end of that era which was trying to have Yoruba pronounced but it was sabotaged in some sort of cultural way so that it never really came out. We always believed that anyone who actually performed straight out Yoruba songs were going to be cursed and punished.

DAMBALLAH WEDO was a powerful thing because you had dynamic figures such as Denizulu, God rest his soul, who was the first drum teacher I ever had. My sister was his mate at the time. He went on to bring us the AKAN culture, very much the same as what we are doing here, just from another part of the land of OLODUMARE. Oba Oseijeman was a very dynamic person who made major contributions into the pride of Africans in America in regaining their culture the best way you can. One unsung hero, Baba Pianki, was one of the major Babas at the time to help run the DAMBALLAH WEDO chapter, which almost got off the ground.

There are many DAMBALLAH WEDO worshippers in America. A lot of it is because of the village in South Carolina, which is an amazing feat of magic in terms of African American recovery of our spiritual independence. It came

out of the DAMBALLAH WEDO house which was upstairs on a third floor walkup on 125th street. It was always mysterious to walk up all those long stairs and finally get up in there and that drumming would be going on. Nobody would know what the heck we were singing or praying or anything. I was a baby at that time; I wasn't even really allowed in there. I couldn't play any drums or anything at that time, but I caught the tail end of it. People like that, Oseijeman -- Black men who insisted on doing something African and who were very much aware that a major part of the Yoruba/Congo/Angolans were brought here to the United States and many parts of the Caribbean. They began to do the best they could do to drum, dance and sing -- to call upon the forces of the African culture to make their lives a little better than it was. As we went on, more and more information began to come out.

Oba Elumi -- Christopher Oliana -- was initiated the same time as Oba Oseijeman. He decided that he was going to go in a different direction. It wasn't the nationalist direction of Oba Oseijeman. It was occult magic, mysticism, the profundities of the prayers, the profundities of the ODU -- power. He began to admire the Cuban music and the structure Obadimeji had set up in Cuba which most of us are now

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calling Yoruba. It is actually very different than what occurs in Nigeria. There you do not get five or ten ORISA. You only get certain ORISA. But Obadimeji devised a system of receiving all of the different ORISA, along with Sierra Marquez and Suzanna Cantana -- these are the ladies they say were the two first priestesses that built the first two cabildoes in Cuba. One was YEMOJA and the other was OYA. The structure of Godmother, receiving ILEKE, the warriors, and washed ORISA, then going on to be initiated into priesthood began here. Some of these houses turned out to be more influenced by the Congo, which we call PALO houses. Others were influenced by ORISA, which we call ORISA houses. But both of them have both. They go hand in hand together. On earth we had to make a pact with heaven on how we were going to deal with the ancestors. As American Yoruba there was not a lot of knowledge on how to deal with the ancestors that came with the Yoruba culture, so it was borrowed from the Congolese culture. It enables us to have the license to travel into the world of the deceased to do what we need to do and then come on back. We call it licensing, scratched, cut -- that's your badge. We supplemented the EGUNGUN understanding with the PALO understanding. We used that as our spiritual guide which was rough in

the beginning, because we didn't know much about that either but that was the formula we used. We discovered that most initiates in Cuba were initiated into three or four different cultures and spoke the language of those cultures: Congolese, Yoruba, Abakwa and Arara.

This is what we are confronted with. Some African American minds don't want to take the challenge. They say, "I got my godmother, I got my ILEKE, that's it." Nobody's checking who these people are, where they come from, what is their base, what was their parents' base. What level did their parents embrace this history on? A lot of people never did that. Then the little cliques began.

We are beginning to gain some understanding and are doing everything we can to create experiences to show ourselves a little more about the subject that we know nothing about. We feel very safe, though. Here again, it is the blind faith that is what is empowering us because we are completely plugged into a force that we came to in blind faith. We didn't know what it was. That same force is guiding us right now. When we go to Cuba, Brazil, Africa, everybody is doing something different and it is very difficult . . . they haven't taught us that the knowledge you seek is turned into wisdom when you realize

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that God placed it all inside of yourself. Therefore, when you doubt, and you search, and are never satisfied and never get to your postliminal level of understanding, you will always wait for someone else to tell you what's happening. This is what I believe is a result of racism and slavery. I believe we need to just work on refreshing our understanding of what this is we're doing. We really need to realize that nobody is going to do this for us and everyone who is doing it, did what they did on their own and they didn't wait for anyone.

There is one last thing I would like to mention before we close. YEMOJA is a very misunderstood ORISA because she tells us right from the beginning that water seeks its own level. Where it doesn't fit you don't have to force it. Water is just about water . . . water, fire, wind . . . these are elements that you don't have to make fit. They will make themselves fit. Water, wind, fire will wear away . . . it will do whatever it needs to do. Water, which we as American Yoruba have really forgotten, is a substance of YEMOJA. OMILAIYE. Mother of all the waters on the earth. That means the toilet water, the sewer, the fresh mountain spring, rain. Without her there would be no forest, no metals, no fruit, no vegetation, no nothing. We tend to get kind of pathological.

We'll go to the ocean for YEMOJA. We don't realize that there is water inside this earth that is being stored that gets drawn back up through the process, with the plants and all. She's working all over the place. She's being carried around in each of us because each of us are 80% water. That mama's working everywhere and you can't get away from it. The most profound ORISA there is. Before there was a road for ELEGBA or OBATALA to walk on, Mother had to first touch the flaming ball in the sky to make the explosion to make the universe. That's one of the theories that they've got, that the combustion of water and the fire made the explosion. Then there was the water that caused the marshy mush that gave the environment for OLOKUN. And there was the water that made the algae that made the marsh that made the plant life begin. YEMOJA, very deep ORISA.

We should stop going for the hype and start checking the elements like they really, really are and the ORISA would mean more to us than they presently do. I was initiated to OBATALA, but I believe that each of the ORISA is in us all; therefore, that makes us all a part of a big whole, a big oneness. I think that it would behoove us to really, really get into that as fast as we can.

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YEMOJA, she gets tired sometimes, and she will bring the water to wash away, sometimes, to clean it up, sometimes.

We cannot be afraid to come together because we are cheating ourselves of a wonderful experience and YEMONJA is not very pleased with that.

CREATING LOVE

Cynthia M. Dagnal-Myron

The AWO was clear in his instructions: describe the partner you desire completely, from head to heart, so you will know to say “hello” when you see him.

I had, of course, read and heard this before; in many traditions there are such teachings. Even as a teacher I had used similar tactics to get children to feel success, feel what a certain experience would be like, through “creative visualizations” that we hoped would turn out to be self-fulfilling prophecies.

Still, when it came to affairs of the heart, I was mistrustful. It was one thing trying to visualize myself making the perfect backhand smash, quite another to visualize meeting the man of my dreams. Over one, I had at least some physical control. The other? Wasn't it best to leave that to Spirit? Didn't they say that when the student was ready the teacher

would come? Wasn't it the same with soulmates?

