



BlackBird Press News & Review



A POET'S JOURNAL OF THE BLACK ART'S MOVEMENT

"I COULD HAVE FREED MORE SLAVES IF THEY HAD KNOWN THEY WERE SLAVES!" - HARRIET TUBMAN

\$20 Donation

**HIGHLIGHTING BAMBD FEST
& A SALUTE TO BLACK AUGUST
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025**

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B A M B D F E S T
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2025 BIENNIAL



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AUGUST
1-31, 2025
BAMBD FEST.COM

INHERITANCE:
THE STORIES WE HAVE A RIGHT TO TELL
& THE STORIES WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TELL

BAM HOUSE & OTHER VENUES
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Letter from the Guest Editor

Dr. Ayodele Nzinga

I play a fictional character in real life. Let's call my character Black. To make it even more interesting, my character only exists to validate the reality of another fictitious character. To turn up the complexity, this drama is being played out in real time, in real life, and is an ever-evolving story. This is written from inside the story, with the hope that we can seize control of the narrative and tell a truer tale.

We find our fictional selves at the point in the story where our fictional foil is intent on making a stolen country white. We will not wander into the story of the autochthonous peoples of so-called America, being peoples of color. Or the fact that the fictive character we will call white is intent on sending everyone in so-called America back to their country of origin (or anywhere that is not here), yet they themselves are not indigenous to so-called America. All of the effort being expended to erase and lean into disappearing and displacing peoples and social systems remake America is the latest episode in the fictional saga of whiteness.

It's all theater --- an extended absurd parody of the given miracle of being alive on this earth, breathing, having volition, and one would think potential, perhaps even purpose---yet at birth we, without conscious thought, agree to perform Blackness and help to enforce the existence of whiteness. We are here in the story--- but we don't play ourselves—at least not all the time. We have developed, among other coping devices, the ability to code-switch. Code Switching affords the ability to disappear or pop out as needed.

We have inherited a myth of ourselves here in America, where we became black by the declaration of our captors, and we've inherited the experience of being stripped of humanity, placed outside of its divinity, by the conferring of a hue that divides, restricts, shapes, filters, and contains. We inherited not only the color line or the veil described by W. E. B. DuBois, but the continued saga of the seventh son as well.

What does sustaining this fiction cost North American



Africans? How does it relate to my theory of “Compound Complex Fractures to the Psyche,” an extrapolation of DuBois’s theory of double consciousness?

DuBois defined double consciousness as the persistent awareness of oneself through the filter of the gaze of an oppressive society, a perpetual twoness—the irreconcilable African heritage and the imposed American identity.

My assertion that I play a fictional character—Black—to validate the fictional character—white closely parallels this. I suggest that “Black” identity is not only fractured by societal impositions but also instrumentalized to sustain the construct of “whiteness.” “Compound Complex Fracture to the Psyche” can be understood as an

elaboration of DuBois's theory of double consciousness, emphasizing the multiplicity and layered nature of psychological injury borne from historic and ongoing multilayered racial violence compounded by the unabating necessity to perform an imposed identity. I suggest this fracture can be debilitating and/or a source of superpower—while this fractured identity inflicts trauma, it also necessitates creativity as a survival mechanism. It encourages discernment, an awareness of self, a lucidity that allows for second sight, a third-eye mojo inherited through racial memory passed through generations.

This dual aspect aligns with contemporary interpretations of double consciousness that acknowledge its developmental complexity: that the racialized subject navigates cultural naiveté, shock, internalized angst, and ultimately a form of awakening or sophistication that can potentially transform the fracture into a navigational tool.

DuBois's identification of the veil, twoness, and second sight reveals the obstructions to full humanity for those excluded by racial identifications that are reductive, invisibilizing, and ultimately violently abusive in order to infer realness to the fictional state of whiteness. This is, in and of itself, “crazy-making”---it's enough to drive a person forced to endure it and able to see it out of their mind.

When I am free to deviate from the fictive nature of my existence or as a way of making myself really real, I create to affirm my isness, my realness. I have a pen—and I write my own stories. Creativity, the ability to dream outside the box, allows one to reclaim their narratives and rewrite their stories on their own terms, leading to a more empowered sense of self as opposed to playing out a part as written in stereotypical tropes that serve to reinforce what is believed about you even before you show your face.

Fostering creativity can be instrumental in navigating a complexly fractured identity, and individuals who express themselves creatively, whether through art, writing, or other forms, open doors to personal integration, considerations of trauma, and methods of mitigating its effect on their growth as humans. Making, creating, articulating, and expressing can support a semblance of sanity, which we shall define here as knowing who is driving the car, or which of your fractured selves should answer the door, and if your multiples play well together.

Creative expression can play a role in preserving and revitalizing cultural practices and traditions, ensuring that cultural heritage is passed down through generations. It also sets the stage for adaptive cultural practices that evolve from and are communicated through creative expression, supporting the fusion and adaptation of cultural practices and offering reinterpretations of cultural traditions to resonate with contemporary contexts, promoting resilience and relevance within fractured identities seeking cohesion. In this world, people are largely unarticulated. Suppose you live and die inside the story of yourself, essentially not questioning what multiple realities operate outside the edges of your lived reality. In that case, this cultural naivete protects the unaware. Ignorance, they say, is bliss. But what of those who ‘wake up’? What if they have no access to being articulated, no way of freeing themselves from a false reality that does not reflect their lived experience, and the false reality in which they try to make life resist being validated?

I submit that sometimes this pushes people over the edge of all the realities, burdened by the inability to process what they cannot know or see, things that are impossible to understand, and operate within the slim boundaries of sanity, your multiples don't play well together, and can't decide who should drive the car or answer the door. In the absence of methods of integration, articulation, validation of one's reality, or some agreed-upon or understood internal hierarchy, one might end up naked, save a blanket, screaming during rush hour at downtown intersections.

GEORGE JACKSON



Remembering a Black August Hero

Written by Luke Douglass

In the cold confines of San Quentin State Prison, George Jackson lit a fire the system could not extinguish. Over 50 years later, his words still smolder—calling to the oppressed, the incarcerated, the radical, and the revolutionary.

Born in Chicago in 1941 and imprisoned by the age of 18 for a \$70 robbery, Jackson entered the California prison system as a young man and emerged a political threat. Not through escape—but through enlightenment. He read, studied, and organized. His mind sharpened while the prison walls closed in. "I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me," recalled Jackson in *Soledad Brother*.

