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# **BLACK NATIVITY: A SEASON FOR CHANGE**

**By T. Mychael Rambo  
and Lou Bellamy**

**Directed by Dominic Taylor  
Presented by Target**

**December 3 - December 27, 2009  
Previews December 1 & 2**

## **TOOLS FOR TEACHING**

The following are a series of questions you may use to prompt discussion, critical analysis or dialogue about this play. They may be used either before or after the play, either to guide audiences toward specific issues as they watch or, to stimulate conversation about topical issues afterward.

These questions are intended to meet the state standards for High School Language Arts and Literacy set by the Board of Education. (Grades 9 through 12).

Penumbra Theatre Company also offers Lesson Plans that use the script, the production, and the study guide to investigate specific themes. Each plan can run from approximately 15 to 45 minutes for discussion. Please contact the Education and Outreach Director for more details: [sarah.bellamy@penumbratheatre.org](mailto:sarah.bellamy@penumbratheatre.org)

### **A Feel for the Times -- Comprehension Questions**

1. Name three religions Langston Hughes incorporated into *Black Nativity*.
2. What was the Abolition Movement?
3. Name two politically influential objectors who were part of the black literati.
4. What were the tenets of the French Revolution? How did they influence the New World?
5. Why was literacy so important to black people at the turn of the century?
6. Explain how spiritual has faith sustained black communities, give one example from the antebellum and one example from the post-bellum periods.
7. What is Creole?
8. What is Manifest Destiny? How was this term used in the expansion of the United States?
9. What is seasoning?
10. Explain what it means to “testify.”

### **Critical Thinking and Analysis -- Short Essay Questions**

1. Langston Hughes exhibited a complex understanding of race that was in many ways ahead of his time. What were some of the contributing factors to his particular comprehension of race and ethnicity?
2. In what ways can you see blended spiritual systems in the New World influencing art and culture? How do these new systems articulate identity?
3. What is the difference between a cultural interest in a faith versus a belief in it? How did Langston Hughes negotiate this difference in his life and work?
4. Have a look at the following poems by Langston Hughes: *A Dream Deferred*; *I’ve Known Rivers*; and *Notes on Commercial Theater*. Do you consider Langston Hughes an activist? How does his work reflect his concerns about the representation of black people and culture? How did he influence and reshape this representation based on his life experience?
5. How does *Black Nativity* reflect the gospel tradition?

**Language Arts and Theatre – Reflection**

1. What are three ways in which *Black Nativity* blurs the boundaries between real time and the past or future?
2. How does *Black Nativity* negotiate material reality versus cosmic spirituality? Think especially about the visibility and invisibility of the story-teller; what is his role, specifically? How does the fact that the audience can see him but the ensemble cannot affect the show?
3. How is dance incorporated into *Black Nativity*? How does the movement component enhance or articulate aspects of the Nativity story?

**Exercise #1**

As part of his effort to document the Underground Railroad, William Still included data from the logbooks of “station agents,” as well as his own records about recent arrivals and departures as thousands of people moved under covert conditions toward freedom. Often called “The Father of the Underground Railroad,” Still helped as many as 60 slaves a month escape to freedom, interviewing each person and keeping careful records, including a brief biography and the destination of each person, along with any alias that they adopted, though he kept his records carefully hidden.

Below are two letters from William Still’s *The Underground Railroad*. Ask your students to read each of the letters and write a letter in response. Prompt questions include: what words were unfamiliar? What did you notice about the language? Was the letter signed? What reasons may the letter be unsigned? What are similar themes in the two letters? What historical events are the letters addressing (this is particularly relevant as the second letter mentions John Brown)?

TOPSHAM, VT., September 1st, 1855.

