

The Bedford Stuyvesant
Museum of African Art

and

Brown Memorial Baptist Church
Rev. Clinton Miller, Pastor

———— Presents ————

Positively Impacting People's Lives

The Second Annual
Nelson "Madiba" Mandela
Humanitarian Award
Presentation

Opening Reception

Saturday, September 26, 2015
Brown Memorial Baptist Church
484 Washington Avenue
Brooklyn, New York



SYMBOLS OF TRIBAL SPIRITS:
THE BEDFORD STUYVESANT
**MUSEUM OF
AFRICAN ART**



Nadia Lopez
Principal/Founder
Mott Hall Bridges Academy



Attorney Bryan Stevenson
Executive Director/Founder
Equal Justice Initiative



Isaiah Washington
Actor/Author/Philanthropist
Executive Director/Founder
Gondobay Manga Foundation

The Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of Africa Art (BSMAA) extends a warm thank you to Mr. Ben Matros who generously allowed BSMAA to photograph his collection.

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BSMAA Mission Statement

Symbols of Tribal Spirits: The Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of African Art (BSMAA) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization located in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. It is dedicated to providing an enriching educational experience to an underserved community in Central Brooklyn and beyond.

With its unique collection of artwork from 40 of the 55 African countries, BSMAA will enrich the lives of the multicultural community in Central Brooklyn, especially the youth. Furthermore, BSMAA will strive to increase broader appreciation and encourage a deeper understanding of the diverse art and cultures from around the world.

You can help BSMAA become world-class cultural institution and the pride of Brooklyn by making a tax deductible contribution on our secure website: www.bedfordstuyvesantmuseum.org

Front Cover Photo Credit:

Isaiah Washington and Bryan Stevenson [Photo Credit: Internet]

Nadia Lopez Photo [Photo Credit: Gilbert Carrasquillo]



SYMBOLS OF TRIBAL SPIRITS:
THE BEDFORD STUYVESANT
**MUSEUM OF
AFRICAN ART**

“Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.”



photo credit: Internet

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**The Bedford Stuyvesant Museum
of African Art (BSMAA)**

Wishes to Thank with Gratitude

Keith Markes
Maryland Realty Corporation

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For his Generous Contribution to BSMAA for
The Second Annual Nelson “Madiba” Mandela
Humanitarian Presentation



Vira Lynn Jones / Photo credit: Paul Takeuchi

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BSMAA Will Save A Place At The Table For President Jimmy Carter

The Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of African Art (BSMAA) is proud of the 2015 Nelson “Madiba” Mandela Humanitarian Award recipients because of the contributions they have made to help humanity. I believe that Mandela, my hero, along with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, is looking down from heaven. I know that “Madiba” is sitting alongside the ancestors with a radiant smile that is lighting of the sky because he is happy with this year’s recipients. The BSMAA’s Awards Selection Committee chose Actor Isaiah Washington for the outstanding humanitarian work that he is conducting in Sierra Leone. After tracing his African ancestry back to the Mende people of that West African nation, Gondobay Manga II, his Sierra Leone given name, has become a courageous warrior using his financial resources and energy to develop the country, one village at time.

Another recipient who won extremely positive praise was Attorney Bryan Stevenson. This humble man, a Harvard law school alumni, knew what he wanted to do upon graduation. Instead of pursuing a partnership at a prestigious law firm that would almost guarantee a seven-figure income, he wrote in his riveting New York Times bestseller, *Just Mercy*, “I knew that it would have something to do with the lives of the poor.” He has dedicated his life defending the wrongly convicted and challenging the racial bias in the U.S. criminal justice system.

The fourth incredible recipient who received the Awards Selection Committee’s March 2015 letter was

Principal Nadia Lopez, who founded Mott Hall Bridges Academy in Brownsville, one of the most economically-challenged neighborhoods in Brooklyn. I had first met her in 2013 at an event. Roy Hastick, the Executive Director and Founder of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACCI), honored her as a Business Visionary. He got it right about Lopez before she posed with President Obama at the White House and appeared on Black Girls Rock this year. After her student, Vidal Chestanet, praised her on a social media blog, that went viral, for having a positive impact on his life, she raised more than \$1.4 million to create scholarships and take the students on visits to Harvard.

In early March 2015, the first individual who topped BSMAA Awards Selection Committee’s list was former President Jimmy Carter. The Carter Center sent a gracious letter saying that the former President had prior commitments and politely declined. In early August of this year, Mr. Carter, who is 90 years old, announced that he is battling cancer that has spread throughout his body. My heart sunk in despair but my spirits perked up when I thought of all the positive reasons he was considered for the Mandela Humanitarian Award.