Jackson's letters—collected in the classic *Soledad Brother*—revealed not only the brutal conditions of prison life, but also the intellectual force of a revolutionary in chains. He made it clear: prison was not the end of the line for Black men in America. It was part of the system's design. A modern plantation.

His words cut through complacency: "The system does not really care whether you live or die. It only cares whether it can use you."

Jackson was not content to remain a symbol. He became a strategist, a theorist, a soldier. He helped form the Black Guerrilla Family, a prison-based revolutionary group, and advocated for unity among oppressed peoples. He became a beacon to others inside—especially young prisoners who saw no future beyond the cell bars.

"I don't want to die and leave a few sad songs and a hump in the ground as my only monument. I want to leave a world that is liberated from trash, pollution, racism, nation-states, nation-state wars and armies, from pomp, bigotry, parochialism, a thousand different brands of untruth and licentious, usurious economics." — George Jackson

Black August: His Life, His Death, Our Legacy

On August 21, 1971, George Jackson was assassinated by prison guards during an alleged escape attempt. Whether planned or provoked, his death was not the silencing they hoped for—it became a rallying cry. Just weeks before his trial for the death of a prison guard (in retaliation for the murder of Black inmates), Jackson's life was cut short—but his message was not.

His younger brother Jonathan had already given his life one year earlier in a high-risk courthouse takeover in Marin County, hoping to free George and other political prisoners. The Jacksons became martyrs, not by choice, but by conviction. Thus was born Black August—a month of mourning and mobilization. A time to reflect not only on loss, but on the lessons within it. George Jackson's life stands alongside other August ancestors: Nat Turner, Marcus Garvey, and the Attica rebels. His name is carved into the walls of memory alongside Malcolm, Huey, and Assata.



DR.'S NATHAN & JULIA HARE

Honoring our Revolutionary Ancestors

Written by Luke Douglass



Founding Father of Black Studies, Revolutionary Psychologist, and Husband to Julia Hare

Dr. Nathan Hare was never meant to fit inside the lines. Born in 1933 in Slick, Oklahoma, he entered academia with fire in his heart and fists ready—literally. As an undergraduate at Langston University and later a graduate student at Howard University, Hare made his presence known both in the classroom and in the boxing ring. But Howard couldn't contain him. After challenging institutional racism within the university, Hare was expelled for his activism—a pattern that would follow him throughout his life.

Undeterred, he made his way West to San Francisco State College, where history would remember him not as an outcast, but as a pioneer. In 1968, under the pressure of the longest student-led strike in U.S. history, Dr. Hare was appointed as the first-ever coordinator of a Black Studies department in the nation. But once again, he was seen as too radical—and again, he was dismissed.

Still, he did not retreat. Instead, he doubled down on the struggle for intellectual and cultural liberation. Dr. Hare earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco, shifting his revolutionary lens toward the Black psyche. He sought to heal not just bodies or societies, but minds—deeply wounded by white supremacy, colonization, and internalized oppression.

The Scholar Who Shaped Black Thought

Dr. Hare was a founding editor of *The Black Scholar*, a journal that became the gold standard for radical Black intellectual discourse in the post-civil rights era. He helped define the field of Black psychology, analyzing the mental and emotional impact of racism on African Americans with an eye toward collective healing. Through his writing, teaching, and public speaking, Dr. Hare challenged the status quo of both white academia and conservative Black institutions. He believed in decolonizing education, creating spaces where Black history, culture, and revolutionary thought could thrive—not just survive. “We must create a curriculum that reflects not only Black experience, but Black excellence, and Black power.”

The Fire Beside the Flame: Julia Hare

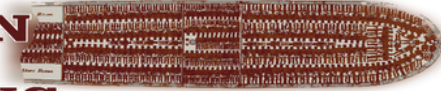
Behind and beside Dr. Hare stood Dr. Julia Hare—a towering figure in her own right. A fierce speaker, educator, and media personality, Julia Hare brought charisma, clarity, and conviction to every platform she touched. Known as “the female Malcolm X” in some circles, Julia could electrify a crowd while breaking down the intersections of race, gender, and politics with surgical precision.

Together, the Hares became a legendary duo, often referred to as “Black America’s first couple of mental liberation.” They co-authored books, hosted panels, and spoke across the country about the psychological warfare Black communities face—and the tools needed to fight back. Where Nathan brought theory, Julia brought energy. Where he dissected systems, she engaged audiences. Theirs was not just a romantic partnership, but a revolutionary one—rooted in love, mutual respect, and shared mission.

TAX HARVARD EXEMPT THE NEGRO

www.taxexemptnegro.com

NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPARATIONS



This year I attended my 30th Yale College reunion. I saw old friends. I remembered who I used to be. I looked around at beautiful buildings paid for by wealth that predated my birth by centuries. And I came to a quiet but sharp realization: for all its talk of access and transformation, Yale - like many elite institutions - still functions less as a ladder than as a pyramid. I say this as someone who has benefitted from the education I received. I'm not wealthy. I'm the first in my family to attend professional school. I worked hard. But I also now recognize the story that was sold to us - the one about hard work and discipline being all it takes to succeed - was always incomplete.

Because some of us must work harder than others just to be believed. And some of us are taught that our success is proof the system works, when in fact our visibility helps keep it intact. This is why I support a policy that some might find provocative: Tax Harvard. Exempt the Negro.

The Cost of Hoarded Privilege

Private universities like Harvard, Yale, and Stanford hold tens of billions of dollars in tax-exempt endowments. They educate a disproportionately wealthy student body, benefit from generations of government subsidies, and are shielded from scrutiny behind a veil of "public good."

But these institutions - many of which directly profited from slavery and market themselves as inclusive and transformational, even as they preserve entrenched hierarchies - have never paid their debt to the people whose stolen labor made their wealth possible. The federal government taxes the paychecks of Black Americans whose ancestors built this country for free. Meanwhile, the compounded wealth of elite institutions continues to grow untaxed. That is not meritocracy. That is fiscal injustice with a moral cover story.

A Reparative Alternative

Here's what I propose:

1. Increase the excise tax on private university endowment investment income, especially for institutions with more than \$10 billion in assets. Tie that tax rate to whether they serve the public - through aid, access, or community investment.

2. Exempt Black descendants of American slaves from all federal income taxation. These Americans have paid double: once in labor, again in generational exclusion. A total exemption is not a handout. It is a long-overdue halt to a system that has extracted without redress, and taxed without repair. They are owed not a gesture, but a remedy.



Photo: Amira Jackmon and her niece visiting the campus of Yale University, as she is also considering attending the university.

