By Kecia Cole

Freedom of the mind is not a comfort, but an achievement to which one aspires and at long last obtains after an exhausting struggle.

--Nietzsche

As we celebrate the dawning of a new decade and look forward to the future, we must also attempt to reevaluate the condition of the Africans in America. Has our liberation truly been realized?

Some would say that is has. Obviously African-Americans have made some unprecedented strides in this country's political system. From the governor of Virginia to the mayor of New York, African-Americans have moved to the forefront of political activity. The White House may even become a slightly darker hue this decade. But are we free?

Some people have perceived Nelson Mandela's long-overdue release from a South African jail cell as a sign of freedom yet we must not be deluded into accepting this pseudo-liberatory rhetoric. Our South African sisters and brothers are far from free. The fact that media spent more time focusing on their fascist oppressors than the innocent natives obviates this fact. It was insulting to watch the American media attempting to elicit sympathy for the Nazi White South Africans.

As Mandela attempted to savor his first taste of "freedom" in nearly three decades and while the masses of actual (Black) South Africans remained economically, educationally, socially and politically impoverished the media had the audacity to ask the brutal White murderers (or accessories to mass murder) how they felt. Who cares about their feelings? My people had their resources stolen and their relatives killed as they were enslaved in their own land. And still people are rejoicing South African freedom. They are not free and we must realize that the only negotiation that can take place in South Africa is that of total relinquishment of all South African land, assets and resources to the natives. Anything other than this is merely a lesser degree of enslavement.

We must realize that mental and physical liberation is an arduous and eternal fight. In the words of Frederick Douglass "Without struggle there is no progress." The African struggle continues--it continues on this campus everyday.

In simply assessing some of the responses to the initial issue of Uhuru, it becomes obvious that we are not free. We are not free from the rampant Eurocentrism that plagues our lives. We are not free to celebrate African culture without being labeled racist. We are not free to hold oppressive forces in this society accountable for their actions. No, we are not free...yet.

Kecia Cole, Uhuru editor-in-chief

Cover
Photo by Elizabeth Malby

THE UHURU STAFF

EDITOR
Kecia Cole

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Jinidad Ojijiwah

PHOTO EDITOR
Elizabeth Malby

STAFF WRITER
Krista Franklin

STAFF WRITER
Elda Jean-Charles

STAFF WRITER
P.J. Allen

STAFF WRITER
David Sellers

PRODUCTION Mgr/GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Mark Jones

ASSISTANT GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Brian Brinkman

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Jinidad Ojijiwah

STAFF WRITER
Saffron Lloyd

ADVISOR
Timothy Moore
Features

5 - Maulana Karenga
8 - Beyond The Call - Stephanie Malby
10 - Black Commercial Radio - Waves Of Deception
16 - Malcolm X - Remembering The Life Behind The Legacy
20 - Reclaiming Of Native Territory - Black Rock
23 - Beyond The Call - Barbara Miller
32 - No Half Stepping
36 - Symbol Of Oppression - Up In Smoke
38 - About The Author - Bell Hooks - Ivan Van Sertima
46 - Beyond The Call - Angelique Troy

Interview

12 - Jungle Brothers - Jay Beez Commin Thru
24 - Mwatabu Okantah - Rebirth Of An African
40 - Giancarlo Esposito - Tries To Do The Right Thing

Entertainment

9 - Poetry - Kecia Cole - Nowal
15 - Poetry - Jinida Ojiwawh - Lora Gay
34 - Photo Essay - Elizabeth Malby
43 - Cartoons - Darryl Crosby
47 - Poetry - Mwatabu Okantah

Speak Your Mind

6 - History vs. His Story - Bringing The Truth To Light
22 - Barriers Among Us
30 - Let's Break Those Misconceptions
44 - Speak Your Mind - Mandela
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

By Melissa S. Forter

Recently I was strongly reminded of the racism still existing in our society. Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing was a shocking, yet truthful portrayal of the lives of the men and women in many major cities in our country today, but I was shocked even more after reviewing an issue of Uhuru. This magazine not only fights for equality, but does so at the expense of others. I was appalled at the “eye for an eye” ideal expressed in its contents and the reciprocal racism expressed in many letters and poems.

Sure you are Black and you should be proud of your heritage and customs. And yes, others should be reminded of your oppression and the suffering of your ancestors, but why must it be done at the cost of my heritage and ancestry?

I will continue to strive for equality of all people everywhere as we are simply one human race, but I refuse to put up with the derogatory remarks of this publication toward my lineage and my ancestors.

---Melissa S. Forter

RESPONSE

Dear Melissa,

Our publication is about freedom, so we welcome you to express your freedom of the press through this letter. We do feel, however, that you have seriously missed the point of Uhuru.

Several non-African-Americans have expressed similar views about Uhuru this semester, all of whom seem to have an inaccurate and distorted concept of racism. Many Caucasians are not aware of their own racist tendencies because they are so deeply ingrained in the structure of this country. Ethnocentrism is a form of racism, and your letter was definitely ethnocentric.

You commented about the suffering of our “ancestors” as though this occurrence was merely in the past. African-Americans suffer everyday due to the oppressive majority culture, and for you to imply otherwise is extremely insulting to our race. It is ironic that White students seem to be intelligent enough to “discover” racism, but often times they can not determine its origins. Whether you want to believe it or not, racism originated with the Caucasian race—your ancestors. That is not being “derogatory” to anyone’s culture, that is the TRUTH.

The editors of Uhuru do not believe in a sugar-coated reality, and that is what you seem to be seeking. The truth is that Caucasians have systematically oppressed People of Color throughout the history of the earth. The truth is that Caucasians attempted to annihilate the Native American, and are directly responsible for their current plight as a people. The truth is that Caucasians raped the Mother continent of Africa for her resources, stole and then claimed the ancient mysteries of Egypt (Africa), killed in excess of 100 million Africans during the holocaust of enslavement/slave trade, enslaved a race of people for 400 years and still continue to oppress People of Color worldwide. No one is saying that you should not be proud of your heritage, but if you were more cognizant of the enumerable atrocities committed by your ancestors (not meaning all Europeans), you probably would not have written this letter in the first place.

You claim that you will “continue to strive for the equality of all people everywhere,” but do you really understand the meaning of equality? Although we strive to end majority-culture domination and oppression we will never be “equal” to you because equality implies sameness—we are not the same. Our differences as distinct cultures are beautiful, and we need to celebrate the differences—not promote uniformity.

You wrote that we are “simply one human race,” however, this assertion is far from simple. Obviously we are all humans, but we don’t share the same human opportunities and rights. We as People of Color definitely do not share the same human freedoms as do non-People of Color.

On one hand we, as Africans living in America, do not feel compelled to justify our motives to non-people of color. Yet, we could not overlook this letter because it expresses the sentiment of several Caucasian people on campus. We realize that non-Blacks may not fully understand this publication, however we do not expect nor need your approval to celebrate our culture. Our culture is ours to celebrate, and hopefully when people get in-touch with their own ethnocentrism they will realize this.

Uhuru in no way asserts African heritage at the “cost” of European heritage. Uhuru is about Africans, not Europeans. However, you certainly can not deny their dominant role in the plight of African people. If you do deny the place of your ancestors in the oppressive history of our ancestors, then you are simply deluding yourself.

We welcome all people to read this publication in hopes that it might help curb some of the racist tendencies which are ever-present in this society. We also welcome you to assist in our battle for freedom, however you must realize that it is our war to fight, not yours. No one is going to gain our freedom but us.

If this letter is not convincing enough to anyone sharing Ms. Forter’s view, we, the editors, have one more suggestion—read a book.
Dr. Maulana Karenga, known to some as the “Father of Kwanzaa”, was a featured speaker at Kent State University during African-American History month.

Karenga’s presentation, African Memory and the Challenge of History, evolved around three central ideas: Traditional Egypt, the holocaust of enslavement, and a reaffirmation of the 1960s.

Karenga emphasized the importance of knowing the true history of Africa and its early African civilizations and used Egypt as an example. He said that as Europeans look to Greek and Roman philosophies and humanities as their classics, so too should Africans look to Egypt as a classical civilization.

“Just as you’re morally obliged to remember your immediate mother and father, you are obligated to remember your ancient mother and father—i.e. your ancestors,” said Karenga.

“We must become the Imhotepian man and woman,” Karenga said. Imhotep was an early Egyptian scholar who is on record as being the earliest to perform surgery, the father of medicine.

Karenga said the term ‘slave trade’ is only a euphemism for what should really be called the holocaust of enslavement.

“Not to call it a holocaust is to discredit and reduce it to what Europeans call trade,” said Karenga.

Karenga described the holocaust as the “loss of human life, civilization and human possibility.” Karenga said that because of this situation African-Americans learned durability, adaptive vitality, and cultural resistance. He said that during the holocaust of enslavement African-Americans maintained their spirituality in spite of hardships.

Karenga looked to the 1960s as more than a push for integration, but as a time of American liberation. “The 60’s forced America to realize that it is not a White country but a multicultural country.”

Karenga said he believed that the African-American struggle in the 1960s was beneficial to all minorities—including women and People of Color.

Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Frantz Fanon were some people who Karenga looked to as answers to the question of African memory. Both Malcolm X and Fannie Lou Hamer incite a remembrance of African foreparents. Fanon urges people of African descent to challenge themselves with the questions: Who am I? Am I who I am? and Am I all that I ought to be?

Unfortunately, Karenga says, there are no answers to those questions. But he did offer a warning through the words of Malcolm X, and that is: “If you lose your history, you lose your memory. If you lose your memory, you lose your mind.”
By OVADIA NASLIRY

by OVADIA NASLIRY

The only way to do this is to abolish this home of the brave " . Through a creed posed, validate the European man's evidence because his words have no validity in our reality. Let us bring the truth to light and made a perpetual slave to his about our color is due to the notion cursed man Ham. Now, let's see what justifying the enslavement of Blacks, read anything in this passage about shall be unto his brethren... " I didn't curse. In Genesis 9:25 it says: "Curse... bear witness that Blacks are descended since those cursed were Canaanites from Cush, the son of Ham, the Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Things, Hold Fast to What is Fine. This information can be found known. It's just like Ripley says, skin from Black to White. So now you called Hansen's (Ham's sons) "believe it or not." This is what that will set us free from the plight that introduced humanity to Baal.

