

PSH Black Heritage Celebration

Maafa: The Middle Passage

By Sinead DeRoiste
Business Manager

Did you know that right here at Penn State Harrisburg there was an opportunity to share the experience of The Middle Passage...at no cost? The performance took place Thursday February 27th right here in our own Gallery Lounge. I must admit that attendance was very sparse, however that did not impact the power or the message. To all those who could not attend for whatever reason I must say that you missed a wonderful performance.

Harambee United Church of Christ (UCC) brought the show to us. They have been performing this dramatization since 1998. The performance commemorates the *Maafa*, which is a Swahili word-meaning calamity. The *Maafa* recounts the stories of Africans whom were from their homelands and sold into slavery.

The opening scene was set in modern times with two older African-American women reminiscing about the stories passed down to them by their elders. The stories retold the horrific experiences of African-Americans beginning with their capture and separation thru slavery and ended with the current attempts to establish and maintain unity between Blacks and Whites in the present.

The horrific experiences that Africans went through to come to America against their will were felt throughout the performance. One scene in particular depicted the actual slave ship and its overcrowded condition. Amidst the performers' moans and groans paired with the ambient sounds of shackles and chains you could hear the members of the audience sniffing and asking one another for tissue.

This performance was very informative and is one of many ways to remember our collective history. I had the opportunity to speak to some of the performers, one of whom attends PSH, and they all felt the need for such informative programs.

Here are some comments:

"Spread diversity, so more people can see it. Everyone should have the opportunity to see (*Maafa*). Penn State University needs a message, especially with all the issues of diversity that they have had to deal with and continue to deal with." -Mrs. Kathy Guider of Harrisburg

"We need more diversity because we are a diverse people. I have German, African, and Irish relatives. We all are one people and we need to go back to our roots...together. The culmination of all this should be unity and we share the blood of Jesus Christ." -Sherle Seigle of Steelton, Actress from Harambee UCC

"Certain classes like Humanities, History and Theatre classes should have encouraged their students to participate. Depending on the event, certain classes should encourage attendance, especially evening courses. Students sneak in because they can't leave classes, but enrichment is absolutely necessary to broaden horizons." -Robyn Perry-Smith of Harrisburg, Student at PSH and Actress from Harambee UCC.



Above performers are seen interpreting conditions on slave ship during the middle passage

Photo By Steve Wilson

HONOR 401H (3 cr.)

Honors Seminar: Comparative Justice and Political Systems (Summer 03)

Assoc. Professor Toni DuPont-Morales will be the faculty member for this trip.

This trip includes a two-week trip to London with four (4) optional days in Paris.

Departure Date for London: July 31, 2003

Departure Date from London to Paris or back to the USA: August 14, 2003

Return Date to USA from Paris: August 17, 2003

The approximate cost is \$2,000. The London portion and \$2,500. The Paris portion, this includes the cost of tuition.

This is a wonderful opportunity to increase your knowledge of other cultures and international travel. If you are planning on applying for this, please stop in Room C216 and see V. Syck. We would also appreciate you advising us here in the Honors Office (Room C-118).

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