Not all descendants of enslaved people are Black. And not all Black people are descendants of the enslaved. But those who are both – referred to as Negro as both a distinction and reminder of the past – carry the historical burden of unpaid labor and the daily burden of systemic racism – deserve reprieve from a tax system that has never worked for us – in a country that once counted my ancestors as three-fifths of a person, and still too often treats us as less than whole.

The Pyramid Problem

At my 30th reunion, I sensed that many of my classmates no longer clung to the belief that hard work alone guarantees success – because they’d seen how rigged the climb truly is. Thirty years out, we had the benefit – or perhaps the burden – of perspective. We had witnessed how access, inheritance, race, and luck shape lives just as much as discipline and drive.

And yet, the idea lingers. It’s a beautiful idea – that if you work hard enough, you can rise. But like so many beautiful things in America, it rests on the unseen labor and belief of others: those who clean the dorms, serve the food, deliver the mail, or never even got close to applying.

Yale, like America, was not designed for everyone to succeed. The success of the few often depends on the willingness of the many to believe that success is equally available to all. That belief is a kind of debt too – spiritual, economic, generational. It is time to start paying that back.

Toward a Just Tax Code

I’m not asking for pity. I’m asking for a rebalancing of the system – one that starts with the acknowledgment that not all wealth is earned, and not all taxation is just. We live in a country where billion-dollar nonprofits grow richer tax-free, while Black families are penalized for working, caregiving, and surviving.

The federal government forgoes \$25 to \$40 billion annually in tax subsidies for municipal bonds – benefits that mostly serve the wealthy. But when it comes to tax relief for the descendants of the enslaved, we hear only of constraints and sacrifice. That is not accountability. That is apartheid in accounting.

It’s time we stop rewarding inherited privilege and start repairing inherited harm.

Tax Harvard. Exempt the Negro. Not because it’s radical – but because it’s time.

Written by Amira Jackmon



Wear the shirt.

Share the story.

Change the narrative.

Film Notes: When Malcolm Smiled



Format: Short Film

Country of Production:
Ghana / USA

Director: Muhammida
El Muhajir

Duration: 10 minutes

Social: @malcolmsmiled

Concept Overview

When Malcolm Smiled is a cinematic reimagining of **Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El Shabazz) 1964 visit to Ghana**, told not through speeches or surveillance but through sunlight, water, and breath. It explores the quiet, intimate, and healing dimensions of a revolutionary's journey home.

Hosted by Maya Angelou, Shirley Graham DuBois, and embraced by Ghana's Black expatriate and intellectual community, Malcolm's time in Accra offered him a moment of emotional exhale. Surrounded by warmth, artistry, and solidarity, he encountered rest, a rare act for a man so often in motion.

He would later write that his meeting with President Kwame Nkrumah during this trip was "the highest honor of my life." This film imagines everything else that moment might have held: belonging, spiritual renewal, and most powerfully, joy.

Cultural Lineage & Pan-African Memory

Though brief, Malcolm's time in Ghana was deeply significant. He entered a country that had become the nerve center of Pan-African thought and Black internationalism. In Accra, he joined a constellation of global Black thinkers, artists, and leaders who were shaping a post-colonial vision of freedom.

When Malcolm Smiled visually and spiritually centers this moment of transatlantic reunion. We see Malcolm not just as an American activist, but as a son of Africa, welcomed home by sisters and elders, visionaries and nation-builders.

This is not a political reenactment, but a poetic act of recovery. The film restores the silences in our historical memory: the off-camera smiles, the shared meals, the unguarded moments of laughter, recognition, and release.

Artistic Direction

Through rich cinematography, textured archival echoes, and stylized movement, the film blurs time inviting the viewer to imagine what history didn't record. Visual storytelling draws from Ghanaian aesthetics, diasporic fashion, and symbols of Black intimacy. Water is used as a motif of healing. Sunlight reflects freedom. And silence becomes a language in itself.

Why This Story Now

When Malcolm Smiled challenges the dominant narratives that frame Black icons solely through pain or martyrdom. By honoring Malcolm X as a whole man tired, beloved, healing, we expand the ways we tell our stories. His smile becomes not just a detail, but a symbol of spiritual continuity, collective memory, and the revolutionary power of joy.

BLACK VOICES

CURATED BY

DR. AYODELE NZINGA



Inheritance | Dr. Ayodele Nzinga

i inherited knock knees
 & hard knocks
 dimples a killer smile
 discernment
a low tolerance for bullshit
 got my mamas
 hands & feet
remembering mississippi mud
 though corpuscles
 big me
has never been there
little me re members
i inherited alabama mississippi &
 the jim crow ride
 the west coast
16 th st train station
 inherited
 oakland
 california
left coast by the water majick child
 inheritor
 of bird tree sky
 wildness
bound to be a wild woman
inherited mojo ways mojo words
 a complex interior
 & a mojo
 i inherited
 music
 thunder
the roar of the ocean
 in hurricane
 round midnight
black sky to shine star
 light & a pocket
 full of cowrie shells
abundant Nile woman
 carry clouds full of
 big mama nettie
 stories about
 mama connies
 memories

just a block away
from cotton flowing fierceness
into veins
like moonshine into mason jars
smelling like magnolias
in warm sun
splattered with blood
hanging from branches with the
moss on the right side of the tree
seeking northern constellations
only to find
they shine on the
same constructed reality
running through melting decades
tasting like centuries
i inherited struggle
i rewrapped the gift &
gave it to hustle
i kept the box it came in
movement always been
my motif
i inherited dispersion
so i move culture
cross borders
like weight
a constant disruption
contemplating
the completeness of
undiluted back of the moon
black pyramid knowledge
dog star prophet
i inherited
dogon theory
shot through
my blood like
a drumline
no surrender
no retreat
playing on repeat
i got sun child tendencies
inventing what I need
i inherited praying hands
moving mountains
planting mustard seeds

plaiting rice into braids
for ocean passages
i shall never eat from
an empty plate
all my cups
overflow
i
inherited
all imagined
lost
in separation
i am
unseparated
unassimilated still African
still human
i inherited
sharp machetes
flowing water
& history
telling itself the truth
i inherited
perfect vision
2020
babalouaye
leveling fortunes
cleansing
forcing the world inside
i inherited the gaze
of panicked oppressors
opening a door
instructing
colored people
“save the world
or at least
stand still
let us
rub your head”
we did not stand still
movement is a motif
we did not save the white world
why would we
i inherited the door
they slammed
our kitchen

too hot
& they didn't
want to
save the world
they wanted absolution
i inherited
now like a near fatal
accident
a bus off course
hijacked by a madman
cheered on by
the rabid crowd
bus now headed for glory
only the madman
will survive
he has no friends only
fans and fans are
for a season
I inherited reason
big jar majick
& a why
i keep going
i inherited grit
a third eye
& a mind on freedom
got to git somewhere
open a door
a window
harriet ambitions
run niggas
run
don't wait
run
i inherited baldwin Wilson
a ten-point plan
a pedagogy tied to a pantheon
straddling the water
& a nat turner
John brown
kinda attitude
i am
not your fiction
beware the real me

not the parlor trick me
not property
not a sofa or a cow
i am
flesh of my flesh
blood of my blood
child of my father
dream of my ancestors
I inherited the promise
In the image of the most high
I am
godz tears
cosmic dust &
from whence I come
i will return
i inherited
the alpha of omega
the beginning of the beginning
I am
the roar of the ocean
in hurricane
round midnight
black sky to shine star
light & a pocket
full of cowrie shells

