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## Fleeing America: Why refugees are risking life and limb to escape to Canada



Two Ghanaians who suffered frostbite, lost limbs while crossing the border from the United States into Canada.



Four Somalians: Hussein Ahmed, far right, and Mohamed Hossain, far left, thought they might die during the icy trek this weekend from Minnesota to Canada.

By Mallory Simon and Sarah Snider, CNN.

Razak Ioyal and Seidu Mohammed know the scars the trek to Canada can leave -- both temporary and long-term.

"The doctors had to cut all my fingers," Mohammed says.

They took skin from his thigh to help repair the skin burned by frostbite.

The two men from Ghana had no idea the journey would be so emotionally and physically brutal when they set out in December for Canada.

"When you step

## NIGERIA'S ACTING PRESIDENT OSINBAJO'S RATING RISES ABOVE BUHARI'S



Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo has been on the job for the past one month as the Nigerian president remains in the UK on

a medical leave.

President Muhammad Buhari had, on January 19, 2017, sent a letter to the National

Assembly conveying his decision to proceed on leave and thus, transferring power to his Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, as required by Section 145 (1) of the Nigerian constitution.

According to polling by NOI last February, over half of Nigerians believe the vee pee is doing a great job.

your leg in the snow you can't pull it out. So you have to put your hand to help your feet to pull it out," Ioyal says.

They did this for three hours, the men said. Ioyal says his hands were so frozen it sounded like when glasses are clinked together. Neither man even knew what frostbite was.

"Something was burning inside me," Mohammed recalls. "I was telling Seidu that ... we have to give up."

They reasoned it was better to go on than risk being sent back to the United States. But, in that moment Ioyal says he thought they might die in that field.

"We were thinking it was going to be no more," he says.

They reached a highway around 2:30 a.m. and didn't know they'd already made it into Canada. The highway, town officials say, was closed at the time because of the treacherous weather. The men were stranded, with nobody to see them and call for help.

Cont'd on page 4

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# YOUR HEALTH:

By Freda Mensah, M.D.

## Hypertension

their doctor.

There are two types of hypertension. They are primary and secondary. For the purpose of this article, we will focus on primary which is the most common.

Hypertension affects millions of adults and children worldwide and is a major risk factor for stroke, heart attack, vascular disease, and chronic kidney disease.

Hypertension is defined as – High blood pressure (BP). Average adult BP is 120/80 mmHG. High BP is when systolic blood pressure (top number) is > 140 and or when the diastolic blood pressure (bottom number) is > 90.

Children typically have lower BP. A 6year old child with a BP of 120/80 is considered elevated and concerning. This child should be evaluated by

### What are the risk factors of high BP?

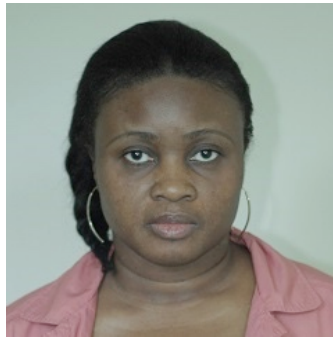
People of African descent, family history, and obesity are the main factors. There are other factor but these are the common ones.

### Things that worsen high blood pressure

- **Salt** allows the body to retain fluids. Plenty of fluid in the body requires the heart to work harder. **Stress** causes the body to release chemicals which in turn causes blood vessels to constrict, requiring the heart to work harder. **Diabetes** has a direct relationship between high levels of insulin and high BP.

**Smoking-** cigarettes contains nicotine which causes blood vessels to constrict, thereby the heart has to work harder to get blood circulating through the body.

**Certain drugs** such as stimulants and steroids are the other ones. There are many other causes.



Dr. Freda Mensah

These are the most common ones.

Once the BP approaches 140/90, your doctor may start you on lifestyle changes (healthy diet and exercise) and medication. There are many types of high BP medications. Your doctor will decide which one is appropriate for you.

### Complications of high BP

– uncontrolled high BP can cause impairment or loss of vision, loss of your kidneys' ability to remove waste and help balance fluids and electrolytes in your body. Later on you can experience heart diseases and or stroke .

If you can maintain normal BP, you can

reduce these complications.