Still, I'd joked often with sisterfriends of “building the ideal man” and then cloning him, one for each of us. And of all the things spinning out of control in my life that needed work, this seemed one that might be pleasant to ponder further. Perhaps, I decided, it might be good to take it a step further: not to create a mate, but rather to discover who I thought I wanted, and then to ask myself why I wanted the attributes I required. I would question myself about each of those attributes, looking for the hidden meanings of each; their messages about my own ambitions, thwarted and fulfilled.

It became, then, an exercise far beyond “mate-creation.” I hemmed and hawed and erased and re-thought and revealed a little each day until he materialized on

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paper, and my own motives surfaced. And when he was “done,” from his smile to his soul, his kindness to the make of his car, I petitioned for him and let it go.

Within three months, I met this “made up” man, and was so stunned that I ran off on a long weekend trip after our first meeting to sort it all out. I tried hard to nay-say it: there were, as my Native American family would put it, some Trickster touches in him, physical things I had said I wouldn't like that in him were somehow absolutely right and delicious -- no problem at all, suddenly. That seemed to be the lesson here: to continue to “let go,” and to learn a new me, along with this new man.

And I had no choice. When he'd said, “Hello,” his smile told me I could run as fast and as far as I wanted. He'd wait. And that smile never changes. I tell my sisterfriends now even if they never write up a lover on paper to be looking for a smile that says, “When you're ready, I'm ready. I've been waiting for a long time for you -- little longer's no big thang to me...”

So, I returned to explore this new territory, and found surprises around every bend. One night at dinner, he dropped a “secret” on me that AWO had said very few modern males ever learned in this

lifetime; just as casually as you please, and almost in the same words. I dropped my TEKKA MAKI, and decided some serious divination was in order. I still had my coat on when I tossed the cowries as a first step, later that night. They liked him. So did every other oracle I was versed in.

Nuff said.

I always caution sisterfriends that I'm well aware he may be a short course, not the teacher come to show me the delights of lifetime learning. For now, though, I have become a star student, and homework has never been more eagerly anticipated. For I have discovered that this man who knows “nothing” or my traditions forces me to constantly re-examine and rededicate myself to them by living them even better than I do, instinctively. He reads the signs in the wind and wild things, greets sunrises and sunsets with great joy, and finds miracles in moments I miss. And when I share with some story from my tradition, or give a YORUBA name to something he believes, he smiles, nods, and says, “Good . . . good . . .” because it's just another thing we both have always known, confirming that we've always been on the same path, maybe one of us a little ahead of the other, and then, for awhile, a little behind, ‘til we met somewhere, somehow, when it

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was time to go on together.

And so, my questions this time for all those who frequent the Marketplace:

How did you know when to say “Hello,” and what are some lessons your teacherpartner has taught you? How do you use the sacred to deepen the simple, day-to-day matters of your relationship?

THE BRIDGE

(from private conversations)

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In April of 1984 I, along with a fellow seeker of truth, began a series of dialogues that led to the appearance of "Dialogues," the second of five essays entitled "The Bridge" to be published in "OYA'S MARKETPLACE," now known as "OSA'GBE SORO." In November of 1984, I had my first reading by an IFA priest. In April of 1991, I was initiated as a priest of OBATALA. The summer of 1993 saw me initiated to IFA and I am now a BABALAWO. My name is Awo Fabukola. To me, all of this is related to the material we call "The Bridge." It is a statement of the agreement between ORI and IPONRI; that is to say our consciousness and our higher self or spiritual double.

DIALOGUES

Chapter Four: Reaction to Experience

It is natural enough to wonder why one is told to clarify what one wants, or is told to practice self observation. These are instructions that are not unique to this School, but are universal. They are instructions, suggestions, which exist in every useful teaching. Perhaps you have heard or read them before and perhaps you have tried them before. Perhaps these activities, of seeing what one wants, and of seeing how one is, are already part of your life, part of your daily living. It is good if they are. It is worth working for if they are not.

There can be much confusion and misunderstanding related to these two suggestions. It is very important to avoid misunderstanding about the why and the how and the expectations related to these suggestions, in order for them to continue to be truly useful.

Of course, we understand that you will

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do with them what you do with them. Each person's subjectivity interprets suggestions differently. Words mean different things to different people. We each have our own history, experience, reference points, context, in which ideas have various degrees of importance and meaning. But since suggestions have been given, and perhaps already tried, you are entitled to an explanation of why, some guidance about how, and some indication of where such suggestions might lead. We take nothing on faith (in the usual sense of the word) and neither should you.

In the most real context, all any us really want is simply to feel good about our lives as we live them. One wonders to what extent anyone would ever have an "interest" in consciousness, truth, love, meaning, cosmic order, higher states, God, etc., if suffering were not the bed-rock foundation of our experience in living.

Picture yourself living each day in a state of fulfilment, creatively and lovingly involved with the people around you, sensing a living relationship with the earth, sun, and stars, knowing as innate comprehension the exact role you played in the cosmos, and feeling at every moment a vibrant joy that you knew to be simply the joy of existence itself. Add to that a state of being in

which you could instinctively greet any and every "problem" that could possibly happen as a gleeful opportunity for the expansion of life and God.

Such a person would have no need at all for those things that are our greatest concerns. A child's first walk across the street is a very big event for that child. And for those who are just waking up to their own reality, there is a predictable amount of worry, insecurity, concern for correctness, and a vast amount of misunderstanding regarding what it is all about. So, the street gets crossed, well or not well, and we wake up to the facts of our own being in much the same way. One knows as an adult that the child's experiences in growing up will all work themselves out, given a little help and good fortune. And so we should treat ourselves the same way, with compassion for our own situation, with self love.

That is the most useful attitude one can have toward oneself regarding suggestions that are given for experiment or study. It is of course the most beneficial attitude one can ever have toward oneself, for the attainment of perfect self love is the highest state possible. But we are not talking about the highest state possible, we are talking about practical compassion for oneself and one's "search." Reject ideals for now.

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Accept, peacefully, the reality of what you are, mistakes and all. That is the “how.”

The “why” behind our suggestions, particularly the first two, is bad news. The reason for these suggestions is that people in general have no grasp at all of how totally wrong their understanding of reality really is. It’s not even close, and certainly not even going in the right direction. The product of your grasp of reality is violence, war, cruelty, and suffering. We are talking about your personal world view. You. Specifically you, “dear” reader. It does no good to tell you that, it will not lead to a change, to freedom from all violence and conflict for you. What will change you is your experience, not the words of someone else. That’s as it should be. So, suggestions are made from time to time that are meant to provide new experience, perhaps insights into yourself, perhaps a rearranging of your certainties . . . not by intellectual argument, but by your own experience in real life. It may or may not work for some people. We are saying you do not know yourself. The suggestions are given to help you begin that process. That’s the “why.”