WM. STILL, MY DEAR FRIEND:—I have the heart, but not the time, to write you a long letter. It is Saturday evening, and I am preparing to preach to-morrow afternoon from Heb. xiii. 3, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." This will be my second sermon from this text. Sabbath before last I preached from it, arguing and illustrating the proposition, deduced from it, that "the great work to which we are now called is the abolition of Slavery, or the emancipation of the slave," showing our duty as philanthropists. To-morrow I intend to point out our duty as citizens. Some to whom I minister, I know, will call it a political speech; but I have long since determined to speak for the dumb what is in my heart and in my Bible, let men hear or forbear. I am accountable to the God of the oppressed, not to man. If I have his favor, why need I regard man's disfavor. Many besides the members of my own church come out regularly to hear me. Some of them are pro-slavery politicians. The consequence is, I preach much on the subject of Slavery. And while I have a tongue to speak, and lips to pray, they shall never be sealed or silent so long as millions of dumb have so few to speak for them.

But poor Passmore Williamson is in bonds. Let us also remember him, as bound with him. He has many sympathizers. I am glad you did not share the same fate. For some reasons I am sorry you have fallen into the hands of thieves. For some others I am glad. It will make you more devoted to your good work. Persecution always brightens the Christian, and gives more zeal to the true philanthropist. I hope you will come off victorious. I pray for you and your co-laborers and co-sufferers.

My good brother, I am greatly indebted to you for your continued kindness. The Lord reward you.

I have a scholarship in an Ohio College, Geneva Hall, which will entitle me—any one I may send—to six years tuition. It is an Anti-slavery institution, and wholly under Anti-slavery control and influence. They want colored students to prepare them for the great field of labor open to men of talent and piety of that class. When I last saw you I purposed talking to you about this matter, but was disappointed very much in not getting to take tea with you, as I partly promised. Have you a son ready for college? or for the grammar school? Do you know any promising young man who would accept my scholarship? Or would your brother's son, Peter or Levin, like to have the benefit of it? If so, you are at liberty to promise it to any one whom you think I would be willing to educate. Write me at your earliest convenience, about this matter.

ELLINGTON, Chautauqua Co., N.Y., Dec. 7th, 1859.

MR. STILL:—Dear Sir:—Yours of the 29th, was duly and gratefully received, although the greater portion of your epistle, of a necessity, portrayed the darker side of the picture, yet we have great reason to be thankful for the growing interest there is for the cause throughout the free States, for it certainly is on the increase, even in our own locality. There are those who, five years since, were (ashamed, must I say it!) to bear the appellation of "Anti-slavery," who can now manfully bear the one then still more repellant of Abolitionist. All this we wish to feel thankful for, and wish their number may never grow less.

The excitement relative to the heroic John Brown, now in his grave, has affected the whole North, or at least every one who has a heart in his breast, particularly this portion of the State, which is so decidedly Anti-slavery.

At a meeting of our Society, to-day, at which your letter was read, it was thought best that I should reply to it, a request with which I cheerfully comply. We would like to hear from you, and learn the directions to be given to our box, which will be ready to send as soon as we can hear from you. Please give us all necessary information, and oblige our Society.

You have the kind wishes and prayers of all the members, that you may be the instrument of doing much good to those in bonds, and may God speed the time when every yoke shall be broken, and let the oppressed go free.

Yours, truly,  
Mrs. DR. BROOKS.

P.S. I have just learned that John Brown's body passed through Dunkirk, a few miles from this place, yesterday. A funeral sermon is to be preached in this place one week from next Sabbath, for the good old man.

**Exercise #2**

Ask students to read through the list and in small groups select one of the arrivals to create a story about. Students should focus on point of view, narrative and creating a believable back story.

1. Female Slave in Male Attire, fleeing as a Planter, with her Husband as her Body Servant.
2. CAPT. F. ARRIVES WITH FOURTEEN "PRIME ARTICLES" ON BOARD.
3. Charles Hall and others.
4. Mother and Child from Norfolk, Va.,
5. ARRIVAL FROM CAMBRIDGE, 1857.
6. Silas Long and Solomon Light—"The Mother of Twelve Children"—Old Jane Davis.