After a failed re-election attempt in 1980, Mr. Carter returned to Georgia and created the nonprofit organization, The Carter Center. On his way to winning the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize, his organization has partnered with health ministries in other countries to provide the vaccine necessary to eliminate river blindness in Africa during our lifetime. He pledged that he would and has almost eliminated the painful Guinea worm by helping to provide African villages with the education and resources to filter the unclear water that causes it. The Carter Center believes that people can improve their own lives when provided with the necessary skills, knowledge and access to resources.

CNN recently ran a multi-part series

called the 1970s, a retrospective of both turbulent and newsworthy events that occurred during that decade. One of the most interesting comment made was about Mr. Carter’s presidency. The commentator had said he “would not have wished what Jimmy Carter went through” on any president. President Carter had experienced many major crises during his tenure. It included a shattered economy with high inflation and unemployment, the 1979 takeover of the American embassy in Iran, a serious fuel shortage, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Besides the incredible humanitarian work that The Carter Center has done around the world, historians will re-examine Mr. Carter presidency. Most certainly be remembered in a very favorable light. During his election run in 1978, he ran a colorblind campaign and stayed true to uplifting the poor of all races.

He established the Department of Education and increased tuition grants for needy students. He was responsible for awaking the American public and Congress to the dangers of the country’s growing dependency on foreign oil. His greatest achievement, of course, was his negotiation of the first Middle East peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. It remains a touchstone of U.S. security policy in the region. He was sincere when he spoke out about human rights and he wrote many extraordinary books. And, let us remember that he is the co-founder for Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that builds affordable housing around the world.

Mr. Carter will not be able to celebrate with the 2015 Nelson “Madiba” Mandela Honorees in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn community, who will attend this event, can celebrate his life by saving a chair for him at the table during the reception to honor the 2015 recipients.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

September 26, 2015

Dear Friends:

It is a great pleasure to welcome everyone to the Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of African Art's Second Annual Nelson Mandela Humanitarian Awards Presentation at Brown Memorial Baptist Church.

New York rises on the foundation of its diversity, and we are proud of our incredible cultural landscape that incorporates the customs and traditions of people from around the globe. My administration and I are determined to provide our residents of all backgrounds with opportunities to participate in our city's rich and vibrant artistic communities. That is why Chirlane and I are delighted to join in recognizing the efforts of everyone gathered today to introduce Brooklynites to the incredible artwork of the countries of Africa. By honoring Nelson Mandela and his legacy of fighting for justice and equality, you are helping to continue his humanitarian efforts and contributing to our efforts to lift the floor for all New Yorkers.

On behalf of our great city, Chirlane and I extend our congratulations to this year's distinguished Mandela Award recipients and our best wishes for a wonderful afternoon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill de Blasio".

Bill de Blasio
Mayor



Positively Impacting People’s Lives

Second Annual

Nelson “Madiba” Mandela Humanitarian Award Presentation

Official Opening Reception

Saturday, September 26, 2015

3 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Brown Memorial Baptist Church

African/International Music Prelude	Recorded Music
Greetings/Introduction the Master of Ceremonies	Vira Lynn Jones, Executive Director/Founder
African Dance Procession	
Lead in Award Recipient Honorees	KowTeff African Dance Company and African Stilt Walkers
South African National Anthem	Soweto Gospel Choir Video
U.S. National Anthem	Whitney Houston Video
Pouring of Libation	
Remembering the Ancestors Who Came Before Us	Chief Anthony Akpowonwon Ukoli
Introduction of Rev. Roland Robinson/ Master of Ceremonies	Vira Lynn Jones
Greetings from Master of Ceremonies	Rev. Roland H. Robinson
Unity Prayer (Ba'ha'i Faith)	Bart Lewin
Welcome and Prayer	Rev. Roland H. Robinson
Muslim Prayer	Imam [TBA]
Special Remarks About Nelson Mandela 2015 Humanitarian Award Recipients	His Excellency Bernard Legodi Consul: Political, South African Consulate General Office in New York City
West African Dance Performance	KowTeff African Dance Company
Nelson Mandela Humanitarian Award Presentation:	
Introduced by Vira Lynn Jones	Principal Nadia Lopez Founder, Mott Hall Bridges Academy
Introduced by Judge Mojgan Sabhani	Attorney Bryan Stevenson Executive Director/Founder Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)
Introduced by Rev. Roland H. Robinson	
2014 Nelson Mandela Award Recipient	Isaiah Washington, Actor/Author/Philanthropist
Moroccan Musical Dance Performance	Anahid Sofian Dance Company, Moroccan Gnawa Dancers
Closing Remarks	Vira Lynn Jones



Mayor Bill de Blasio

Photo Credit: Internet

The Honorable Bill de Blasio is the 109th Mayor of New York City. From 2010 to 2013, He was the New York City Public Advocate. He has also served a New York City Council member, representing the 39th District in Brooklyn.