### How to reduce BP

Low salt diet: minimize canned foods, fast foods and eating out on a regular basis. Prepare your own meals with veggies/fruits. You have control of what ingredients you put in your food. Limit red meat and consume more baked fish and chicken. Stay away from fried foods as much as possible. Oatmeal is very good for circulation.

### Weight Loss:

Aerobic exercise such as running or jogging 30min/day for most days of the week. If you don't like running, you can walk but must be brisk walk, enough to get your heart pumping, increasing your heart rate and breaking a sweat. At any point in time, if you feel light headed, have trouble breathing, experiencing chest pain or tightness while exercising, stop

immediately and seek immediate medical attention. Hypertension is a lifelong disorder. For optimal control, take your medication as prescribed by your doctor.

**For additional information, email : [health.md@doctor.com](mailto:health.md@doctor.com)**

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# SOCIAL JUSTICE: by Tapo Chimbanga

## Helping Your Child Develop a Healthy Attitude Towards Sex.

Children are not ignorant of sex and sexuality. Sex is everywhere. It is real for very young people. This is sad but true. Because of technology and the pop industry, children are becoming aware of sex as a social norm sooner than you might have. Not talking about it does not eliminate it from your children's world. It is up to you to make sure that what they know and experience is age appropriate and protective. Make sure ALL electronics like iPads, iPhones, and computers in your house have child safety settings. Watch T.V. with your children, do not just set them in front of the screen and go about your house chores. Do not assume YouTube, Netflix, Disney Channel, or Nickelodeon will pay attention to how much your child is exposed to. That is your duty. Some of the programming on these channels is very inappropriate for younger children and without you to explain or monitor what they are viewing; they are vulnerable to misguiding information. In addition, pop music is highly sexualised but entertaining.

When they are older talk to them about sexuality, normalise it, and help them see how it fits into their life. Do not attach stigma to it and make them feel it is an evil thing. It is not. It is human and it is good but they need to know what makes it good and what makes it bad. Talk to them about body image and self-care, hygiene, and sexual health. Seek professional help if you are not sure how to begin. Make it something they can ask questions about and be open to the questioning. If they can learn from you, you have saved



them from much confusion and misinformation. If you are religious, do not use that as a way to stifle the curious mind. Instead, teach them your values and explain how sexuality fits into God's design for humanity. If you prefer the scientific approach, make it factual but also emotional. Do not just explain the anatomy or physiology of sex. Also, explain the mental and emotional aspects of sex.

Parents sometimes feel talking about sex is the same as giving their children permission to have sex. I have known many young people that were kicked out of their family homes for engaging in sexual activity. If you never talked to your child about it, why would you punish them for doing something that is quite normal and a rite of passage? Do you know if your teen son knows how to put on a condom? Do you know if your daughter knows how to protect herself? When children learn skills at school it is not with the assumption that they will go and start doing what they learn. It is with the assumption that should the need ever arise they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to do what is necessary. So teach them about protection and sexually transmitted diseases. At the same time teach them how to say "no!" until they are mature and ready to enjoy sex without risking their physical and emotional health. Should your child make a mistake, be open to guiding them through the difficulty of living with it.

Finally, making your child feel ashamed or uncomfortable in their body is unkind. Colonisation and

white supremacy has done that to Black people for a very long time. Young women are constantly under pressure to look good, to be sexy, and to be attractive. Body image is very important to the young mind. Boys are not immune to the pressures either. Sex is not the way to feel good and young people often associate the two. As a parent, help your children develop a healthy body image. Beauty is not about being sexy. Use vocabulary that they can understand and help them understand the meaning of words like "sexy." Encourage your children to be beautiful not sexy; to be admirable as a form of attractiveness. Talk to them about double standards and unrealistic expectations; and talk to them about self-worth.

In a world where Black and African children constantly deal with racism and social oppression, they should know their value as human beings and they should recognize their beauty - both inner and outer. Black people have a long history of being portrayed as over sexed and unable to control our sexuality. Our children do not need to face this. Help your children stand against stereotypes that make them into hypersexualized individuals.