Here is one example of one such story of an arrival described as a box of cargo:

In the winter of 1857 a young woman, who had just turned her majority, was boxed up in Baltimore by one who stood to her in the relation of a companion, a young man, who had the box conveyed as freight to the depot in Baltimore, consigned to Philadelphia. Nearly all one night it remained at the depot with the living agony in it, and after being turned upside down more than once, the next day about ten o'clock it reached Philadelphia. Her companion coming on in advance of the box, arranged with a hackman, George Custus, to attend to having it brought from the depot to a designated house, Mrs. Myers', 412 S. 7th street, where the resurrection was to take place.

Custus, without knowing exactly what the box contained, but suspecting from the apparent anxiety and instructions of the young man who engaged him to go after it, that it was of great importance, while the freight car still remained on the street, demanded it of the freight agent, not willing to wait the usual time for the delivery of freight. At first the freight agent declined delivering under such circumstances. The hackman insisted by saying that he wished to despatch it in great haste, said it is all right, you know me, I have been coming here for many years every day, and will be responsible for it. The freight-master told him to "take it and go ahead with it." No sooner said than done. It was placed in a one horse wagon at the instance of Custus, and driven to Seventh and Minster streets.

The secret had been intrusted to Mrs. M. by the young companion of the woman. A feeling of horror came over the aged woman, who had been thus suddenly entrusted with such responsibility. A few doors from her lived an old friend of the same religious faith with herself, well known as a brave woman, and a friend of the slave, Mrs. Ash, the undertaker or shrouder, whom every body knew among the colored people. Mrs. Myers felt that it would not be wise to move in the matter of this resurrection without the presence of the undertaker. Accordingly, she called Mrs. Ash in. Even her own family was excluded from witnessing the scene. The two aged women chose to be alone in that fearful moment, shuddering at the thought that a corpse might meet their gaze instead of a living creature. However, they mustered courage and pried off the lid. A woman was discovered in the straw but no sign of life was perceptible. Their fears seemed fulfilled. "Surely she is dead," thought the witnesses.

"Get up, my child," spake one of the women. With scarcely life enough to move the straw covering, she, nevertheless, did now show signs of life, but to a very faint degree. She could not speak, but being assisted arose. She was straightway aided up stairs, not yet uttering a word. After a short while she said, "I feel so deadly weak." She was then asked if she would not have some water or nourishment, which she declined.

Before a great while, however, she was prevailed upon to take a cup of tea. She then went to bed, and there remained all day, speaking but a very little during that time. The second day she gained strength and was able to talk much better, but not with ease. The third day she began to come to herself and talk quite freely. She tried to describe her sufferings and fears while in the box, but in vain. In the midst of her severest agonies her chief fear was, that she would be discovered and carried back to Slavery. She had a pair of scissors with her, and in order to procure fresh air she had made a hole in the box, but it was very slight. How she ever managed to breathe and maintain her existence, being in the condition of becoming a mother, it was hard to comprehend. In this instance the utmost endurance was put to the test. She was obviously nearer death than Henry Box Brown, or any of the other box or chest cases that ever came under the notice of the Committee.

**Vocabulary – Important Terms**

**Abolition** – the act of formally repealing an existing practice through legal means, either by making it illegal, or simply no longer allowing it to exist in any form. In the United States, The Abolition Movement refers to the project to end racial slavery and liberate black Americans. The movement gained momentum after the British Parliament outlawed the African slave trade in 1807 and incorporated people from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds including but not limited to free blacks and liberal whites such as the Quakers. In 1863 slavery was outlawed in the United States with the formal declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

**Antebellum** – the period of time before or existing before the American Civil War during which slavery, the slave trade and the sale and purchase of slaves was legal and protected by local and federal governments.

**Anthropology** – the science that deals with the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, and social customs and beliefs of humankind or, the study of human beings' similarity to and divergence from other animals.

**Artifacts** – an object produced or shaped by human craft, especially a tool, weapon, or ornament of archaeological or historical interest.