Eric Adams

Brooklyn Borough President

The Honorable Eric Adams was elected Brooklyn Borough President in 2013. He was previously a New York State Senator in the 20th Senate District. Prior to his election as the State Senator, Borough President Adams served as a police officer in the New York City Police Department for 22 years. The Brooklyn Native, is the co-founder of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, an advocacy group for black police officers, and often spoke out against police brutality and racial profiling.



His Excellency Bernard Legodi

Consul Political

Office of the South African Consulate General



Rev. Clinton M. Miller, Pastor

Brown Memorial Baptist Church

Photo Credit: BMBC Church website

Rev. Clinton Miller was born in Brooklyn, New York. He has been the pastor of Brown Memorial Baptist Church since 2000. He earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Southern Connecticut State University. He received his divinity degree from Yale University.



Letita A. "Tish" James

New York City Public Advocate

Photo Credit: Internet

New York City Public Advocate James is the current and fourth elected New York City Public Advocate. She previously served as a member of the New York City Council, representing Brooklyn's 35th Council District. Public Advocate James has a B.A. from City University of New York of New York Lehman College and a law degree from Howard University School of Law. She is working for a master's degree in Public Administration at Columbia University.

NELSON "MADIBA" MANDELA 2015 Humanitarian Award Honorees:



Photo Credit: Gilbert Carrasquillo

Nadia Lopez
Principal/Founder
Mott Hall Bridges Academy
Brownsville, New York



Photo Credit: Nina Subin

Bryan Stevenson, Esq.
Executive Director/Founder
Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)



Photo Credit: Internet

Isaiah Washington
Actor/Author/Philanthropist
Founder, The Gondobay
Manga Foundation

Symbols of Tribal Spirits: The Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of African Art (BSMAA) Awards Selection Committee is proud to present three outstanding honorees who were chosen for the Second Annual Nelson "Madiba" Mandela Humanitarian Award. This award was bestowed upon these individuals because they exemplified and embodied many of the extraordinary principles that the late South African President embodied in his life: his idea of a just society, his fortitude, his exceptional dignity and his unwavering sacrifices toward helping humanity.

NELSON "MADIBA" MANDELA 2014 Humanitarian Award Honorees:



photo credit: Internet

Chirlane McCray
New York's Activist
First Lady



photo credit: Internet

Dr. Melony Samuels
Executive Director/Founder
The Bed-Stuyvesant Campaign
Against Hunger



photo credit: DSPAC website

Dwana Adiaha Smallwood
Founder, The Dwana Smallwood
Performing Arts Center



Principal Nadia Lopez, student Vidal Chestanet with President Obama / photo credit: Pete Souza

A Student Praises His Principle On A Social Blog And Inspired An Outpouring Of Support

"We wear purple and black every day because that is the color of royalty. I want them to know their lineage, that they are descendants of African kings and queens, and to know their culture."

– Nadia Lopez, Principal

Nadia Lopez had thought about to quitting her job as principal of Mott Hall Bridges Academy in Brownsville, one of the most economically challenged neighborhoods in Brooklyn. Lopez founded the middle school in 2000 provide a more challenging educational opportunity to her students. She began to feel that her efforts did not matter. One day a Divine Hand intervened. It would cause two lives to collide that would have a positive impact on Lopez's life. The chance meeting would help Mott Bridges Hall Academy raise more than \$1.4 million for a scholarship fund and future visits to Harvard.

The Mott Hall Bridges Academy miracle began in January 2014 after a chance encounter between 13-year old Vidal Chestanet, one of its students and Brandon Stanton, a photographer who documents people's stories for his popular five-year old blog, Humans of New York. Once he exited the subway he crossed paths. Vidal was walking home. Stanton had just exited the subway and spotted Chestanet and started taking his picture. At the same time, Stanton asked Chestanet who had influenced him most in his life and how the person had influenced him.

"My principal, Ms.Lopez," Chestanet responded. "When we get in trouble, she doesn't suspend us. She calls us to her office and explains to us how society was built down around us. And she tells us that each time somebody fails out of school, a new jail cell gets built. And one time she made every student stand up,

one at a time, and she told each one of us that we matter."

"I had recently been wondering whether I was really making a difference because sometimes it's hard to see the change," said Lopez, in an internet interview. "And out of all of the people in the world, he picked me. I was grateful and appreciative." All I could say was, "God, I hear you, I get."

"I was ready to quit, I was ready to resign, I was done, and my mother told me to pray on it, and I just felt like I didn't want to pray on it, I wasn't ready to pray. It was on the Monday that Brandon had put the post up. I only knew because some of my staff member and one of my former scholars sent me a text that basically said, Hey, did you see this? This is amazing. Look at what people are saying. I could not understand or comprehend what was going on," she said in a PBS interview.

After posting Vidal's inspiring story, Stanton contacted Lopez to talk about what she wanted to do with the students many whom have never know anything other than the housing projects and gangs. Mott Hall Bridges Academy had already taken the students on annual visits to local colleges. But, she decided that a visit to Harvard might show the students that no college was beyond their reach.

