

ASCAC Mid-Atlantic Region
PRAXIS Newsletter

**Ivan Van Sertima Tribute
Report**

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On Saturday January 26, 2002, ASCAC Mid-Atlantic conducted a bus trip to the Dr. Ivan Van Sertima tribute at Medgar Evers College, CUNY in Brooklyn, New York. The exquisitely hosted trip along with the magnificent weather and historic event created a momentous experience for the approximately twenty-five participants.

A distinguished list of living legends gathered - at their own expense - to attempt to articulate the magnitude of Dr. Van Sertima's contribution to our collective psychological healing process. His 1977 seminal work, *They Came Before Columbus*, was explosive. Although he stood on the shoulders of two centuries of African-centered scholars, the timeliness, readability and impeccable analytical nature of his work made it stand out. It exploded the twin myths of Western superiority and African inferiority for a wide audience. As a follow-up, in 1979 he created a locus for African-centered scholarship with his *Journal of African Civilizations*. He motivated a generation of scholars.

The following is the list of speakers and overview of each message.

Dr. Clinton Crawford opened the proceedings.

Minister Clemson Brown offered libations.

Ralph Carter led us in the singing of the Black National Anthem.

Dr. Runoko Rashidi presented a chronology of the *Journal of African Civilizations*.

Dr. Jose Bey expressed the honor he felt when Dr. Van Sertima asked him to contribute an essay on Moorish history. He described the positive influence his association with scholars had on his life.

Dr. Wayne Chandler told us of his surprise at finding nothing depicting Hannibal as a Black African, while conducting research on him. He had to go to Latin and French sources to find those depictions. Later in his career, he was informed that there are in fact active efforts to censor history book material.

Aisha Finch, daughter of Dr. Charles Finch, read a tribute by her father entitled "Ivan Van Sertima: An African Man for His Time". He described how *They Came Before Columbus* shook Western establishment and uplifted African-centered scholars.

Gil Nobles said that African-centered scholars play the role of terrorists, when they expose fallacies in Western beliefs. He called Black scholars, who advocate Western worldviews, political transvestites. He recounted some of the troubles he faced through the years by serving our community with his show "Like It Is".

Dr. James Crawford revealed that he was transformed the first time he heard Dr. Van Sertima speak. Dr. Crawford advised that reclaiming the science and values of ancient Africans would serve us as a people.

Dr. Rosalind Jeffries said that Dr. Van Sertima teaches excellence.

Dr. Leonard Jeffries told us that we must establish support systems for our scholars. By serving us, they gave up the material rewards their talent could have brought them. We must also support our young scholars as we pull generations together, build human pyramids and establish schools of knowledge everywhere.

Dr. Ben admonished us for routinely paying homage to a male deity but rarely to a female one - we must balance our perspective. He discussed the price that African centered scholars have had to pay for refusing to compromise with the West's distortions. His response was always, "No! You're lying!" The result was not one merit raise in his academic career.

A Guyanese folk singer sang a song to commemorate Dr. Van Sertima's birthday.

Camille Yarbrough said that Dr. Van Sertima's works filled in missing pieces; it is up to us to tell our story. She related how during our enslavement, the oppressor would undermine our unity by giving selected ones favorable treatment in the "big house". She pointed out that those "master's tricks" are being employed today.

Tehut-Nine rendered his poem *Scary Movie*. It was a moving and brilliantly crafted collage of movie and television show titles. Its message was that although the Western establishment views conscious Africans as threats, we must maintain our self development efforts.

Dr. Asa Hilliard read a tribute from Nzinga Ratibisha Heru - international president of ASCAC. He then announced ASCAC's international conference scheduled for March 14-17 in Philadelphia. Dr. Hilliard impressed upon us that we are engaged in a serious culture war. And the Heritage Foundation is a primary antagonist. He related Brazil's conscious campaign - articulated in 1914 - to eliminate African culture. It would be done by absorbing people of African descent into a Brazilian culture. He gave examples of a similar campaign in America.

Dr. Jan Carew - fellow Guyanese and longtime friend of Dr. Van Sertima - said that the imperialists tore pages out of the book of the universe, but Dr. Van Sertima put them back. He said that we must write our own history, if we want the truth. He guides his life with something his grandmother told him: "Vision without action is hallucination".

Jacqueline Van Sertima - wife of Dr. Van Sertima - told us that there are no such things as accidents. She related the circumstances that weaved their lives together.

Dr. Ivan Van Sertima recounted experiences from his investigative researches. He said that, with effort, our history that has been denied, distorted and buried could be recovered.

Dr. Ishakamusa Barashango led us as we collectively projected a blessing towards Dr. Ivan Van Sertima.