Before Loving Day | Coryna Ogunseitan

Love was something different;
Or else love was not the point.
Where you see one ant, there are many.
Where would the children go?

Love was not the point. The point
Was one's inheritance:
Where would the children go?
Give a slave a cookie
and she'll demand the deed to the property.

There is the problem of inheritance;
Not all mules are sterile.
Give a slave a cookie and she'll demand the deed.
The property does not love you. The property
is only land.

Not all mules are sterile:
Love is something different.

And property in the end is only land.
Where you see one ant is a trail of ants: unending.

Homage to Nikki Giovanni | Nzinga LeJeune

May your words devour and conquer.....give purpose and power
explode then redeploy.....to hearts alike and sour
like lemon dropsfrom a tucked speakeasy
where poets find truthgive birth to rebirth
sing songs of liberation.....filled with black feelings, black thoughts, and black judgement
so we make rainon a cotton candy day
chasing utopia
like a true Gemini way
only to have a good cry
as we ride night winds on our bicycles
quilting the black-eyed pea

Black Antiquity | James Cagney

The sideboard's seasonal climbing wall of pies
Its gradient scale from sweet potato to cinnamon

wine rich fruit punch clotted with sugar instead of gin
cause mama'd had enough drunks by summer's end

pickled beets, jalapenos, chow-chow, plum jam
black eyed peas, green beans, okra, candied yams

our house and its week-long republic of aromas
dining room's chatter chewed down to the bone

reverend grandpa, his evangelical cousins
their white crown of prayers anchor our table

with grace taking up the hand of one
seated on my left, our skin fuses into a hydrangea

our human bouquet to god
this holiday basilica, its twin

domes of upside down pineapple
and coconut cakes snow-banked in frosting

our year of long distance phone calls
reduced to a compilation of rhyming

hungers, gestures ecstatic mouths
chewing symbols for infinity

the sun sips color from a blushing sky
eases into its winter night bath

candles, chandeliers offer a benediction of light
over the warm cemetery of our dining room

a trail of crumbs from kitchen back
to garden, germinate into a neglected memorial

harvests of gold, umber and orange
flake into a blizzard of dead seedlings

time blurs the eyes of memory
hair faints white through doomed skin

The Women in My Family Be | October BLU

natural disasters
generation flooding spaces causing property damaging
just to be seen
Raging wildfires and burnt sequoias
Uprooting red woods
Singing baobab leaves
Thinning o zones
Droughting once watered deserts
these women be original banana
seeded and fungus roots
my women folk be why they named Katrina
Katrina
Be the 5th day following the levee break
be tornadoes birthing hurricanes
swaddling babies in ocean waves
bracing bodies against
the crash and rocks
these women
these women
be daughters of
scarcity
void of cultivation
be the beating leather before
its fashioned into boot straps
I come from a long line of shipwreck causing women
Fresh men consistently cast their bodies into the deeps of their blues
No survivors have ever been found
These women submerge emotional cargo with sultry siren songs
Passed down cursed tongues
I come from a long line of unstable fault lines
Seismic heartbeats when broken
Everyone will always be casualty
These women folks carry monsoons in their wombs
contracting volcanic eruptions when uneasy
be
sink holes
tsunamis
catastrophic event
flood insurance in a fire zone
I come from a long line of natural disasters
And to this day
Not one of them
believes in global warming

The Deepest Stain | Isaiah Alexander

From Texas to past exes
I leave a trail of misdirection
Like the most beloved legends
I meet death before twenty-seven
My mother's tears stream at my feet
Lay me down for my final sleep

My misery now history
No inquiry into my withering.
What remains is all the carnage
My father's jeans stained with garbage
He scrubbed and soaked his own hands raw
To cleanse the cloth of a former cause

But nothing works, not a thing he could do
Except pass them down like his father did too

So, now I scrub.
While hating him for hating you
For passing down this dreadful due
I scrub with soap, shame, and sweat I'm
out of patience and out of breath Useless
jagged denim mess
Remnants that he tried his best
He traded family to find his truth
Convinced his cauldron brews would do

I've been working on these jeans for years
With suds and every fabric cleaner
Still it glares that arrogant sneer

It's inevitable what I have to do
Wait for the day another wanders through
A baby boy coos without a clue
And the wretched cycle begins anew

Salt Water Crossings | devorah major

did our waters of salt breathe
as we birthed our young
did we swim in those laughing waves
before the wrenching
before the tearing
before the theft

did we harvest the bounty
of her fish to feed our families
and with thankfulness did we
offer her fresh flower songs
that were swallowed by her crests
we did do we did do

did we cleanse our wounds
in her seas and discover our dreams
under those glistening midnight waves
did we listen to the ancestors' guidance
as the surf met the sand
did we know and relish
the waters of salt
before their arrivals
before our crossings
we did do we did do

before we were packed
into strange ship hulls
chained, naked, and trapped
in an evil we had never imagined

we did not know these waters as venom
then we learned their sting as they were
poured in buckets over
our bruised and torn bodies
to wash away the stench of
blood, feces, and razor tears
its salt bite was bitter
as our homes turned to memory
turned to myth and then
were forgotten

all was salt and moan
soaking through our skin
to live forever
in the marrow of our bones

we did not see the stars change
did not know when
the moon was hungry
and fierce or full and satiated

but we knew salt

we ate its curses
we savored its healing
we learned its lessons

Self Portait as Kendrik Lamar's To Pimp a Butterfly Album Cover | Rodrick Minor

everybody wanna cut the legs off 'em, Kunta!
Black man taking no losses
Now I run the game, got the whole world talkin'
King Kunta!
When you got the yams

evremix — i, a chorus of onyx
stardust eclipsing over a chiefless law
a cookout for us only
sunkissed with fire and jazz —barechested
& bulletproof with a brazen stare,
i be the party & protest on the front lawn
drunk with flamboyancy & champagne
in my mouth, a wad of dead slavemasters
hangs Franklins then Grants
say grace to my kinfolks & dem
whose bones slaved this country's bedrock
i pose in bravado, rightful heir to my throne
a kingdom
for all my Negus & me