The expectation of all of this is much more difficult and risky to describe, for the expectation, the need, is for an

entirely new, entirely different kind of consciousness in you. We do not mean an improved version of what you are now. We mean something very new and so unlike what you know that even the subject of it is dangerous to discuss. It’s dangerous because we don’t know how you may interpret what was just said. We cannot, or will not, describe the new form of consciousness just mentioned. One reason is that the word “description” may have no meaning at all in relation to that new consciousness. And we will not stoop to making silly promises about what this radical change in consciousness would be “like.” Comparison as a mental act is not relevant here. It’s all very frustrating, isn’t it, trying to explain the unexplainable, and trying to grasp what is no explanation at all!

But do you, or do you not seek to be different? Do you not want a different kind of life experience, a change from what has been your history, your apparent present? You can’t have it both ways. If you want things to be the same, then that is fine. But if you seek transformation, rebirth, awakening, freedom, then do not suppose that would be the same as what you already know. That would be different, very different, indescribably different, from what you know your life to be.

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You must understand that the decision to change, to become different from what you are and have been, is a decision that can only be done unconditionally . . . totally without condition. It has to get to the point of being a matter of life and death for you, which it will, eventually. To make a conditional decision to change, however, based on your own current state of enslaved subjectivity, is to make no decision at all. To place conditions on this is to project your present state into the future. So we do not make descriptions or promises about your transformation. We make suppositions for the sake of discussion, experiment, study. But if you decide to seek for yourself real change, then we cannot, could not, tell you what that will be for you. In trying to “explain” change in consciousness, it can therefore get very preposterous very quickly.

The practical explanation, though, is that certain kinds of activity help to create a little break in one’s usual psychological state, one’s internal routine, one’s machine. One seldom believes strongly enough in the total, unending need for that kind of action within oneself. One cannot easily grasp how totally asleep one is. And one may not really like the possibility that this really is a life’s work, nothing less.

Freedom implies choice. Choice of

inner state, choice of action, choice of consequences. We could probably agree that a free person is one who is not living from one accident to the next, not confused, not suffering. This is a person aware of her or his real possibilities and can act from clear perception of the truth in the present. And so the student must accept that he or she is not free, which his or her reactions to experience are not free. For what else are you? Are you not your reaction to experience? Is there any part of you, lived in reality on a day to day basis, which is not reaction to experience?

What is the real answer to this question? What are you, other than a complicated package of reactions to your own experience? Can you answer that, at all? Not from psychological theory, not by invoking an invisible force or principle that can’t be verified, but can you answer that from the fact of perception, from what you see to be true? We don’t mean think to be true, hope to be true, want to be true, need to be true, feel might be true, want to be true, need to be true, feel might be true, head is true, was promised is true, used to know was true, deduce must be true, agree with your friends is true, head from a voice in the night is true, but is true because it can be directly seen to be true!

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So, our suggestions all have to do with seeing, with perception. Do you know what that is, just to see something? Perhaps you are unsure on this matter—most people are. But it is the most important point of all.

Seeing is one thing, reacting is another. Perception is one thing, thinking about the object of perception is another. The direct knowing, that is, cognition, of something, is not the memory of that thing. Sensing, or experiencing the reality of something in the present is not the anticipation of a repeat of that event in the future.

The problem, and the actual basis of our slavery, is that the mind does both. The mind sees and the mind things. The mind perceives and the mind also remembers and has imagination, that is, can imagine a future. So, as we live our lives, are we living from the perception of the present, or do we live from reactions, all based on memory or imagination? Do you think you know the difference? Good. It is essential to know the difference. You can prove the difference to yourself right now: do not allow your mind to name or think about what it is that you are holding in your hands right now and looking at, reading. Just see it. Perceive it. Not as something known to you, not as something familiar, defined, but just as something.

Now ask, what is this I am holding and looking at, and remain in a state of deep, silent, perception of this object. Even if you succeed in stopping all internal verbalization, has this object become a living, vibrant object with no familiarity whatever to it? No history, no sense of known about it? Honestly now, are you reacting to it as something that you have seen before, already know about, or are you genuinely experiencing it as utterly new, unfamiliar, not a continuation of the past?

So the question is for us, what drives us? Is it perception of the present without the prejudice of memory or expectation, or am I trapped in my own knowledge, my own learning, to the point where I honestly cannot even look at something without also naming it at once?

When you perceive without naming, without reacting, without advancing or withdrawing, when you just look, just see, then you are doing something that cannot be and never is a conditioned reaction from the past or a product of imagination. Reaction to experience is always mechanical, always a product of the past, of fear, of hope, or of some other subjective state. But seeing, just seeing, is never that and is always free.

EDUCATION IS CULTURE

Dr. Ulysses D. Jenkins

It is an honor for me to write an article about education. Being involved in higher education for the last twenty years has blessed me with the opportunity of traveling and studying in Europe and Africa, as well as working both at the junior college and university level here in Chicago.

While traveling in Europe and Africa, I spent several years of independent research at the University of Hamburg in Germany. I also spent a year as an Affiliate Scholar at the University of Ife, Nigeria. It was at Ife that doctoral research provided me with material which culminated in my first publication entitled "Ancient African Religion and the African American Church" in 1976.

My academic experience includes being head of the Drama Department and Dean of Humanities at Malcolm X Community College, and Assistant Dean of

African American Student Affairs at Northwestern, where I have been since 1979.

During those years of travel and study, there has been one lesson that I learned in a college physics class that has stuck with me, and can be applied to every situation. I learned that there is no part that is greater than the whole. The question that taunts African Americans when addressing the issue of education is: "To what part of the whole does education belong?"

Education is a part of culture. And culture is a tool for making sufferance natural and cooperative. The extent that your culture can be successful depends upon its authenticity. Culture deals with a common ancestry, a common heritage and a common destiny. Culture also helps to control change. Culture makes life's event intelligible

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and significant. Every event of large significance takes place within the setting of some culture and derives its significance from that culture.¹

Education, which is one of the major institutions, helps with the interpretation of life. The other four institutions are religion (the mysteries of life), family (continuum of life), land/economics (the sustaining of life), and politics (the protection of values).

During the early sixties, when I was studying at the University of Hamburg, I was surprised by the extensive research that the Germans had done throughout Africa, including countries that they had not colonized, such as Egypt and Nigeria. And even though the research in Hamburg had been extensive, it could not compare to the leading institute for African research located in Frankfurt. Imagine my surprise when I came back to the United States in the mid-sixties to find that doing research about Africa as an African American was considered radical. Even to this day, African Studies programs that I have seen provide very little in-depth interpretation of African culture and its significance to the African in this country. [The Pan-African Studies Dept. of Kent State University would be an exception. Ed.]