We are still finding ourselves, for instance, that the relationships from the past are still important. We are still dealing with the seed of Abraham, and we must not forget that the religion, social, or economic situations that are coming are all possible hopes of true emancipation. For the reason we want land, we can't change our position on the matter. The victim is a part of the people we must not forget that the religion, social, or economic situations that are coming are all possible hopes of true emancipation. For the reason we want land, we can't change our position on the matter. The victim is a part of the people we must not forget that the religion, social, or economic situations that are coming are all possible hopes of true emancipation. For the reason we want land, we can't change our position on the matter. The victim is a part of the people we must not forget that the religion, social, or economic situations that are coming are all possible hopes of true emancipation.
By Elizabeth Malby

Next December, 21-year-old Stephanie Malby will become the first Black woman to graduate from Kent State University with a degree in Aerospace Flight Technology.

Malby has been a licensed pilot for over three years. She received her private pilot's license in January 1987, her commercial pilot's license in August 1988, and her flight instructor's license in September 1989. And in March, Malby was elected vice president of the Organization for the Continuance of Aviation Education.

"I've been writing letters for OCAE since it was formed," Malby said. "We've sent them out to parents, alumni, local pilots, and other groups or organizations that may support us."

Malby is critical of the University's reasons behind the proposed discontinuing of the flight program.

"The first thing they said was that it didn't fit into President Schwartz' goal of developing a more research oriented university," Malby said. "It was later brought up that money was a factor, but the flight program is basically self-supporting."

According to Malby the tuition for the average Kent State flight students is $10,000 a year.

"The University only pays for two instructors and chiefs," Malby said. "We even have to pay to rent and maintain our classrooms."

Malby said she is excited about becoming the first Black woman to graduate from the flight program, however considering the present threat to the flight program she says she fears she may also be the last.

"The program does need some changes and I think the students realize that, but we hope an alternative to closing the program can be found that both students and administrators can be happy with," Malby said.
Am I Queen?

Hypocrisy...
lingers on your lips
like pledges of liberty

As you call me
your Black Athena
your Black Madonna
& Messiah

To you I reign Supreme
African Queen
with gold between my thighs

I am Queen
until I begin to rule
my own
my love
my self...then

With one stroke of your tongue
I go from blessing to bitch
just like that

I am a blackbitch when
I say no
no you
not you
--but me

And self love
is man hate
to you

Another Chapman, Walker, Davis
too into my womanhood
w/a fight that is
too dike/like

Hypocrisy...
you know
Oppression B colorblind
and when the big foot of
damnation
steps on me,
I don’t ask the color
I just
Stand Up.

Xenophobia, Ethnocentricism, Prejudice, and Racism

Because
The hue of
Ebony’s skin
is different from
our skins
WE
abhor her.

Because
Renatta’s tongue
is different from
our tongues
WE
implore her
to speak English.

Because
Kim Chung’s culture
is different from
our cultures,
WE
dismiss her
as a ‘dumb Chink’.

Why do
WE
fear the unknown,
never trying to now it and make it
our own?

WE’ve
grown thorns around our selves,
and pricked each other
leaving blood stains and pain
in a world
of Xenophobics, Ethnocentricists,
Prejudice and Racism.

Mr. Sweet Little
To Alice Walker whose story, ‘To Hell With Dying’brings tears to my eyes and sweet sorrow to my life.
I’m dying child.

No more dances in circles with
a wrinkled, dark brown, nappy
white-haired old man, who is a
diabetic and alcoholic;
chews tobacco and plays a guitar.

Mr. Sweet Little you cannot die.
My family and I are not ready to say
good-bye.
Not yet.

Let me jump on your chest and
tickle your ribs;
watch you laugh death right in its
face.

I’m dying child.
As a young boy I laid the dreams of
a doctor, or a lawyer, or a sailor to
rest when
I learned that brown skin men sur-
vived if they
were not.

Mr. Sweet Little you cannot die
just because life for you was so
hard.
I don’t care if you’re a fisherman
who
plays a guitar.
Remember me, your princess?

I’m dying child.
Don’t lay your dreams in a hole
and cover it--ashes to ashes, dust
to dust--
because you are.

Mr. Sweet Little please live.
I promise not to bury my dreams,
no matter how hopeless life seems.

I’m dying child.
My fingers cannot strum my guitar.
The words of ‘Sweet Georgia Brown’
and ‘Caldonia’ live no longer on my
brain.
Take my guitar and strum it.
Let ‘Sweet Georgia Brown’ and
‘Caldonia’
live in your brain.

Since I can no longer implore you to
live,
I promise Mr. Sweet Little,
I will.

Thank you for my resurrections,
my princess
Good night.
Music professionals have been asking the questions: "Are Blacks Giving away Jazz" and "Are Blacks Giving Away Rhythm and Blues?" My answer to both of those questions is an angry, heart-felt 'yes'! It seems to me no matter how much I try to ignore it, we are giving away one of the most visible existing art forms of our history--our music.

It's a shame that one has to turn to a radio station geared toward White audiences to hear the better of jazz, reggae, blues, gospel, alternative music, African Music, blues, that by Tracy Chapman and other music types which are considered to be 'pop'. Sure, WZAK (93.1-FM) of Cleveland plays some Blues and Jazz (two hours on Sunday), but Lynn Tolliver, program director for the station (managed by Zenophon "Zen" Zappisi, who is not African-American), has been quoted as saying that he doesn't play the above types of music or that by artists such as Tracy Chapman because they 'don't fit the program', according to music critic, Randall Grass, who is a commentator for National Public Radio's program called "Crossroads."

"Indeed Black commercial radio does not by-and-large play reggae, jazz, gospel, blues or African pop," Grass said.

Tolliver was not available for comment regarding the issue.

Radio stations who refuse to play such music simply because it doesn't go along with their programming are, in my eyes, not with the program because the music that has had the most relevance to the struggle and experience of African-Americans is that which I named, and which most of our stations won't play.

"No radio station can afford to play everything to serve everybody," said Harry Boomer, program director for WBXT (900-AM) in Canton, which he says is primarily geared toward adults between the ages of 25 and 59. But he does see it (more diverse and cultural programming) as more of a responsibility than other stations because there are only 250 African American-owned radio stations in this country, according to Boomer.

The fault does not lie with radio alone, many of our young people do not appreciate our music unless it is conveyed through raps or backed by synthesized electronic gadgets such as that of Baby Face, Bobby Brown, or Al B. Sure. I don't have anything against Baby Face, Bobby Brown, rap Al B. Sure, or any group for that matter, but it's a shame that we don't celebrate traditional Jazz, Reggae, or African music with the same enthusiasm.

Go-Go, originating out of Washington, D.C., is, in my opinion, the most beautiful, energetic afrocentric and funkiest form of African-American contemporary music today.
Go-Go is where traditional Africa meets modern Afro-American music. A serious go-go listener can hear the Afrocentric connection in the rapid beat of the bongos (without which go-go wouldn't be go-go). One can also hear traces of traditional African style in the 'call-and-response' in go-go. You know, the band leader (with names like Sugar Bear and T-Bone) would call out something like: "Shaka Zulu, Shaka Zulu, y'all"; and the crowd would respond: "Shaka Zulu, Shaka Zulu". Or something like: "Whatchya gon' do?" "Drop the bomb, drop the bomb!". Go-Go, which has been around since the late 70's, was not introduced through Northeast Ohio radio waves until "Da-Butt".

Many rap artists get ideas from go-go music. L.L. Kool J's 1987 hit, 'I'm Bad', was originally done by go-go master Chuck Brown. Curtis Blow recognized the funk-value in go-go when he teamed up with the legendary Trouble Funk and made the charts with the 1986 hit, 'I'm Chillin'.

There are other alternatives to 'urban contemporary' music such as House Music, which was first known in Chicago and Detroit. Of course, in Northeast Ohio, most of us did not hear House on the radio on a regular basis until Pump up the Jam by Technotronics.

"It's true (about Black Commercial Radio)," James Hill said, a disc jockey for WBXT. "Radio takes the same attitude as television. The message that was probably intended has been forgotten for the dollar." Hill tries to "promote unity, understanding and waking up" through his program while mixing it with fun. His format consists of soul, funk and some hip-hop.

Aside from its musical programming, Black commercial radio lacks in another important category of the media--news. In this area, there is very little or no news broadcast on Black commercial radio--especially of events occurring in the African-American community.

But again, WBXT, in addition to its national network news, at least has a local evening news program called The Daily Drum.

"When most radio stations are kicking it hard, we're trying to inform and educate people," said Harry Boomer about the program which runs from 6 to 7 p.m., which is prime time in radio business. The Daily Drum focuses on issues affecting the African-American community locally and nationally.

It is true that Black commercial radio cannot afford to program everything to satisfy its listeners--there is not enough room in a day. However, when this media neglect to serve the community for the sake of a dollar or for reasons of cultural amnesia, then the only word fitting to this situation is betrayal.
Jungle Brothers

Sammy B.
Mike G.
(Baby) Chris
Afrika

J A Y B E E Z
COMMIN’ THRU

THE JUNGLE

Clad in some African gear, the brothers looked as though they came straight out of the jungle...or maybe Brooklyn. These rappers were different and in a realm of their own making. Mike G. spoke of the evils of pork and the virtues of vegetarianism. Afrika, with a head full of tightly braided plats, seemed at peace as he spoke of a reunion with his Maker. These men who possess a definite spirit of Africa are the Brothers--Jungle that is.

The Jungle Brothers, said to be the fathers of hip-house, are promoting more than mere music. Behind the tribal melodies and funky beats is the ever-sounding message of Black consciousness. They seem to exist at an elevated level--somehow closer to the Motherland and to their creator than most. Now with their second album released, Done by the Forces of Nature, the Jungle Brothers have made a definite name for themselves. A name associated with De La Soul, no gold, funky vibes, the jungle, uplifting Black women and most of all African Consciousness.

Straight Out The Jungle, the Jungle Brothers 1988 premier album, ignited a sub-genre of dance music known as ‘’hip-house.” Although the innovative single, “Girl I’ll House You,” helped bring the group fame, they claim the song’s lyrics do not indicate the pro-unity of their purpose. The Jungle Brothers claim their true mission is “to use music as a tool to bring about peace and unity.”

The three brothers in the spirit; Afrika Baby Bambaataa (Nathaniel Hall, 19), Mike G (Michael Small, 20) and deejay Sammy B. (Sammy Burwell, 21) joined forces about three years ago to form the Jungle Brothers. Mike G., a native of Harlem, said they formed because “The world is a jungle and we’re the brothers in it helping ourselves and each other to survive.”

New York hip-hop legend Red Alert manages the Jungle Brothers along with other progressive rappers such as Queen Latifah, Chill Rob G., Sister Monie Love and a Tribe Called Quest. Red, Mike G’s uncle, says that these anti-materialistic, Afrocentric rappers are all united by what he describes as a “Tribe Vibe.”