When Your Father is Quiet | Nefertiti Asanti

& red & small, it is how you smell anger &
every flame is a man you want to love cause
you see the yellow caution on the rind of the
lemon he tips into the glass. you cut a perfect
circle away from that sour fruit & toss the
seeds. there is a blues your father wants to
hum, but he don't know the words & the
melody left with your mama. you are not your
mama: you stay & you grow a whole head
taller. you say your father angry, but he only
lifts his fist when there's a glass in it & he only
strikes when there's a match to light. anger
don't always mean violence, & sometimes it's
just sadness, & it grows a whole head taller
than your father. it's like your father got two
heads, you know: one he sticks out the window
& one he sticks in the oven both fall off the
table, roll like marbles. the heavier they get,
the smaller they seem, 'til they stop at your
toes, at your feet. on your feet, you decide
which of your father's heads to collect.

Contrapuntal for My Warring Mythologies | Yasmine Bolden

*my hair has been a thundercloud & in someone else's mythology
i am a geography of slaves' dreams & their ancestor's wildest nightmares
i have been a warning since before three fifths of a person yet still notice how i stand my ground
this body filled with forefathers from the inside. the call is coming but i am the call. i foretold it
tornado-beautiful and thunderclap ugly-hearted, loud as a dead-wrong dixie song.
my body will be the salt brought into being by betrayal; a killer origin story that my grandchildren will use to season their lives.*

*my mother's mother's mother's hair was a highway of lost causes & doomed descendants
& a sweetelle of sore southern losers
now marronage in the kindness of my fro
i was born, i was born a compromise, i was born too loud to be loved in halves, i was an eviction
with warring ancestors caught in eternal lorefare
unable to leave. the legislature is held against me
from inside the house of flesh & unknown mothers.
i will give them the names that they deserve:
ugly-hearted, loud as a dead-wrong dixie song.
my body will be the salt brought into being by betrayal; a killer origin story that my grandchildren will use to season their lives.*

To All Y'all | Maurya Kerr

who ask me what are you? I say this:

*bitches, I am sea & sky, moon & sun,
all the colors in one
motherfucking bundle
of bright.*

*I am Parks & Davis & X.
Mildred & Richard.
My momma & my daddy.
Coffee, cream & sugar.
Crepuscular.*

*I'm the stuck-up-think-she-a-white-girl-bitch in the morn on the right
& baby baby slim latte later on the left at night.*

*Yo, I am a mothafucking celebration standing on this bridge of liminality,
all amalgam & alloy, bullseye & border, chafe & quarter, daddy's little secret—
see,
I'm the daughter, granddaughter & great great motherfucking great granddaughter*

To All Y'all...continued

*of an Africa chained & crated to 'Merica to be fucked & slaughtered by
your great great fuck no he ain't great grandfather.*

*Interstitial, I am the space between each grain of soil in the field,
the tract of time between cracked & open cotton boll,
the toll & grime on the sole of Massa's boots,
the semen on the see ma look how pretty I am dress
of the girl gone to work her first day at The Big House.*

*Wait, you think Sally wanted Tommy?
Think she hemmed & hawed & had a choice
to suck or not suck
his pallid flaccid fuck
of a dick?*

*For your pasty ol' grand pa pa, we girthed & rimmed,
were the one-drop dark-dripping down his drunk-ass-rear-end.*

*Impotence of segregation,
I'm Miss Cegenation.
& I cusp & I cusp & I cusp & I cusp.*

*Color me blues & black or white & wrong, but I'm a wheaten mutt-don't-give-a-fuck—
in fact, I'm mama of the mules,
king of the curs,
brightest of the brindles,*

*poet to all anti-pedigreed & pinto.
I'm halffrica & all one hundred halves of the half-caste.*

*I'm the biggest bitch of the bastard battalion,
a magnate of amalgamation,
& queen of the crossbreed ruling over the mongrelization of this shithole nation.*

*Know me.
Crown me.
Kowtow.
Kiss.*

& long live the ligers, fuck yeah.

Bobby D | Cazoshay Marie

*Your hands permanently stained with oil
from years of manual labor
A child carrying on his back
blocks of ice and bags of coal
And the burden of making a better life for your descendants
A burden you were proud to bear
Working, praying for a better future for them
than you could ever have dreamed of for yourself
Answering to “boy” – although you outranked them
and were a hundred times more of a man
than they could ever hope to be
Stealing bags of potatoes to feed your family
jumping train tracks
You suffered indignities, swallowed a lifetime of pain
until it became a cancer
Jazz drummer turned husband, father, grandfather,
ancestor
Rhythm of a love that resonates across time and space
The stuff legacies are made of
The makings of a real man
Those oil-stained hands built the health and wealth
of generations to come
A dream come to fruition a hundred times over
Gratitude*

The Ripest Fruit | Kwamise Fletcher (aka LadyK)

*I was born honey-thick,
a body full of summer's promise,
hips like ripe mangoes,
arms soft as the flesh of a peach.
But in my family's kitchen,
love came with a knife...
peeling, slicing, paring me down to what they thought
was easier to swallow.
My mother led the carving,
trimming herself down to fit into frames that were
never
built for us.
She wore depression like a virtue,
sipped on self-denial like fine wine,
Said she didn't want me to suffer
like she had,
that the world would never be kind to a body like
mine.
But I heard the trembling's
beneath her warnings,
She was never overweight,
just weighed down
by someone else's idea of beauty,
a European ghost whispering
that her curves were curses,
that her worth was measured
by what she could disappear into.
And yet here I stood...
unapologetic, round, and radiant,
loving myself in ways
she never could.
Maybe that's what stung the most.
That I dared to cherish
what she had spent a lifetime
trying to erase.
That I let my body exist without war,
But some days, the war finds me.
Some days, the mirror is cruel,
and I trace the outlines of my body like an apology.
Some days, I wear the weight of my skin like an
anchor.*

