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Vol. 3 No. 1

March 2, 2009

- THE CREATIVE WORK FUND
- THE GROUSBECK FAMILY FOUNDATION
- THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION



THE LIA FUND

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SOUTH AFRICA PHOTO GALLERY

PRESS



PRINTER-FRIENDLY VERSION

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Contact Cultural Odyssey

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Founder, Co-Artistic Director

Rhodesa Jones
Co-Artistic Director

Newsletter Info

Suggestions?
Comments?
Contact us:
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South Africa Diary - An Online Experience!

Welcome to Culture Odyssey and The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women's **first time** new technology online experience. The theme of this newsletter explores the use of the evolving digital film technology to proliferate the impact of the Medea Project workshop and performance process on a national and international level. The following online experience documents an historic November 2008 Medea Project residency and production and brings it back home to San Francisco audiences as well as an online global community of supporters and interested parties.

So, hang on, tune in, and experience South Africa's exposure to the Medea Project and the gift of expanding and diversifying their audiences through this **"very first time in South African history"** Medea Project residency and performance inside their prison complex.

- Medea Project Artistic Director, Rhodesa Jones
Assisted by Cultural Odyssey Executive Director, Idris Ackamoor

Please support the future of *The Medea Project* by making a donation!

[click here](#)



A Brief History (YouTube - click to view)

Media Release Urban Voices International Arts Festival International Theatre Programme

1 November to 15 November 2008
Website: www.artsexchange.co.za
Email: info@artsexchange.co.za
Media enquiries only: 011 726 6916

International Theatre Exchange with Cultural Odyssey: The Medea Project : Theatre for Incarcerated Women. SA/USA

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Check out our music at the following online outlets:



Cultural Odyssey

Idris Ackamoor Ensemble

Rhodesa Jones



Idris Ackamoor Ensemble



Idris Ackamoor Ensemble



(YouTube - click to view)

**I AM THE GENERATION
OF THE OPPRESSED,
THE GENERATION OF
POVERTY
I AM THE GENERATION
OF RIOT, THE
GENERATION OF
STRUGGLE
I AM THE GENERATION
OF DEMOCRACY**

**NOW I AM FREE STANDING IN AFRICA
I AM THE AFRICAN**

**THIS AFRICAN IS A LEOPARD PROUD WITH IT'S
COLORS
CAUSE IT'S PROUD WITH ITS NATIONS
THIS AFRICA IS THE RAINBOW NATION
SO I'M THE RIVER BETWEEN THE AFRICAN MOUNTAIN
I'M THE HILLS TO THE VALLEYS OF AFRICA
I'M THE WELL TO THE AFRICAN FALLS
I'M STRONG AND TOUGH LIKE THE ROCKS TO THE
MOUNTAIN CLIFFS**

**I'M BLACK, I'M A COAL OF THE WOODS
OF THE TREES FROM THE AFRICAN FORESTS
I'M THE AFRICAN! I'M THE AFRICAN!
I AM THE AFRICAN!**

ATTENTION MUST BE PAID!

It is their dances that keeps us all afloat.
We are swimming in a lake of memory!
Attention must be paid . . . as they attempt to dream
I hear much musing about their families, their mothers
They are dreaming of getting out to help other young people
Attention must be paid . . . to our own bodies, needs, back to our
dream-
Diving down, I return with a mirror of re-creation:
What do we need to know about each other to begin this voyage back
to ourselves
Back to a time before life hurt?

[Homework: One thing you need to know about me.]

**ONE THING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ME
- BY JABU GWALA**

*I know myself as a Christian child . . . humble person. I'm
always cool. I'm friendly to everybody. I don't judge people.
I'm always smiling. Actually, I like to share what I have. At
the same time I'm a very sensitive person. It's like if you
tell me something sad or I watch news on the TV, I see
something or they kill each other, I end up crying. I always
tell myself that everything in life is possible if I have
balance. I'm always telling myself that imagination is the
beginning of creation. I imagine what I desire and I will do
whatever I have imagined about. I've got high principles
and I am determined to live up to that because many pass
unnoticed in the rush of life. I live a purpose driven life, and
I believe I'm here for a purpose. If you are really interested
in knowing me better, the results are so amazing! I believe
in choosing my thoughts, as choosing the direction of my
life. I have a lot of respect for my country, in everything it
has to achieve.*

*What keeps me going? My strong personality. And I
possess qualities that impact vitality and radiance. And I*

am the only one." - JABU GWALA



(YouTube - click to view)

The air is electric as we peruse their words! There is a generosity of spirit! They are truly curious about each other. They are open . . . I praise them for their efforts. I remind them that to go in search of one's self is the true key to seeing the world different. I stressed that god is good. I want more. Let's find god in ourselves .

[Homework: How do we honor our selves?]

**HOW DO I HONOR MYSELF?
- BY THANDEKA MKHWANAZI**

I honor myself by motivating myself and keeping myself happy
I honor myself by having self-respect so that I will also be able to have respect for others
By being true to myself
I honor myself by doing the best I can for myself
(Important decision)
Encouraging myself
I honor myself by being confident regardless of the situation

I wake up in the morning and meditate on a few lines of scripture, and go to the mirror. I talk to my reflection and I appreciate every one of my features, especially my boobs. I used to call them "the girls" now they've changed to "hip no howzies" for hypnotising. Then I bless myself with 30 minutes of exercise.