**Bahia** – is actually a state in the country of Brazil in South America. As the chief locus of the early Brazilian slave trade, Bahia is considered to possess the greatest and most distinctive African imprint, in terms of culture and customs, in Brazil. These include the Yoruba-derived religious system of *Candomblé*, the martial art of *capoeira* (especially the style of *capoeira de Angola*), African-derived music such as *samba*, *afoxé*, and *axé*, and cuisine with strong links to western Africa.

**Bastille** – a prison located in Paris, France, the Bastille was the symbolic center of the French Revolution whose tenets were “liberté, égalité et fraternité” (freedom, equality and brotherhood). When the masses stormed its walls on July 14, 1789 it was considered a coup signaling the fall of the French aristocracy and tyranny of the wealthy. Today the French celebrate Bastille Day as a national holiday.

**Bookie** – a person that takes bets and may pay winnings depending upon results and, depending on the nature of the bet, the odds. Bookies worked illegally in the United States and were especially successful during Prohibition when illegal gambling was at an all-time high in major metropolitan centers.

**Bootlegger** – the illegal sale, production or consumption of alcohol, bootlegging became especially prevalent during the 1920s during the American Prohibition period and was controlled predominately by organized crime enterprises. A bootlegger operated the business.

**Buffalo Soldiers** – The black infantrymen of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Calvary who rose to celebrity upon their heroic return from the Indian Wars of 1866 – 1890 and patrolled the frontier territories as the U.S. spread westward beyond the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers into heavily contested indigenous land. While most returned to civil society some, realizing the terror the American government asked them to inflict upon Native American peoples was the same that had been inflicted upon blacks in the country, defected and joined the ranks of Native tribes, ingratiating themselves and became absorbed into indigenous American culture.

**Chesnutt, Charles** – (June 20, 1858 – November 15, 1932) an African American author and political activist best known for novels and short stories exploring racism and other social themes. His first and most famous book, *The Conjure Woman*, was published in 1899. Charles Chestnutt was a mixed-race individual who was often mistaken for a white man though he never attempted to “pass.”

**Civil War** – (1861–1865) was a sectional conflict in the United States of America between the federal government (the "Union") and eleven Southern slave states that declared their secession and formed the Confederate States of America led by President Jefferson Davis. The Union led by President Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party opposed the expansion of slavery and rejected any right of secession. Fighting commenced on April 12, 1861 when Confederate forces attacked a federal military installation Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

**Clandestine** – private or surreptitious; happenings or relationships characterized by, done in, or executed with secrecy or concealment, most frequently used to describe purposes of subversion or deception.

**Colloquial and Collective memory** – “the memory of the people” that may be passed down through the generations through song, oral history, folklore or through other artistic mediums but is very rarely included (and is often contrary to) the dominant historical record.

**Colonization** – the systematic expansion of European control of foreign territories. The region colonized is typically known as the Third or Developing World today, though at one point America, today a superpower, was contested colonial territory of the British, French and Spanish. The enforcement of colonial rule includes oppression, racism, forced religious conversion and language acquisition, efforts to undermine cultural continuity through education and the prohibition of students to speak their native languages.

**Corporeality** – bodily, material, of or pertaining to the flesh. Individuals who are socially and politically “marked” are done so through their bodies via gender, race, sexuality, etc.

**Corroborate** – to strengthen or make more certain with other evidence. Historians use various materials in dialogue with one another to prove an assumption or answer a question.

**Creole** – the merging of cultural, ontological and spiritual systems into a new, blended articulation of culture in the New World. Creole tradition incorporates European, African and indigenous American traditions into emergent expressions of culture and identity. It is often most easily identifiable in terms of cuisine, music and art though language and religion are vital to understanding the process.

**Cullen, Countee** – (May 30, 1903 – January 9, 1946) Considered the Poet Laureate of Harlem, Countee Cullen wrote for many of the premiere black magazines during the Harlem Renaissance including *Crisis* (NAACP) and *Opportunity* (National Urban League). Although his more notable poems deal with issues of both race and poverty such as “Saturday’s Child,” “Incident,” he wrote in verse unlike his contemporaries such as Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer. He received a master’s degree from Harvard University.