Stanton created a fund-raising campaign for Mott Hall Bridges Academy on a crowd funding site, Indiegogo Life. The initial goal was to raise \$100,000.

When Vidal's story went viral, more than a million dollars were raised. It was enough money to pay for 10 years of trips to Harvard. The donations continued to come in until more than \$1.4 million was raised.

Despite the fact that many of the students are from low-income backgrounds, she has high expectations for her students. "First, I call my children scholars, my staff, as well," she said in an interview. She has a 30-member staff and wanted people to know that she is successful because of her very supportive staff. "I don't do this alone. This is not a one-woman show. I have an amazing team, and they are loved."

In April 2015, Lopez was honored with the "Change Agent" award on the Black Entertainment Television (BET) broadcast, "Black Girls Rock!" Black Girls Rock! is an annual awards show that honors and empowers women of color around the world in different fields involving music, entertainment, medicine, entrepreneurship and visionary aspects.

After hearing about their moving story, President Barack Obama invited Lopez and her student to the White House in early February 2015. Lopez received the Business Visionary Award from the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) in 2013.

Article sources: *Ellentv.com, theroot.com, The New York Times*

Bryan Stevenson: Young Nelson Mandela Challenges Bias In The U.S. Criminal Justice System

Photo (right): Attorney Bryan Stevenson with Anthony Ray Hinton, who was released after spending 30 years on death row.



photo credit: Internet

“Bryan Stevenson is America’s young Nelson Mandela, a brilliant lawyer fighting with courage and conviction to guarantee justice for all....”

– Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Laureate

Desmond Tutu has called Harvard-trained Attorney Bryan Stevenson the young Nelson Mandela, “an extraordinary man who chose reconciliation over vengeance, and epitomized the healing power of magnanimity, grace and love.” The former South African Archbishop said in a recent *Vanity Fair* article that justice needs champions, and Bryan Stevenson is such a champion. His courage and commitment contributed to the abolition of the death penalty for juveniles, and Stevenson is working tirelessly to end life sentences for adults convicted of crimes committed in their youth.

Stevenson could have chosen a comfortable life working in a top-tier law firm, earning a seven-figure income and living a comfortable, stress-free life. Instead, he has devoted most of his legal career to defending the poor, the imprisoned and the condemned – usually people of color who he says haven’t received justice. He has achieved significant success. Stevenson, who grew up in a poor, segregated area of Delaware, started the Alabama-based private non-profit Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). EJI’s website notes that Stevenson and his staff “have won reversals, relief or release for over 115 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row.”

“Doing something purposeful is more attractive than doing something

profitable,” said Stevenson, in an interview with the U.K.-based publication, *The Guardian*. “My happiness quotient, my peace quotient, is going to be higher if I’m engaged in something important, something purposeful.”

“Frankly, the work I do is extremely rewarding,” Stevenson, who grew up poor in a black neighborhood in Delaware, told the Alabama News Center, a website blog. “It’s enormously challenging and there are a lot of difficult days, but when you walk out of the Jefferson County (Alabama) jail with Anthony Ray Hinton knowing he’s free after 30 years on death row...the sensation and feeling at that moment is priceless. No amount of money can give you that.”

Mr. Stevenson has faced discrimination when visiting prisons to consult with his clients. Guards did not believe or acknowledge that he was an attorney. One guard insisted on strip-searching him every time he went to consult with a client. He has received death threats, bomb scares and a tremendous amount of hostility toward his work. Stevenson and his staff have not been deterred. EJI relies on contributions and grants for its support and does not charge the clients it decides to defend.

Stevenson riveting memoir, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* should be required reading. It is

a guide to better understand this humble man and why the Bedford Stuyvesant Museum of African Art (BSMAA) wanted to honor Stevenson’s incredible work by selecting him for the 2015 Nelson “Madiba” Mandela Humanitarian Award. His riveting book will take a reader on a roller coaster ride of emotional ups and downs. A reader will cheer when Stevenson is triumphant in getting a client, who was wrongly convicted, released from prison. When law enforcement officials have trumped up charges to wrongfully-convicted an individual, a reader will feel a strong sense of outrage. Finally, when Stevenson has fought but loss an appeal and his client is executed, you will want to scream in anguish.

Just Mercy begins with the story of the local police being under pressure to solve the murder of a white clerk in a dry cleaning store. Walter McMillian, a black Alabama businessman, who was having an affair with a married white woman, was arrested and charged with the murder. Despite the fact that witnesses testified that McMillian was at a church event, he was found guilty and held on death row for six years. Stevenson took on and won McMillian’s freedom after proving a witnesses had been threatened with execution unless he implicated McMillian in the crime.

