



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

Extends A Warm Heart-Felt Thank You To:

**Dr. Willis Pumphrey and  
Mrs. Kyera Pumphrey**

For Their Generous Contribution To  
Sponsor

**The Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe**



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



FRIENDS OF SIRONKA DANCE TROUPE



Vira Lynn Jones/Photo credit: Paul Taekuchi

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### BSMAA Welcomes Nicholas Sironka And The Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe

statements that I could locate. My goal was to show Homeland Security that funds would be made available to support six dancers from Kenya. By this time, four months had already passed and the BSMAA staff was frustrated but did not give up. In addition, Nicholas Sironka included with these documents numerous newspaper articles of the dance troupe performing around the world and even in front of the Queen of England.

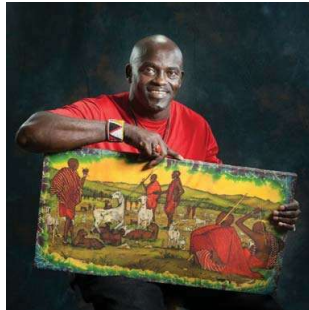
After waiting with nervous anticipation for two weeks, BSMAA finally received notification that the dance troupe had been granted visas in late September, five months too late to perform at its annual Nelson Mandela Humanitarian Award Event held each October. Despite the BSMAA Board of Directors' vote to cancel the 2017 Mandela event, I am so excited that a decision was made to bring the Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe to Brooklyn in mid-October to perform at various venues.

The paperwork for the Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe was constantly returned by Homeland Security. The government agency constantly demanded additional documentation. Sironka had explained to BSMAA that such demands had never been requested in the past. The dance troupe had been visiting the U.S. since 2004. BSMAA has almost given up hope that Homeland Security would grant visas to the dance troupe.

On our third try when submitting paperwork, I enclosed any financial

illustrator, designer and mural artist. His color-saturated art interweaves the Maasai Culture into large Batik images. Nicholas was born in the Rift Valley province in Kenya.

Sironka received a Fulbright Scholarship and was a Scholar-in-Residence for a year at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. Sironka has taught batik art and Maasai culture in workshops, in addition to creating and exhibiting his artwork in the college's art gallery as well as other galleries around the city.



Nicholas Sironka with one of his Batiks.

In addition, Sironka has established a scholarship fund, housed at Whitworth, to sponsor an outstanding Maasai High School boy or girl to attend a university in Kenya, and, as part of their study program, become an exchange student at Whitworth College.

"As a Maasai, I have always wanted to give back to my people, and at the same time, enhance life for the Maasai," said Sironka. "Nothing seemed more appropriate than the establishment of a scholarship fund."

For more information about his work, go to the website: [www.sironkamaasai.com](http://www.sironkamaasai.com).



The Maasai men performing the jumping dance. [Internet Photo]



A young Maasai girl. [Internet Photo]

The Maasai are cattle and goat herders and their economy is almost exclusively based on their animal stock, from which they take most of their food such as meat and milk. Their houses are constructed from dried cattle dung. Despite their famous reputation as fierce warriors, Maasai culture revolves around their cattle.

Despite the growth of modern civilization, the Maasai have largely managed to maintain their traditional ways, although this becomes more challenging each year due to increased urbanization. Maasai's distinctive culture, dress style and strategic territory along the game parks of Kenya and Tanzania have made them one of East Africa's most internationally famous tourist attractions.

They take great pride in showcasing their culture; a warrior is of great importance and a source of pride in the Maasai culture. To be a Maasai is to be born into one of the world's last great warrior cultures. From boyhood to adulthood, young Maasai boys begin to learn the responsibilities of being a man and a warrior.

Their role is to protect their animals from human and animal predators, to build kraals (Maasai homes) and to provide security to their families. Through rituals and ceremonies, Maasai boys are guided and mentored by their fathers and other elders on how to become a warrior.

## Who Are The Maasai People?

The semi-nomadic Maasai people are a tribe who live in parts of Tanzania and Kenya in East Africa. The Maasai people who pride themselves as the authentic people of Kenya is estimated that about one million.

Despite the growth of civilization and modernism, the Maasai have managed to sustain many beautiful aspects of their culture which make them one of East Africa's most internationally famous attractions. Here are some beautiful aspects about the Maasai people:

The Maasai traditionally dress in animal skins. The typical Maasai dress consists of a red cloth called a shuka. The red cloth is wrapped around the body and numerous strands of beaded jewelry is placed around the neck and arms. These are worn by both men and women and may vary in color depending on the occasion.

Maasai men perform numerous traditions and ceremonies. The most famous tradition known and admired around the world is the warrior "jumping" dance. Young Maasai



Maasai women articulate their identity and position in society with body ornaments and body painting. Most beadwork is created by women. [Internet Photo]

morani (warrior youth) usually leap into the air from a standing position, in order to demonstrate their strength and agility.

As a symbol of Maasai beauty, both men and women wear metal hoops on their stretched earlobes. The Maasai often walk barefooted or wear simple sandals made of cow hide.

Historians believe that the Maasai's ancestors originated in North Africa, migrating south along the Nile Valley and arriving in Northern Kenya in the middle of the 15th century. The Maasai, Samburu and Camus people are historically related and all refer to their language as Maa. They also speak Swahili.