**Decolonization** – any effort organized or independent toward liberating the oppressed masses from imperial influence and control.

**Du Bois, W.E.B.** – (February 23, 1868 – August 27, 1963) One of the preeminent philosophers and historians of his day, W.E.B. DuBois was a beacon for African Americans struggling for autonomy, respect and self-representation, a true race-man. He was a founding member of the NAACP, a veteran author of creative and sociological writing, and a thinker who put forth some of the foremost social philosophies to come out of the era. Some of his best-known works are *The Souls of Black Folk*; *John Brown*; and *Black Reconstruction*.

**Dynasty** – is a succession of rulers who belong to the same family for generations. The term "dynasty" is also used to describe the era during which a family reigned, as well as events, trends and artifacts of that period.

**Ethnography** – is the genre of writing that describes the social or cultural lives of human beings based on fieldwork that includes observation, historiography, interview and analysis. Ethnography situates the findings of fieldwork within a holistic framework founded on the idea that any society cannot be understood through individuals in isolation or in part of the social system—all pieces must be taken into consideration not just for their sum but also for their interconnected nature. The genre has both formal and historical connections to travel writing and colonial office reports. Many cultural anthropologists consider ethnography the essence of the discipline.

**French Revolution** – (1789–1799) was a pivotal period in the history of French, European and Western civilization. During this time, republicanism replaced the monarchy in France and the Roman Catholic Church underwent a radical restructuring. While France would oscillate among republic, empire and monarchy, for 75 years after the First Republic fell to a coup d’etat, the Revolution is widely seen as a major turning point in the history of Western democracy—from the age of absolutism and aristocracy, to the age of the citizenry as the dominant political force. The slogan of the French Revolution was “*liberté, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort!*” (“Liberty, equality, fraternity, or death!”). This slogan outlived the revolution, later becoming the rallying cry of activists, both militant and non-violent, who promote democracy or overthrow oppressive governments.

**Garvey, Marcus** – (August 17, 1887 – June 10, 1940) was a publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, Black nationalist, and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). Garvey, born Jamaica, is best remembered as an important proponent of the Back to Africa movement, which encouraged those of African descent to return to their ancestral homelands. This movement would eventually inspire other movements ranging from the Nation of Islam to the Rastafari movement which proclaimed him a prophet. Garvey said he wanted those of African ancestry to “redeem” Africa and for the colonial European powers to leave it.

**Great Migration** – The rapid relocation of masses of black Americans from the traditional South to the northern states that coincided with the industrialization of major cities at the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Haitian Revolution** – (1791-1804) was the most successful of the many African slave rebellions in the Western Hemisphere and established Haiti as a free, black republic, the first of its kind. Africans and people of African ancestry freed themselves from slavery and colonization by taking advantage of the conflict among whites over how to implement the reforms of the **French Revolution** in this slave society.

**Harlem Renaissance** – was a flowering of African American art, literature, music and culture in the United States led primarily by African Americans in Harlem New York City. **Langston Hughes’** work was seminal to the movement.

**Harper’s Ferry** – a town in Jefferson County, West Virginia, situated on the banks of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers where the Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia meet. On October 16, 1859, the radical abolitionist **John Brown** led a small group of followers in a raid on the Arsenal. Brown attacked and captured several buildings; he hoped to use the captured weapons to initiate a slave uprising throughout the South. However, he and his men were quickly pinned down by local citizens and militia, and forced to take refuge in the fire-house adjacent to the arsenal. On October 18, U.S. Marines were sent via train to Harpers Ferry. Under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee, they stormed the fire-house and killed or captured most of the raiders. Brown was tried for treason by the State of Virginia, convicted, and hanged in nearby Charles Town. The failed raid was a major catalyst in accelerating the slide to **Civil War**. Brown was successfully prosecuted and sentenced to death by hanging.