“[It] just reinforced what I had known

(continue on pg 11) ----->

Bryan Stevenson: Young Nelson Mandela Challenges Bias In The U.S. Criminal Justice System (cont'd)

all along, which is that we have a criminal justice system that treats you better if you're rich and guilty than if you're poor and innocent," Stevenson said told Fresh Air with Terry Gross, a National Public Radio (NPR) Peabody Award-winning weekday magazine of contemporary arts and issues.

Stevenson most famous case that dominated the media in April 2015 was victory in wining the release of Anthony Ray Hinton, who spent 30 years on death row for two 1985 murders he claimed that he did not commit. There were no eyewitnesses linking Hinton to the crimes, no fingerprints linking him to the scene, and no other physical evidence except for the questionable link between a set of bullets and a gun found in Hinton's home. His conviction was overruled in 2014 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Hinton's constitutional right

to a fair trial had been violated. Hinton was Stevenson's second client to leave Alabama's Death Row alive.

In December 2014, President Obama, in the wake of the violent reaction to the police killings of Eric Garner in New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, appointed Stevenson to a taskforce that will generate a report on the state of the law in the country.

Stevenson, who is considered the most respected and acclaimed legal mind in the country, is the recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant, the NAACP Image Award for Best Non-Fiction, the National Medal of Liberty from the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Olaf Palme Prize for international human rights in Stockholm, Sweden, the Reebok Human Rights Award and the Thurgood Marshall Medal of Justice.

He was named one of Time's 100 Most Influential People for 2015. In April 2015 Time magazine named Stevenson one of its 100 Most Influential People. Stevenson is a tenured professor of law at New York University.

Stevenson has been received numerous cash awards. Each time he has donated the money to the EJI to continue the work of defending the poor, the imprisoned and the condemned.

Article Sources: *The Guardian, Vanity Fair, Alabama News Center Blog, NPR Fresh Air.*

African Proverb

**The fool speaks,
the wise man listens.**

Ethopian proverb

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**From Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, We Congratulate The
2015 Nelson Mandela Humanitarian Honorees**

For

“Impacting Other People’s Lives”

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Actor Isaiah Washington Discovers His African Ancestry; Dedicates His Life to Developing Sierra Leone



photo credit: Gondobay Manga Foundation Website

Whenever actor Isaiah Washington walked the streets anywhere in the U.S. or in his travels abroad, he was always asked the same question by African people from the continent, “What part of Africa are you from?” In his book, *“A Man From Another Land”*, a riveting autobiography that chronicles his early life, his acting career and finally his charity work in Sierra Leone, Washington would always give the same response. “I was born in Houston, Texas.” Each time their puzzled stare would silently scream at him, saying, “You are lying.” Washington, who is best-known for his role in *Grey’s Anatomy*, had hope that one day he would understand why African people knew something about him that he did not understand. In what became a life-changing experience, Washington decided to take a DNA test in an effort to connect to his African ancestry. He finally understood why African people asked him that burning question.

In 2005, a Washington, D.C.-based

“Isaiah Washington not only talks the talk, he walks the walk. No one embodies the spirit of Sankofa more fully and completely in our generation today than does Isaiah... [He is] a man of enormous vision and dedication to restoring and reconnecting our African American sisters and brothers with their African Heritage.” – Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

firm, African Ancestry, traced Washington African ancestry back to the Mende and Temne peoples in the West African country of Sierra Leone. His was so proud after connecting to his African roots that he applied for Sierra Leonean citizenship. In 2008, Washington became the first African American man granted citizenship of an African country based on a DNA test. He now has dual citizenship.

Washington, who has appeared in four Spike Lee films, was inducted as chief of the village and given the name Chief Gondobay Manga II, after a former great warrior. After that experience, Washington dedicated himself to developing Sierra Leone, one village at a time. He created a foundation after his given Sierra Leonean name, Gondobay Manga II, to address two of the country’s greatest needs – clean water and childhood education. He has built a school for primary and secondary education and built the first of several water wells. Washington was instrumental in delivering \$2 million of much needed medical supplies to a hospital there.

As he was being inducted as chief of the village, Washington said in his book that his chief mother had whispered into his ear and said, “You’re a man from another land” that would arrive in Sierra Leone and return the country to its former greatness. Washington is convinced that he is that man and he has promised to “not let the people of Sierra Leone down.”

So far, Washington has kept his promise. He has negotiated for two medical companies to provide prosthetics for amputees and rain catching systems to provide clean water. Through his Gondobay Manga Foundation, Washington was able to obtain funding for an innovative goat farming project that will allow families in Sierra Leone

to become self-sufficient by producing meat, milk and cheese projects.

Washington has donated \$25,000 to a computer reconstruction project of Bunce Island, an 18th century slave-trading castle in Sierra Leone. Once the largest British slave castle on the coast of West Africa, it was known to export tens of thousands of African slaves to North America, particularly the South Carolina and Georgia.