The article entitled “Can Experiential and Career Programs respond to Minority Needs?,” a recent publication by Walter Rhet, Jr., explains the importance of culture in the educational process. He writes that “Culture as a factor of educational design has been magnanimously ignored. Yet the cultural system is vital to an apprehension of socially agreed upon meanings and patterns of understanding. These meanings depend upon what the African analyst, Amilcar Cabral calls “the synthesis of balances and solutions which society engenders to resolve the conflicts which characterize each phase of its history.”

“Educational methods are primarily a reflection of specific cultures. Information assimilation, the dominant form in Anglo-American education, expresses Anglo-American culture — linear, analytical and object-oriented. African American culture is dynamic; it encourages the examination of paradoxes and a far deeper understanding and insight into the world. It can be described as holistic, affective, symbolic, figurative, dialectical, intuitive and subject-oriented. New research in brain functions supports the feasibility of non-verbal learning and holistic conception as underutilized in Western culture, and strongly present in African and Eastern systems. In spite of this, the psycho-

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logical studies of learning theory describe only Western cultural norms whereas the subject's preferred psychological modes may be conditioned by a cultural system different from the dominant one. Thus, education as a product of culture can be utilized by one group to exploit another."²

Rhett's statement is real. As Albert King would say, everybody wants to know the reason without asking why.

While in Germany, I would occasionally drink beer. Beer was so common that it was called fluid bread. When I came back to America, I had a taste for a beer and I bought a six pack. When I took a sip, I had to spit it out. The taste was awful! Later, I spoke with Malachi Favors, a famous bassist who traveled throughout Europe. He said, "Man, you have got to get some Beck's. You can't drink this American beer." That's when I realized that the advertising for American beer was about its coldness. It was all a gimmick. The advertising focused on form and not on substance. This is the same feeling I get whenever I hear African Americans speaking about education. They speak of the form and not of the substance.

I once read a statement by Paul Robeson, a man whom I greatly admired, that summarizes the plight of

the African American in this country. It states: "Realizing quite rightly that a nation is ultimately judged not by its might, but by its culture, the Negro has set out to try to absorb Western arts. What he has not understood is that culture cannot be put on from the outside. A certain artificial grace may be achieved by such means, but only at the cost of strangling the natural creative impulses. That is too big a price to pay, and the race that pays it will never be an influential people."³

African Americans, welcome to twenty-first century, where what you bring to the table is going to be the important issue. If anyone that reads this article is interested in trying to start a grammar or high school, or supporting an African American college, I think that would be energy well spent.

¹ Abrams, Kojo: *The Mind of Africa*.

² Rhett Jr., Walter: *Can Experiential and Career Programs Respond to Minority Needs?*

³ Robeson, Paul: *New Chronicle*, London, May 1935.

THE BOOK

The book that I hold sacred, with truth that never lies,

Is the book of life itself, before my very eyes.

Written by divine author, its message clear and plain;

Who, in mountains, seas, and skies, writes down His Holy
Name.

Filled with the Spirit breathing, who authors every page,

Inspiration bringing, to the endless age.

Other books men honor, penned on printed page;

Are just the image of the book of life to endless age.

Written with sun and planets, moon and stars above,

Earth in all its glory, showing His truth and love.

- Baba I'Orisa Larry Akus

Desires, Roads, and Choices

By **OLORISA OSUN OKANTOMI**

Mr. Webster's definition of a road includes: a way or a course; a method of doing something. That which one desires is that which is longed for; craved. Choices are described as things that we have selected or decided upon, based on our preferences.

What is it that these three things have in common? How are they interrelated? How do we manage the three and still manage to live "happily ever after?" How do we accomplish that which we are destined to accomplish in this lifetime?

Human beings are all very different when it comes to shape, size, disposition, methods of doing things, color, etc. What is it that really causes us to be who we are? A friend of mine states, "It's in the DNA molecules." She then takes it a step further. Putting her thoughts into my own words, DNA is

our personal blueprint of self, gift of OLODUMARE and EGUN.

Modern science has told us how important DNA is in deciding our physical and our mental makeup. Those of us who have taken any part in the raising of children have found that there are some things that we have a very difficult time getting our children to conform to or even do. No amount of reasoning, threatening, or punishment seems to change the behavior. It is simply not in the blueprint. Sometimes if we do win the battle, we end up losing the war. I took a four-year course of study to be a vocal music teacher, and at the end of my senior year, I knew that it was not for me. I never went further than substitute teaching. I'm a nurse now. Everything turned out fine, but there's a lot to be said in support of the practice of divination immediately after birth!

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The issue of realizing one's personal spiritual destiny really begins at birth. For many, if not most of us here on western soil, the work is only acknowledged once we reach various stages of adulthood. So then what? How do we get started, especially since the first portions of our lives quite often were of a confusing, experimental time?

Ideally, we can strive to be spiritually open, free and in alignment, self with spirit. Free as in open to the voice of spirit, and not being afraid of what we may hear. Free as in liking oneself. Free as in not being caught in a web of spiritual, intellectual, emotional and material confusion. Free to give and to receive, to learn and be taught.

Once we can visualize our road, our path leading to our destiny, there still remains the question of whether or not we choose to accept the challenge to work toward it.

ESUELEGBA, the Gatekeeper, He who offers choices and forces us to make decisions, works with and for us constantly, giving us opportunities to learn life's lessons. The ability and courage to make decisions that are in line with personal spiritual destiny are freeing. It takes time, effort and faith for most of us to reach this point, but it is our choice.

OGUN works with us in realizing the obstacles - internal and external - and in helping to remove them. Sometimes, he'll even remove them for us once we acknowledge their presence. The job of finding the most direct route to accomplishing our goal belongs to OSOSI, the Hunter who's arrow never misses.

My own desire is to realize as much of my destiny as possible in this lifetime. My desire is to be able to be at inner peace any time, despite what is happening externally. My desire is that, in the uphill journey of life, realizing we are all at different horizontal and vertical levels of development, I can reach forward to be helped, backward to help and around me to give and receive strength without losing my balance.

For those of us who ascribe to YORUBA religion, ideology and culture in America, our relationship with EGUN is essential. To be in touch with EGUN allows us to be in touch with ourselves. I have heard that when you call one, you call them all. The EGUN of those whom you assist (or hinder) can assist (or hinder) you.

Regular and sincere work with EGUN and ORISA seems to be the key. Those of us who have been successful in our relationship with spirit have the respon-

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sibility of helping others who sincerely want to develop the same, either by assisting or suggesting someone else who can. It could be that all one needs is the door to be opened and instructions given; spirit takes it from there. Or it could be that more assistance is needed, providing a further blessing for both teacher and student.