After listening to some lyrics of these Brother, the purpose of their mission becomes obvious. They are not simply trying to “go back to Cali,” “get the job done,” or “bust a move.” These music makers, rap innovators, and African educators must have been “Sent to earth to educate the fool.”

UHURU: When did you come into your African Consciousness?
Afrika: African consciousness has always been a part of us, that’s the way we were raised. Our parents were always telling us about what’s going on in society and stuff like that. It was always in us.

UHURU: Do you feel this consciousness has had an impact on African-American youth? How do you feel about the more negative raps, you know, the ones that are extremely sexist?
Afrika: Well, rap is reality and whatever is out there on the street you’re going to hear it in rap music. There’s girls that fit those records, and there’s girls that fit our records, like Black Woman. All I can say is that I just don’t like the fact that there are women like that and brothers like that.

UHURU: Earlier you mentioned your song Black Woman, do you feel that some of your lyrics are contradictory in that you have a song like I’m Gonna Do Ya on one album, while you speak about the virtues of Black women on the next?
Afrika: No, I can say it would be con-
But I'm Gonna Do Ya is nothing like (Eazy-E's) A Bitch is a Bitch. It doesn't say that I'm just gonna lay you down and f--- you, it doesn't say that. It says I'm gonna lay you down and make love to you.

UHURU: You are not wearing gold chains and you claim to be anti-materialistic, how do you feel about the materialism in rap? Do you feel it is detrimental to young African-Americans who idolize rappers?

Afrika: Well, we feel that materialism is what society calls it, but in reality it is an art. You know, gold in different shapes going around the fingers, the neck, the wrist and the toes—all that is a part of art.

Mike G.: It's not what you do, but how you do it.

Afrika: Unfortunately with the changing times to date it's a symbol of materialism, whereas yesterday it was a symbol of art. It was a way for the Black man and the Black woman to dress themselves up and look nice.

UHURU: It seems as though the youth is more interested in getting gold chains than they are in getting books. Since your lyrics express a need for African educational reform, do you feel that African-American youths need to reevaluate their priorities on that level?

Afrika: We're the type of group that would say wait before you get a gold chain—hear this (one of our songs) and then make your move. It's not like we're saying don't do it, because there are a lot of members of our group who do wear gold. But we'd just like to put a halt, because there are a lot of brothers and sisters out here, young and old, who are influenced by these rappers and they just want to go out and "be" without getting the knowledge first—without getting the understanding of why it's done. They just want to throw it on, and when you ask them a simple question of why they have it on they can't explain. We would want them to have it on but be able to explain why they have it on.

UHURU: In one of your lyrics you say you don't eat meat because you're not that mean, are the Jungle Brothers vegetarians? If so when did you stop eating meat and why?

Mike G.: I'm a vegetarian.

UHURU: Are you a strict vegetarian?

Mike G.: I'm strict enough. Being that we're on the road a lot it's hard to be strict. I stopped eating meat because for one I had gained a lot of weight and two it's not healthy to eat a lot of red meat. The red blood cells clog your heart and pork is just not the righteous meat. It's more or less a health thing with me. To be a positive person you got to start from the inside. You gotta eat right, feel right and exercise and things like that. That's what helps us make records the way we do and, more or less, keep up the image we project.

Afrika: I stopped eating beef and pork, beef mainly, because a doctor told me that a lot of that food goes undigested after a while, and I just didn't like that feeling of meat built up in me. I haven't eaten pork in the last two or three years. Someone said that pork wasn't good for you and I read a book about the pig and that was enough for me. Now when I smell pork I don't get sick, but I'm glad I don't eat it.

UHURU: Is the African consciousness movement in rap a permanent thing or is it just a fad?

Mike G. It's hard to say because it's like a Hammer style, or any other style, people get tired of it. People may get tired of conscious rap but it's more of a thing you gotta live by it more than get paid by it.

Afrika: Nope, I feel differently. Nobody will ever get tired of a conscious rap. Maybe Hammer...I have nothing against Hammer, but you already know what Hammer is all about. He can't move, all he can do is rap and dance. If he does anything else, he'll risk losing his audience.

With a conscious rapper there are different levels of consciousness that the rapper can pick to rap about. It doesn't always have to be Black consciousness—it can be consciousness of nature, or the planet earth, or the solar system, or the Bible. That right there oughtta tell you that we can be around as long as we want.

UHURU: Do you see any parallels to this movement in hip-hop to the Black revolutionary movement during the sixties? Is conscious hip-hop a rebirth of that, and if so will it die out as quickly?

Afrika: The Jungle Brothers are here for yesterday, today and tomorrow, you know what I'm sayin'? Life is a cycle and basically we just rap the cycle as it turns. We just came from one era where it was rap, but no message to it at all. We were doing raps like that, and we just kept moving on. Now we've met-up with the conscious era, and we're just moving forward. Tomorrow might be something else, but we'll be there because it is our job to follow the cycle and manifest it.

By Kecia Cole
POETRY

By Jinida Ojliwah

WE WEAR THE X

So much to learn, So little time
It's frustrating (as T.T. Fortune may have felt)
To have these feelings inside that
I cannot express
Because of my ignorance.

There are quite a few things I know
Yet I sometimes am only half-learned about those even
I think: How hard can it be--to learn about yourself?
But then I remember I'm trapped,
And have been for almost a quarter century,
an con, a decade--time does not matter when you have been cheated from yourself
Cheated by what we call Education.

I walk around
Silently (on the outside)
wearying the dreaded X
As El-Hajj once did

Full of hate for the enemy,
Confusion from my ignorance,
And envy of those who possess knowledge
which I cannot grasp.

Tears of betrayal form in my eyes
When they told me I was a nameless,
Nationless, cultureless, spiritless
being in a foreign land.

On the other hand,
A smile of pride forms on my inner-face
When I discovered (and still am discovering)
The greatness of my mothers and fathers which I possess!

Running Into The Truth by David M. Sellers

Crawl around the caverns deep,
Avoid the mass confusion
Find in the void, your true belief
Your way of life and fusion. The truth is wanted and needed by some
But after a lifetime man must pick one
That will turn that crawl into a walk
And that walk into a run
Run so fast- blindly faster yet and trust.
Trust that in your path there is no wall
That will smash a man's run into a crawl.

Know The Hurt by David M. Sellers

Create a vision in your imagination
A vision of pain that can not be measured
Nor can it be noticed because of the constant infliction.
Imagine a man sent to the middle of his personal hell.
What is yours?
Concentrate on it.
Focus...think...realize...feel...
..feel the pain!
Know the hurt.
Bring to life the feelings.
Now cry.

Cry a river of tears.
Weep for the hell to stop.
The salty tears that run and run
are just same same as the ocean of tears...
of my people.

By Lora Gay

A Letter to the Dreamers

Dear Martin and Langston,
Let me inform you of your children’s progression

The Dream is not lost but, Indeed, it has been deferred
The struggle is forgotten because we have achieved a fatal state of blind affluence.

And although the letter of the law offers us opportunity unlimited the African American Dream simply has not come true.

The scars of slavery fester upon your grandchildren’s souls
And despite the ‘favorable conditions’ in which we are growing
Still we must battle our rising anonymity
God Bless You Both
Let 1990 be from now on known as "The Year of Malcolm X!" This year marks the 65th birthday of Malcolm X and the 25th anniversary of the great leader's assassination.

Successful efforts are being implemented on the local and national level toward making what many African-Americans consider a hero's birthday a national holiday. However, this holiday like Kwanzaa, is not a government-established holiday, nor is it an international one. It is a day that African-Americans will collectively designate as a day of remembrance.

Ron Daniels, who is President of the Institute for Community Organization in Youngstown; Conveyor of the African-American Progressive Action Network and former Pan-African Studies professor at Kent State University, is an Ohio front-runner in the effort to memorialize Malcolm X's birthday. Daniels said the effort is gaining popularity.

"We are declaring May 19th as an African-American day of commemoration," Daniels said.

"Malcolm should be studied from birth to death," said Rauf Mohammed, from the West Akron Neighborhood Development. Mohammed spoke on Malcolm X at Kent State during a lunch time dialogue on the religion of Malcolm X. The program was sponsored by the Men and Women of Excellence, an organization which has made strides in commemorating Malcolm X on a college level.

"People only study Malcolm the last 15 months of his life," Mohammed said.

What is it that makes some of us shiver and smile inside when he speaks? What makes the hair on the backs of our necks raise at the sound of his powerful yet smooth voice which rings out with messages of self-pride, nationalism and militancy?

Mohammed explained that it is important to study and understand the metamorphoses which Malcolm Little, "Detroit Red", Malcolm X, and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz underwent before attempting to understand the philosophy, beliefs and teachings of what Mohammed considers a martyr. Malcolm Little was born on May 19 in Omaha, Nebraska in 1925. Malcolm's father, a small town reverend who was a follower of the Garvey movement, was the object of White supremacist hatred. Because of threats on his life, Malcolm's family was forced to move from state to state. At the tender age of four, young
ILLUSTRATION BY ANGELIQUE TROY
Malcolm was awakened in the middle of the night and forced out of his family's home to escape fire. These flames of hatred and White supremacy were burning down the Little's home in Omaha.

The family then migrated to Michigan, where they experienced some of the same racial hostility. But cities in the northern state of Michigan still practiced racism and segregation. In the book, The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As told to Alex Haley, Malcolm recalls cities such as East Lansing and Owosso where "no Negroes were allowed after dark."

It was in Lansing, Michigan where Malcolm's father was murdered by what is believed to be a White extremist group ironically called the Black Legion. Malcolm was six years old.

After his father was murdered, life for the Little family, especially for Malcolm's mother, was not easy. For Malcolm in particular, the break-up of his immediate family left him to be shifted from home to home. His criminal activities would eventually help to transform his life. Most of Malcolm's adolescence was spent in Michigan where he got the name "Detroit Red." He then moved to Roxbury, which was known as the Harlem of Boston, to be taken care of by his older half-sister.

Although she was said to be a strong woman, Malcolm's sister did not have enough influence on young Malcolm to deter him from wandering the streets of Boston—the night clubs, reefer houses, and pool halls. It was in Boston where "Red" was introduced to his first Zoot Suit, his first Conk (a chemical process) and his first White girlfriend. The cool and collected master of hustling, prostitution and organized crime was eventually arrested and convicted of his infractions of the law in February of 1946.

Prison for Malcolm may have been an omen in disguise as he experienced a reawakening and new discovery of himself. Malcolm, guided by the teachings of Elijah Muhammad while in prison, was determined to do the will of Allah—through the religion of Islam upon his release.