Washington has spent over \$1 million of his money to raise awareness about the good reasons the international community should develop Sierra Leone as more than a place where the “Blood Diamond War” took place.

The award-winning actor is also involved in charitable organizations at home. In 2006, Washington was the master of ceremonies for the first White House Summit on Malaria. Its aim was to fight the war against malaria in 15 countries. He established the Hire International Investment Group. Its mission is to help transform Sierra Leone and the rest of African in stages by strategically leveraging financial and human capital to profitably and ethically development land, natural resources and human resources. In 2010, Washington became an honorary board member of the Borgen Project, a Seattle-based non-profit organization that advocates global poverty legislation.

Washington is currently starring in the television series, *The 100*, an American post-apocalyptic drama television series that began airing in 2014. He served honorably in the U.S. Air Force for four years.

Article information credit: *Internet, Gondobay Manga Foundation website*



photo credit and source: KowTeff Website

KOWTEFF AFRICAN DANCE COMPANY

Sewaa Codrington is the artistic director and co-founder of KowTeff. The Brooklyn-born native has over thirty years of experience in traditional African dance. She has developed a multifaceted expertise as a teacher, performer and an historian of the art form. Ms. Codrington's professional dance performances have taken her throughout the U.S. and the world. Her greatest love is choreography and it gives her an opportunity to preserve the purity of African dance while creating dynamic and electrifying performances as they relate to the social and historical context of the dance's origins.

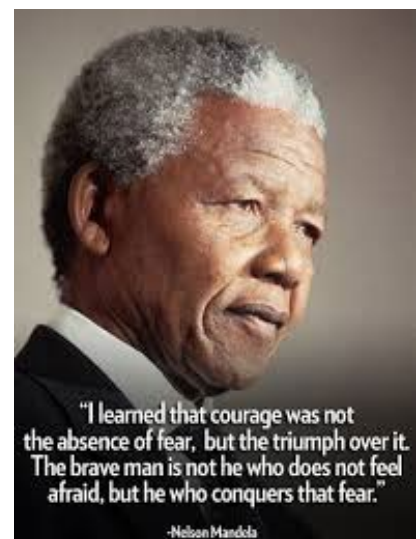
It was her extensive studies all over the Sene-Gambia region in West Africa under the tutelage of members of the National Ballet of Senegal from 1986 to 1988 that solidified her experience and love for African arts and culture.

Dance Company History

KowTeff was founded in 1992. The African dance company is one of the leading community based African Diaspora folkloric arts institution. For twenty three years, the dance company has used arts to empower people of African descent through education and entertainment. The dance company has researched, taught and performed African Diaspora Dance throughout the New York tri-state area and abroad. KowTeff has educated and entertained thousands of audience members with free classes and community based performances in underserved communities.

The word "KowTeff", means "coming from above" in the Wolof language in Senegal. The dance company trains the over twenty member group of dancers, drummers, singers, actors, storytellers,

and stilt walkers in a wide variety of African, American and Caribbean folk traditions. For KowTeff, the arts are a tool for healing the community and keeping values, principles, and customs of African traditions alive.



-Nelson Mandela



photo credit: Anahid Sofian Dance Studio

ANAHID SOFIAN DANCE COMPANY

The Anahid Sofian Dance Company was founded in New York in 1979. The dance company is named after its founder, Armenian-born Anahid Sofian, one of the pioneers who took Oriental Dance out of the night club and onto the concert stage. The dance company made its professional debut at Carnegie hall as part of the New York Ethnic Dance Festival. Comprised of twelve dancers and six musicians, the dance company specializes in dances of the Near and Middle East. Dances include many variations on Raqs Sharqi, known in the West as “bellydance” and that is performed throughout the Near and Middle East, from the dances of the gypsies of Turkey to the traditional Awalim style from Egypt. Folkloric dances include tribal dances from

Morocco and women’s dances from Armenia which reflect their grace and lyrical beauty.

Her dance studio offers instruction on regional styles, choreography, structured improvisation, costume making, and music and rhythms for the dance. Her classes are structured after classical dance and include a thorough warm-up designed for the needs of Middle Eastern dancers. She is internationally recognized as one of the most versatile and innovative artists in the world. She has performed as a soloist and with her company in such mainstream venues as The Museum of Modern Art Sculpture Garden, the United Nations, the Uris Theatre on Broadway and Carnegie Hall. She was

hired to curate numerous performances including the Middle Eastern Festivals held at Town Hall in New York.

Ms. Sofian also teaches master classes and workshops for the Middle Eastern Dance community throughout the U.S. and Brazil. At the college level, she has taught at Hunter College, Sara Laurence College, NYU and at The New School University in New York.

The Anahid Dance Company’s dancers, Dena Raqs and Patricia Clarke, have collaborated with two Moroccan Gnawa Dancers to perform a traditional dance performance combined with a Middle Eastern-style dance.