*But I cannot say this aloud.
I cannot let them see the cracks,
cannot give them the satisfaction
of knowing that some nights
I pinch at my reflection
and hear only their voices...
Because the moment I confess
that my love for myself
is sometimes a trembling thing too,
the floodgates will open...
See, I knew you couldn't possibly love yourself...
I knew it was all an act...
So I stay silent.
I carry my doubts alone,
whisper them into my pillow,
let them settle in my chest
like fruit left too long in the sun...
I know I need to find a love for my body that
does not feel like defiance.
like a fig splitting under the sun, too full of
sweetness to hold itself together...
But I am trying.
Every day, I am trying.
To love myself in all my stages...
the bloom, the bruises, the overripe sweetness
of a body that has carried so much, but still
refuses to be discarded.
So I hide.
Tuck my beauty in the back of the fridge,
where light never touches it & confidence turns
cold,
But I am done letting their taste buds
turn my joy to doubt.
I am not overripe... I am bursting... lush, alive.
And if they cannot stomach my sweetness,
if they cannot fathom how I feast on self-love
without gagging on their guilt,
then let them starve on a love so decadent, it
drowns their judgment, even when that
judgment is my own...*

Razing U.S. | Alex J. Bledsoe

*May the rhythm, the shaking of our walls be lovemaking not demolition
may it be laughter, no longer gunshots through our bed frames as we lay next to the fathers
of an unborn nation*

*as we prepare to birth an army that never asked to be
soldiers we conscript
still not equipped to protect
whose caskets only we care to carry
red black and green draped over our dreams*

I understand where you're coming from but can't relate to anyone with a place to call home

*I come from a people whose tents is surrounded by tents
new cities inventing our own fire*

*hands hovering over flames to keep the blood moving,
moving quietly come morning,
knowing too much attention brings ruin
every brick tossed in their landfill and not only that but with a sneer*

A reminder this is not home

*I look over at my brother the griot
he nods and says keep going
there's more to say and we've decided against nihilism today
we never cared much for it anyway*

*carriers of old ways boxing backwards 3 million years
you see the project of knowing is new and they got you believing that shit*

*I'm just here to give you a sign,
the earth is on our side,
sister in arms,*

a reluctant army betraying all borders

*bringing breath to a dead world
bringing death to an old world as it gasps not yet ready
to beg for Black mercy*

Dr. Ayodele Nzinga directs film version of Marvin X's BAM Classic play Flowers for the Trashman | Marvin X

We were honored to attend the final shooting of my first and most famous play Flowers for the Trashman. Directed and produced by Dr. Ayodele Nzinga and performed by her Lower Bottom Playaz Theater Company, in residence at 1540 Broadway, downtown Oakland. Having produced the play for several years, she knows the characters thus giving her skills to upgrade this iconic play that helped set off the national Black Arts Movement, and as per Oakland, the play ignited students at Merritt College and was critical in establishing the Black Panther Party. According to BPP Co-founder Bobby Seale, "After Marvin X performed his play at Merrit, students were ready to join the Black Panther Party.

The cast includes two of Ayo's sons in the leading roles of Joe, a college student, and Wes, his buddy from the hood. Although theatre audiences often focused on Joe's antiwhite tirades after they go to jail for J walking and white man enters their, the major theme is the father and son relationship. During a break in filming, the actors questioned the playwright about his drama. Did he understand his father, they asked? "No, not until I became him, then I understood him well," as I say in a poem.

So is this an intergenerational story? Yes, I am still living it as we speak. The play ends with the lines, "I want to talk with my sons," but I have been estranged from my son, especially my oldest son and namesake. At 60 years old, he's still suffering from the trauma of my abandonment and neglect, just as I was. And then he did the same to one of his sons, so this drama is not over. Stay tuned for Flowers for the Trashman Part II.

The play has special significance for the lead actors since they too suffer from fatherly abandonment and neglect. Alas, the plays deconstructs degrees of the absent father. Wes says, "I ain't never seen my father, I don't even know what he looks like," so imagine his trauma.

We give honor and praise to Dr. Ayodele Nzinga for producing and directing this film version of Flowers for the Trashman.



Note: Flowers for the Trashman is Marvin X's most well-known Black Arts Movement play, which with generational difficulties and the crisis of the Black intellectual as he deals with education in a white-controlled culture. The play was also published in Black Fire, the classic Black Arts Movement anthology, edited by LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal.

Aging in the Movement, a Black August Retrospective

Diego Jimenez

Upon entering Anti Police-Terror Project's The Peoples House, located in The Bottoms of West Oakland, the first thing you are greeted by are pictures of Comrades George Jackson and Assata Shakur. If it happens to be a Monday, you might then notice a group of elders receiving acupuncture and sharing stories about the old days. Among them are former members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) who supported everything from printing political education community newspapers to being line chefs for the Breakfast Program. Each one of them is filled with an absolute treasure trove of knowledge and wisdom to impart, yet rarely do we take the time to listen. All too often, our freedom fighters become isolated, ironically enough, due to the physical and emotional trauma of their service to us, and many of them are dealing with moderate to severe health conditions.

A movement that does not treat its elders with respect is not destined to succeed.

Most of the higher-profile figures have spent the majority of their lives in prison and sometimes decades in solitary confinement as a result of their revolutionary organizing. The resilience and mental fortitude required to not only survive such torture, but to emerge with a lucid mind and a compassionate heart is nothing short of superhuman. This is a level of discipline and perseverance that our movement desperately needs in today's world. We have devolved to relying on the convenience of rhetoric and crumble at the first sight of conflict. This is due to many factors, including political education, structure, and the loss of a culture of accountability - but also impacted by our failure to directly involve our aging freedom fighters in our organizations and movement spaces. They have real-life lessons to impart that no book can reveal.

Leadership without lineage and rigorous study of our past is the reason for many dysfunctional and ineffective organizing strategies. We must be in principled collaboration with the older generation to analyze their victories, replicate the models that worked, and evade the pitfalls that made them vulnerable to State infiltration, assault, and repression.



Our political and moral barometers should urge us to build community with our elders and surround them with the resources and care needed to prolong their lives.

The State understands how vital the transference of knowledge between generations is to the success of a movement. This is why they either let us die in prison or wait until we are so sick that there is not much time left to organize and educate once released.