**HOW DO I HONOR MYSELF?
- BY MIHLOTI JOYCE CHAUKE**

Placing myself first within me and satisfying my feelings is a big honor to me. Why, is because in reality you cannot satisfy a human being. Therefore I need to make myself happy before someone else. Not forgetting the upstairs man because he is my creator. I'm who I am because of him.

Seeing someone getting help in terms of medication and counseling is a great honor. The field that I'm working in is very sensitive, which is HIV/ AIDS. It needs perseverance and understanding. By doing so, gives me a perpetual honor, because I hate persecution.

**HOW DO I HONOR MYSELF?
- BY NELISWA MOTSHELE**

I honor myself by being humble and patient! Although I have done mistakes in my past I still have dreams and visions that will come to life in the future! I'm strong and never give up in life. I go on even when I see no lightness anymore. I honor myself cause I'm beautiful and special but most of all it's all because I'm a strong African young woman!

THE YARD: Introducing The Art of Fabulosity!

The writing exercises are a success! This is a group that enjoys writing! They welcome self-expression. Once, I am sure the autobiography will live, we head for the yard.

This prison is a catacomb with large spaces situated internally to provide fresh air and physical exercise.

In the sunlight we began moving around this ancient courtyard changing directions, moving backwards gradually adding jumps with sound. I stop at intervals to speak about our relationships to our body, our breath: extending out thru the



Walking to the Yard (YouTube - click to view)

fingertips to experience a full extension of the arm. The beauty of strength and resilience. I remind them of the much needed physical power inherent in exercise. **We can do this!** Moving into balances- building human sculptures, flowing into supporting each other. I recant my basic approach to performance: **We are fabulous! We are fabulous! We are truly fabulous!**



Fabulous & Fit (YouTube - click to view)

They are floating over the concrete!

Idris takes them thru rhythmic explorations- stepping, stomping, clapping, singing in groups! It is magical to watch these African women work their physical musicality! The beautiful feminine African body, organically bring its own intelligence. I am exalted as I experience this cadence!



Stomp, Clap, Sing (YouTube - click to view)



Moving Poem (YouTube - click to view)

A performance is possible! We have some language, we are exploring movement and they are all so generous in sharing the joy of sound! In the sunlight, we are ready to return to our rummage for truth! They are stepping and speaking together! They are floating over the concrete!

My intention is to create a moving poem:

I hear, I need, I want, I will, I am! : They gesture intoning hopes, dreams, longing with pure desire! They are the South African choir! They are the Greek chorus as woman after woman move into soloing their personal visions of a new world!

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Urban Voices International Arts Festival In Association with Jo'burg Correctional Services And Cultural Odyssey

presents

The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women in

"Serious Fun at Sun City"

A Theater Workshop directed by Rhodessa Jones
Assistant Director: Idris Ackamoor
Producer: Roshnie Moonsammy

Johannesburg Correctional Services
Female prison
Johannesburg South Africa

27 October - 19 November 2008

Introduction**RHODESSA JONES: Rho-isms**

"I say to women. Look in the mirror everyday of your life and decide what's beautiful about your body anyhow . . . anyway. Cause we get like, "Oh God, I'm too fat . . . I used to be really skinny . . . I used to be . . ." What are you now? What can you embrace now about yourself?"

"How did you save your own life? That's you at your best. It's about your core strength."

"I want you to get down to YOU! We have a hard time serving . . . admiring . . . taking care of ourselves. It's either the family, it's God, and it's never ourselves. And even God wants us to know grace and grow strong. But as women we always go somewhere else with it. Create a portrait of yourself!"

"I want you to look deep and long at what you do best. We forget about that part of us. We take it inside.

We eat too much.
 We sex too much.
 We drug too much.
 We put ourselves at risk
 We put ourselves in harms way
 We look for love in all the wrong places

You grow up with somebody saying
 Ooo baby you so fine
 Ooo baby you so fine
 Carry this bag for me . . .
 Oooo, baby, you so fine
 Cash this check for me
 Oooo, baby, you so fine
 You do the time
 I'm gonna be waiting for you . . .

And we do it
 We blindly do it!
 We sacrifice our children . . . our families . . . and our dreams

Take this stuff to heart. Theater saved my life. You deserve a great life!!

[^top](#)***Cultivating Serious Fun at Sun City***

Showtime (YouTube - [click to view](#))

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Coming up

- August 4 - 8, 2009 · Cultural Odyssey's New Performance in Black Theatre at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina featuring: **Music for One Hand Clapping** featuring Idris Ackamoor & Frederick Harris, **The Unsung Diva** featuring Angela Dean Baham, **The Love Project** featuring Rhodessa Jones & Idris Ackamoor, and **The Breach** (a work-in-progress) with Joanna Haigood, Rhodessa Jones, and Idris Ackamoor.

Visit us online at www.culturalodyssey.org

South African "Odyssey" e-news written by Rhodessa Jones, designed by Paul Hyatt of Open Range in collaboration with Idris Ackamoor. Video footage filmed and edited by Idris Ackamoor. Photos by Idris Ackamoor and Bram Lammers.

ODYSSEYS — the online newsletter of Cultural Odyssey
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