So, at this point, the best way that I can describe relationships with spirit, using myself as an example, is as follows. OSUN has been with me since birth, chosen in heaven by OLODUMARE and EGUN. According to the blueprint drawn up by them, she was chosen to rule my head, the final determination being made during the initiatory process. Along the road through the journey of life, ELEGBA is at the toll gates. I have to pay him through and because of the triumphs and tragedies normally experienced in the living of life. OGUN is with me to help with internal and external road blocks to progress. It is OṢOSSI who is the routing consultant. His job is to reveal to me whether I am taking the most direct path to reaching my spiritual destiny. All of the ORISA are navigators, each of them offering assistance at various times in life. OSUN is in charge.

It's really that simple.

MOJUBA OLODUMARE, MODUPE GBOGBO EGUN, GBOGBO ORISA. MAFEREFUN OSUN, ORI YE YE O.

Osun Okantomi is a priestess of OSUN who resides in Cleveland, Ohio, with her husband Marcus and sons Kareem and Malcolm. All are actively seeking to develop IWA-PELE by way of YORUBA principles and practice. She is a registered nurse and holds a bachelor's degree in vocal music education. She enjoys all kinds of music, African dancing and drumming, fabric art and clothing design, and various other crafts. She is an avid reader, enjoys bowling as a sport, and considers herself a people person. It is her desire to assist in bringing the YORUBA community-at-large together for the purpose of praising ORISA.

"It is not necessary for all to agree on everything. We can agree that we will disagree at times, but all of us can praise ORISA. A collective effort with collective energy can raise the ASE to levels well beyond what we can do as individuals."

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IFA

By CHIEF FELA SOWANDE

The late Chief Fela Sowande was a professor of Pan African Studies for Kent State University. Born in Oyo, Nigeria, in 1905, he received a great deal of his higher education from British schools. He discovered that, for all his learning, his roots held the true knowledge. He returned home to study and wrote a number of books on traditional Yoruba culture. The unpublished papers were left to the Department of Pan American Studies at Kent. Permission has been given to share some of his work with our readers. The following is a continuation of an unedited excerpt.

Acknowledgements are due to the Ancient Religious Society of African Descendants Association for permission to quote freely from their collection, and to those who readily granted access to private libraries of rare books. They remain anonymous as a protection against the curious-minded, whose

curiosity is only equaled by their forgetfulness to return borrowed books. -
Fela Sowande

We are concerned here, however, with ELA. For here we see no Spiritual Principle overwhelmed by the gods many and lords many of Yorubaland; no tantalisingly elusive “character,” no question whatever but that in ELA we have the Great Spirit who -- in the Yoruba System -- is the Life-giving “Sun” of that system; Who, as ELA/ORUNMILA is both “God and Man,” the major Prophet of the system, its Saviour and its Root, its only direct link with the Holy Trinity: QLQRUN-ELEDA-OLODUMARE. In short, ELA is, in our view, the projection into the world of men, of that “single essence” from which, in the Spiritual Worlds, even the Holy Trinity derives. Likewise the entire Yoruba System derives from ELA, a Mighty Archangel beloved of God; al-

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ways there must be initiate-Priests of IFA for whom to live is to know, to love, to serve, ELA. There can never be a time -- past, present, or future -- when this is not so, "till suns shall rise and set no more." That we do not know them -- these men of Noah of our race -- is no proof that they do not exist; we deceive ourselves to think otherwise; but in the Yoruba System, there is no indication of any Spirit, no matter how infinitely above man in wisdom, in power, and strength, who is 'static' and perfect. Even OLODUMARE had to learn by experience, as related above. As for ORUNMILA, the number of Stanzas in the ARSADA collection relating the problems and difficulties he had to face, not least of which were series of insurrections against his leadership by his pupils, would make up a small booklet of fascinating stories with an undercurrent of grave seriousness. "May we not even think" asks Henry Osborn Taylor in his "Freedom of Mind in History," "that the expanding consciousness of the human race, from its bestial beginnings, has in some way reflected the consciousness of God? If so, is there not progress in God Himself, in the Divine Spirit, as well as in man? And if God is reflected in the spiritual consciousness of the human race, is He not then Himself conceivably a spiritual growth, development, or evolution?" . . . to which the Yoruba System can only

answer "Aye, thou sayest well," as it subscribes whole-heartedly to Taylor's further comments: "In imagining or in justifying our ideas of a living, working God who is Spirit, none need not struggle for an impossible consistency . . . No working religion ever has been consistent in the idea of its God. Indeed, the endeavour for such consistency means scholasticism. The religion that is living, like life itself, knows no consistency. . . . Not through logic is religion justified or her children."

And now to the ORISA. "ORI" -- as an independent entity -- has been discussed above. For the definition of ORISA, we turn once more to Yoruba Life Scripts, and to Chief Ajanaku, Araba Eko, who, (then as Mr. Ajanaku) defined ORISA as "AWONENTI ORISAYATO SI AWON ELEGBE RE IYOKU," namely, "He whom ORI has created in a manner different to that in which his contemporaries (or fellows) have been created." Such a person has an added something which makes him stand out among his fellows. From the unpublished ARSADA collection, we have the following EJI-OGBE Stanza:

ORUNMILA WI: ENIA NI I D'ORISA!
MO NI, ENIA NI I D'ORISA. O NI,
ODUDUWA TI E RI HUN, ENIA NI;
NIGBATI O SE OHUN RERE SI AIYE,
NI NWON FI MBO Q, TI NWON SI

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NJUBA RE. ORUNMILA WI: ENIA NII D'ORISA! MONI, ENIA NII D'ORISA.O NI ORISNLA TI E RI HUN, ENIA NI; NIGBATI O GBON, TI O SE OHUN RERE SI AIYE, NI NWON NRANTI RE TI NWON SI MBO O, ATI GBOGBO AWON ORISA EYI-O-KU BEBE LO. NJE, ENIA NII D'ORISA ENI GBON NI NWON MBO; ENIA NII D'ORISA.”

An English translation might run roughly thus: “ORUNMILA said: Human beings become ORISA. I responded: human beings become ORISA. He said: ODUDUWA, that you hear so much of, he was a human being; because he did good while on earth as a man, he was remembered after his death, and worshipped. ORUNMILA said: Human beings become ORISA! I responded: human beings become ORISA. He said: ORISANLA, for example, was a human being but he was wiser than his fellows, and did good while on earth; therefore, he was remembered and worshipped after his death. Therefore, human beings become ORISA; only the wise ones are worshipped. Human beings become ORISA.”