Dr. Mutulu Shakur, the grandfather of detox acupuncture and a member of the Black Liberation Army (BLA), was diagnosed with stage 3 blood cancer towards the end of his 36-year sentence. Upon his release, even with his health deteriorating, he began to tour college campuses and speak about his life's work and ongoing commitment to the movement for liberation and a sovereign New African nation. Despite the efforts of the care team

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Letter from the Guest Editor Continued from page 6

creative outlets like writing, painting, or music offer a way to explore and express complex feelings tied to identity struggles tied to compound complex fractures of the psyche, helping individuals understand their emotions and experiences. Engaging in creative activities promotes reflection, allowing people to explore deeper aspects of their identities, beliefs, and values, which increases self-awareness. Creative expression provides a platform for sharing stories, validating experiences, and affirming identities in a society that marginalizes and erases them. Articulating thoughts and feelings through creativity can help individuals recognize that their struggles are valid, leading to greater acceptance and empowerment. Art can also act as a form of resistance against cultural erasure, enabling people to assert their identities and challenge mainstream narratives.

Creative expression plays a vital role in fostering personal growth during identity challenges. It serves as a tool for self-exploration, validation, and emotional regulation while building resilience and community. By offering a platform for individuals to assert their identities, creative expression empowers them to navigate complexities in their lives and enhances their sense of agency and self-

worth. Through creativity, individuals can transform their struggles into meaningful expressions of identity, promoting healing and personal development. Artists are afforded a means to address social and political issues related to their culture, stimulating conversations that challenge dominant narratives and encourage critical engagement with identity.

Cultural affirmation in creative expression is pivotal for personal identity. It solidifies cultural connections, fosters pride, builds community, and preserves traditions, while simultaneously facilitating dialogue about identity and addressing social issues. Through creative expression, individuals gain agency over their identities, explore intersections of culture, and engage in personal growth, ultimately cultivating a more profound connection to themselves and their communities.



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DR.'S NATHAN & JULIA HARE

Honoring our Revolutionary Ancestors

Their connection was one of fierce intellect and even fiercer love. They built not just a family, but a movement. From the foundation of The Black Think Tank to their appearances on national television and within Black communities coast to coast, Nathan and Julia Hare represented a union forged in truth-telling and transformation.

Julia once said, “We’re not here to be tolerated. We’re here to be celebrated.” And in that spirit, we remember them both—not only as scholars, but as lovers, builders, and keepers of the flame.



Aging in the Movement, a Black August Retrospective

his family put around him, he passed 6 months after his release at the age of 72. The State can claim that they granted 'compassionate release' knowing damn well that the damage was already done.

We would not be where we are today without the contributions of heroes like Dr. Mutulu Shakur. He is the reason why so many others and I are now pursuing acupuncture as a means of becoming more complete soldiers in the Movement. Were it not for his ingenuity and relentless love for the downtrodden, we would not have a way of combating addiction with a tool that belongs to us, the people.

The work we do at Anti Police-Terror Project's The People's House follows in the footsteps of our most beloved martyrs and political prisoners. We embrace their legacy of unwillingness to forget about those that live on the margins; our brothers and sisters living in cages, in tents, occupied zones, the ones that the State seeks to erase from our sight.

In a society that has become increasingly numb and desensitized to the daily atrocities of Capitalism, creating programs like The People's Clinic is a way of reclaiming and preserving our humanity. We must become our own social safety net.

We must provide for the people that which the State refuses to provide, i.e., health care, groceries, and public safety. As it becomes increasingly apparent that we cannot depend on the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC) for our medical needs, the collective consciousness will shift towards community-based solutions that offer genuine care. We must be ready to answer that call.

Just as you would serve your aunties and uncles the first plate at the cookout, we must follow the same approach when addressing the needs of our community. We simply will not allow our elders to become isolated, sick, and transition without properly documenting and honoring their lives.

Creating intergenerational spaces where the youth can also benefit from the knowledge of their elders bodes well for the future of our movement.

As parents, we cannot hope to raise the next generation of young revolutionaries without the tender love and support of the grandparents, both blood and chosen. This is central to our liberation strategy at The People's House as we build a future where our elders can age gracefully and their contributions can be celebrated.

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GEORGE JACKSON

Remembering
a Black August Hero

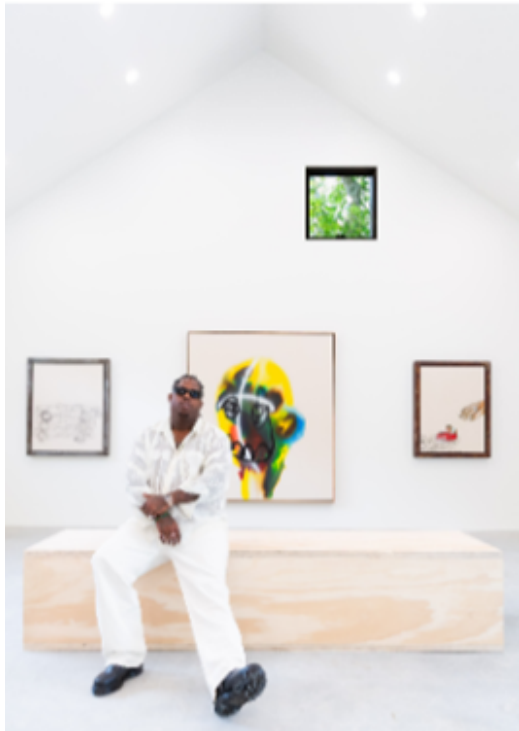


From the Prison Block to the Global Struggle

Today, George Jackson's analysis of mass incarceration as an extension of white supremacy feels more prophetic than ever. With nearly 2 million people locked up in the U.S.—disproportionately Black and brown—his call to resist resonates through generations. He warned that reform without revolution was a trap, "The men who run this place are doctors of repression. They are specialists in making people into slaves."

But he also reminded us that liberation is a mental and spiritual struggle, not just a physical one. His life teaches that even in a cage, you can become a force the system fears.

Jahlil Nzinga: Artist Snapshot



Q: What was the theme of “growing up”? What’s your inheritance, and what do you hope to leave behind?

A: Words and action are my inheritance

I want to leave the same behind because it helped me on my journey.

My theme growing up was: Try, chase more, and chase bigger.

I just knew there was something in the world for me, I just had to get it.



Photo Courtesy of Jah, Installation, “The Weight of It All.”

Q: Describe yourself in five words.

A: Leader. Authentic. Special. Resilient. Brave.

I choose these words because it’s how I feel at this moment when I think of what I’ve done to get here and what it takes to keep get where I am going.

Q: Where are you going? What’s the top look like? Why do you paint?

A: The top is the bottom of another hill, but this is what I’m here for, and I’m grateful for the chance

to play the game. Painting is what I’m called to – I’m drawn to it. It’s what feels the most natural; it’s like I’ve done it my whole life.



Photo Courtesy of Jahlil Nzinga and new work in his “The Weight of It All” solo show at SAW in South Hampton.

