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Egungun (CUBA RITMO) Kwanza Msingwana

Kwanza Msingwana has traveled widely in Africa and the Caribbean. As an observer of political, religious, cultural and artistic trends in Africa and the Caribbean, he is keenly aware of life in those spaces. Kwanza is a percussionist, poet, and storyteller. He has performed for such notable persons as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. He has also performed with poets Reg E. Gaines (from New York), U of T alumnus Dr. Afua Cooper, and David Robeson – grandson of Paul Robeson. Kwanza is co-author of a collection of short stories entitled *Only Mountains Never Meet* (1994). He is currently finishing a Master's degree in Teaching at OISE/UT.

i heard the egungun/ just above the arbo de carolina/ may be they
was dancing/ or merely appreciating the rhythms of the orisa that
pervade the terrain/ strong ties/ these rhythms/ that snake their
way/ like dambala/ to the land of olodumare and obatala/ tega sikio/
as my people would say/ tune your ear/

i heard voices/ and they were countless/ from those haunted weather
beaten walls that surround habana/ bear witness/ silently/ to too
many an atrocity/ i stared at ubiquitous eyes/ that saw everything/
like those of olorun/ grant us safe passage/ o great spirit/ on our
ways/

elegua/ shango/ whirling and prancing/ fancy step stepping in the
middle/ with ogun perched on his broad shoulders/ while the
rhythms of the bata/ okonkolo/ iya/ and itotele/ percolated above/
as sonorous kongas and tumba shook beneath/ emanating
tremorous bliss that washed over us like ocean waves/ o feet please
don't fail me now/

i pray/ purify us/ o/ oshun/ with your waters/ and bless us with
abundant love/ we who search and search/ seeking/ wisdom and
guidance/ pray the wisdom of orunmila/ and yemaya's riches/ like
salt/ tastify our days with rhythm/ dance/ and good vibrations/
nourish our souls/ and/ pray/ o shango/ that your strength shall
follow and guide us always/

asé.