**Historiography** – studies the processes by which historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted. Broadly speaking, historiography examines the writing of history and the use of historical methods, drawing upon such elements such as authorship, sourcing, interpretation, style, bias, and audience. The word historiography can also refer to a body of historical work.

**Hughes, Langston** – (February 1, 1902 – May 22 1967) was an African American poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer, and newspaper columnist. Hughes is best known for his work during the **Harlem Renaissance**. His life’s work was dedicated to expressing the heart, passion and strength of black American culture.

**John Brown** -- (May 9, 1800 – December 2, 1859) was an American **abolitionist**, the first white abolitionist to advocate and to practice insurrection as a means to the abolition of slavery. He has been called "the most controversial of all nineteenth-century Americans." His attempt to start a liberation movement among enslaved blacks in Virginia in 1859 electrified the nation. He was tried for treason (to the state of Virginia) and hanged, but his behavior at the trial seemed heroic to millions of Americans.

**Lincoln, Mrs. Mary Todd** – (December 13, 1818 - July 16, 1882) was the First Lady of the United States from the years between 1861 and 1865. Her husband, Abraham Lincoln served as this country's sixteenth President.

**Locke, Alain** -- (September 13, 1896 - June 9, 1954) was an African American writer, philosopher, educator, and patron of the arts. He is best known for his writings on and about the **Harlem Renaissance**. Locke received his PhD. in philosophy in 1918, the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Locke promoted African American artists, writers, and musicians, encouraging them to look to Africa as an inspiration for their works. He encouraged them to depict African and African American subjects, and to draw on their history for subject material. *The New Negro* a collection of writings by African Americans, which would become one of his best-known works.

**Mande people** -- The Mande peoples founded and managed one of the largest ancient West African empires. It was a vast region that incorporated coastal and savanna groups, stretching throughout Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. The Mande are known for their music and their dexterity in fabric art, particularly in weaving rhythmic patterns in cloth. As a result of the transatlantic slave trade, many of these people ended up in the New World, their presence traceable through cultural, musical and textile customs particular to the region.

**Manifest Destiny** – a phrase that expressed that the belief that the United States had a mission to expand, spreading its form of democracy and freedom. Advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that expansion was not only good, but that it was obvious ("manifest") and certain ("destiny"). Originally a political catch phrase of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, "Manifest Destiny" eventually became a standard historical term, often used as a synonym for the territorial expansion of the United States across North America towards the Pacific Ocean and an ideological excuse or pardon for the slaughter or forced relocation of vast numbers of indigenous peoples. The term fell out of usage by U.S. policy makers early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but some commentators believe that aspects of Manifest Destiny, particularly the belief in an American "mission" to promote and defend democracy throughout the world, continued to have an influence on American political ideology.

**McKay, Claude** -- (September 15, 1889 – May 22, 1948) was a Jamaican writer, humanist and communist. He was part of the **Harlem Renaissance** and wrote three novels: *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo* (1929), and *Banana Bottom* (1933). McKay also authored a collection of short stories, *Gingertown* (1932), and two autobiographical books, *A Long Way from Home* (1937) and *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940). His book of poetry, *Harlem Shadows* (1922) was among the first books published during the Harlem Renaissance. His book of collected poems, *Selected Poems* (1953), was published posthumously.

**Middle Passage** – refers to the portion of the Atlantic Slave trade that transported enslaved people from Africa to markets in North and South America and the Caribbean. It was called the Middle Passage because the slave trade was a form of Triangular Trade; it left Europe for African markets, sailed to Africa where the goods were sold or traded for people in the African slave markets, then sailed to the Americas and Caribbean (West Indies) where the Africans were sold or traded for goods for European markets, and then returned to Europe. About 18 million Africans were transported from Africa with 3 million dying during the journey. Disease, abuse and starvation due to the length of the passage were the main contributors to the death toll.