This makes more sense than the idea that ORISA is a corruption of ORISE, and refers to OLODUMARE as the Head-Source from whom all ORI derive. The story of Atowoda given by Idowu sounds as though someone has

been having a quiet chuckle at his expense! The same holds for the story of Olurombi, as told by him. A childless Yoruba woman who longed for a child would not go to the Iroko Tree to ask for a child and then offer that child in sacrifice as a gesture of appreciation. It is not in keeping at all. The story actually comes from a Stanza from the IRETE-QSA, (ARSADA unpublished collection), where we find that there were three characters involved: Onikaluku (tone pattern: mid-high-high-mid-high), Onikaluku (tone pattern: low-low-low-low-low), and Olurombi (tone pattern: mid-high-high-mid-high); all three were hard put to make ends meet. All three consulted their respective BABALAWOS; all three were sent to the Iroko Tree; all three vowed that if the Tree Spirit enabled them to make plenty of money at market, they would offer sacrifice. The first vowed a goat, the second vowed a lamb, the third -- Olurombi -- vowed her first born, the fairest of the fair. Each had a marvelous turn-over, and then the Tree Spirit demanded that they should fulfil their vows. The first took a goat to the Iroko Tree; the second took a lamb; Olurombi, now aghast at what she had let herself in for, turned to the three BABALAWO to see if she can get out of her foolish vow. They told her to get seven animals and make sacrifice; she did. Then ESU went to the Iroko Tree and said to the

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Tree Spirit, “When things get to a certain impasse, one must consider alternatives; it has become tabu for a first-born to be sacrificed to the Iroko Tree-Spirit.”

(“BI O BA DI OGIRI, NSE NI O NDI A-PADAPSE; ESU NI ONIKALUKU JEJE EWURE; ONIKALUKU JEJE AGUTAN. OLUROMBI JEJE OMORE A-PON-BI-EPO; ESU NI: O DI EWQ ORISA! A KI I F'AKQBI ENI BQ IROKO.”)

And so the Tree Spirit was forced to accept the seven animals in place of Olurombi's first born. Here again this story from the ODU Stanza makes more sense, and is more in keeping with that one would expect to happen in Yorubaland.

Next: Ile Ife.

GENEALOGY: UP, DOWN AND 'ROUND THE FAMILY TREE

By OMOPE DABOIKU

This article is designed to assist those who are seeking to find missing ancestral links, particularly those who do not have the time, money or resources to hire formal assistance. With the processes outlined here an individual can be very successful, but diligence is necessary.

The basics of genealogical research are about the same regardless of family origin. However, because Homeside Cultural Programmings' primary focus is improving the quality and quantity of information on Africa and African America, there is emphasis on procedures to locate persons of African descent. Genealogical research is more difficult for African Americans because enslaved Africans were not included in the regular National Census and many slaveholding states did not keep formal

records. But, the basics are the basics — no matter where your family originated; and, there is important material within for those Americans who do trace their ancestry from Europe or other origins of emigration.

This article can help if you are just getting started, or if you have been researching your family for years and are interested in a formalized way to codify your results. Either way, the methods outlined here, if followed thoroughly, can produce extremely fine, detailed family records. If that is your goal, this is the guide for you.

We will guide you step by step. Each chapter, or stage, is defined, outlined and full of tidbits to help you dig into your family history. There are also several appendices available which you may

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find helpful in your work.

STAGE I: DEFINITIONS OR WHAT IS GENEALOGY AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

According to Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, genealogy is the study of (1) an account of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or from older forms; (2) regular descent of a person, family, or group of organisms from a progenitor or older form: pedigree; (3) the study of family pedigrees. This is a pretty wide definition, but no where does it state that genealogy is work! Webster's definition only relates to the result of genealogical research, and then implies that the account/record that is developed is limited to one family lineage or name.

Homeside Cultural Programming focuses on genealogy as a process, developing accounts/records illustrating an individual's descent by taking into consideration that within five generations one person is connected to 32 great-great-greatgrandparents — not to mention the multitudes of cousins. Homeside does not isolate genealogical research to tracing only a person's father's heritage but works with the total extended family, acknowledging that each successive generation plays a crucial role in the development of family

traits and history.

So, before starting your research, determine what your level of depth will be. It will be important to define your scope of purpose. The types of records you will use, where they will be found, and the resulting documentation will all depend on the scope of your purpose. We are not trying to tell you what your focus should be, only that clarity of purpose is necessary to keep from chasing data unnecessarily.

Clearly identifying what the purpose of your research is will keep you on track and the likelihood of skipping any stages or steps will be reduced. By defining your purpose, the chances of overlooking important items will be lessened. Information sources vary as to the type of data they include. Matching purpose with resources will cut down on spending time looking at the wrong type of records for your needs.

Have you defined the purpose of your research at this time? Are you searching for information on one lineage (name) or are you attempting to develop a family tree illustrating how you are connected to every one of your relatives? Once you have decided, it will be time to go to Stage II.

STAGE II: INTERVIEWS

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Where applicable, talk to family, family friends and the acquaintances of one's ancestors. The interviewing process is an important first step. Here you can formally verify family stories you may have heard as a child or gossip you heard on the street. When interviewing, start with family elders. However, the oldest family member may not be the best source of information. Even though the advantage of being oldest is foremost, some family elders don't want to be reminded of the past and this may manifest as a lack of memory about the past. Don't be surprised if someone shows a lack of interest; if interest in genealogy was always a focus in every family, professional genealogists would have no clients.

First question should be: Who is the oldest relative you can remember? From there, eventually find out who was the last member to leave the ancestral homesite. Also, determine if there is a relative whose relationship to an ancestor puts them in an older age group even though they are relatively young. For instance, did a family segment have "two sets of children" where the age difference was more than 10-15 years? If so, the younger of those children (whose memories may be better) may be prime sources of information. Or, perhaps your grandparent has an uncle or aunt who is younger

than your grandparent; that uncle or aunt is closer to the source and may have information that your grandparent does not know.

Do not assume that the family will have the most information or the most pertinent facts. Also, do not assume that if there are no more living family members there can be no success in this realm. When these conditions exist, seek out family friends, acquaintances, church or club affiliates and school-mates of the ancestor in question.

"But, all the family has passed away," is a common statement we at Homeside hear. However, if one looks closely at the available people resources, sometimes the seemingly least likely person can provide the most information. One case in point, a person using the Homeside research method felt they had exhausted family resources. When questioning their own father for the umpteenth time, out of exasperation, the father suggested the person visit a gentleman who had been a deacon of the local church the family had attended. When the visit finally occurred, the church deacon not only remembered the ancestor's name, but was able to describe the ancestor, state what the ancestor's occupation had been, name the children borne and state what cemetery the ancestor rested. While the

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person doing the research had known the deacon all her life, the deacon had not always lived in the same town. As a matter of fact, the deacon had met the person's ancestor while living in another city, one which the researcher was not even aware had been an ancestral home.

The experience above clearly shows why it is necessary to follow the #1 Rule of Genealogical Research; DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING! Exhaust all the know possibilities before taking on the tasks of Stage III — Hunting for Treasures.

STAGE III: TREASURE HUNTING

ALSO KNOWN AS

RUMMAGING IN THE RUBBLE

The information source for this stage of research is HOME wherever it is. HOME can be an ambiguous term; so, we will define what we mean. HOME starts with your place of abode. Do you have any pictures of ancestors or other kinfolk? How about newspaper clippings? Did you inherit the family Bible and never really notice the writing in the margins?

