

Dr. Selina Akua Ahoklui: A Remarkable Woman

by

Doris Green, M.A.

Retired Fulbright Scholar /US Department Cultural Specialist, President: Pan African Performing Arts Preservation Association, Columnist at Modern Ghana.com,
Creator of Greenotation Percussion Notation System

THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR THE LIFE OF

Dr. Selina Akua Ahoklui

• 1941 — 2017 •

Service Saturday, June 17th, 2017 St Matthew Roman Catholic Church 1123 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11213	Viewing: 9:30 am—11:00 am Mass: 11:00 am Repass (Immediately after Mass) St. Matthew's Parish Center 1345 Lincoln Place (located directly behind the church)
---	--

Parking: Underground public parking is available next door to 1345 Lincoln Place (directly behind the church)

Directions via MTA: 3 or 4 trains to Utica Ave and the church is across the street.
A train to Utica Ave | exit the station go to Malcolm X and Fulton St | take the Kings Plaza bound 846 bus | exit at Eastern Pkwy and Utica Ave



Greetings, family, friends and members of the Ghanaian community and all others; I extend to you my sincere condolences and wish you comfort and strength in your time of need.

For the third time within two weeks the telephone rang to announce that the frosty hand of death has claimed another life from the African cultural community. This time it was my esteemed friend and colleague Dr. Selina Akua Ahoklui. As I wiped tears from my eyes I try to patch together a few sentences to pay homage to Dr Selina Ahoklui, a remarkable woman.

3.1

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.10, no.4, June 2017

I have known Selina or over 40 (forty) some odd years. I believe we first met at the American Museum of Natural History. We shared a common goal, which was to disseminate African culture to the public at large. Selina was born in 1941 in *Tsibu Awudome*, Ghana. She was a gifted artist working in the medium of fabric design, Kente cloth, weaving and fashioning jewelry. I recall at the Museum she offered classes in “*tie dye*”. One can say that Selina introduced the art of “*tie-dye*” to the public.

Adinkra printed cloth was another one of her specialties. She fashioned the Adinkra stamps from potatoes that were inked with different color and the imprint was transferred to the cloth. This was a new experience for the students.

Batik

Selina’s specialty was silk batik fabric. In order to make the Batik design, areas of the cloth is blocked out by using hot wax on the area. When the fabric is dyed, the waxed portion resist the dye leaving the imprint placed in the waxed area. My favorite was a black floral imprint on mid-night blue fabric.

Family

I share with you that my sister and I knew Selina. Her children and my niece went to Midwood High School. Selina was an excellent cook. She would prepare Ghanaian food for us. I had travelled to Africa visiting more than 21 nations conducting research in African music and dance. As such I had a favorite food from each country. In Ghana I enjoyed Fou-fou, spinach stew, chicken and light soup. I recall that Selina made Fou-fou from Bisquick because tropical and African foods were not readily available here. But it was still delicious.

Exhibits

Selina and I worked on many occasions; some of the more salient exhibits were the African music and dance exhibits we mounted at Adelphi University in Garden City, Long Island. The theme of the exhibit was the various instruments found in different countries of Africa. People could see the Chopi xylophone made from graduated tin cans as resonators for the keys. Selina dressed the showcases with fabrics of her design. We also brought Professor Opoku and his group to the campus to demonstrate Ghanaian music and dance.

3.2

At the museum I organized a Ghanaian weekend wherein I asked Selina to do a workshop on different head ties and head dresses worn in Ghana. It was spectacular to see how an ordinary piece of cloth within minutes could be transferred into an outstanding headdress. I particularly like the headgear called ‘in a hurry’.

The most celebrated exhibit we did was the New York Fulbright Alumni chapter held at New York University. This exhibit celebrated my work as the creator of Greenotation, the only system designed to write music of percussion instruments on paper and later reproduce them from a print source. The audience listened to my presentation and was invited to actually play the instruments, bells, rattles and drums from the printout. Dr. Selina Ahoklui had a room that resembled an out-door market in Africa. This market had all of her artistry displayed, materials, Kente cloth, tie-dye shirts weavings and batik prints as well as different jewelry fashioned by Selina.

A lady from Liberia catered the food so the attendees were able to taste African food and drink Sorrel and Ginger beer as well as dine on Fou-fou and other tasty delights. A roving musician (Balafone) player supplied the music. All in all it was an exhibit not usually experienced by the public and it was SRO only.

Selina and I worked together to bring African culture to the masses. When she became a teacher for the Board of Education, she invited me to her class during Black History Month so the students could not only see an American who had spent many years in Africa but also to enjoy my slide presentation of Africa, People, Places and Things.

Teacher of the Year

During her tenure with the Board of Education, Dr. Selina Ahoklui made us all proud when she was nominated “Teacher of the Year” which was celebrated in Washington, D.C. with President Bill Clinton. This was a most cherished moment.

We are gathered here today to have a final view of a most remarkable woman, Dr. Selina Akua Ahoklui. We applaud her for her contributions and celebrate her life here on earth. Her death leaves a void and she will be sorely missed, but we will always have our eloquent memories of her – Rest in peace.



3.4

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.10, no.4, June 2017