

The Big 'A'



The Organization of African Students at Temple University

Message From the President

Hello OAS,

The year is winding down, yet the energy is picking up! I just wanted to remind all of you that the future of OAS is in your hands. I have been with OAS since I was a freshman and it is time for me to let go. Election time is right around the corner. So, those of you who are interested please show your face and your energy because now is the time! OAS has grown so much since I have been here and I know that there are better things in store. Like I always say, "To Begin Is to Finish and to Finish Is to Begin"! When one cycle comes to an end it is only meant for another cycle to continue in its place. Good Luck to all in the upcoming race! Thank you for all the support throughout the years!

—Ijeoma Obilo

Inside a Community of Bright Lights

By: Aishah Alassan

Heads bobble up and down along rows and rows of chairs. African stoles and dashikis in multi-striped patterns move about in random order, while uniforms of white shirts and blue pants peak through African garments. A boy shouts over here and a girl whispers, "shhh" in another section of the room. The day has begun and Ms. Ann Guise, director of the Bright Lights Program, is ready to begin an induction ceremony. Ms. Ann Guise will be inducting sixteen exemplary 1st-6th graders who are becoming one of the prestigious, and admiral Bright Lights. The Bright Light Program was founded by Kwame Ture, formerly known as Stokely Carmichael.



As a dedicated activist, Kwame Ture committed his life to empowering Africans from all over the Diaspora. Kwame became involved in many aspects of the various movements of his time to liberate African people. He worked with organizations such as the Democratic Party of Guinea and the Black Panther Party movement. Kwame was instrumental in creating the All-African People's Revolutionary Party and the Bright Lights Initiative.



"You must light the fire everywhere. You must learn everything there is to learn, because knowledge gives you bright light." In this statement, the late Kwame Ture briefly communicates the goal of children within the Bright Light program—to learn and share the knowledge. It is not the learning of any knowledge that makes someone a bright light however; it is the learning and sharing of the knowledge of Africa and her diverse people. From Kwame Nkrumah to Sojourner Truth, the children within the Bright Light program are aware of their history and continue to embody and display these uplifting images every day and every year during the induction ceremony.

On March 21, 2005, 16 new Bright Lights were inducted into this prestigious program. Mr. Parris, the principal of Peirce school, one of the school's that partake in the Bright Light initiative, welcomed the parents and visitors to the ceremony before introducing Ms. Guise. As a gospel melody played in the background, Ms. Guise called out to children in the hallway, who then proceeded to march into the room carrying flags from Mali, Nigeria, Ghana,

and other countries in Africa.

The treasures that the Bright Lights program had received from their travels were then displayed, including an African carved wood mask inlaid with bronze. Stones from the very top of Mount Kilimanjaro, as well as an N'Dembele doll and Mud cloth were also shown.

Ms. Guise then proudly called out the names of the new inductees, including a second grader by the name of Tierra, who was one half of a twin. Tierra's twin sister had been a bright light since she was in Kindergarten, and Tierra had worked very hard to become a Bright Light herself. Four girls from the 6th grade were also inducted and presented as Elders within Bright Lights.

The sacred ceremony of the pouring of libation followed a very moving speech by Mr. Parris.



Clinton, one of the Bright Light's that had come to speak at an OAS meeting, was granted the privileged right of pouring the libation. Clinton also wrote a poem on what it meant to be a Bright Light, from which the last line was, "As a Bright Light we are forever moving forward, and never turning back."

OAS long time member, and also featured member within the second edition of the newsletter, Kwakou Leak, spoke about the meaning behind the induction ceremony and its significance to Kwame Ture. "This day is a day that Kwame would be proud of . . . we can't solve the problem of our people, if we're not educated, if we're not organized."

March 2005

Volume 1, Issue 4

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The Big 'A'

Unbridled Sexual Violence in War-Torn Sudan

By: Jason M. Ellision

Kwakou also spoke about the children's role in this year's Africa Night, which he believed was a prime example of "bridging the gap between Africans worldwide."

The new inductees were honored with a badge, a letter from the late Kwame Ture, and parents received bumper stickers, reading "A Bright Light lives here." After the inductees received their badges, they called out their ancestor's name and recited the Bright Light Pledge.

Soon after, Ms. Guise surprised me as I was taking notes on the ceremony and asked me to recite the charge of the Bright Lights. Luckily, my nerves behaved on that day, and I was able to recite the charge with no problem.