Gnawa Dancers Origins Connected To West African Slaves

The term “Gnawa” (also Gnaoua) refers to a North African ethnic minority who traces its origins to West African slaves. Gnawa communities in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia trace their origins to the Sudan, referring to sub-Saharan Africa (the term “Sudan” is the Arabic word meaning “the Blacks”). Gnawa music is a rich repertoire of ancient African Islamic spiritual religious songs and rhythms that combines traditional music and dancing. The music is performed at “Lila’s, an entire communal night of celebration,

dedicated to prayer and healing. While many of the influences that formed this music can be traced to sub-Saharan West Africa, its traditional practice is concentrated in Morocco. Gnawa music is characterized by instrumentation. The large heavy iron castanets are known as qraqab and a three-string lute known commonly as a hahhuj (or gimbri).

[Source: Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia].



Facing the Masks: Selections From The Ben Matros Collection



Bembe Ceremonial Mask
Feathers, Animal Skin, Wood
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Traditional masks and headdress of the eastern Bembe people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are recognizable for their concave, cupped orbits around the bulging "coffee-bean" eyes.

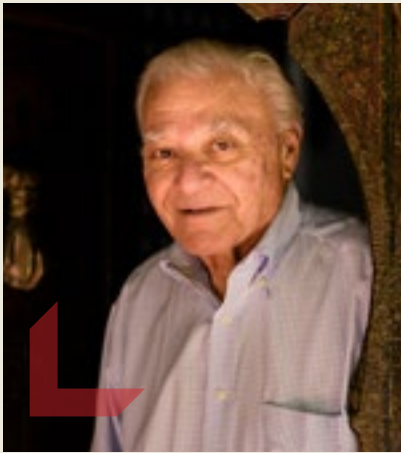


photo credit: Paul Takeuchi

IN FOCUS: BEN MATROS

A Passionate Love Affair With African Art Helped Collector Build An Extraordinary Collection

Ben Matros vividly remembers how he developed a passionate love for collecting African art. He had just gotten married to his wife, the love of his life. As a wedding gift, a friend gave him a ceramic figure shaped like an African drummer. “The piece sat on my coffee table and I would stare at it. I found it very comforting. I had to have more,” said Matros. At that point he realized that he had fallen in love again. This time it was African art. His obsession would lead to him to search out other avenues to acquire African art to expand his collection.

In Manhattan, Matros located African Modern, a store that sold African art similar to the ceramic African drummer. “The store basically sold African art that was junk,” said Matros, laughing. “I realized that I was foolishly spending my money there.” When he decided to acquire museum-quality African art to add to his collection, he would frequent art auctions. “I would go to auctions but at one point I could not afford it,” said Matros.

Matros finally realized that the idea approach to expand his collection was to travel to Africa and cultivate relationships in the local villages as an avenue to acquire authentic African tribal art. “One day I told my wife that I was going to Africa. She said ‘are you crazy!’ ‘What do you know about Africa?’ I told her nothing but I was willing to learn very quickly,” said Matros.

Matros made his first trip to Africa in the early 1960s. He traveled to six West African countries during that

trip to the continent. Matros was hooked. That visit turned into more than a 20-year odyssey of trekking to the continent five to six times a year and spending a month at time in a village. Matros would hire local people as guides to help him navigate and understand the customs and nuances of the countries, especially in the French-speaking countries where the villagers spoke only the local language.

“I told the guides that I wanted to go into the villages,” said Matros. “In most cases the village chiefs were very accommodating. There were art pieces the chief was willing to sell to me. But, there were pieces that would never sell.” Matros was asked if he ever experienced hostility when he arrived in a village to negotiate acquiring African artifacts the people treasured as sacred. “The people never looked at me as a Caucasian but as a friend. The warmest memory I have is feeling like I belonged,” said Matros, smiling.

“Guides would take me to a particular area and try to work out a deal (with the chief),” said Matros. When Matros was asked what criteria he used in his decision purchase a museum-quality mask or statute for his collection, Matros said, “Collecting African art is personal. It is based on your likes and dislikes.” When he would stumble across an unusual piece of art, he would not hesitate to quickly negotiate a purchase.

Matros walked ahead of his visitors and invites them to follow him inside an enormous room located off the side of the kitchen. It is his personal

museum filled with some of the most unique, one-of-a-kind African masks and statutes. Even more unique than his collection are the stories and experiences he narrates that reflect a riveting scene out of an Indian Jones movie.

“While in Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), the chief made the children bath and dress up to look proper before showing me the art,” said Matros, laughing. He has witnessed the ceremonies of the female secret Sande Society of the Mende people in Sierra Leone. He discussed how the Dan (ethnic people) of Liberia said outsiders do not understand their mask making techniques. Matros said that carvers make the mask specifically to fit only that individual’s face. “A new mask is made every few years because the old masks do not fit the face anymore” said Matros. Then the old one is discarded.”