*Tapo Chimbanga is an educator and psychosocial researcher interested in social justice.*

### Refugees cont...from page 1

We were standing in front of the highway for almost about seven good hours," Ioyal says. "That's where we decided that we should give up our life ... we just give everything to God." "We just raised our hand. We shouting 'help, help.'"

They eventually were found, taken to a hospital for their wounds and now have hope for a second chance at a life free of persecution. Both men had dreamed of asylum in the United States. But when they were denied, they say they had no choice but to go north. Going home would be deadly.

## POETRY FOR LIFE

Life's journey to self discourage and growth is filled with disappointments, discouragements, challenges, tears, and fear. But it takes courage and perseverance to overcome whatever curve balls life throws at us. With courage, a winner will never quit. With the heart of courage, one will see the light at the end of the tunnel. Our poem for this month is about the courageous heart. Read on!

### COURAGE

By Victor Ashbey, MD.

**What is courage?**

**It is not the absence of fear**

**It is the victor over fear**

**It is the imagination beyond the fear**

**It is letting obstacles become a flame**

**To lit us up beyond our fear.**

**It is about turning our fear into strength**

**Turning our weakness into opportunity**

**Turning our doubts into believers.**

**Turing adversity into victory**

**It is getting out of our comfort zone**

**And turning our thoughts into champions ©**

# EDITORIAL

## Black "History" Month

People who don't control their past lose sight of their future. Let us embrace our-story (Black "History" Month ) with pride. Hopefully, a day will come when there would be a Universal African Heritage Month. This is because we have to write our-story not his-story.

We as a people have to have romance with our reality and truth. As a people, we have always been hospitable and nicer to other people in the motherland. Hence, we have allowed others to write his-story about our-story with mis-education of the Africans.

The truth is within ourselves, deep down in our hearts, and we do not have to search for the truth outside ourselves. Thousands of years of our-story have not been told the way it should. Thousands of years Before the Common Era have not been told. We have lost track of the essential and the vital life force of our-story.

Once we lose track of our-story, we lose track of who we are. When we lose track of who we are, we lose track of our ability to control our mind, heritage, and destiny. Our heritage and destiny are lost when our-story becomes his-story.

His-story is written to reprogram our-story to cause dependency on his-story for salvation. As a result, we stubbornly can't see anything great within ourselves and our-story. We are subsequently bound in a cage, and stare at the walls for salvation. Ironically, the space within the walls of our-story is the origin of our-salvation.

If we don't see our-story as valuable, nobody will. This is why we should all celebrate Black Heritage Month or Black "History" Month.

## Nana's Corner: What kind of man deserves a good woman's love?



Nana Amponsah

Too many times, I see the role of the woman in African relationships as one that should cater to the whims and graces of her man. She must be all sorts of wonderful to gain his love, respect, and faithfulness. Even her personal hygiene and cosmetic preferences come into question. However, little is said about the quality of man such an all-encompassing woman deserves. So on behalf of all my African sisters out there, let us talk about what kind of man deserves your respect, your loyalty, your faithfulness, your hard work, and your time.

**Faithful:** I put this at the top of the list because we cannot remain ignorant of the health risks sexual promiscuity pose. A man who sleeps around does not deserve anything from you. He will likely infect you with an STI or HIV/AIDS. He will also cause you a lot of depression and anxiety. Your mental health is important. If you cannot find peace in your relationship then he is not deserving of you. Faithfulness is not too much to ask for. Any man claiming he is an African man and it is his divine right to populate the earth or some other nonsense is seriously delusional. Ditch him!

**Respectful:** A man who does not respect you and treats you like an acquired property is not worth any effort from you. Do not jump through hoops for a man who cannot appreciate your beauty or efforts. Do not start wearing make-up and dressing in ways that make you uncomfortable. If you do change your appearance, it should be your choice not his. Also, if you find yourself downplaying your intelligence or

belittling your accomplishments because he gets jealous, ditch him. He will drag you down. If he enjoys making you look or feel stupid or inadequate he is masking his own insecurities and shortfalls. Too many women suffer emotional stress and anxiety because they are giving their best to the worst kind of man. If he resorts to violence, name-calling and other abusive practices, he is not being respectful of you. You do not owe him any loyalty, respect, or love. Ditch him!