HOME then extends to the place where your parents live. Did they keep a

scrapbook of accomplishments, family notices about births, deaths or reunions? Is there an address book that has been used for years? Is there a picture around the house of a person whose name nobody knows?

All the above items can yield precious clues to an ancestor's identity. Just as there are hard metals and soft metals, the clues found here can be classified as hard data and soft data. Hard data include names, places, dates, photographs — things that give information about physical characteristics; soft data include artifacts — things that belonged to the ancestor — whose value depends on the researcher's goals.

Don't despair if the family records are in disarray. Things will improve once you do your share to document your family's history. And, don't forget the input of friends, neighbors and acquaintances.

STAGE IV: LEGAL RECORDS — Birth/Marriage/Divorce/Death and Others

All the previous sources of information have been free of any cost, except time and perhaps money for transportation. When materials are free, there is not the same kind of restraint placed on accumulation. But, obtaining copies of legal records usually includes payment of some kind of fee — processing,

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copying, mailing, etc. Therefore, before beginning this stage be sure your scope of purpose is clearly defined. This is where it will begin to pay off.

Legal records are defined as documents concerning birth, marriage, divorce and death. The primary records in this category are birth records because they are usually filed by the parents and include both parents' names and places of origin. However, one drawback exists; before 1900, all states did not file birth certificates. Should the ancestor you are seeking have been born before 1900, secondary documents — marriage and divorce — will be important. Marriage and divorce papers are often easier to obtain. They are also especially helpful when the ancestor was born before 1900 because, although a birth record may not be obtainable, by marriageable age state records will have been codified to a national standard.

There are disadvantages when using marriage and divorce papers for information. The research has to trust that the information provided about the ancestor's parents was provided by the ancestor in question. Sometimes the person providing the information on the marriage license is someone other than either of the two being married. In addition, the child getting married may

not always be certain of the parents' place of origin.

Death certificates can be the least accurate. Here it is quite frequent that the person providing the information is not a family member or is a family member under stress. To make matters even more complex, if it is a child of the deceased providing the parent's name, birthplace, etc., the child may not know the parents of the deceased. Nevertheless, death certificates can be of great value when searching for someone born in the 1800's (before birth records) and who passed away after 1900.

We spoke of agencies and fees earlier. These types of records are usually found in vital statistics departments of state governments and are often located in the state capital. The cost/fee ranges from \$3 to \$5 per record. Some agencies charge whether a record is found or not, and most request that a money order accompany the search request. Therefore, it is better to perceive the charge as the cost per search per item. As mentioned earlier, this is where the payoff comes for knowing exactly what type of record will best suit your purpose.

The "Other" category of legal records includes U.S. Social Security documentation, military papers (discharge),

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school logs, church rolls, depositions or hearings for pension settlements, etc. Naturalization and immigration papers fall in this category also, but because of their important role for those of European descent, they will be dealt with separately in more detail.

THE GRAND MYSTERY: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU RECORDS

The purpose of gathering the previously mentioned records is to clearly determine the earliest place of residence for your family lineages. Or, at least, you'll be able to develop a timeline of where your family was during major portions of time. This knowledge is necessary should you want to delve deeper into the mystery of "THE CENSUS." Here is where organization really pays off.

For our purposes we will divide the U. S. Census Bureau records are divided into hard and soft data. The hard data is the Population Schedule which contains the listing of residents found in a particular county, town, district and land plot (in descending order). Here you will find handwritten copies of the actual census taken every ten years. However, be mindful that the National Census began in 1790, and did not include people held in bondage or Native Americans. The 1890 records were de-

stroyed by fire; and the quality of the listing varies by state and census taker. Names are sometimes misspelled by the recorder — either through ignorance or egocentrism.

Despite these discrepancies, the Census is an excellent record of who was living where and with whom. Finding a household of your own family members can be an intense emotional experience; and, because the record lists people according to housing tracts, you can even determine who the family's neighbors were at that time. Details like these can help verify family stories.

The soft data within Census Bureau records include the Industrial and Agricultural Schedules. These list the farmers of the specified area (criteria listed above) and business owners. The schedules give details about the type of business, what was produced, and the value of stock or inventory. Again, this type of information can verify stories about an ancestor's occupation and standard of living.

For more detailed information after finding out the places where the family lived, implement Stage VI.

STATE VI: MUNICIPAL, COUNTY AND STATE RECORDS

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These include court documents — litigations or suits brought against or by a family member, deeds, will, probate proceedings and other legal transactions. Tax records, city directories and indenture papers fall in this category also. Only the more current years' data will be housed in the Courthouse (municipal, county or state). The older records will probably be housed in the state archives. This can be determined by calling the local institution and asking if they have the year's records that you will be searching. They can also tell you if it has been microfilmed and where it is currently stored.

Homeside also includes published materials by city, county or state historical societies in this category. Some of these accounts are quite lengthy and give great detail about the geography, industry and people. They can be helpful, especially if you are searching for the validity of "a legend" told throughout generations of your family.

STAGE VII: BEYOND AMERICA'S SHORES

When you have sifted through all the other records mentioned previously, you may be ready to hunt down the links to some land beyond the horizon of the United States. Here the procedure shifts a bit, depending on one's cultural

heritage. Because the special needs of African Americans are so extensive, we will cover that area here. Then, we will discuss the full range of options open to Americans of European descent.

The records peculiar to the needs of Americans of African descent include various types of "slave records" — manumission papers, bills of sale, wills of plantation owners, litigations involving slaves, published slave narratives, or county history narratives — which may be found locally or may be housed in a state's archive collection. Travel logs written by those passing through the South as tourists during slavery years do exist; they are often published by the state or county history society.

Historical societies also often keep plantation family correspondence, especially if the plantation family was of economic importance to the community. Within these papers one can sometimes find family slave lists giving individual names of those enslaved, physical descriptions and familial relationship to others on the plantation. Other pertinent records of this type include auction information, property deeds, etc. Additionally, the Census Bureau Population Schedules prior to 1860 include a separate Slave Schedule.

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Ship records are also a source of valuable information. Family stories may include the name of a ship or harbor — that's the soft data of this category. Hard data — a manifest list of cargo, perhaps — can be provided by a few trading companies who are still in the import/export business that also imported slaves. Some of the actual auction companies that operated along the coast are still in business, as are some insurance companies that insured the human cargo. If you have a lead that names a harbor, check the port records of the cities where the ship departed, its point of arrival and any ports of call.

If your family history does not give the specific name of a ship, point of arrival or point of departure, don't despair. Continue to research the favorite family foods, types of folktales, and the family revered "old wives tales." Cultural retentions can provide leads into understanding what African society most impacted our family. Books on the cultures and societies of western coastal Africa, the history of western Africa between 1500 and 1900, and on the transatlantic slave trade may be helpful in bridging some information gaps.

