

Never Let Me Forget You Africa

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In the Book: Candlelights From Freedom to Freedom

Reading and pondering the words written by Ms. Alice Johnson from her reflections through poetic writings *From Freedom to Freedom* provoked the deepest emotions of my connection back to Mother Africa. It was through the eyes and experiences of Alex Haley, author of *Roots*, which transformed Ms. Johnson forever and moved her to write from a place in her heart. My reflections and writings also stem from this same place and continue to shape me into the person God has called me to be. I can be nothing else. True liberation—honor and respecting that reality for us all—is the very essence of Ms. Johnson’s writings. Captured in her words is the reality of being the gift God has called you to be, and that the biggest irony, or the sin of blasphemy, is being what God has *not* created you to be.

In that place of transformation, God connects me back to the Motherland of Africa where the experiences of Alex Haley were shaped and moved him to write and produce his great movie. It is important to go back to Genesis in order to understand the present and future realities of life. I must never forget or else. As the psalmist says so well in Psalm 137, *If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither. May my tongue stick to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem beyond all my delights.*

Jerusalem is truly Africa for me. It is Africa where the delight must be experienced and celebrated. It is in the remembering and the celebration of Africa that makes the liberation possible for me and my people. It is in the remembering that not only sparks the thought, but in the remembering that reality becomes real. It is in the story of *Roots* that makes Kunta Kinte’s reality live in you and me. Therefore, the pain and the liberation is a reality in progress, and we become part of the progress that embraces *all* of humanity. Do we not get it, yet? Maybe the 2010 devastation of Haiti will help us to remember that we are all intimately connected and interconnected to that human fabric called life. When one suffers, we all suffer. When one is honored and celebrated, we are all honored and celebrated.

Yes, on the slave ships and the backs of Kunta, I and the We come to be. On the slave ships and the backs of Kunta of the Middle Passage, the I and the We come to that conscious awareness that the graveyard which was meant to kill that dream became the dream of the I and the We and made it possible to move from the back of the bus to the front of the bus--from the Outhouse, to the White House, as the President of the United States. And yet, before all that, we were leaning on the shoulders of great men and women who made it possible. From Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, David Walker, Barbara Jordan, Shirley Chisholm, Joseph Lee, Bessie Smith, Booker T. Washington, John Hope, James Weldon Johnson, Father Augustus

Tolton, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, Sister Thea Bowman, Pope Victor I (African Pope), and the list goes on and on.

If I forget you Mother Africa, *may my right hand wither*. It is through the writings of Ms. Johnson that we come to understand the present reality of why we are here and continue to be. Freedom is rung through the eyes and the experiences of a people who remember and celebrate a heritage that writes and proclaims from the voices of those who have been silenced. It is in the *cannot do* that made the voices of the ocean to spring forth to shout from the mountain tops, *Let Freedom Ring*. Let it ring from the songs of our people in the Motherland of milk and honey. Let it ring from the slave ships that sang a song of remembrance which our captives could not understand. Let it ring from the chopping blocks where our great queens and kings were hauled forth as animals without a soul. Let it ring from those segregated allies that had signs written in our minds where we could not go. Let it ring from the songs that sang *We Shall Overcome One Day*. Let it ring from the seat of the White House where we built bricks of snow that turned into the residence of clay.

And here we are pondering and reflecting on the words that have taken flesh within those words written by Ms. Alice Johnson that make the connection with the past, present, and future reality of an African Diaspora people. Her reflection of poems of a Black people gives hope for a generation where others have lost a sense of hope because of the lack of connectedness with the past that has brought us this far by faith. It is this written word that gives hope for those who process these words and makes them a live reality in their everyday lived experience of life. It is that journey that is expressed within the written word that plants the seeds of tomorrow in spite of the seed of sorrow. Because it has been planted in the writer, now in me, may it take root around the world for those who have a conscious awareness of the importance of the ancestors that bring a light to a world that lives in you and me. Thank you, Ms. Johnson, for keeping the flame of hope in our hearts of your written word that has been echoed throughout the ages.

The God of our weary years and the God of our silent tears continues to lead us on as a people of faith—a faith in God, our ancestors, and ourselves. Let us stand together and be true to the history that has been handed down throughout the ages. Thank you, Ms. Johnson, for putting your spirit on paper so that those words may continue to live on in our hearts, minds, and spirit, and now given a voice in your writings *From Freedom to Freedom*.