

Ancestral Roll Call

via Adinkra symbolism

Dedicated to the life and legacy of

Mazisi Raymond Fakazi Mngoni Kunene

1930-2006



Sesa Woruban

[I change, I transform my life; transformation]

Asa G. Hillard, III

1933-2007



Mmere Dane

[time changes; change, life's dynamics]

Vè Vè Amasasa Clark

1944-2007



Hwenudua

[measuring stick; examination, quality control]



Mazisi Raymond Fakazi Mngoni Kunene (1930-2006), celebrated poet, anti-apartheid freedom fighter, Pan Africanist, and professor emeritus of African linguistics and literature at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), joined the ancestors on August 11, 2006 at Entabeni Hospital in Durban, South Africa, after a long illness.

In South Africa, those attending his memorial service on August 19, 2006 included the First Lady of South Africa Mrs. Mbeki, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, and the Mayor of Durban, as well as former UCLA Professor and poet Keorapetse “Willie” Kgositsile. Retrospectively, The Mazisi Kunene Foundation Trust was launched at the International Conference Centre in Durban, South Africa on June 3, 2006, thus honored with the presence of His Majesty King Zwelithini, the First Lady Mrs. Mbeki, Dr. Z. Pallo Jordan the Minister of Arts and Culture and Mr. S'bu Ndebele the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal which coincided with the first publication of the Foundation, a limited edition collector's item of poetry by Professor Kunene.

In a message read at the August 19, 2006 service, President Thabo Mbeki declared Kunene “an extraordinary South African ... who combined in his being, as one integrated whole, our past, our present and our future.” He was, Mbeki said, “one of those African thinkers and artists who sought to restore the dignity of the colonized and once-enslaved peoples of Africa and those of the African Diaspora.”

Widely regarded as one of the continent’s preeminent poets and winner of multiple literary awards, including being appointed South Africa’s first poet laureate in 2005; Kunene drew on the oral tradition of Zulu literature to create poetry about Zulu history and thought as well as to celebrate Pan African values. He once said that “a writer ... should avoid the temporary attractions of cheap popularity and make a contribution to the community that gave birth to his genius.” He translated some of his work into English, including his most famous work, a translation of the great oral epic “Emperor Shaka the Great” (1979), a still widely read and taught text, about the powerful early 19th-century Zulu leader

Kunene also published “Anthem of the Decades: A Zulu Epic,” about how death came into the world, as well as two poetry anthologies, “The Ancestors and the Sacred Mountain” and “Zulu Poems.” In the 1990s, he published several books in Zulu, including “Isibusiso sikamhawu” (1994), “Indida yamancasakazi” (1995), “Umzwilili wama-Afrika” (1996) and “Igudu likaSomcabeko” (1997). Although most of his work has been neither published nor translated, his most famous work has been translated into many languages, including English, French, German, Japanese and Dutch. Kunene started writing in Zulu when he very young and had published a number of poems in newspapers and magazines before he was 12, hence he won the Bantu Literary Competition when he was 26.

Kunene obtained a teaching certificate at Maphumulo Teachers’ Training College and his master’s degree in 1959 from the University of Natal for a survey of Zulu poetry. He left South Africa to pursue doctoral studies on Zulu literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, but instead played a leading role in bringing attention to the horrors of apartheid in South Africa [Kunene went into exile in 1959 and, with fellow exiled writers Es'kia Mphahlele, Keorapetse Kgotsile, Cosmo Pieterse and Dennis Brutus]. This, he was a founding member of the anti-apartheid movement in Britain, setting up the London office of the African National Congress (ANC) with current President Thabo Mbeki. In 1962 he became the chief representative of the ANC in Europe and the United States, where he traveled and lectured widely (in 1966, his work was banned by a South African government order), in addition to later being ANC director of finance.