**Hardworking:** Some men are highly educated and others are not. Sometimes circumstances beyond their control limited their opportunities, especially here in North America where racism and anti-blackness makes it difficult for African men to succeed. However, a lazy man is a curse on your future and your children's future. Some men use racism and discrimination as an excuse to stay home, stay in bars, and hang out with equally unambitious friends instead of getting a job. A man demanding your respect should earn it by showing that he would work hard at whatever he does to earn your respect and for you to be proud of him. If you work hard and do whatever you can to take care of him and your family, he should do the same. If he is unemployed and you are, it is reasonable for you to expect him to look after the kids, clean the home, and have a meal waiting for you when you come home. A hardworking man will not see this as emasculation, rather he sees that he is contributing to the family and he is doing it for you because that is what he can do, at that moment in your lives to show you he deserves respect. Ditch him!

*Nana Amponsah is a Psychotherapist with over 15 years experience in helping couples and families improve on their relationships.*

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### Subscription Costs

\$66.00 per year including  
postage.

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# African Progress in America

## Harvard Law Review Elects First Black (Nigerian)

### Woman President

By JAMIE D. HALPER, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER January 31, 2017



**ImeIme A. Umana '14, pictured above as an undergraduate, will serve as the 131st President of the Harvard Law Review. SHUNELLA GRACE LUMAS**

UPDATED: January 30, 2017 at 10:40 p.m.

ImeIme A. Umana '14 will be the first black woman to serve as President of the Harvard Law Review, the legal journal announced Monday.

Umana, who hails from Harrisburg, Pa., will be the 131st leader of the organization. As a Harvard undergraduate in Lowell House, she earned a joint concentration in government and African

American studies and served as the president of the Institute of Politics.

Michael L. Zuckerman '10, the outgoing president of the Law Review, wrote in an email that he is excited to see where Umana will take the publication in the coming year.

"ImeIme is one of the most brilliant, thoughtful, and caring people I've ever met, and the Law Review is in phenomenally good

hands," Zuckerman wrote.

Candidates for the Law Review's top post must answer questions from a forum of editors, write responses to submitted questions, and participate in mock editorial activities, according to Zuckerman. This year's field of 12 candidates featured eight women and eight people of color, Zuckerman wrote.

"ImeIme's election as the Law Review's first female black president is

historic," Zuckerman wrote. "For a field in which women and people of color have for too much of our past been marginalized or underrepresented, her election is an important and encouraging step toward a richer and more inclusive legal conversation."

As president, Umana will oversee more than 90 student editors and permanent staff members who make up the Law Review and communicate with writers, including senior faculty members.

"Knowing ImeIme, I can't wait to applaud her in a year's time for the extraordinary work that I am certain she will do," Zuckerman wrote.

Umana's election comes as the Law Review aims to accept editors from a wider variety of backgrounds. Last year, the legal journal elected the most diverse class of editors in its history, and in 2013 it expanded its affirmative action policy to include gender as a factor in its

admissions process.

Umana is a PhD candidate "interested in the intersection between government and African American studies by exploring how stereotypes of black women are reproduced and reinforced in American political discourse," as reported by Clutch.

Her appointment echoes that of Barack Obama who became the first Black man elected as President of the Harvard Law Review in 1990, and who went on to become, you know, president.

Umana has several people ready to cast prospective votes for her to become the first Black female president of the United States as well. I am one of those people.

If this ain't Black excellence, I don't know what is.

It's times like these when the stories of women of color need to be heard and celebrated. Today we celebrate ImeIme Umana in all her Black woman glory.

## President Trump signs new executive order on immigration, drops Iraq from travel ban

WASHINGTON, March 6 (Reuters)

- President Donald Trump signed a revised executive order on Monday banning citizens from six Muslim-majority nations from traveling to the United States but removing Iraq from the list, after his controversial first attempt was blocked in the courts. The new order, which the White House said Trump had signed, keeps a



President Donald Trump surrounded by "all the kings men" signs an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington banning some muslim countries from entering the United States of America

90-day ban on travel to the United States by citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the new order would take effect on March 16. The delay aims to limit the disruption created by the original Jan. 27 order before a U.S. judge suspended it on Feb. 3.

