Ayodele Nzinga, MFA, PhD is a writer, director, theater producer, playwright, and scholar creating work in Oakland, California. She is the founder director of The Lower Bottom Playaz, Inc a non-profit theater company in Oakland, California. She is quietly making theater history by presenting the entire American Century Cycle by August Wilson in chronological order of the decades presented in the series often referred to as The Century Cycle (photo credit: TaSinSabir.com).
Spider Woman and the Twin War Godz

riding with spider woman and
twin war Godz born into a state
of war divined to be she who remembers
shield carrier spear chucker
hard to duck her up right in storm
moving forward like water
persistently efficient at removing obstacles
climber striver dream walker talking to the dead
i only fall forward i stand on what came before me
i do not recognize fences so i can't sit on them

nothing divides me i only multiply my shadow
covering all the ground upon which i stand
unafraid born free unapologetic in possession of
dignity i promise you nothing you will know
me by the works of my hands moving mountains
and making crooked places well-lit being very
straight about what lies in the dark ignorance is a
good excuse but a poor shield so i bleed light
i have come to make change and nothing but
change can change that no scrambles for cheese
prosperity follows me the abundant shiny one
seeking justice done three eyed with an inability to
act blind as time waits for no one i make time to
wake the deaf and see to it that the blind are reminded
to remember what they were born knowing it's not their eyes that
have failed I will prevail one path only forward into
change or the void i remain who i came to be
she who remembers
silently in small moments
will deliver reciprocity like the
new take out you found will
never forget its my duty to remember
its me rattling your cage
tapping on the window
resilient determined after me i

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.11, no.6, April 2018
have insured there will be more
all of us riding with spider woman and
twin war Godz with freedom on our mind
forever forward three eyed
with an inability
to act blind
we pray with our
hands moving
promising nothing
save reciprocity

Lynching Tree Memory

there are things I can never do
i do not take certain things for granted
no rose garden
only grey tinted glasses
blessed with memory too many people
afraid to remember least the scars come
open pus all over the crowded bus holding
small lives on their way to stale holes in
compressed realities with ghost hovering
over their sagging shoulders weighted by
impossible histories packed into tight
airless boxes no light no memories
no pain in amnesia curious freedom
i remember so i am not free to chain
others i can not be overseer can not
probe with blue gloves over hands that
are not part of the answer just more
of the question of how to be sane
with the memories of lynching trees
the shadows of broken bodies swinging
sorrowfully in southern breezes i remember
the name of black boys i never knew in life
just the memories of horrendous deaths

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.11, no.6, April 2018
i remember the roads my great great grans
walked in emancipation freed into poverty
the shadows from the lynching tree breathing
shallowly in jim crows reach afraid of joe turner
remembering stories of ships bad masters cruel
mistresses i can not carry chains can not lash backs
can not stop and frisk count your pennies taxing you
in pharaohs name can not deny you i love you better
than peter loved jesus love you well enough to
remember what you have forgotten in order
to open your eyes to something other than
the nightmare of real reality easier to sleep
easier to be sheep not all of them are slaughtered
only those that point out wolves
only those that can see
only those who remember
i remember all the reasons you are too afraid
to remember i sharpen weapons for the war
you won’t see i can not wear the uniforms
do the dances barely learned to speak the
language only did it to help me be of value to you
i am because we are
i remember
i can’t sell you god
i remember godz of thunder
dog stars and pyramids
i remember to pray with hands moving
i can not live on my knees
i remember being born free with dignity and everything
i can not settle for less i own my all-ness
the broken places from which we have risen
stumbling falling forward
remember us like a sky full of shiny midnight black crows
all together mystical and resplendent
rising above snares
that are not our imagination rather their machinations
wrought of fear designed to contain i remember
all the ways the songs been sung
the rope the whip the startled surprise
in bewildered eyes rough hands curses
no quarter in the madness no limits to
the transgressions under the authority
of tyrannical texts making profane things
seem sacred i remember being well before
the virus came the departure the separation
though doors of no return the abyss of
the ocean water burning lungs howling
from the pens home receding in the distance
the insistence that i was less than human
no tears no love no pain not human
beast animal property i remember being
human so i cling to it i will not be made
less i remember the shadows
the soulfelt sorrow
in bleak quarters the morning after
picnics & photographs of
visible hate poured on
like gasoline
the smell of sulfur
as the flame is lit
there are things i cannot do
things i do not take for granted
no rose garden
only grey tinted
glasses i
remember

Cotton & the Lynching Tree Gang

there was a gang of them holding us down
we were no match for such fierce cruelty
we fought back best we could but they
had friends in high places with last
words to say we had the right to last rites
sometimes
if bodies could be
found or were whole enough to recognize
sullen petulant times in the harsh grace of
cotton riding with joe turner & jim crow

31

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.11, no.6, April 2018
in the shadow of the lynching tree that
would stretch forth through centuries to come
becoming legacy and millstone
around the slender neck of equity
marking us like the melanin
no place for us
in the world after cotton
sugarcane railroads and telephone poles
forever set apart by the sins of
founding fathers who were not
saints merely flawed men building
fences around stolen things preaching
law and justice as they slaughtered and divided
spoils manifest greed exceptional ignorance and
superior suppression spoon feed through religion
god bless us swinging in the wind bloated
birds picking at our eyes as a chorus wails
lamenting our bloodied escape while they are still tethered in
terror seeking north stars even ground singing to
remind the Godz where we have landed after falling
through cosmology do you hear us
brave voices raised in a terrible storm
the dust knows
ink lies
cotton has memory
slaved sharecropped
for no crops
jim crow left but joe turner stayed
incarceration is the new plantation
we got 13th amendment blues
mementos of literacy test
grandfather’s clause
black codes
merciless black robes
poll tax
spooks in sheets with a craving
for carving black genitalia
at picnics
hoping not to get picked
we remember the struggle
muffled through cotton we recall the swinging
bodies in the shadow of long days melting into the
void of endless nights trying not to be
seen remembering
quietly carrying
the leaky bags of body parts trauma and overwhelming
grief down hungry streets
past the fences
on the other side
of knowing
we were born free
with dignity
and
everything
there was a gang of them
we fought back best we could
they got friends in high places
with cotton on their breath
saying last words
we got the right to last rites
sometimes
if the bodies
can be found
or are whole enough to recognize
while cotton dreams wide awake out loud
of us falling down

Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, vol.11, no.6, April 2018