**Miscegenation** – is the mixing of different ethnicities or races, especially in marriage, cohabitation, or sexual relations. *Interracial marriage* or *interracial dating* may be more common in contemporary usage. While the English word has a history of ethnocentrism and racial superiority, the Spanish, Portuguese and French words, *mestizaje*, *miscigenação* and *métissage*, connote a positive ethno-cultural melting pot. It was outlawed in the United States until the landmark civil rights decision was enacted in 1967 by the US Supreme Court and declared Virginia's anti-miscegenation statute, the "The Racial Integrity Act of 1954", unconstitutional, thereby ending all race-based legal restriction on marriage in the United States.

**Nathaniel (Nat) Turner** – (October 2, 1800 – November 11, 1831) was an American slave whose failed slave rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, was the most remarkable instance of black resistance to enslavement in the antebellum Southern United States. His methodical slaughter of white civilians during the uprising make him a controversial figure, but he is still considered by many as a heroic figure of black resistance to oppression.

**New World** – describes the territory explored by the Europeans after Christopher Columbus landed ashore in the Caribbean. Thinking momentarily that he had discovered a new oceanic path to India, he declared that the people inhabiting this land were Indians. They were in fact, Native Americans, more than likely Taino and Carib peoples. Upon realizing that the land discovered was not India, the European explorers declared this vast stretch of land in the Western Hemisphere the “New World,” and set about exploring, claiming and cultivating the land.

**Ontology** (ontological) – is the philosophical study of being or existence.

**Orisha** – are multi-dimensional beings who represent the forces of nature. They have attributes and stories similar to the stories and attributes used to describe the ancient Greek and Roman pantheons. To the followers of Santeria, however, the Orisha are not remote divinities; on the contrary, they are vibrant, living entities who take an active part in everyday life.

**Passing** – refers to the ability of a person to be regarded as a member of a combination of sociological groups other than his or her own, such as a different race, ethnicity, social class, gender and/or disability status, generally with the purpose of gaining social acceptance. This may take the form of changing only one group from the person's own, such as a person dressing such as to pretend to be of a higher social class, or may take the form of simultaneously changing multiple groups. In the United States, some black people found it advantageous to let whites assume they were also white, thereby denying their family and history but gaining access to privileges reserved for whites only in a segregated society.

**Paternalism** – describes a system under which an authority presence decides to supply needs or regulate conduct of those under its control as individuals as well as in their relations to the authority and to each other. A paternalistic society is organized much in the way of a **patriarchal** family structure wherein the leaders are not only responsible but additionally control and mediate any interaction between other members of society.

**Patriarchy** – describes a society that is structured around the notion of men as breadwinners, leaders and representatives of the society. This kind of society is marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family and the legal dependence of wives and children. Additionally, a patriarchal model traces birth lineage back through the father's bloodlines, which often determines inheritance. In more broad terms, patriarchy describes the control by men of a disproportionately large share of power over the rest of society.

**Plantation Slavery** – the use of slave labor to promote the intentional planting of a crop, on a large-scale production or pasture. Crops may be called plantation crops because of their association with a specific type of farming economy. Most of these involve a large landowner, raising crops with economic value rather than for subsistence, with a number of employees carrying out the work. Often it referred to crops newly introduced to a region. In past times it has been associated with slavery, indentured labor, and other economic models of high inequity. However, arable and dairy farming are both usually (but not always) excluded from such definitions.

**Prohibition** – The enforced time period in the United States between 1920 and 1933 during which the sale, consumption or production of alcohol was illegal.

**Santeria** -- is a set of related religious systems that fuse Catholic/Christian beliefs with traditional Yoruba beliefs. In the Yoruba language, Lukumí means "friends" and also applies to descendants of Yorùbá slaves in Cuba, their music and dance, and the Cubanized dialect of the Yorùbá language.