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# LETTERS FROM AFRICA

## Cameroon shuts down internet in English-speaking areas



A series of demonstrations in Cameroon's English-speaking regions escalated into violent clashes and a government crackdown that included shutting off Internet services.

By Kieron Monks, CNN  
Updated 6:57 AM ET, Fri  
February 3, 2017

A crippling Internet shutdown is entering a third week in the English-speaking region of Cameroon. The government suspended services for Southwest and Northwest province after a series of protests that resulted in violence and the arrest of community leaders.

The shutdown has proved particularly damaging in

the city of Buea, the capital of Southwest that has been lauded as Cameroon's "Silicon Mountain," where dozens.

All tech companies are down. Most banks are down and ATM machines are not working so people don't have access to cash." With no resolution in sight, conditions are likely to deteriorate further.

## Jungle Justice: Beating someone to death for minor crimes? Where is the law?

By Naa 'Sei

Recently, a friend sent me a what's app video of a woman beating mercilessly almost to death in Ghana. The graphic image of the attack was so disturbing that it made me sick to my stomach. What was her crime? Stealing money!

Attacking a human being with no regard to her human right, dignity, and respect is very barbaric. This incidence prompted my curiosity into scouring the Internet for more instances of these mindless act of

evil. What was discovered was indeed a jungle of savagery and raw disregard to human life. It is a jungle without justice.

The mob mentality with lawlessness is the order of the day in the jungle. "Jungle justice" is becoming a daily phenomenon in the lives of many in poor countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, India just to name a few. There are images of "jungle justice" on display on the Internet. There are numerous instance of people in poor countries taking the law into their hands with eyewitness videos and photos

galore in social media. Why should a man or a woman suspected of theft beaten to death? Why should a man or a woman suspected to have different sexual orientation be beating or killed? Why should a suspected adulterer be mobbed? Why should suspected "witch" be reduced to a lifeless being in with the rule of country?

Where is the law? Where are the law enforcement officers whose role is to sever and protect the citizens? The pervasive evil act of mob

lynching, mob killing, and beating seems to suggest an increasing breakdown of regard for law and order in Ghana, Nigeria and other parts of Africa. "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is good men to do nothing."

The police should do their job in re-enforcing the law and safeguarding the lives of it citizens. No one should die for committing petty crime. Let's not forget that he who combat evil crime by disregarding the law commits evil crimes themselves.

## Brawls break out in South African parliament after denunciation of Zuma

Associated Press in  
Johannesburg  
Thursday 9 February 2017

The South African parliament descended into chaos on Thursday, with opposition politicians denouncing President Jacob Zuma as a "scoundrel" and "rotten to the core" because of corruption allegations and then brawling with guards who dragged them out of the


chamber. The raucous scenes unfolded on national television as opposition legislators tried to stop Zuma from addressing the chamber, repeatedly insulting the president and declaring him unfit for office. In the surrounding streets of Cape Town, police and hundreds of members of the military patrolled to guard against protesters who want Zuma to quit.

Security teams were eventually called into the chamber to remove red-clad members of the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), some of whom scuffled with guards.

Lawmakers from the Democratic Alliance, the country's biggest opposition group, then walked out in protest. Some members of the ruling African National Congress party heckled them as

they left. "Out! Out!" they shouted. "Finally," said a laughing Zuma, who then started an annual address on the economy and other national matters.

A politically weakened figure, the president has faced calls to resign even from factions of the ruling party




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**SAGE ADVISE:** By Peggy Riley & Angela Wacht**Suggestions and information to help navigate everyday life****Dear Sages,**

I'm writing to you because Valentine's Day is this month and it always causes me distress. My girlfriend expects something special for the occasion and I don't know what to do. The problem is, I'm just not into giving gifts and doing things for some random holiday. I love my girlfriend a lot—and I give her nice gifts and do nice things for her all year long—but I just can't get excited about these "Hallmark Holidays." (Same goes for Christmas and birthdays, too.)

This has been a big bone of contention for us for the 6 years we've been together. It hurts her feelings and makes her sad—but I just can't seem to do it! The thought of going out and buying a gift and doing all the fanfare feels forced and disingenuous. I want to just be myself—and I want that to be enough. What should I do?