MARVIN X SAYS: “READ A BOOK”

“Marvin X is considered the Father of the genre Muslim American Literature.” - Dr. Mohja Kahf, University of Arkansas

“He’s the USA’s Rumi, Hafiz, Saadi!”

- Bob Holman

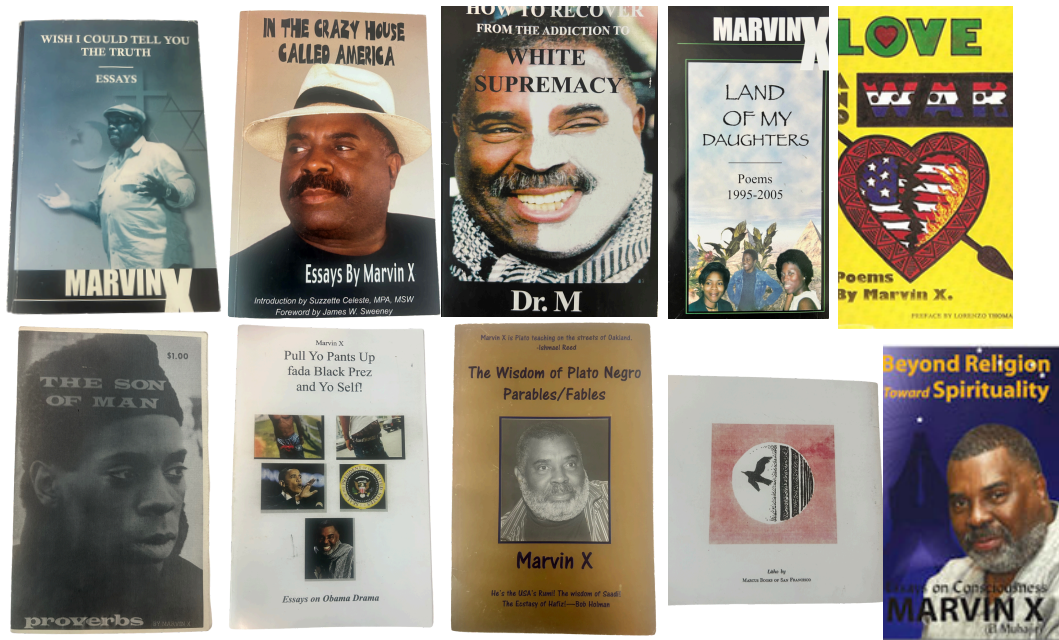
“Plato teaching on the streets of Oakland.”

- Ishmael Reed

“The African Socrates teaching in the hood.”

- Dr. Cornel West

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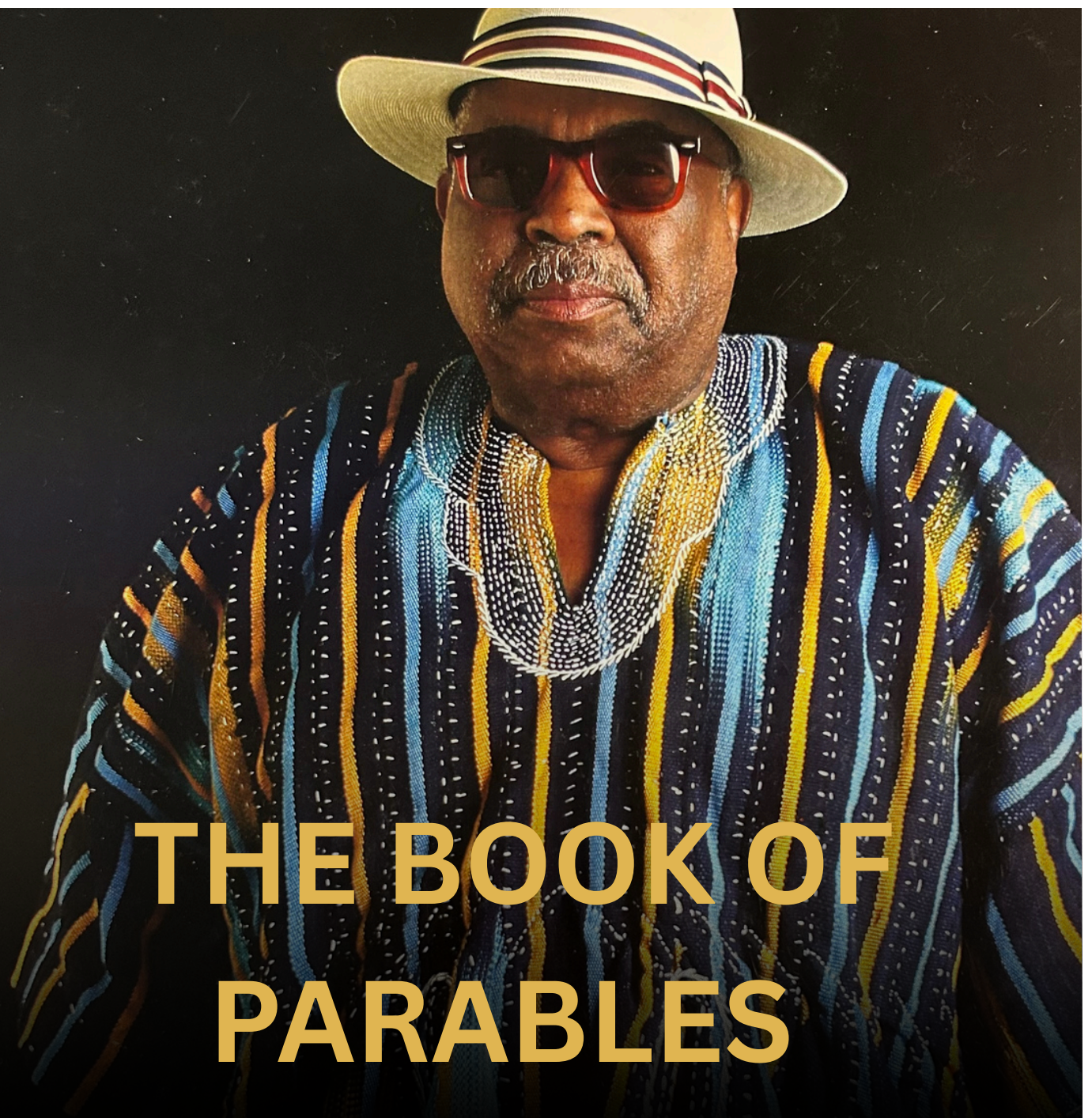
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