The first step was adopting the 'X' to replace his last name. The X symbolizes the true African name which many African-Americans have been deprived of since first setting foot on this soil. Yet more importantly than a name Malcolm had to learn discipline, one of the five pillars of the religion of Islam.

Max Stanford, a member of the Institute of African-American Studies in Cleveland, knew Malcolm X personally. He describes him as "one of the most disciplined, sincere and dedicated revolutionaries I've ever met on the planet earth and inside the United States."

Malcolm X told Stanford which seemed to remain with him that he "would never again believe in the divinity of a man...The worst kind of fanatic is a religious fanatic," Stanford said. "African-Americans take religion as dogmas rather than as liberators."

Eventually Malcolm X had become 'too outspoken' in the opinion of Elijah Muhammad. He was eventually silenced after making the infamous remark about the "chickens are coming home to roost" referring to the assassination of President Kennedy.

After his separation from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X made the Hajj pilgrimages to Mecca. He returned with new names—El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and Omowale, a Yoruba name which means "the son who has come home." Malcolm is also said to have returned with a more open-minded view of Europeans.

Since the separation from Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, El-Shabazz still kept his faith as a Muslim, and he continued making various national and international speaking engagements.

While traveling, Malcolm X sensed that he was being followed by enemies—supporters of Elijah Muhammad. He sensed that he was "a marked man." Yet even after having his home bombed and his family threatened, Malcolm X continued his speaking engagements and doing the work of Allah.

Malcolm X is said to have no longer cared about his life and safety as long as no harm was done to his family. He only worried about the safety of his wife Betty and their four daughters. El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz was assassinated while speaking in the Audubon Ballroom of downtown Harlem on February 21, 1965. In addition to knowing Malcolm X as being humble, down-to-earth, open-minded, flexible and even comical, Stanford also observed that he an abundance of respect for women." Stanford said.

Stanford recalled the conflict that occurred when Malcolm appointed a woman to be secretary of the O.A.A.U. Even though the women were college educated and well qualified Stanford said their presence caused problems for the older members of the organization.

Malcolm X may be perceived by some as a militant, violent, White-hating, radical, fanatic. At least that was the image of a young, bachelor named Gil Noble. Now a successful host of his own award-winning New York talk show called "Tell it Like It

Malcolm X: Remembering the Life Behind the Legacy “A martyr’s death inspires people to go forward”--Rauf Mohammed

Stanford has tried to pattern the political and personal aspects of his life after the strict discipline of Malcolm X as taught through the religion of Islam. Having once been a Muslim under the name of Muhammad Ahmad, Stanford still holds on to some of those disciplinary tactics today. Even after leaving the Nation of Islam, he does not drink alcohol or smoke.

Stanford, who worked with Malcolm X in forming the OAAU (Organization for African American Unity), seems to be in agreement with Malcolm X on religion. One thing

18 Uhuru, Spring, 1990
Is. Noble admits that he did not agree with or care too much for Malcolm X. Noble, who lived in Harlem during the same time as Malcolm, made every effort to keep his distance from him. He recalls turning the other way when he would see crowds gathered around him on the streets of New York. "I thought the man had horns," Noble said. Noble's attitude changed only when he viewed a tape of one of Malcolm's speeches after his assassination.

"It blew my mind," Noble said. "I felt angry...like I'd been had." After doing extensive research and study of the life of Malcolm X, Noble has come to the conclusion that Malcolm X had accomplished more than he previously thought.

"Malcolm waged a struggle with America that forced America to open doors which had been closed," Noble said. Ron Daniels believes it was Malcolm's revolutionary image and Kujichagulia (self-determination) that intrigued him the most. He also admired Malcolm's connection with the African continent.

"To say Afro-American at that time was revolutionary." Now, in 1990, the challenge is being forth to African-American youth, the children of the post-Civil Rights Era, to pull out those speeches and books on Malcolm from the closets and to relearn appreciate the legacy that this martyr has left behind.

Daniels admits that he was pleasantly shocked by the awareness of students he sees emerging in the 90s, but having been a professor of Pan African Studies, he realizes that "these were his students."

"Young people are going back to dreads and naturalis, and a new sense of consciousness," Daniels said. We can witness for ourselves how the sale of Malcolm X T-shirts and other paraphernalia are selling rapidly and becoming more in demand. Many might be aroused by the commercial and faddish aspect of these things, but Daniels says that the gesture is still positive.

"It (wearing Malcolm X and related paraphernalia) may be faddish, but it's better to have fads for the right principle than for a negative one".

Max Stanford warns, however, that it may be dangerous to continue living in the past.

"We have to learn from Malcolm," he says. "But don't start from where he started, rather from where he ended."
When I was young and had the opportunity to meet new people, the subject of music always seemed to come up. Music was then, as it still is today, a major influence in my life. One of the major tools in my development as the Black musical connoisseur of the 90s was MTV. While other children were outside sledding or swimming, I was becoming one with the new music television phenomenon that is so mainstream today.

Early MTV was all rock, therefore while other African-American youth were at the skating rinks jamming to Funkadelic and the strong bass beats of a new music craze called rap music, I was gorging on white rock groups like INXS and Adam and the Ants. Don't get me wrong, I had my share of "Flashlight," "Rapper's Delight," and "The Message," but I much preferred the tribal drum beats of Adam and the Ants' "Ant Rap" and "Prince Charming." In those days I was perceived as the wannabe Black girl when it came to music. I'm sad to say that that idea hasn't changed much.

The late 1980s brought a "new" musical style—Black rock. Groups like Living Colour became big just last year, and underground groups like Fishbone, Bad Brains and 24-7 Spyz have just recently been acknowledged by both the White and Black media—mostly by the White media.

These groups were, and still are, more readily embraced by White listeners as well. But once again, I, the musical freak, bought their tapes and slipped them proudly in my tape collection right next to Public Enemy and De La Soul. Then I smiled smugly as rock began to take on the color of its real face.

In the book White Boy Singin' the Blues: The Black Roots of White Rock by Michael Bane, rock 'n' roll is summed up as being a combination of White country and Black blues. If you take White country and break it down you will find Black blues and something else called string band music.

White America has always had a fascination with Black music. In the Harlem Renaissance, it was White America who flocked into the heart of Black communities to hear the blues and jazz which was born from the souls of African-Americans. This music had meaning and substance.

It seemed to thrive as a living entity of its own, and white America could not seem to get enough of it. From this music the doo-wop groups of the 40s gradually emerged, and following that came legends like Fats Domino and the rock 'n' roll legend Chuck Berry. However, rock 'n' roll did not break big until this heart and soul of Black music took the form of a white man—America's rock 'n' roll king Elvis Presley.

Since Elvis, the Black musical form that we call rock 'n' roll, has naturally assumed its white mask. Only in the last few years has rock 'n' roll taken on the form that it originally had.

Today rock 'n' roll can be broken down into at least 3 categories: pop, heavy metal and alternative/hardcore. Pop seems to be the type of music more readily accepted by African-American audiences, while heavy metal and alternative/hardcore music received very little acceptance in the African-American listening audience. They also receive virtually no air play on Black commercial radio. The question I seek to ask is "why?"
One of the largest complaints about heavy metal music is that more emphasis is placed on guitar and less emphasis on bass (percussion). This is one reason many African-Americans justify a closed-minded approach to alternative musical styles. I've also heard many African-Americans say that heavy metal artists don't sing, they scream. That leaves me with one question to ask, "Why do most of us seem to love Prince so much?"

Much of Prince's early music contains much heavy guitar and screaming. These are the two elements that make his music so great--so classic. (Well, besides the fact that it drips sexuality.)

And all you Public Enemy fans out there should listen to songs like "Channel Zero" and "Sophisticated Bitch" on Public Enemy's first album. Both of these songs have a great deal of that heavy guitar we complain so much about. So now that those two excuses are shattered, let's broaden our minds.

Living Colour, a rock group who happens to have all-Black members, broke big this summer predominantly among white audiences. Being a Living Colour fan, which I consider to be rare among African-Americans, I fail to understand why the group is so unpopular with Black audiences. The song "Open Letter (to a landlord) contains strong African-American themes. And "Funky Vibe," which was recently remixed by S Teresa's Daddy O, even has a few strong, funky bass riffs. The guitarist, Vernon Reid, who is a legend in his own right, also played the guitar in the aforementioned Public Enemy song, "Sophisticated Bitch." Yet, the group gets neither credit from mainstream African-American or air play on Black commercial radio.

Another group which has remained virtually obscure to African-Americans for the five years of its existence is the hardcore group Fishbone. Fishbone is one of the funkiest, Blackest and strongest hardcore groups in the music business today, yet they don't seem to be acknowledged by their own race. Only in the past year was Fishbone asked to be on Soul Train to sing their remake of the Curtis Mayfield hit "Freddie's Dead." (And for those of you who don't know who Curtis Mayfield is, put the new Bobby Brown remix album away and go find your parent's old scratched-up Superfly soundtrack.)

In an interview with Essence magazine Fishbone stated the reason their music was so hard and loud was because African-Americans are an angry people and that their music is just a materialization of that anger. Other songs by Fishbone that have strong African-American messages are "Slow Bus Movin'(Howard Beach Party)," "Ghetto Soundwave," and "Subliminal Fascism." The song "Slow Bus Movin'" praises the Black Power movement of the 60s. It contains the chorus: "Round and around and around we go/ the bus is movin' mighty slow/ Brothers in the back seat/ Cause in the front/people gettin' hostile when I kill someone."

A new hardcore group that recently hit the scene is 24-7 Spyz. This group, surprisingly, did get some airplay on BET. Songs like "Social Plague," "Jungle Boogie," (A Kool and the Gang remake) and "Ballots Not Bullets," prove the Spyz as being worthy of African-American acceptance. "Ballots Not Bullets," which is also the title of a famous Malcolm X speech, is the story of one man's personal commitment to the liberation of himself and his people. With pro-Black lyrics like, "I'd rather die on my feet/ than to live on my knees/ go to my homeland/ set my brothers free," how can one help be anything less than inspired to be a strong African-American freedom-fighter?

On the scene for 10 years, Bad Brains are the veteran African-American hardcore/rastafarian band. They also seem to be the only group that is vocal about their religion. Each one of the four band members practices the rastafarian religion, but none of them are from Jamaica.

Bad Brains also have extremely political and Afrocentric lyrics. "House of Suffering," from their I Against I album addresses the importance of remembering ones heritage: "In this house of suffering/don't want but just one thing/ got to have my origin."