A very touching part of the ceremony included Ann Guise recognizing her daughter Kimberly, along with her granddaughter, nine month old Rebecca, who Ann Guise proudly proclaimed as a "future Bright Light." Mr. Parris also recognized a Bright Light family—one of the first Bright Lights who went to college, and whose younger siblings were now apart of the Bright Light program at Peirce school.

Mr. Parris ended the ceremony by honoring Bright Light Program director, Ann Guise, calling her major role in the program, "Volunteerism at its best!" He thanked and challenged all in the audience to go out into the community and spread the word on the Bright Lights program.

"Thank you parents for coming. Thank you Bright Lights for being an example to all," said Ann Guise as the ceremony concluded.

After the ceremony, I was able to take pictures of some of the Bright Lights at Peirce school. A couple of minutes later, a small 12 year old boy with cornrows tapped me and said, "I didn't get to take a picture." I replied, "Oh, I'm sorry I took pictures of the boys earlier." He nodded his head and walked away.

I then saw him showing a picture to Kwakou Leak. I asked Kwakou who was in the picture. Kwakou replied, "It's a picture of Anthony with Kwame Ture when he was two." I called Anthony over, and told him I would gladly take a picture of him. I captured another memory for Anthony that day—this time with himself as a new inductee of the Bright Lights program, and OAS long time member Kwakou Leak.

On April 23, the Bright Lights will be performing at Africa Night, and all of you will be able to witness firsthand the dedication and commitment of these exceptional kids.



"When we tried to escape they shot more children. They raped women; I saw many cases of *Janjawid* raping women and girls. They are happy when they rape. They sing when they rape and they tell us that we are slaves and that they can do with us how they wish."

"The attack took place at 8 am on 29, February, 2004 when soldiers arrived by car, camels and horses. The *Janjawid* were inside the houses and the soldiers outside. Some 13 women and girls were raped in different huts in the village. The *Janjawid* broke the limbs (arms and legs) of some women and girls to prevent them from escaping. The *Janjawid* remained in the village for six to seven days. After the rapes, the *Janjawid* looted the houses."

"Five to six men would rape us, one after the other, for hours during six days, every night. My husband could not forgive me after this, he disowned me."

These are quotes from Sudanese refugees interviewed by Amnesty International in May 2004. They give only a small glimpse into the mass sexual crimes committed against women and girls in Darfur, Sudan. The Darfur region of western Sudan has been engaged in a civil war since February of 2003. The conflict pits Sudanese government troops and government-backed militias (known as the *Janjawid*) against rebels fighting to end marginalization and discrimination of the region's inhabitants. Violence and aggression resulting from war has plagued the Sudan since fighting began. Many outside of Sudan have little knowledge of the number of injured and displaced civilians, and everyday the numbers of fatalities rise.

Aside from the number of people who have been injured or killed, and those forced to flee to one of Sudan's neighboring countries, the incidents of rape and sexual violence are disturbing. In a report released on March 7, 2005, *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF), a medical charity, reported that between October

2004 and mid-February 2005, doctors in North and South Darfur had treated around 500 women and girls who had been raped. However, MSF believes this to be only a fraction of the actual numbers because women are scared and reluctant to report sexual attacks.

The report, titled, "The Crushing Burden of Rape: Sexual Violence in Darfur," also explained that most attacks occurred when women left their villages and internally displaced person's camps to search for firewood and water, and that almost a third (28 percent) of the rape survivors who sought treatment from MSF reported that they had been raped more than once, either by single or multiple assailants. It is clear that rape and other acts of sexual violence are being used as a tool of war in Darfur. Members of the military and militia groups often assault women and girls in public, often in front of their mothers, fathers, or husbands, leading to humiliation of the victim.

Not only is rape a fear of women in Darfur, so too is the threat of being taken as a sex slave. On July 19, 2004, Amnesty International released a report entitled, "Sudan: Rape as a weapon of war in Darfur." According to the report, girls as young as eight are being raped in Darfur, Sudan, and used as sex slaves. Women also fear the sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies that may result from an assault. The Amnesty International report also noted incidents where women were killed because they were pregnant or lost their babies while being attacked.

Efforts have been made to contest the sexual violence in the Sudan. The U.S. Congress declared that the killings in Darfur amount to "genocide," and Amnesty International called for the perpetrators of such crimes to be tried by standards that meet international standards of fairness. Still, more help from other nations is undoubtedly necessary. It will take months of effective enforcement to counter the government-backed *Janjawid* and protect women and girls in the Sudan.

More information on this issue can be found at allAfrica.com and [Save Darfur.org](http://SaveDarfur.org).