In 1972, he organized the historic South African Exhibition Appeal, to which Picasso, Marc Chagall, Giacometti, Henry Moore, Ben Enwonwu, Robert Rauschenberg and others donated works, an exhibit President Mbeki praised as “one of the most memorable highlights of the world struggle against apartheid, the indelible signal that the struggle for the destruction of the apartheid system was, in reality, a struggle for the elevation of the human soul.”

During his more than 30 years of exile, Kunene became the head of the Department of African Studies at the National University of Lesotho and then taught African literature and the Zulu language at UCLA for 19 years, where he became a full professor. He was a spiritual and practical adviser to many students, earning him a devoted and enthusiastic following. He had an especially close association with the African Student Union at UCLA, and the African and African American activist-intellectual community in Los Angeles. One of Kunene’s former doctoral students in linguistics, Kykosa Kajangu, remembers that his “door was always open, not only to students at UCLA, but to students from every walk of life. His mind was a wisdom depot.” A former doctoral student of his in literature remembers him as “brilliant, regal, even arrogant, but devoted to the intellectual welfare of the students who came to him.” Kunene only returned to South Africa in 1993, when apartheid had ended. In 1993 UNESCO honored him as Africa’s Poet Laureate. He then lectured at several South African universities, and in Durban he assumed the position as a professor of isiZulu Studies, and for his creative and critical contribution he was awarded a D.Litt by the University of Natal, now the University of KwaZulu Natal.

Kunene was born in Durban on May 12, 1930, and grew up in Amahlongwa on the KwaZulu Natal south coast. His ancestral home, where he was laid to rest, overlooked the Indian Ocean. His father, Mdabuli Albert Kunene, was from the royal Swazi family (Kunene's great-grandparents moved from Swaziland to Zululand after a cattle-theft dispute in 1840, and later his grandfather Mhawu moved further south and settled at Mkhunya near the Umkhomazi River), and his mother, Eva Kunene, was a teacher from the large Zulu Ngcobo family. In 1973, he married Mabowe Mathabo, with whom he had four children. Kunene is survived by his wife, Mathabo; daughter, Lamakhosi; sons Zosukuma, Ra and Rre; and his siblings, Blessing Musawenkosi and Sthandiwe Joyce Kunene.

Donations to preserve Kunene’s work can be made to the Mazisi Kunene Foundation Trust, founded by Mathabo Kunene to promote her husband’s work and to campaign for the inclusion of African literature in school curriculums. To contact the Kunene Foundation, e-mail Janine Zagel at jzagel@worldonline.co.za or visit www.cas.org.za/projects/Library.htm. Reference source: *UCLA Today* (vol.27, no.1, August 15, 2006).



Asa G. Hilliard, III

Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II 1933-2007



Pan African Educator, Historian and Psychologist

Asa Grant Hilliard, III (Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II) was a world renowned Pan-Africanist educator, historian, and psychologist who passed from this life on August 13, 2007 in Cairo, Egypt. He was in Egypt to deliver a keynote lecture at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, an organization he helped found. He was also lecturing for a study trip led by Rev. Jeremiah Wright of Chicago. The cause of death is attributed to complications from malaria. “Dr. Hilliard was in his favorite place, with his favorite person – our mother, when he died,” said his daughter, Robi Hilliard Herron. He was married for nearly fifty years to the Honorable Patsy Jo Hilliard, former mayor of East Point, Georgia, and a former school board member for the South San Francisco Unified School District.

Born in Galveston, Texas on August 22, 1933 to Asa G. Hilliard II and Dr. Lois O. Williams, Asa G. Hilliard III graduated from Manual High School (1951) in Denver, Colorado. He received a B.A. from the University of Denver (1955) and taught in the Denver Public Schools before joining the U.S. Army, where he served as a First Lieutenant, platoon leader, and battalion executive officer in the Third Armored Infantry (1955-1957). He later received his M.A. in Counseling (1961), and an Ed.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Denver (1963).