Signed,  
Feeling Forced and  
Frustrated

**Dear Forced and Frustrated,**

We are sorry to hear that you are experiencing so much frustration—especially connected to someone you seem to love dearly. We appreciate that you want to be genuine and authentic in the relationship—at the same time, we also sense that you are uncomfortable with the idea of causing your loved one distress. We are wondering if there may be some kind of compromise the two of you can make around this issue.

You stated that you give her

gifts throughout the year—perhaps you could designate some of them in advance of the occasion (for example, something you give her in January could be a Valentine or something you give her in September could be your Christmas gift to her).

In addition, since the actual day seems to be important to her, perhaps you could write her a special love note or send her a thoughtful text on the actual holiday. These are just a couple suggestions you might consider—the key is compromise! In the words of author Chinua Achebe, "Compromise, if not the spice of life, is its solidity. It is what makes nations great and marriages happy." We also encourage you to communicate, openly and intentionally, with her about this issue. Let her know how you feel about it and share with her your thoughts about ways in which you would be willing to compromise. Then, ask for her thoughts—and really listen. We hope our suggestions are helpful—and we wish you and your girlfriend a very happy and peaceful Valentine's Day!  
Signed,  
The Sages

**Dear Sages,**

I am a single woman in my 50's and I recently moved in with my mom to help care for her. She is in her 80's and has dementia so she really needs some assistance. And I have had some financial difficulties in the last several years so the move will be helpful for me as well. It seemed like a good choice—a win-win for both of us—however, it is driving me crazy! Don't get me wrong—I really love my mom. We've been through



Angela Wacht



Peggy Riley

some hard times in our life but we've always managed to stay close and nothing has ever really come between us. But the job of caring for her is exhausting and emotionally draining as well!

She's no longer the mom I've always known—bright, vibrant, energetic, young for her age. Now she is forgetful, she repeats herself over and over, she has no energy, and even getting her to bathe is a chore. I want to be a good daughter and take care of her but I am frequently at my wit's end! How do I keep from becoming irritable and resentful of her in her waning years?

Signed,  
Discouraged Daughter

**Dear Discouraged Daughter,**

We are very sorry to hear of your mom's dementia! And we commend you for your desire to help her out and care for her in her time of need. However, caring for someone with dementia is certainly not an easy undertaking. Caregivers in your situation are frequently overwhelmed and stressed and run the risk of burnout. One person cannot be the sole resource for another whose needs are so great. We encourage you to get support for yourself.

There are support groups for people who are dementia caregivers—and you may also want to consider seeing a counselor for individual support as well. In addition, it will be helpful for you if you can identify one or two (or more) others who can sit with

your mom from time to time so you can have some respite. Try to stay connected to friends and engage your interests as best you can. Make room for some fun—and use humor and laughter whenever possible—it is truly healing. Most importantly, take care of yourself and don't set the expectation to go it alone. Author, speaker, and self-care expert, Eleanor Brown says, "Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." Be good to yourself—we wish you peace, contentment...and laughter in your journey ahead.

Signed,  
The Sages

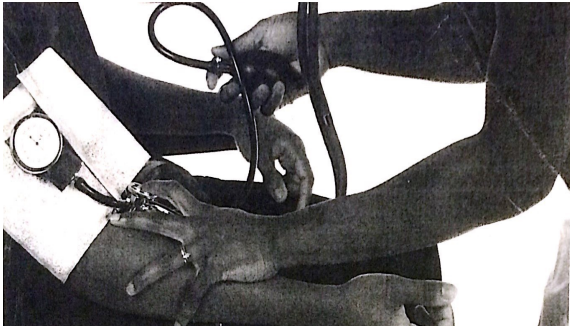
***Peggy Riley, LPC and Angela Wacht, LPC are Counselors and Directors of Sage Center: Counseling, Consulting, and Creative Community Wellness. They are here to provide suggestions and guidance about everyday life.***

To submit a question or concern to Sage Advice go to [www.SageCenterAtlanta.com](http://www.SageCenterAtlanta.com) and click on the Sage Advice tab.