Each one of these bands have all African-American members. I believe they deserve much more respect and airplay in African-American communities than they have received in the past. We all must begin to broaden our musical horizons and cease the false assumptions that everything that is not heavy on percussion is coated in Caucasian. I encourage all of us to begin to support these brave African-American bands who have the strength to reclaim musical territory that originally belonged to their ancestors.
By Gina Gammons

African-Americans face a multitude of problems in today's society. Many of these problems stem from circumstances beyond our control. For example, the reality of the prejudices that often hinder our mobility.

However, there are many obstacles that we must overcome that lie closer to home. They are the barriers we have set among ourselves. Females are resentful of each other because one decides to straighten, perm, curl or crimp her hair. The reason being, "She has lost her identity of a sister," as if altering the texture of the hair makes her less Black than the one who chooses to wear braids. Come on people! In a world where famine is widespread and injustice is the law of the land in South Africa, this hardly seems to be a pressing issue. However, it is still being treated as such.

While our society does tend to favor fair-skinned African-Americans, this does not mean that every fair-skinned person who moves up the corporate ladder, for example, didn't do so through hard work. What about the darker skinned person who achieves the same thing? How quickly do we attribute their skin color to their success?

The point is simple. Black awareness and pride is not external. It does not stem from the variations in our skin color or what we chose to do with our hair. Having a sense of heritage comes from within. It doesn't take only the fair-skinned person to fail at doing so because ignorance knows no confinement. We are all susceptible, so check yourself.

In short, if we don't abandon the simple things so that we can handle those things that are of a serious nature, we won't have to worry about the White people disunifying us—we will successfully do that ourselves.
Being a college student trying to maintain a high GPA may be difficult, especially if you are an African-American college student on a predominantly White campus. But Barbara Miller is not letting anything get in the way of her academic success—not even her three-year-old child.

Miller, a 24-year-old junior sociology major, is not what most would consider a typical college student. Although she is has a full-time course load, Miller must work part-time while commuting back and forth from Akron. In spite of this, she still managed to maintain a 3.6 overall GPA, without neglecting the care of her daughter Ashley.

As a single parent Miller is doing all she can to instill self-pride in her young daughter. She stresses pride in learning about African and African-American history to Ashley.

“I teach her that we were not slaves—we were kings and queens before we were enslaved.”

Miller, a native of Canton, would like to use her degree in sociology to pursue a career in policy making and urban development projects; such as housing and work programs to get people off of welfare. In doing so she feels she would be giving back to her community the best way she knows how.

By Jinida Ojlwawh
Twenty years ago, in a place called Kent, Wilbur Smith woke up not knowing who he was. Although his deep ebony complexion was obvious, Smith suffered from a cultural amnesia that became an epidemic for Blacks in the 1960s. He searched for identity.

Then came the death.

Smith was laid to rest in 1978 leaving only a memory behind. Yet instead of mourning his death, many danced on his grave. Through the death of Smith came the emergence of a new African spirit—a spirit called Mwatabu Okantah.

Photos by Elizabeth Malby
without those programs. If I had it to do all over again, I would go to Kent. I realize that it was an educational foundation that other people fail to have.”

Wilbur Smith ultimately evolved into Mwatabu Okantah, a teacher, poet, musician, deejay, historian and philosopher in Cleveland. His hair, once short and undistinguished, now falls down his back like defiant locks of wool. His voice, once ringing with uncertainty, now exudes the strength of the Motherland with each word spoken. Okantah has most certainly evolved. From the arms of the Department of Pan-African studies Okantah has evolved into an African.

Al Henry, a Kent State alum and artist living in Kent, is Okantah’s former roommate. Although he rarely sees Okantah now, Henry fondly recalls an association with him. The physical distance that lies between them does not seem to have separated these two college friends. Okantah and Henry are still bound together by a common past. “When I first met Okantah I did not know him as Okantah, I knew him as another persona,” Henry said.

“The person he is now isn’t the person he was....he has come to grips with a lot of his Africanness and I’ve seen him take a full spectrum.”

Henry said a mutual interest in art and the Black Power Movement helped him to become friends with Okantah. Okantah embodied what Henry defined as the classic 1960s poet.

“Okantah was one of the last really Black militant students of the 1970s,” Henry said. “I think Okantah certainly conjures up that spirit of the 1960s-type poet like LeRoi Jones, Nikki Giovanni and Gil Scott Heron.”

Pan-African Studies professor E. Timothy Moore also attended Kent State with Okantah. Moore, who along with Okantah was an officer of the Black United Students, said that both he and Okantah represented some of the remnants of the 1960s Black Power Movement.

“There was like a partying mood on campus but there was still a remnant of the 1960s Black Power Movement and we constituted it,” Moore said.

“He and I were with that group that was trying to keep that African tradition alive in our studies and in our involvements. It was also at this time when I called him Smitty and he replied, ‘Smitty’s dead.’”

Although Okantah denies having early aspirations of becoming a poet, he could not deny his early rebellious tendencies. He went from refusing to recite Julius Caesar in high school because he said he thought it was suffocated to more politically oriented revolts in college--revolts that helped to shape Kent State history.

His involvement in a 1970 Student Center sit-in staged by BUS ultimately helped to launch the formation of the Institute of African-American Affairs (now the Department of Pan-African studies).

Okantah, on his quest for knowledge, began taking classes in African studies for no credit. He said that the real credit for him was the knowledge he received--knowledge of Africa.

“Being what was the Institute for African-American Affairs...we were in Africa,” Okantah said. “When we got out of there, they didn’t know how to deal with us at Kent State.”

Okantah explained that this knowledge he received would have monumental effects on his life. He not only learned the knowledge--he lived it. As Smith evolved into an African he was not alone, in fact, other people were watching. Edward Crosby, chairman of Kent’s Pan-African studies depart-
ment, was one of Okantah's mentors. Crosby saw great potential in Okantah as an undergraduate student, and he is proud of who he has become.

"When I knew Okantah he was Wilbur Smith from New Jersey," Crosby said. "It gives me a lot of pleasure when you have a student around you and the student comes through the way Okantah came through. When he was a student, I knew there was something in him; I just didn't know how it was going to burst out.

Black Perspective on May 4

When four fatal shots were fired at Kent State on May 4, 1970, students all over the country began to wake up. Those bullets ignited a political fire that would be one of the last protesting infernos of the decade. Yet, while White students were fighting the system, Black students were coming into a new-found consciousness and cultural awareness. They too had a fight—a fight for identity. While at Kent State, Okantah knew a White student named Dean Kahler who had been shot in the May 4 shooting. Okantah noticed an obvious difference between the actions of the two races during that time. Black students, who generally were suspicious of authority, were not highly visible on the Kent State campus on May 4, 1970. Many Blacks left the campus as their own symbol of protest.

"Black students got the hell out of there," Okantah said. "They said the guards didn't have live ammunition, but you couldn't tell Black students that.

Okantah explained that the impact of May 4, and similar shootings throughout the country such as Jackson State, was profound because for a brief moment in the 1970s Black and White students came together on a common ground.

"When black people move that tends to move the country," Okantah said. "And when the country moves, they tend to forget that Black people inspired them to move."

And although Okantah became politically conscious at Kent, that was not enough to keep him there. After two years he dropped out. According to Okantah he left Kent to experience life and to "find himself." In this search for self Okantah ultimately found his cultural identity, but it was no easy task.

For the first time in his adult life Wilbur Smith, a recipient of a Kent State track scholarship, found himself without his athletic ability. He felt alone. A knee injury and the emotional trauma that accompanied his withdrawal from sports led Okantah to experiment with drugs such as acid. Okantah said he got high to escape his reality; to escape his crisis of identity.

"By 21 I felt like I was a person who didn't have a name because I related to my name as a slave name." Okantah said. "I didn't know how to explain that to most people....so I dropped out of school. Okantah credits poetry for getting him through this time of confusion. He said poetry, along with a new-found African heritage, gave him direction when he literally had none.

"For the first few years I was into it (drugs), I didn't have any bad experiences," Okantah said.

But after a bad experience Okantah said that he stopped taking drugs. "It was that point that I realized how dangerous it was and that I had been lucky."

Smith ultimately took refuge in his African heritage. He symbolized this transformation by choosing an African name, Mwatabu, which means 'a child born in the time of difficulty or sorrow,' because he was sickly as a child; Sanyika which means 'a gatherer of people,' and Okantah, which means 'breaker of rock.'

The Soul of a Poet

After getting a bachelor's degree in English and Pan-African Studies from Kent State, Okantah attended the City College of New York for graduate school in 1978. Upon receiving a Masters degree in Creative Writing he returned to Kent State to teach. During this time, Okantah also began a career in poetry. He was now able to bare his soul, which was reeling with the creative and soulful and juices of African ancestors.

"I have an artist's nature, a poet's nature...I'm able to see into things, see beyond the surface--to be deep in the actual sense of deepness," Okantah said.

Okantah has published five books of poetry to his credit: "To Sing A Dark Song," "Hell is For Those Who Glitter," "Afreena Bass," "Collage" and "Legacy: for Martin and Malcolm." He describes himself as being "at peace" when he writes poetry.

The soul of the poet seems to resemble the soul of a traveler, both having a disdain for remaining stationary. Because Okantah seeks to see the world in its entirety, especially Africa, he cannot remain stagnant for too long. After all he is an artist, a poet, who seems to answer to a higher calling. He goes wherever the spirit moves him to go. Recently that meant a jaunt to Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.

"I went because that was the trip that I had been preparing for at Kent," Okantah said. "It was a pilgrimage...I went to test what I had learned, and I found out what I learned was valid. I knew things about Africa that Africans didn't know or had forgotten.

Okantah the Teacher
In 1981 Okantah took Cleveland State by storm. Although Okantah's presence helped to culturally revolutionize Cleveland State, he recently left the institution to pursue other interests. Crosby said that his contribution to the school was invaluable and that he could never be replaced.

"When Okantah arrived at Cleveland State you could see then that something was going to happen at Cleveland State that never happened there before, and probably will never be there again now that he's gone," Crosby said.

"He brought a light to that place. When Okantah came in there a new burst of energy arrived at Cleveland State—a burst of energy that Cleveland State did not know was going to happen to them....I've never seen an urban institution with all those Black folk around and no action at the place. Okantah built that action."

Okantah, who gave up teaching to devote more time to writing, had an immeasurable impact on his students and the University itself. Okantah directed the Culture Center, instituted an annual Pan-African festival at Cleveland State, established two radio shows on the college's station advised the Black student paper, started Kwanzaa celebrations on campus and advised the Organization of African-American Unity as well as the Palestinian student organization on campus.