The professional career of Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III spans the globe. He was on the faculty at San Francisco State University; consultant to the Peace Corp in Liberia (West Africa); superintendent of schools in Monrovia, Liberia; and later returned to San Francisco State University as department chair and dean of the School of Education. At the time of his death, he was the Fuller E. Calloway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta where he also held joint appointments in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education.

As a distinguished consultant, Hilliard worked with many of the leading school districts, publishers, public advocacy organizations, universities, government agencies and private corporations on valid assessment relevant to African content in the curriculum, teacher training, and public policy. Several of his programs in pluralistic curriculum, assessment, and valid teaching became national models. For example, he designed the approach and selected the essays that appeared in *The Portland Baseline Essays* (Portland, Oregon) which represent the first time a comprehensive global and longitudinal view of people of African ancestry had been presented in a curriculum.

In 2001, Hilliard was enstooled as Development Chief for Mankranso, Ghana and given the name Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II, which means “generous one.” He spent more than thirty years leading study groups to Egypt and Ghana, as part of his mission to teach the truth about the history of Africa and the African Diaspora, and co-chaired the first national conference on the Infusion of African and African- American Content in the School Curriculum in Atlanta. And notwithstanding, he was a founding member and the first vice president of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, a founding member of the National Black Child Development Institute, and a key advisor for Mali government sponsored African Education for Every African Child conference held in Mali.

Some of his publications include *The Maroon Within Us: Selected Essays on African American Community Socialization* (Black Classic Press, 1995); *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind* (Makare Publishing, 1998), and *African Power: Affirming African Indigenous Socialization in the Face of the Cultural Wars* (Makare Publishing, 1998), to name a few. He also co-edited *The Teachings of Ptahhotep, the Oldest Book in the World* with Larry Williams and Nia Hilliard (Blackwood Press, 1987), *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African American Students* (Beacon Press, 2004) with Claude Steele and Theresa Perry, and *Testing African American Students* via the *Negro Educational Review* (vol.38, no. 2-3, April-July 1987).



Nana Baffour Amankwatia, II
1933-2007



Photo credit: Jane Scherr

Vè Vè Amasasa Clark

Cosmopolitan African Diaspora Scholar

by

Yasmin Anwar

UC Berkeley News (December 6, 2007)

VèVè Amasasa Clark was an associate professor of African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and a literary scholar who coined the term "Diaspora literacy," joined the ancestors December 1, 2007 in Berkeley, California.

During her 16 years on the African American Studies faculty at UC Berkeley, she became an expert on such topics as African oral expression and the Francophone novel. She was instrumental in helping create at UC Berkeley the nation's first doctorate program in African Diaspora Studies.

"Her theorization of 'Diaspora literacy' has functioned as a model for numerous scholars in the field, here in the United States and in the Caribbean. She will be sadly missed," said Suzette Spencer, an assistant professor of African American studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a former student of Clark's.

Clark's urbane manner was reinforced by her multilingualism. She spoke fluent French, Spanish and Creole and had a fair understanding of Wolof, a language spoken in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania. She co-edited *The Legend of Maya Deren* (1985), a biography of the avant-garde filmmaker and theorist; and *Kaiso! Katherine Dunham: An Anthology of Writings* (1978), about the iconic dancer and choreographer who died in 2006.

"She was the epitome of a brilliant scholar, passionate thinker, gifted writer and master teacher," said Ula Taylor, chair of UC Berkeley's Department of African American Studies. "As a colleague, she was a woman of integrity who was committed to encouraging younger faculty to embrace their own intellectual voice."

As a mentor and champion for Black scholarship, Clark worked on the retention of African American students and sought to provide a support network for graduate students in African American, African and Caribbean Studies. What many students loved most was how she challenged them academically and intellectually.

"She could think so far out of the box, it was mind-blowing," said Lisa Ze Winters, an assistant professor of English and Africana Studies at Wayne State University, Detroit, and a former student of Clark's. "Even as she pushed you, told you that your work could be better, you knew she really wanted you to succeed, to exceed your own expectations. In her mind, there were no limits."