The advice in this column is general and is not intended as actual counseling for specific issues or concerns. If you need to address more specific issues requiring more intensive focus, please contact **Sage Center at 404-419-6221 or visit our website at [www.SageCenterAtlanta.com](http://www.SageCenterAtlanta.com)**

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**BLACK HERITAGE MONTH FEBRUARY 1 -FEBRUARY 28**

**WE BRING YOU THE MAJESTIC HERITAGE OF THE ASHANTI KENTE CLOTH.**



Adapted from **The Atlanta Black Star.**

By Ricky Riley

**The Legend of Kente Cloth**

According to Akan legends, the Kente cloth was inspired by the elaborate web designs of a mythic spider, Ananse. Nearly 400 years ago, two friends went hunting into a forest where they came upon a spider making a web. They stood there for two days watching and taking note of the spider’s intricate designs.

When they returned home, the two began to implement the designs they saw in the clothes they wore using fibers from a raffia tree. These first designs were called kents. The earliest cloths were made with white

cotton enhanced with some indigo patterns.

**The Cloth of Kings**

The wealthy West African empire of Ashanti (Asante) lasted from 1701 to 1957. At its height, this empire was at the epicenter of the West African silk trade with the Portuguese. The trade brought in exotic silk that was used to enhance kente cloth.

The Ashanti emperor-king was Osei Tutu (c. 1695 – 1717), was one of the first to wear the elaborate cloth. Even though kente cloth began as an Ashanti symbol for the monarchy, it was eventually available to everyone. Even though everyone can wear the cloth, Ashanti royals/ chiefs get to choose the newest designs

first. According to About.com, the tradition still continues today. When a new design is created, it must be offered and presented to the royal house. If a king declines to accept the pattern, it can be sold to the public. However, chosen designs that are worn by Ashanti royalty can not be worn by the public.

**Women Do Not Weave Kente Cloth**

In the early years, the cloth was exclusively woven by males. The cloth was a symbol of royal and political power and women could not weave it because it would violate social norms. The Akan people believe that a woman’s menstrual cycle interferes with the production of the cloth. Today, men still primarily do the weaving.



**There are Different Kinds and They All Have Meaning**

There are 12 different varieties of kente cloth to choose from. Many of the colors range from black, gold, yellow, blue and green. Their distinct colors also hold special meaning. For example, black means maturation and intensified spiritual energy. Blue cloth represents peacefulness, harmony and love. Green kente cloth stands for vegetation, planting, harvesting, growth and spiritual renewal. Gold and yellow represent wealth and royalty.

**Kente Cloth in Mainstream Fashion**

The cloth has become mainstream since the American Pan-African and Black power movements in the 1960s and 70s. In the '80s and '90s, rappers such as Salt-N-Pepper began to wear the cloth. Designer Lola Maleombho routinely models her clothing after kente patterns, and her designs are featured on some of



the world’s most glamorous runways.

In recent news, the popular cloth has become the subject of institutionalized backlash because some have deemed it “tacky.” Atlanta Black Star also reported that young Black women have decided to forgo traditional prom dresses for more Afro-centric styles including kente cloth. These high school students have gone viral for their uniquely African dresses.

**Kente Cloth is Black Pride**

Over the years, the cloth has spread across the African diaspora. People have used it

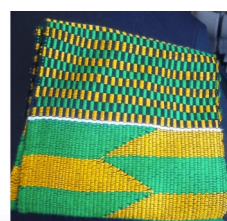


as a special gift item during ceremonies such as child naming, graduation or marriage. In some cases it has been used as a symbol of respect for the departed during funerals and ancestral ceremonies.

In Ghana and the Ivory Coast, men sport the cloth in a toga or kimono. Women wear it in two pieces for the top and lower body. In the U.S., Black graduates wear the cloth as a stole around their necks, signifying Black excellence and pride in one’s heritage.

**Police Escort Black Merit Scholar Out of Graduation After Refusing to Remove Kente Cloth**

An 18-year-old Black student was removed from graduation after he refused to take off his kente cloth. Nyree Holmes attended the diverse but predominately white Cosumnes Oaks High School in Elk Grove, California. In a story he shared on Twitter May 24, the merit scholar says he was able to walk across the stage, but police officers greeted him at the other end.



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