The Big 'A'

Did you Know?

Geography Facts

- 1) Africa is the second largest continent in the world.
- 2) Africa is 11.7 million square miles.
- 3) Sudan is the largest country in Africa, covering an area of 967,490 sq. miles.
- 4) The Namib in Africa, is the world's oldest desert.
- 5) The Nile River, running around 4,132 miles, is the longest river in not only Africa, but the world. It also consists of the Blue Nile and the White Nile.
- 6) Lake Malawi has the largest number of fish species in the world.
- 7) The Sahara Desert is still expanding, at a rate of a 1/2 mile per month.
- 8) The highest point in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro-the Uhuru point- in Tanzania.
- 9) The biggest island off Africa is Madagascar, covering 226, 658 square miles.
- 10) West Africa alone, which has approximately 200 million people is about the size of the United States.

Health Facts

Facts Compiled by Aishah Alassan

- 1) The world's biggest hospital is in Soweto.
- 2) Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 90% of all Malaria cases.
- 3) Africa would have been an estimated US \$100 billion better off in 1999, if Malaria had been eliminated years ago.
- 4) An estimated 25 million people are living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 5) An estimated 18 million people have died from AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 6) Uganda is the only country in Africa where the AIDS rate has dropped steadily from 1999.
- 7) The organization 'Africa Action' initiated *Africa's Right to Health* campaign addressing issues in the AIDS pandemic.
- 8) Women in Sub-Saharan Africa face a 1 in 13 chance of dying from child birth compared to 1 in 4,085 in the 'industrialized' world.
- 9) In 2001, Algeria and Mauritius had the highest healthy average life expectancy (HALE) for males, at age 56.
- 10) Seychelles had the highest HALE for females at age 63.



Famous Africans

- 1) Kofi Annan hailing from Ghana is the seventh Secretary-General in the United States.
- 2) Kenneth Kaunda was Zambia's first president and is also an AIDS activist.
- 3) The famous poet Phyllis Wheatley, was born in Senegal, and was taken as a slave to America in 1761.
- 4) The late 12 year old Nkosi Johnson was an AIDS activist and South Africa's longest surviving child with AIDS.
- 5) Ama Ata Aidoo, writer of African women in the modern world, hails from Ghana.
- 6) The filmmaker of the acclaimed *Sankofa*, Haile Gerima is from Ethiopia.
- 7) International fashion model Alek Wek was a former refugee of Sudan.
- 8) Africa's fastest women, Mary Onyali, hails from Nigeria.
- 9) Ike Quartey, of Ghana, is the World Boxing Association welterweight champion.
- 10) In 2004, Kenyan born Wangari Maathai was the first ever African woman and environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

African Websites

- 1) Afro-Vision.Com-Comprehensive and Up-to-date Resource Guide on Africa and the Diaspora.
- 2) AfricaAlmanac.com-Has everything from African history to African Records, has a listing of 700 best known Africans.
- 3) www.mnet.co.za-South Africa's pay-television network website, offering different varieties of entertainment.
- 4) www.bday.co.za-South Africa's premier business site, offering the latest in Business news.
- 5) www.ghana.edu.gh-Ghana's educational website with creative graphics.
- 6) www.hst.org.za-Website offering latest Health news in South Africa, including issues in AIDS.
- 7) www.cama.org.za-Contemporary African Music and Arts, is a "multi-media documentary initiative for African arts and culture."
- 8) AllAfrica.com-has the latest in news from Africa.
- 9) Ghanaweb.com-everything Ghanaian from history, to sports, to dating.
- 10) Naijalounge.com-a unified Nigerian online community.

The Big 'A'



Queens of Africa By: Gwinyai P. Muzorewa

Retraction: In the last issue of The Big 'A', it was stated that Queen Tiye Nubian of Kemet was a Pharaoh. This is not the case. Though she was a co-regent, and an exemplary model of leadership through three successive reigns, history does not accredit her with the status of Pharaoh.

We continue to honor our African Heroines in this last installment of the 'Queens of Africa' with Ambuya Nehanda of the MaShona, and Nzingha, Amazon Queen of Matomba. Let us also remember that these are African women of great courage and leadership that have been documented in history. But let us not forget our mothers, sisters, and daughters who achieve great feats everyday.