Clark was born December 14, 1944, and grew up in the New York City borough of Queens. She was the only child of Freemasonry fraternity member Alonso Clark of North Carolina and her Caribbean born mother. As a child, she first contemplated becoming a doctor and then a musician, according to an interview she did in 1996 when she became the inaugural recipient of UC Berkeley's Social Sciences Distinguished Service Award. As an undergraduate in Queens College at the City University of New York, Clark majored in romance languages, and after receiving her bachelor's degree in 1966, she continued her language studies at the Université de Nancy in France, where she received a certificate d'études supérieures. She returned to Queens College and received her master's degree in French in 1969.

During the 1970s, Clark headed west to UC Berkeley, where she worked as a teaching assistant in French and then as a lecturer in African American Studies (formerly Afro-American Studies). She also taught French at an experimental collegiate seminar program on campus that was known informally as Strawberry Creek College.

Daphne Muse, director of the Women's Leadership Institute at Mills College in Oakland, met Clark in 1973, when they were both teaching at UC Berkeley. The two quickly became close friends, and Clark officiated at Muse's wedding. "She would have me on the floor in tears with laughter. She had an uncanny ability to mimic, and she was just brilliant," said Muse. "She was also incredibly generous, both spiritually and financially."

In 1980, Clark was hired as an assistant professor of African and Caribbean literature at Tufts University in Massachusetts. During that time, she worked on her Ph.D. thesis in French and ethnology for UC Berkeley, and received her degree in 1983. In 1985, she received a faculty research award from Tufts to attend the United Nations Conference for Women in Nairobi, and a year later, she was promoted to associate professor of African and Caribbean literature at Tufts.

In 1991, she returned to UC Berkeley as an associate professor of African American Studies, and that same year, she won recognition for coining the phrase "diaspora literacy" in a paper titled "Developing Diaspora Literature and Marasa Consciousness" which she defined as the ability to understand multi-layered meanings of stories, words and folk sayings in African diaspora communities through the knowledge and lived experiences of the community members' cultures.

Her method of using literature to convey experiences inspired students to look beyond dry surveys and interviews for their research. That was the case for Erin Winkler, who took Clark's "Diasporic Dialogues" course during her first year in graduate school at UC Berkeley. "As a social scientist who researches children's developing understandings of race, I was not sure how a literature course would speak to my work," said Winkler, an assistant professor of Africology at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

But Clark encouraged Winkler to use coming-of-age novels in her research, said Winkler, "because they speak to experiences of race in ways that sometimes go unspoken in surveys or interviews. What she modeled in her own scholarship had a profound impact on my development as an interdisciplinary scholar."

During Clark's career, she received numerous awards, including a Guggenheim fellowship for research on choreographer Katherine Dunham, a graduate fellowship for study at the Université de Dakar, Sénégal, and she was a Rockefeller Foundation fellow-in-residence at Brown University.

In 1996, after winning UC Berkeley's first Social Sciences Distinguished Service award for "service that benefits undergraduate and/or graduate students," she explained to an interviewer her passion for fostering a new generation of Black scholars. "We're all trained in something else: English, political science, French, sociology," she said of her own generation. "How many Ph.D.s do we have who actually came though in African American Studies or African Diaspora Studies? So, it's exciting to me that we are about to develop a generation in this field."

Trica Danielle Keaton, an assistant professor of American Studies and global studies at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, fondly refers to Clark's adages as "VèVèisms." "'Joining the ancestors,' a precious VèVèism, is not an ending, but rather a transition, something that feels akin to one of VèVè's 'zen moves' to higher and safer ground," Keaton said. "I am humbled by the love that she bestowed on us, her 'intellectual daughters and sons.' Indeed, I am honored to be but one of so very many touched by her genius and generosity."

Clark is survived by a wide circle of friends, colleagues and students. A memorial gathering in celebration of her life and legacy was held December 14, 2007 in the Lipman Room of Barrows Hall at UC Berkeley.



(Francine Price photo)