THE EUROPEAN CONNECTION

Even though all European immigrants did not come to the U.S. through the portals of Ellis Island, records of their emigration are much more formalized than those of African sources. Most people of European descent know which generation their ancestors came to America and from what country, and often know exactly the town or village with which the family is associated. While naturalization papers, U.S. Immigration Service documents and ship records are relatively easy to locate, Americans with ancestors from Europe can be quite successful by searching church records since the church was often an integral part of their lives right from arrival. Many cities are known for their strong European derived ethnic communities, complete with, for example, the first Irish Catholic Church where Irish was the language of the liturgy. Baptismal records, christenings, marriages, and confirmation papers are all significant to genealogical research and often times are available simply for the asking.

EAST, WEST, NORTH OR SOUTH: MODERN TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU TOO!!!

Speaking of asking, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) is a good place to ask for help. The Mormon Church has made track-

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ing genealogy a major focus of its ministry, having cataloged and collected genealogical information from across the United States and the world. For instance, the Cincinnati (Ohio) Branch of the Mormon Genealogical Library is one of 697 branches of the Salt Lake Mormon Library and the Cincinnati library alone has 86 million names on microfiche! By using the GLC (Genealogical Library Catalog), the volunteer there was able to tell us the volumes of records available in several Georgia counties and the available dates. The list is much too long to include in its entirety, but here is a sample of what was available from Chattooga County, Georgia:

Military Civil War records, Homestead Act records, deeds from 1800-1902, probate court records, marriages from 1834-1939, collected Bible records from various sources, cemetery records, criminal records, speeches of noted orators of the day, etc., etc.

The Mormon Church also has ancestral tracking forms that may be helpful in your work. The Cincinnati branch is located at 5505 Bosworth St., Cincinnati, Ohio, or write the main office — Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Genealogical Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

STAGE VIII: ANCESTRAL CHARTS— POLISHING YOUR HARD EARNED GEMS

Now that you have all this information, how will you illustrate the relationships you have found? Will you develop something that is too narrow to truly show all the family you have found? Or, will you plan to show a horizontal chart of family members? This is important for the documents you prepare, hopefully, will provide generations to come with valuable history.

Unfortunately, most genealogical charts tend to focus on one family branch of an entire tree. In fact, some people hire professional genealogists to trace one particular lineage, usually on a male relative's name, with the goal of defining the family's coat of arms or claiming an inheritance.

However, it is possible to develop a horizontal chart showing thirty-two (32) branches all as a part of a five generational tree. This type of chart shows descent through all ancestors and all relatives, not only those with the same last name. Developing this type of chart is a very detailed process. If you are interested in knowing more about this method of documentation or have questions about searching your family history, write Homeside Cultural Pro-

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gramming, P. O. Box 6903, Cincinnati,
OH 45206.

More grease to your elbow. Now, you're set to go. As you find critical information long lost to you and yours, remember the task you have undertaken: You are pledged to preach the value of knowing "your roots." If you do your job well, generations yet to come will appreciate your efforts and, hopefully, call your name with love. You, too, may become one of the revered. ASE.

This is the beginning of a series on the ancestors and how the concept of EGUN has been translated from an African origin into a western expression.

Reprints of this article with supplementary forms are available through Sea-Shelves.

THE NEWS REPORTS:

The following article appeared in the New York Law Journal on Wednesday, May 4, 1994. Thanks to Salina Gonzalez for submitting it.

Judge Permits Inmates to Wear Religious Beads

New Federal Law Applied First Time to Challenge

by Deborah Pines

A FEDERAL judge in Manhattan yesterday ordered state prison officials to permit two inmates to wear under their clothes multi-colored beads which are central to their Santeria religious faith.

Applying a new Congressional measure called the Religious Freedom Restoration (RFRA), Southern District Judge Sonia Sotomayor found a November 1993 prison directive barring

such beads likely to be an impermissible burden on prisoners' religious rights. *Campos v. Coughlin*, 94 Civ. 1057.

Prison security concerns about beads signifying gang membership inciting violence can be satisfied with less restrictive measures than banning all beads, the judge wrote. Prison officials, she added, "cannot merely brandish the words 'security' and 'safety' and expect that their actions will automatically be deemed constitutionally permissible conduct."

Judge Sotomayor's 48-page ruling granted a preliminary injunction sought by the inmates. Tony Campos, 38, a convicted murderer housed at the Ossining Correctional Facility and Alex Lance, 25, who is serving a drug sentence at Oneida Correctional Facility.

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The ruling is believed the first in New York to apply RFRA, which Congress passed last year to restore a higher standard of review for government attempts to interfere with the free exercise of religious freedom (NYLJ, March 17). Under the law, any action that restricts a religious practice must be justified by a “compelling state interest” and must be accomplished by the “least restrictive means” available.

Judge Sotomayor’s ruling is also believed to be the first in the country to address in some way the constitutionality of RFRA. Although Judge Sotomayor said she did not need to resolve the question in granting a preliminary injunction, in a footnote she wrote she sees little reason why Congress cannot expand religious rights as it did in RFRA.

Judge Sotomayor granted the preliminary injunction after finding irreparable harm to the inmates and both a likelihood of success for their claims and significant questions going to the merits with the balance of the hardships in their favor.

She found the inmates would likely prevail under the standards of RFRA and under the previous standards which favored prison officials so long as a challenged prison regulation was rea-

sonably related to a legitimate penological interest. She also found their equal protection claims could carry the day as well.

Gang Membership

The challenged directive said inmates may wear “traditionally accepted religious medals, crucifixes and crosses” but not prayer beads. Rosary beads, Dhikr beads used by Muslim or other prayer beads may be possessed for prayer and worship once approved by prison officials but not “worn or displayed.”

Prison officials said the directive was a response to growing violent incidents and rivalries by inmates possessing colored beads signifying gang membership. They also asserted wearing beads is not central to the Santeria faith which combines elements from African religions and Roman Catholicism and claims millions of adherents worldwide.

But Judge Sotomayor found prison officials’ claims of security risks from Santeria beads worn under clothing speculative and she called their skepticism about the centrality of wearing beads “at best, ill-informed and indifferent.”

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She concluded: "Plaintiffs convincingly argue that wearing beads under their clothes would address DOCS' (Department of Correctional Services) concerns. Wearing of the beads in this manner avoids their public display and, hence, the easy identification of gang members, while simultaneously permitting plaintiffs to exercise their religion."

Brad Karp, Eric Dinallo and Brian Murphy of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, represented the inmates pro bono. Barbara Hathaway, an Assistant New York Attorney General, represented prison officials.

Please help us be informed of what the world is saying that may be of interest to our way of thinking. Send in clippings you run across that you feel may be of interest. Please be sure to include source, date and author (if listed) of publication.

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