Ambuya Nehanda of the MaShona

Ambuya Nehanda of the MaShona was a spiritual medium during the British colonial incursion in Zimbabwe in the late 1800s. Ambuya in the Shona language means grandmother, as an identification of their relationship to society. According to the general principles of African 'Traditional Religions' or simply African culture, the role of divine authority is given credence to by all others in society. During her time, this power hierarchy was threatened by the missionaries who culturally and perceptually threatened this relationship. The Shona culture as well as most African cultures place the role of spiritual medium in high esteem, and recognize this authority ahead of their own.

This lady of history played a crucial role in the organization, and mobilization of the forces that would resist the British. The war was called the Ndebele-Shona Chimurenga (i.e. war). The Chimurenga had two fronts within Zimbabwe, Matabeleland in the Southwest and MaShona-land in the central and northeast of the country. The Shona and the Ndebele, as of 1850 made up the two largest ethnic groups of Zimbabwe (then called South Rhodesia). The Chimurenga in Matabeleland (where the Ndebele reside) began in March of 1896 and the MaShonaland (where the Shona reside) Chimurenga began in June of the same year.

The leaders of the resistance were the Paramountcies of Mashayamombe, including the Makoni, and Magwende of MaShonaland. Several smaller Paramountcies such as the Nyandora, Seke, Whata, and Chiota followed the example set in MaShonaland and Matabeleland. These chieftaincies however recognized the authority of the *svikiro* (prophets and spiritual mediums). The two leading *svikiro* were Sekuru Kagubi and Ambuya Nehanda.

While the Matabeleland-Ndebele front subsided in December 1896, the MaShonaland-Shona Chimurenga front sustained effective resistance until 1903. The opening of the Matabeleland Chimurenga was the year the British companies attempted to colonize the people within 'sole called' South Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The colonizer/multinational company utilized slash and burn tactics to starve out the agrarian and pastoralist based economy of the resisting Chimurenga warriors. The upset in the flow of goods and substance in order to force surrender, may be likened to isolationist strategies used by nations today in order to force or subdue the resistance movement.



Southern Rhodesia, now modern day Zimbabwe

Under the ultimate leadership of Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kagubi the MaShona used guerrilla warfare tactics. The March 20th 'L'Ouverture' or opening conflict included the death of an African policeman who was employed by the British South Africa Company. The British response was a swift mobilization of European forces numbering 2000. Also present on the European side were 250 Ngwato who were sent by Kgama. Also on the European side were 200 Colonial (South African) indigenous forces, and 150 Rhodesian Africans under the jurisdiction of Sir Fredrick Carrington. These 'run and gun' tactics of the Chimurenga warriors resulted in the obtainment of Martin-Henry rifles, Lee Metfords, elephant guns, muskets, and blunderbusses. They also toted the traditional spears, axes knobkerries, bows and arrows. They constructed an elaborate communication network through which they communicated numerous messages. Furthermore, they coordinated their efforts of strike and regress with great precision, and tact. Ambuya Nehanda was captured in December 1897, charged with murder and condemned to death. On March 2, 1898 she was hanged, but her influence and organizational skills were remembered and her people continued to resist for another five years. Today she is still regarded as a military genius and a legendary matriarch of Zimbabwe.

The second Chimurenga War for independence was fought from the 1960s to 1979. The inspiration for this war that bonded all sides of the Black Zimbabwean political picture drew strength from the memory of Ambuya Nehanda.

The Big 'A'

Queens of Africa Cont.

**Nzingha or Jinga or Ginga
(1582-1663A.D.)**

Amazon Queen of Matamba



Queen Nzingha, in a bid to cultivate a more substantial

power base, married the King of the Jagas. In doing so, she forged a relationship based on kinship with the Jaga forces and her ethnic origins. She subsequently became a Jaga Queen by marriage arrangement and assumed the authority and responsibility that went with it. She later became the Queen of Matamba after conquering it for the Jaga people. She also pursued the position to never accept the Portuguese incursion by armed resistance. She again exercised her diplomatic ability in forging an alliance with the Dutch. This strategy was employed in order to attain yet another front of resistance. Ensuing battles commenced as she employed guerilla tactics as well as masterfully executing strategies that she devised. Queen Nzingha would retreat to the hills of Matamba and continue to mount offensive strikes against the Portuguese. Queen Nzingha was a battle tested field commander who even led the troops into battle herself, until the age of 60!

Queen Nzingha was royalty as she was the sister of the Ngola (King of present day Angola). In representing her brother, Queen Nzingha displayed her ability to forgive, when her brother was identified as killing her son in a bid to retain power. She never the less advocated her brother's position by going to Luanda. She did so in royal splendor and upon entering the meeting room with the Portuguese governor she observed only one seat. Not to be out done she asserted her authority in ordering her attendant to kneel down as she sat on his back. She is recorded to have out maneuvered the governor on each point of contention within the exchange and achieved a treaty of equal terms.