The man who wears a beard and thick locks of kinky hair that nearly reach his waist is undoubtedly missed. The Culture Center at Cleveland State, once abundant with the energy of Okantah, will never be quite the same.

"Now that Okantah is gone I have every reason to believe that the Black studies and the culture center will be gone, because it takes a hell of a lot of energy to keep things like that alive. Okantah has that energy," Crosby said.

"This man would work all day long. He would put out that kind of energy and that's allowed him to do what he wanted to do up there. I don't think Cleveland State recognized the talent they had—they were never ready for it."

Although Okantah said he did not consider himself to be controversial at Cleveland State, he did say that people perceived him as being that way.

"I was outspoken in the sense that I spoke my mind," Okantah said. "I was the most known professor there...I just wasn't conventional and I admit to having strong opinions."

Kahlil Pedizisai, a senior sociology major at Cleveland State, seems to resemble Okantah at an early age. Pedizisai, who also wears dreadlocks, attributes much of his cultural development to Mwatabu Okantah. He claims that Okantah, his teacher and his friend, helped direct him on his journey to African enlightenment.

"Okantah was outstanding." Pedizisai said. "What I liked best about his (Black literature) class was not only did he know how to break down material, but he knew the entire history as well.

"He opened my eyes when I first met him....The reason why I had developed such a rapport with Okantah is because I see so much knowledge in him."

Pedizisai, who has maintained a friendship with Okantah, said that Okantah differed from other professors because he lived what he taught. The concepts he spoke of so fervently in the classroom were much more than empty rhetoric to him. Okantah was a teacher who claimed all to be his students, and life the ultimate instructor.

"At the collegiate level you really don't have too many Black professors especially ones who actually live what they teach," Pedizisai said.

"Some people teach African studies but they don't actually live it and the students notice that contradiction."

Crosby said that Okantah, a former pupil, now resembles him as a teacher. He is a teacher to all who want to learn.

"He built a tremendous connection with his students because he considered, like I considered, that you don't have to be in my class to be my student," Crosby said.

"I was afraid that when Okantah first began to teach at Cleveland State that he was going to take too much of Kent up there and try to implant it and therefore get confused, but that's not what he was going to do at all. He was going to implant Okantah up there."

The Aftermath

Thirty-seven-year-old Okantah now lives on his art. Okantah is divorced and the father of two. Although he now has more time to spend with his 2-year-old Taseti and his 16-year-old daughter Janiea, Okantah's steady income has been replaced by the unstable fees gained from lecturing and writing. But he is content. He never liked working in "Babylon" anyway. After a long day of hustling, Okantah seemed happy to be in the warmth of his small East Cleveland apartment. He rested in a warn, leather rocking chair by a living room window. The incense he burned gave the airless room a sweet scent. Okantah seemed at peace as he rocked back and forth while silently staring out into the unusually calm city street. He said nothing. It was hard to determine thoughts from eyes so deep and private. As his dark eyes surveyed the room they were met by African statues and paintings. He quietly smiled. I knew then he was in Africa—he had gone home.
Curiosity is one of man's greatest wonders.

Knowledge is one of man's greatest challenges.

Yet what is the purpose of curiosity if the knowledge reeks with misconceptions?

I remember seeing a video in grade school that projected an African village in which members dressed in clothing similar to ragged bikini bottoms. My schoolmates, most of whom were African-Americans, laughed. Then one girl, full of pity, sadly looked at me with such seriousness and asked: "Ada (short for Adaeze), did you wear that too?"

I didn't answer. As I look back, I suppose that I should not have rejected her candor but rather answered her ignorant question to make her more aware. Such ignorance not only damages the self worth of native Africans, but it angers me. But that was their opinion of Africa--full of naked children and tigers running wild.

Achadu Unogwu, a senior chemistry major from Nigeria, is amazed by the lack of knowledge Americans have about the continent. "They (African-Americans) regard Africa as one country and not a continent," he said. "They seem to believe everything they see on T.V."

Dr. M.L. Nambuo Temu a professor in the Pan-African Studies Department, who is from Tanzania, said that he is attempting to educate people about Africa even though many people are apathetic about the Motherland.

"I try to clarify every misconception I encounter everywhere," said Temu. "I try to educate them, if they want to be made aware of Africa and Africa's contribution in the world." Temu does this through teaching Kiswahili and African culture and history.

---

Ada speaks on African misconceptions

It's hard to believe that with the movement today toward African-ness, African Americans still remain confused and to some degree willfully ignorant of mother Africa. Misconceptions seem dominate the minds of those who stubbornly believe they already know.

---

Even today many of those children grew up with such misconceptions and accepted them. When I was two, I came to the U.S. from Haiti, West Indies. Growing up here was hard in many ways.

Whenever there was any news about Haiti, the media seemed to always show the worst part of the island with indications that voodoo was commonly practiced by all. Yes, there is voodoo in Haiti, but I don't...
see much difference in the rituals and practices that my ancestors practiced in Africa.

In fact, voodoo originated in Africa but then again many things Africans did were looked at as evil by European colonists. I believe that voodoo was a positive practice, not a negative one. But because I have little knowledge about the phenomenon, I will not attempt to judge it.

We need also be aware of how Black people are portrayed through the media's eye. They have always brought out the worst of our people. We know this just by picking up a newspaper or viewing the news. Many of us have experienced turning on the news just to catch a broth or sista telling their version of a crime scene. They often show them people clad in a bathrobes with bright pink curlers in their hair. They would speak what Whites call improper English and what African-Americans call Black dialect.

One of the misconceptions of African and African-American people is that we all look and act in this manner. Why do we continue to believe such things? Why don't we find out for ourselves what the truth is?

Is Africa underdeveloped?

Another predominant misconception is the belief that areas such as those in the West Indies and in Africa are primitive and disadvantaged. "(People) assume Africa and the West Indies aren't developed countries," said Benson Willock, a junior Industrial Design major.

Although some of these countries are underdeveloped, this lack of development should not be overemphasized or generalized to countries in Africa or the West Indies. According to Achadu, Africa is an extremely diverse continent.

“Africa is a large continent and there are rich countries and poor countries,” Achadu said.

The identity of Africans

Africans and islanders of the West Indies alike are proud of their heritage, and they do take pride in telling people that they are natives of another country "as long as they aren't ignorant of the country," cautions Benson. Dr. Temu also comments by saying, 'I am very proud of my country and Africa as a whole. I always make sure that people who interact with me know that I am an African from Tanzania.'

People from the West Indies are Africans that have been acculturated by European colonists during the slave trade, Jamaicans and people from the Virgin Islands speak (British) English while Haitians speak Creole (a dialect of French) and French. There is strong resemblance of African heritage in Island culture even today. Haitians regard their elders with utmost respect, and they also have several religious practices that are similar to those of Africans.

But do African-Americans accept this identity? Achadu says that he recognizes some identifiable traits in African-Americans.

“A majority of Blacks don't see themselves as Africans, but I've noticed that they greet each other with 'brother' or 'sister,' like we do in Nigeria," Achadu said. "The dancing is also very similar."

Although this brotherhood does seem to exist, some Black people refuse to accept the fact that we are all from the continent of Africa. Floyd recalls a childhood where he did not feel accepted.

“When I was in junior high school I got along with the White kids,” Benson said. "Because I was a foreigner a lot of Blacks made fun of me—especially the guys."

Why is it that people make fun of Africans, especially when African-Americans are supposed to be our brothers and sisters? Although mocking does occur, it seems as though African-Americans see characteristics of themselves in their African brothers and sisters.

However, some Africans do see African-Americans in a negative light. That fact must be acknowledged but neither culture should play the "mind games" which encourage those stereotypes emphasized by the media. Now that the "mind game" has been exposed we should not be contestants. It is the time to begin to get the knowledge, spread the word and break the cultural misconceptions.
By P.J. Allen and David Sellers

The issue: Stepping.
The adversaries: Black Greeks and football players.

You're at a jam. The music's pumping, you're on the dance floor and everyone is having a good time. Enter: The brothers Alpha Phi Alpha and their step-line. Brothers moving in unison doing some funky fresh moves. It looks good. Enter: The brothers of Phi Beta Sigma (canes and all) with their own step-line. Led by Bro Steve, the Sigs are sporting their blue and white. Enter: The Q-dogs, Omega Psi Phi, with their very own unique version of stepping.

And don't forget the ladies, Alpha Kappa Alpha circling the dance floor screeching "skewee". The dance floor is becoming smaller and smaller and the fraternities and sororities begin to compete with each other in their stepping lines.

A common scene, well maybe not, but we've all seen some part of it at some time or another. Many people have thought nothing of Greeks stepping, but some people are getting annoyed with the way Greeks seem to dominate a dance. Some people are asking the question: "Why are Black Greeks the only ones who can step?"

One student who is heading the fight against the exclusive rights to step held by fraternities is senior football player Patrick Young.

"I've got just as much right to step as anyone else," Young said. "Once you pay your money and are not causing any harm to anyone, you should be allowed to do whatever you want, and that includes stepping. They (Greeks) think they have a privilege to step because they belong to a frat.

"If they had their way, they'll have us standing on the side of the wall at a dance watching them step all night," Young said.

William Blake, Greek affairs program officer, advisor to Black Greek Council and Black United Student, said he didn't think there was much of a problem with stepping.

"It (stepping) demonstrates a comradeship, creates a euphoria and uplifts the students' self-esteem," Blake said. "It has a lot of positive and up until recently it was only done by Greeks.

"It seems that football players, not only at Kent State, are beginning to step and fraternities feel threatened," Blake also feels that stepping is not an exclusive right.

"There are no rules or regulations that say that only Greeks can step," Blake said. "It's become more and more a social dance as a form of expression."

Young said that he has never dropped to imitate another Greek organization.

"They (Greeks) think that we want to try and be like them, but that's not the case," Young said. "When we step, we represent the football team, when they step they represent their organizations. We can never step as Q's or Alphas.

"It shows their mindset. If they were secure about themselves they would worry about properly representing their organizations and stop worrying about who else is stepping. They talk about their mottos, yet they don't live up to them."

In spite of the opposition to stepping privileges, Greeks want to preserve their right to step. Steve Harris, president of Phi Beta Sigma, said that stepping is an expression of each fraternity or sorority.

"(stepping) is a sign of unity, something to be proud of by members of a fraternity," Harris said. "When someone goes through pledging and gives his time to his fraternity, then stepping is a way to relieve frustration and have a good time."

"I don't think anyone else really understands the meaning of stepping and everything a Greek does to obtain that right to step."