**Seasoning** -- the forced acclimation of newly arrived slaves. The goals of seasoning were twofold: the first was to acclimate new slaves to their surroundings including basic language acquisition, lay of the land and laws to abide; the second goal was to break any rebellious spirit that would encourage newcomers to incite trouble amongst the senior populations. Seasoning was a brutal, confusing and critical feature of the slave system.

**Segregation** -- or "Jim Crow law" the enforced, at one time legal, separation of the races in the United States based on racial prejudice and assumptions of racial superiority that was contested largely in the public realm as it pertained to people of color accessing social services such as public transportation, public drinking fountains and bathrooms, schools, theaters and stores. Segregation also influenced miscegenation (interracial or interethnic marriage or dating) hiring practices, legal representation, voting practices, medical care and housing. Citizens, business owners, state and federal officials, terrorist mob groups and the KKK enforced segregation. The Civil Rights Movement spurred the US Supreme Court to declare segregation officially unconstitutional in 1954. Its retraction throughout the country proved both slow and very violent.

**Testify** -- a solemn attestation as to the truth of a matter. Within the context of black culture and spirituality it can connote truth-telling or preaching.

**Theology** (theological) – reasoned discourse concerning religion, spirituality and gods. Theologians attempt to use rational analysis and argument to discuss, interpret, and teach on any of a myriad of religious topics.

**Underground Railroad** -- a network of clandestine routes by which African slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century United States attempted to escape to free states, or as far north as Canada, with the aid of abolitionists. Other routes led to Mexico or overseas. It's estimated that at its height between 1810 and 1850, between 30,000 and 100,000 people escaped enslavement via the Underground Railroad, though U.S. Census figures only account for 6,000. The Underground Railroad has captured public imagination as a symbol of freedom, and figures prominently in Black American history.

**Vodun** -- is a transliteration from the Fon language from Africa. Sometimes referred to as voodoo, or vodou, the religion of is practiced primarily in Haiti. Haitian Vodun (also known as Sèvis Gine or “African Service”) is a Creole religious form. Vodun has strong elements from the Bakongo of Central Africa and the Igbo and **Yoruba** of Nigeria, although many people or nations of Africa have representation in the liturgy of the Sèvis Gine.

**Washington, Booker T.** – (April 5, 1856 – November 14, 1915) was an influential educator, political leader and author working at the turn of the century. He was the founding principal of the Tuskegee Institute. He is perhaps most famous for his autobiography *Up From Slavery* and his 1895 address in Atlanta wherein he suggested that the best way for African Americans to participate within US society was to redirect efforts to end segregation in order to focus on education and developing a skilled labor force. His debates over this with **W.E.B. DuBois**, who considered Washington an apologist, are well-known.

**Wolof Dynasty** — the Wolof are an ethnic group found today in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania. Wolof history probably dates to about the 12th or 13th century. Wolof forefathers migrated west to the coast from Mali following the defeat of the Empire of the Ghana in the 11th century. Oral family histories indicate that at least some of the first settlers in the area were of Fulbe origin. Much Wolof history has been preserved in oral praise songs which are recited by **griots** ("professional praise singers"). Portuguese traveler accounts from the 15th century indicate an organized Wolof presence in what is still their homelands. Europeans established a fort on Gorée Island off the coast of modern day Dakar, which served as one of the primary points of departure for slaving vessels bound for the Americas. Since European contact Wolof history has undergone numerous conquests and revolts as competing rulers challenged one another for kingship. Most Wolof are Muslim, and it was most often the case that Wolof leaders converted to Islam first, before the religion spread to the less powerful members of society. (For more information, please see: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Wolof.html>)

**Yoruba** -- a large ethno-linguistic group or ethnic nation in Africa; the majority of them speak the Yorùbá language. The Yoruba constitute approximately 30 percent of Nigeria's total population, and around 40 million individuals throughout the region of West Africa. While the majority of the Yoruba live in southwestern Nigeria, there are also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in Benin, Ghana and Togo, as well as large diasporic Yoruba communities in Sierra Leone, Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Trinidad, the Caribbean, and the United States.