In order to better solidify relations, Queen Nzingha converted to Christianity and adopted the name Dona Anna de Souza. In doing so, she hoped the identification that would come out of her Christianity would reverse the Portuguese position of the dehumanization of the African in the form of the European Atlantic slave trade. She was determined to protect her people, by any means necessary. The treaty would however fail, as the Portuguese market driven forces demanded many more enslaved Africans. The Queens response was decisive and strategically prudent.

The Jagas people under the leadership of Queen Nzingha, re-fashioned their structure from desperate to formidable. In doing so, they formed human barriers against the Portuguese slave traders. The Jagas were an ethnic group that re-organized themselves in order to overcome the threat of the Portuguese slave traders as well as their African accomplices/employees. She used one diplomatic ally to attack another. This was all in defense of her people of Angola. Her enemy of which she spent her entire adult life fighting were the Portuguese slave traders. The war she waged lasted for more than thirty years. History might view her as a woman that viewed her function in society as the last line of defense, stemming the tide of the European slave trade. Dying on December 17th 1663, she lived to the age of 80 and never surrendered.

Current Events:

Zimbabwe Elections

By: Uchenna Nwoke

Over 20 percent of Zimbabwe's population has been barred from this month's parliamentary election. The total number of citizens affected by last week's ruling is about 3.4 million.

An appeal against the high court's decision was filed by expatriate Zimbabweans. Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyaisiku said of the appeal, "[It] has no merit and should be dismissed." The ruling, announced March 17th, came from a court linked to an ally of President Robert Mugabe. Citizens question whether the March 31st, vote will be free and fair. Lovemore Madhuku, chairperson of the National Constitutional Assembly, said there is clear evidence of vote rigging and alteration of the electoral process. Also, he claims that the president's party, Zanu PF, has established a highly repressive government system ensuring their continued hold on power in Zimbabwe. They have created an atmosphere of fear and undermined laws that deal with basic freedoms of speech and assembly.

The opposing party, Movement for Democratic Change says that support for the president's Zanu PF party has reached an all-time low.

"If the outcome of the election is perceived as unfair, there is likely to be deep frustration among the population and this frustration may be expressed through violence," said Brian Kagoro, chairmen of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. He told Zimbabwe Independent, a periodical out of Harare, that, "Protests and expressions of dissatisfaction are also likely to be met with increased government sponsored violence."

If not corrected soon, the consequences of such strong governmental control will be very damaging to all the people of Zimbabwe.

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May Issue:

- ◆ OAS Year in Review
- ◆ Africa Night Recap
 - ◆ Current Events
- ◆ Featured Members
- ◆ Much, Much, More!!!

Upcoming Events

Organization of African Students (OAS)

April Events

- * Spring Fling (April 19th)
- * Date Exchange/Auction (TBA)
- * Africa Night (April 23rd)!!!

Haitian Student Organization (HSO)

April Events

- * Spring Fling
- * Voodoo vs. Christianity Part 2 forum
- * Semi-Formal

Student Organization of Caribbean Awareness (SOCA)

April Events

- * Spring Fling
- * More Events (TBA)

Note: If you would like to find out more information about these upcoming events contact Aishah3@temple.edu.

Also contact Aishah3@temple.edu for your Organization's upcoming events to be featured in this section.

Signing Off With Aishah A.

To the Readers,

Can you believe it? The Big 'A' s next issue in May will be the last issue of the year! Yes, we have accomplished a major achievement. I believe as this year is coming to a close, The Big 'A' has accomplished what it set out to do: make more people aware of Africa, in all of its glory, and helped to dispel the negative stereotypes associated with Africa. I only hope all of you can agree with me.

In this issue, we take a look at the Bright Light Program. It is programs like these that make me proud to be African. Just witnessing the type of knowledge these kids had on their history, from the pouring of libation in the ceremony to the reading of ancestors such as Kwame Nkrumah and Sojourner Truth. This program is a true testament that we can and will bridge the gap, between all Africans of the Diaspora. It is a do-able feat!

I just hope people can take away one major point from this newsletter. The point is not just to be aware of this knowledge yourself, but also to share this knowledge with your peers, your children, your family. If you learn something, what good is it, if you don't share it? Share the knowledge, Share the power! Until the next (and last) issue of the year . . .

Peace and Blessings

~Aishah A.