According to Black Greek Council, stepping is a symbol of unity that
must not be broken. During each of the organization's intake processes (pledging), unity is a major emphasis. At this time they teach that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, therefore each link must be uniformly as strong as the next so that the chain may be strong and effective. This unity matures through the intake process and further strengthens once the individual is in the organization.

Many Greeks say they believe that stepping at a jam is a small but important token of unity that is represented in their own unique way. Marvin Powell, former president of Black Greek Council, supported the concept of the Greeks exclusive right to step at a Greek dance.

"It's not a Greek thing. But here at Kent State, those are the rules that we play by," Powell said. Harris said Greeks have a right to regulate who steps at their dance.

"It is the responsibility of those who give the dance to control the atmosphere of the dance," he said. "If someone is causing trouble, then they will have to leave.

"In order for us to give a dance we must reserve a place to hold it, sign three to four release forms, have an advisor present at the dance and hire two policemen for security. Frankly, we do a lot to give a party, and we feel that it's our party to do with as we please. We can set whatever rules as we see fit and that includes who can step and who can not."

Kevin Williams, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha, feels that stepping is an exclusive activity that Greeks do at their own dances as a part of the social aspect of being Greek. Williams also said he believes that the more serious side of Greek life is community and campus service projects. "It is like the football team going to practice all year long, working hard, and on game day we (Greeks) suddenly feel like playing, so we get out on the field and play," Williams said. "If they feel that it is such an injustice when we step at our parties, then they can find something else to do for fun and we won't bother them." The problem is not with the right to step or not, but with the lack of other social outlets in Kent, Young said.

"Other than going to Greek dances, it's not much to do on this campus," Young said. "If they start telling us what to do, what to wear, and who can dance, there's just no other place to go."

Other football players support Young's speculations. Keith Younger, freshman, said that he doesn't attend Greek dances anymore.

"It's just not worth the hassle," Younger said. "If they're going to place so many rules on us, I'd rather not go."

Anthony Roebuck, sophomore, feels that Greek policy is unfair.

"I think everyone should step," Roebuck said. "Allowing some people to step and others not to is just another form of separation."

As the result of an altercation between Greeks and football players at a dance given by Delta Sigma Theta, Blake and other university officials worked to quickly solve the problem.

"There was a brief scuffle between the football team and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity," Blake said. "No one was seriously injured, but university officials, and myself, felt that we had to deal with the issue."

"A couple of days later we met with members of both organizations. There was a mutual agreement that members of the football team would not step at Greek dances."

"It solves the problem for now, ever since that day there has been no trouble between Greeks and football players."

Some were not pleased with this agreement.

"That's bullshit," Young said of the agreement. "I know that once we get this team back on track next year the brothers on the squad are going to do some serious partying." And some tried to put the situation in a broader perspective.

"Brothers on this campus will fight about anything," Harris said. "Yesterday it was break-dancing, and today it's stepping. We have to stop all of this fighting."
Keita Saad

Sharon Smith
Beauty in Black

portraits by Elizabeth Malby
SYMBOLS OF oppression

“Whoever publicly profanes the Red or one of the states incorporated into it, its Constitution, colors or flag or the German armed forces, or maliciously and with premeditation exposes them to contempt, shall be punished by imprisonment.”

December 19, 1932, RGB Statutory Criminal Law of Germany

In 1989 a law of forced patriotism was enacted by the United States government making U.S. flag burning illegal. This law, the Flag Protection Act of 1989, is now producing a new wave of criminals—the flag burners. Disgruntled Americans have publicly shown their contempt for the “powers that be” by staging red, white and blue bonfires all over the country. On October 30, two days after the Flag Law went into effect, four people known as the DC 4 burned flags on the steps of the U.S. capital. Only three people were charged. On November 29, seven people were indicted in Seattle for participating in something they called a “Festival of Defiance.” These flag burners were charged with destruction of government property.

On February 22, an unprecedented Supreme Court ruling deemed the Flag Act unconstitutional in Washington state. Although lawmakers say the Supreme Court will now rule the flag law unconstitutional, flag desecration continues to spread throughout the country as an open symbol of defiance. College campuses such as the University of California at Berkeley, Princeton University, Wesleyan College and Hiram College have all staged similar flag burning ceremonies.

Gregory “Joe” Johnson, one of the infamous members of the D.C. 4, had charges against him dropped. He supported his comrades as they faced a year in prison, and in the process made a name for himself. Johnson called the dropping of his case an act of “profound cowardice and despera-

tion” on the part of the Bush administration. “There was a lot of contempt and disgust for the war. And there was general and attitude of F.T.A (the army) and F.T.W. (the war), feel like that had a big impact on me when I was young... You gotta figure some things out very young,” Johnson claims to have been looking for something revolutionary when he returned to the United States in the 70s. Reading George Jackson’s autobiography in high school laid the foundation for this would-be revolutionary, but it was not until 1976 Kent State protest against the building of the gym annex that Johnson found himself actually fighting the powers that be.

Then in 1989 Johnson, along with Dave Blalock, Shawn Eichman and Dred Scott Tyler, burned flags in New York city on October 28, the night the law went into effect. After police failed to arrest them for defying the new law, the four traveled to the nation’s capital the following Monday to stage yet another flag burning. This time all three were arrested.

“The government really wants to enforce this flag law, they want to enforce patriotism one way or the other,” Johnson said.

“The open defiance of their holy symbol is not something they can really live with. They understand that it’s becoming conscious, and they are trying to underscore how widespread opposition to the law is and how much defiance of the law is going on.”

Johnson said his case clearly establishes that flag burning is an act of symbolic speech or protest. Although the Flag Act is supposed to protect the physical integrity of the flag, Johnson contends this law is an effort to protect the flag’s symbolic integrity.

“They send flags out to get destroyed all of the time in wars, so it is not the physical integrity they are trying to protect,” Johnson said.

“Flag burning is an important battle for most of those who see the flag as a symbol of oppression. But it also is important for people who frankly right now don’t feel compelled to burn the flag, it’s important for them to not stand aside and let the government tell them the appropriate way to utilize the flag in expression.”

By Kecia Cole
By Kecia Cole

“Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best places...and ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm...I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me--ain’t I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well--ain’t I a woman? I have borne five children and seen 'em mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear--and ain’t I a woman.”

--Sojourner Truth

African women have had an ongoing struggle asserting their position in American society. Plagued with the double oppression of sexism and racism, they have been given a tremendous burden to consistently bear. Black women have been the object of White men's rape and general domination for centuries, and although they have always fought back, the voice of protest is now sounding louder than ever before. They are staging battles not only against racism but against sexism as well. This is the time. This is the movement. This is Black feminism.

There is a widely held view among African people that racism is the only oppression that Black women have to confront. Yet, the simultaneity of oppression seems to be the crux of Black feminist political understanding. Although ranking oppression is not relevant to the struggle, Black feminism attempts to acknowledge both.

Gloria Watkins, who goes by the pen name of Bell Hooks, is the foremost Black feminist author in the country. Her books: *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* and *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*, all speak to an emerging political ideology known as Black feminism. Hooks, in her analysis, challenges not only the male-dominance existent in all races, but the racism in the White feminist movement.

Watkins received a bachelors degree in English from Stanford University, and a Masters degree in the same field at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Presently she is on sabbatical from Oberlin University, where she was a professor of Black literature.

"I think if Black men would start off addressing feminism, rather than a reactive response to feminism, there would be grounds for this kind of dialectical, critical interchange that would allow us to acknowledge the way sexism functions in Black communities," Watkins said.

"I think one of the problems is that whenever we start-off with feminism, what immediately comes to mind is White feminism and the history of racism. It's like already we seem to have gotten off the track in starting with ourselves--with Black people starting with ourselves...If I'm going to ask the relevance of feminism to myself as a Black woman and to my Black male colleagues and comrades, then the question I feel like I have to start with is not is feminism (the organized feminist movement) racist, but the question of what are the politics of gender for Black people and how does sexism affect us as a people. How has it eroded our capacity to be in solidarity with one another."
Ivan Van Sertima is one of the most talented scholars of Afrocentric thought in this century. This Guyana, South America native is accomplished in the fields of literary criticism, linguistics and anthropology.

Van Sertima was educated at the School of Oriental and African studies, London University and the Rutgers Graduate School and holds degrees in African Studies, Linguistics and Anthropology. He is currently a professor at Rutgers University and a visiting professor at Princeton University.

His works investigate the presence and contributions of Africans in early Asia, Europe and ancient America. He also spotlights such profound African thinkers as John Henrik Clarke and Cheikh Anta Diop.

Van Sertima, who helped to nominate candidates for the Nobel Prize in Literature from 1976-1980, is an accomplished author in his own right. He is the author of *Caribbean Writers*, which is a collection of critical essays on the Caribbean novel. He also compiled the *Swahili Dictionary of Legal Terms*, which is based on his field work in Tanzania in 1967. His more recent works include: *Blacks in Science: ancient and modern*, *Black Women in Antiquity, Egypt Revisited, Nile Valley Civilizations, African Presence in Early Asia, African Presence in Early Europe, African Presence in Early America*, *Great African Thinkers and Great Black Leaders: ancient and modern*. 
Giancarlo Esposito, who is best known for his performances in Spike Lee's films School Daze and Do The Right Thing, spoke to a Kent State crowd of about 200 during African-American history month. Esposito, clad in a dark suit, no longer resembled Buggin Out. The short dread locks were no longer in his hair. The Africa medallion was no longer hanging around his neck. In short, his character was now replaced by the man—an actor with strong opinions about the power of Black images in movies and on television.

After his speech, Conrad Mohammed from the Nation of Islam also spoke about Black imagery in film and a debate between the two men ensued. Esposito took the position that Do The Right Thing was a positive movie for the African-American community, while Mohammed spoke against the movie saying it did not provide enough positive Black images. The debate provoked the audience to form their own opinions, not only about the movie, but also about the two men.

During a recent UHURU interview Esposito attempted to explain his interpretation of the “right thing” on and off the silver screen.

UHURU: Do you feel that African-Americans have advanced in the acting profession or do you think that we have regressed?

Esposito: I think that we’ve advanced because we are starting to see films that are made by us. We have young Black filmmakers who are coming about now, who are women, who are really starting to affect the scene. I feel as if we are starting to get into the position where we can show completely positive visions of Black people. So I don’t feel that we have regressed. I think we have to deal with history as their history is dictated to us. We have to deal with the pain we have from that history.

That’s why I started to talk about feelings tonight. Feelings have to go somewhere. That anger has to go somewhere...but we are rising. We are getting better. Believe me, our Black filmmakers are focusing on what they’ve been angry about personally.
When that anger gets out and gets done with then they'll start focusing on the joy they have from life, about living in Black communities and dealing with Black people.