When Matros was asked to offer advice to novice collectors who want to acquire museum-quality African tribal art, he was quick to offer advice. “Do not buy the airport art. It is made for tourist,” said Matros, explaining the African art sold at the airports are targeted to people who want to acquire art before boarding a plane is “junk”. “The art is made to look old but a trained eye can see that it is just made for tourist.

Facing the Masks: Selections From The Ben Matros Collection

- 3 Sande Female Secret Society
Helmet Mask
Mende People
Sierra Leone, Liberia



Facing the Masks: Selections From The Ben Matros Collection



4 Mende Mask w/ Brown Raffia

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, only men are permitted to wear wooden masks in ritual ceremonies. That is not true of the female Sande Society. The black helmet mask is worn exclusively by the Sande, the female secret society in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The mask embodies Sowó, their guardian spirit.

The Sande Society is a fellowship of women who are responsible for preparing young Mende girls for adulthood, and for their roles as wives, mothers and female community members.

The mask usually includes an elaborate hairstyle and attempts to represent serene feminine beauty, with high foreheads, small, compressed facial features and voluminous neck-rings depicting the desirable full-figured woman. The hair of the Mende mask varies in style. A thick head of hair is admired, and these are designed into coiffures that indicate elegance, wealth, and femininity. The neck rings at the base of the mask is an actual exaggeration of actual neck creases. The Mende people consider a beautiful neck to be one with rings.



photo credit: Internet

A Sande Secret Society Ceremony

The headdress is the only African mask known to be worn by women. It is worn by an elder. The rim of the wooden headdress rests on the shoulders and a black costume of natural grasses covers the body.

[Credit: randafricanart.com]

Facing the Masks: Selections From The Ben Matros Collection



5 Yaka Kholuka Circumcison Mask

Yaka People

*The Democratic Republic of the
Congo*

The most important event in the Yaka ceremony is the initiation of young boys into adulthood. To make the of the educational period, festivities are held in which the initiates perform with newly carved masks. It showcases the most startling masks and the most spectacular dances.

Initiation mukhanda, that includes circumcision, is a crucial part of Yaka life. Circumcision and initiation, mandatory for all young men, are organized in remote areas. The rituals are organized by the main secret societies. These masks are for initiation and are used only once.



photo credit: Internet

Yaka Initiation Candidates

Young men dressed in Yaka kholuka ceremonial mask. Yaka or yakala means “males”, the “strong ones”, and Bayaka means the “strong people”. The masks are the work of a sculptor who carries out his art far away from the initiation enclosure, separated from the view of the other villagers. The face and body features are painted with bright colors on white background. The mask is then framed by a mass of raffia fiber and then mounted by a hat made from branches covered with a resin-coated tissue.

Facing the Masks: Selections From The Ben Matros Collection



7 Ceremonial Mask With Dreads *Dan People* *Liberia, Ivory Coast*

The Dan mask was used during initiation ceremonies. These types of masks are made and worn exclusively by male dancers. Dan people classify surroundings into two realms - the village with all inhabitants (human realm), and the forest (bon) (spirit realm) where the spirits reign. Once the male mask dancer dons the mask, he is transformed into a spirit. The mask dancer goes into a deep trance during rituals and brings forth messages of wisdom from his ancestors.

8 Ceremonial Mask With Beard *Dan People* *Liberia, Ivory Coast*

There are regional variations among the masks of the Dan people who live in the western part of Ivory Coast and eastern Liberia. Masks are characterized by a concave face, a pointed chin, a protruding mouth, an upturned nose and a high-domed forehead.



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"I was not a Messiah, But an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances"
– Nelson Mandela

All African artifacts listed in this book are part
of the Ben Matros African Art Collection
(in order of appearance)

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Bembe Ceremonial Mask | 5. Yaka Male Initiation Mask |
| 2. Lega Ceremonial Mask | 6. Dan Mask With Costume |
| 3. Mende Helmet Mask With Black Raffia | 7. Dan Mask With Beard |
| 4. Mende Helmet Mask With Brown Raffia | 8. Baga Ceremonial Mask |

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Back Cover:

Ceremonial Headdress Mask

Baga People

Guinea (Conakry), West Africa

The Baga people have a rich traditional of multifunctional masks and sculptures. The colossal wooden headdress is more than six feet tall and probably was strapped on one dancer. The mask intentionally has a horizontal alignment that consists of a crocodile jaw, human-like face, antelope horns, a snake body and chameleon tail. During a performance, a thick coat of raffia and a cloth cape were attached to the holes that encircle the mask. The dancer would also have worn baggy pants and raffia around the ankles.

The Baga Headdress Mask from Ben Matros' collection is the most unique-looking mask that you probably will not find in any book or museum collection. He acquired it from the village while visiting Burkina Faso.



SYMBOLS OF TRIBAL SPIRITS:
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