UHURU: Do you feel that the movie Do The Right Thing inspires violence or provokes thought?

Esposito: I think it really inspires a thought provoking thing rather than violence. It inspires you to really look into yourself and see where your allegiance lies. That's what happened to Mookie. He had to see where his allegiance lay. He realized that he was on the wrong side of the fence, and that he did not want to be the brunt of all that anger so he had to really take the position to be with his people. But I feel as if it leaves you with the question of what side would you be on given those circumstances.

UHURU: In your teen-age years did you resemble Buggin' Out? What were you like?

Esposito: I didn't resemble Buggin' Out at all. I played the piano. I studied Black American music, jazz music--music that our Black forefathers gave to us and created. I was very different. I studied dance and theater. I didn't realize until later on, until I was about 15 or 16, that what I did would affect other people. So I decided to do different types of roles to wake people up. But I was very unlike Buggin' Out. I was in that atmosphere from time to time. My mother had trouble. My father and mother divorced. We were on food stamps for a period of time. I understood being in the ghetto and being offered drugs. I understand having to be strong.

UHURU: Did you like Buggin' Out as a character?

Esposito: I have to say that Buggin' Out tried in a certain way, but he was acting out without having the knowledge that he needed to help persuade people to do the right thing.

UHURU: Who do you think was the most positive character in the movie?

Esposito: I thought Mother Sister was an extremely positive character. I also felt Da Mayor, under all his problems and pressure, he saved a young man's life. He told the young people in the neighborhood who don't speak to him with any respect, that 'you don't understand my pain because until you've seen your children and your starving, until you've seen these things go on here in this place we call America, then you can't understand that.'

There's a lot of love in the movie, because Joie, Mookie's sister Jade, thought that he was shiftless and unable to really transcend himself from his experience. She still loved him. When do we talk about love? Love must be discussed, because love is a very big issue and I really feel that in the movie there's a lot of that going on. Even though I don't really support what is going on as far as Mookie being who he is and not trying to better himself and just being about 'I gotta get paid,' even though we don't discuss that. His sister, even though she did not approve of that, still loved him. And that is something wonderful to be said about the Black woman, who is so beautiful and so vibrant and so strong and so powerful and who has really been the backbone of this Black American society. I feel that we have to be able to say something about that...She didn't just say, 'You're shiftless, you're just about the money, you don't pay the rent.' She didn't do that. She wasn't like his
girlfriend in the movie. She is a positive role model.

**UHURU: Do you feel that African-Americans are free?**

Esposito: Freedom is a state of mind. I know that (in) the freedom movement in this country we still have a long, long way to go. I know that we are each always confronted with still the same old issues of racism. And still the same things that make us feel immediately that we are not good enough, that we're not free, that we're still the underclass...but it's a state of mind.

**UHURU: In Rolling Stone magazine you spoke about your close relationship with Danny Aiello on the set. But you said that when the whole riot scene ensued and he called you a nigger you were surprised and hurt because you realized at one time in his life he had called someone a nigger. Would you like to comment on that?**

Esposito: I went back and looked at that, and Danny and I were very upset because we both had those feelings. As I said, those feelings are in many of us. I cringe every time I walk down the street and a lady pulls her pocketbook close to her. I get angry when I'm stopped by the police, as I was in Boston last year, for doing nothing at all...I was stopped because I was Black. I was angry but you see those things do happen to us as Black men and I try to explain that to White people. Be careful of the Black man's anger because he needs to find some way to release that. So I feel that Danny and I really confronted our prejudiced feelings in that last scene. I was the first one to call him a ginea bastard. I didn't realize that until I saw the cuts of the movie then I realized I broke first. I disussed him first. In my mind I perceived right away that he had to be a racist, but we were so into our characters and when he called me a nigger I realized that he called other people a nigger. I realized I had called other people 'white batters'...But I understood then when that scene went down, that I had a lot of resentment for White people and he had a lot of resentment for Black people and at the end of the scene we were both released from that bondage. We were released from those feelings that bind us because we were able to transcend it and realize that as people we loved each other. I feel that love is the only thing that will change this world. Violence will not. Black-on-black crime will not.

I am growing just like you do. I am not a perfect person. I can't tell you what to do, but I can tell you that my commitment is to do this...My commitment is to uplift. My commitment is to get us to understand that love is more powerful than hate. So with the quotes at the end of the movie, I align myself with Martin Luther King's quote completely. Not because I dislike Malcolm X. I talk a lot about him. I love him very much. I feel as if that's the perfect example of a Black man we need to have because he was a man who did not have all the answers. I'm very much like him because I did not have all the answers. He also attached himself to the wrong understanding. And then when he finally had the awakening and realized he had a different understanding, he worked on himself. And he worked to sort of change how he felt and understand what had gone wrong for him, why he had tapped into the wrong understanding....

I'm not perfect. I cannot speak from half-knowledge. You can't speak from half-education. You have to really dive in and embrace all of it. If it's built on the wrong thing and their pushing it, it's not fair to us as Black people. It's very important for us to have the proper understanding. We don't need a Black organization to come along that is not about love and not about God. Because then, what's going to happen is Blacks will start exploiting each other. We'll gain the universe, we'll come back in the day when the Black man once ruled the earth, and then we'll eventually just start to exploit each other...."

**UHURU: Did you come into many of your personal beliefs before Do The Right Thing or after?**

Esposito: I don't know. God just sometimes gets me going. Sometimes it happens and I don't know when it actually comes, but it comes and it goes. As I say, I'm not perfect. I do make mistakes. I do get out of myself when I shouldn't. I do have to apologize for that. But I try to walk in the light; I try to walk with grace. I try to release the anger I have in my own heart every moment that I love because I go through it. Believe me, I go through it. I go through it with White people when I go to the South, but we have to rise above ourselves. We have to get out of ourselves. We have to start to learn how to love each other and if we don't, we're through. We're finished. I don't care what you preach, what religion you talk about, what you say we got to do, and chop off who's head and do all that; forget it. Cause He's gonna push the button up there. God's gonna say, "I'm through with it. Sorry, see you!" So Let's wake up together. Let's wake up together now.

Giancarlo Esposito.

42 Uhuru, Spring, 1990
COLORS... COLORS... COLORS... COLORS! COLORS... COLORS!

JUST SAY NO!
"I feel that the man should have been out about 27 years ago, and I think that there will be a big-ass riot now that he's out."
--"Jumping Jack Flash."

"I think it's okay but the government might think that he's out of touch with things that have been going on and they might use him to their advantage. If there is give in one area, then there has to be some take from another."
--Faroq

"We should be cautious of anything that might be behind it...it seems too easy."
--Candace

"I think it's good, but I think he has a lot of work ahead of him because the White government isn't going to give up their power to satisfy the Black population. Everybody should pull together now that Mandela has been released."
--Anisa

"I'm afraid for him because I think that when he gets out the White man is going to get him."
--Adrienne

"I think it's a long time coming and I'm very happy for him, but I only hope there's nothing behind it all."
--Angela

"I think it's good that he's released, but I also think that they're doing it to make it seem like they're taking a stand against apartheid, but in reality they are trying to take the heat off of them."
--Rich

"It's been about 30 years now and I fell it's time that he's been released. I think that the ANC should take necessary steps to assure his safety."
--Dellisa

"It's about time they freed the Brother. Among all the changes in the world today it will be a stepping stone for human rights and maybe the new revolutionized decade will also bring about the end to apartheid."
--Bamm
“It should have been done years ago. He was jailed trying to help his people. Life in prison is a harsh punishment for something I’m sure would have bettered their condition.”
--Trisha

“I’m elated. This is a small step that South Africa is taking but they have a long way to go because it’s evident that the White man is not going to give you anything.”
--MZ. Reed

“I think it’s great that he’s being released, maybe the blacks will come together as a race. I also think you the Desmond Tutu is holding back race by not letting the Blacks fight the Whites.”
--S.S.

“If this is all a set up I think that White people should stop being immature.”
--Jeanne

“I’m pleased that he’s going to be released but I’m still very skeptical because freedom in South Africa has been such a long process that until everybody in South Africa is free, we shouldn’t be so quick to believe what the government in South Africa says. I think right now it’s just rhetoric.”
--Nicholé

“It’s about time they let him out,”
--Christie

“It’s about time they let him out,”
--Christie

“My overall feeling of Mandela’s release is a positive one; however, I felt that this action indicates a need to pacify South Africa on “the systems’ part.”
--Gina

“It’s good that things are changing in South Africa, but I won’t really be satisfied until... changes start to occur in South Africa because there has been very little action.”
--Deborah

“I think it’s long overdue, and I’m curious to see what role he’s going to play as far as promoting the end of Apartheid and what the government’s response will be to his actions.”
--Val

“I am honored and feel blessed to be able to witness such an event that will go down in history as the beginning of yet another emancipation of our people. I also think that the requests that his fellow imprisoned victims of apartheid be released should honored, but realistically I don’t think it will occur in the near future. But with time comes change as we have witnessed and by the grace of God those others will be released also.”
--Kym
In a world where pornography and trash can be portrayed as "art," it is an affirmation of faith to meet an artist like Angelique Troy. She is a woman of character, in the Yoruba definition, of inner beauty and conviction. Her artwork shows this. It would be trivializing to say that this 22-year-old Clevelander is an artist with a message-she is more than that.

Her work and her style seems to have a quiet impact on its viewers, helping some get back in touch with their own vision. That power reaches out and touches people who see her work, which ranges from fabric paintings and jewelry to buttons and banners. Angelique's images are geared mainly toward other African-Americans, but are accessible to anyone with eyes to see.

Troy tries to have a message or something in particular to say when beginning each piece which inspires and guides it. She believes that everyone has talents and something to say if they will only take the time to find out what that is.

Troy also believes in giving something of herself back to the community and has worked with children over the last summer, teaching art at a school near her home in Cleveland. She gives first credit to her parents as guides and inspiration, and goes on to name Dr. and Mrs. Crosby, Pan African studies Professor Fran Dorsey, and the Department of Pan African Studies for helping her to know the truth of her heritage and inner-self. Troy seems to live by that truth that comes out of the Traditional African World View "I am because we are." And for someone who is more comfortable expressing herself in her artwork than with words, she says a lot.

Angelique Troy, a junior with an undecided major, is surrounded by her art.

By Saffron Lloyd
BLACK FLOWER

i am seed
planted within
the night warmth
of black people
my roots running down.
my stem and flower
straining
to push through
the urban polluted top soil
of our confinement,
to know the stars
moon and sun...

---Mwatabu Okantah