

Manifestos written by SCAWDI women as part of Interwoven Freedom Project

THE YOUNG LOVERS

By Annette Campbell

Tinto was a handsome and vibrant young man who was taken from his homeland, a village called Esper in Africa and transported on a slave ship to the sugar cane plantations of Jamaica. There he met and fell in love with a beautiful young woman called Dido, also a slave from a small village in Africa, similar to his own.

As often as they could, the two stole away from the plantation high up in the hills and countryside of St Elisabeth. Tinto could never say for sure whether it was Dido's sweet smile and dimples, or her slim figure and warm welcoming arms that made him want to marry her and keep her by his side. She had fair skin and, as a house Negro, was always well dressed. In return Dido loved to touch Tinto's curly hair, stroke the dark, soft skin on his face and tenderly run her fingers along the scar on his left cheek that bore the marks of his African tribe. They both dreamt of the day when they'd be free to raise strong, handsome sons and beautiful daughters in the image of their parents.

As time moved on the couple's love grew until one day they summoned up enough courage to ask the Master of the plantation if they could 'jump the broom.' Scornfully he refused their request adding that in the face of such nonsense, he would soon move Tinto to one of his plantations on another island when the next slave ship docked.

That night, in the cool of the evening breeze, surrounded by the lush beauty of their tropical paradise island, Tinto and Dido met to plan their escape. Holding Dido close Tinto looked out over the horizon. They could hear the ships in the distance and wondered if Tinto would soon be forced to board one, separating them forever.

The place where they stood was three thousand feet above sea level. They would jump knowing that they faced certain death on the rocks that jutted out into the sea below, but also knowing that at least they would be together. They kissed for the final time knowing and accepting their fate.

By the time their bodies were found late the next day, sprawled, bloodied and broken across the sand, the Master had already written off their loss and found two new slaves to replace them.

Lover's Leap, as it is now called, has become a popular tourist attraction. As the setting sun lights up the hillside with fiery colours, creating beauty so astounding it takes your breath away, holiday-makers stand wistfully on the cliff top and remember the two ill-fated lovers, ripped from their homeland, drawn together by love and ultimately pulled apart by the evils of slavery, Rest in peace Tinto. Rest in peace Dido.

Compelled to be together in death because they could not be together in life.

**LOVE AND HATE:
THE BLACK WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH HER HAIR**
By
Varlene McFarlane

In pre colonial times and before long slavery when Africa governed itself and abided by it's own traditions, laws and sense of morality, African women displayed love and reverence for an external yet intrinsic part of themselves; their hair. In West Africa hair styles signified marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth and social status, as well as symbolising/denoting the tribe which you came from. 1.

Slaves brought to North America and the Caribbean were from the Wolof, Mende and the Yoruba tribes of West Africa. The women of these societies were known for keeping their hair scrupulously clean and neat and in a braided style. Braids were perfect for beauty and practicality as these styles were cooler and easier to maintain when going about daily duties of child-rearing, housekeeping or running a business under the hot sun. Conversely a bad hair day or *unkempt* hair was an indicator of bereavement or depression.

Differences in hair care were also much in evidence on the plantation. Women working in the fields utilised head scarves to cover their hair, keeping out insects, shielding it from the sun and ensuring it required minimum effort. House slaves who came into regular contact with plantation owners and their guests took greater care with their personal grooming, sporting more elaborate styles.

Natural slave hair, frequently described as 'woolly' by slave masters, soon took on the connotations of 'bad hair.' This was deliberate racist terminology which is still degrading today. Eventually African women started to change and straighten their hair in an effort to make it more 'manageable', less 'kinky' and therefore less 'bad.'

It's hard to say exactly when today's African Women began to hate their hair. When they were forced onto slave ships they were given clothes to wear during the Middle Passage. When these same garments were used to commit suicide the sailors removed them and the women were robbed of all but the barest essentials. Their hair was often shaved as well, robbing them of their individuality, their humanity and their womanhood. 2.

Perhaps after several hundred years of perpetuation black woman have never psychologically recovered from the shame and humiliation of being robbed of their crowning glory. This hatred is evident in the consistent use of relaxers straighteners, texturisers, wigs and hairpieces which hide or cover up 'kinkiness', making black hair appear European.

Back in the twentieth century, hair advertisements for black women depicted natural hair as ugly whereas straight, European type hair was shown as desirable and beautiful. Vocal opponents to this biased portrayal have been

few and far between and, although no longer enslaved, it seems that thanks to a legacy of slavery and colonialism, the twenty-first century black women still continues to have a love hate relationship with her hair.

Sources:

1. Untangling The Roots of Black Hair in America by Lori L Tharps and Ayana Bird. Published by Saint Martin's Press Inc.
2. Syann Thompson; The Love –Hate relationships between black women and their hair. Why Black Women Hate Their Hair; A look at British Caribbean and African American Women. www.blackbritain.co.uk

**LETTER FROM SIXTEEN YEAR OLD LORETTA TO HER BROTHER
LATHAN**

**By
Gwenneth Jones**

*August 12 1729
England.*

My dear brother Lathan,

I hope that when this letter reaches you it will find you in good health. As for me, as I put pen to paper, I am well but I do miss home. If anyone had told me what I was coming to when they stole me away from you and our family I would have run faster and hidden deeper and nobody would have caught me.

Can you believe that I am now sixteen years old, Lathan? That's what Master tells me when he looks in his big book that has the names of all of the slaves. But I should not be too hard on Captain James as he looks after me well. I have three good meals a day and Captain even allows me to be schooled with his three children, which for slaves like me in England is a great and unusual privilege.

Every day I have to be up at 5:30am. During the summer, like now, it is not too bad as the mornings are light and sometimes the sun is already up, just like home. Do you remember when we used to get up early to milk the goats and then take them out to pasture? Oh how I miss those days.

In the winter having to rise so early is not at all pleasant, Lathan. I go to bed in the dark and when I open my eyes it is still dark. This is so strange to me! It is very hard to take Captain and Lady their breakfast when I am still half-asleep but I have no choice. I have gotten into trouble on a number of occasions during the winter mornings for spilling the mistress's pot of tea.

I have said, dear brother, that Captain James treats me well but the mistress is another story altogether. She hates me with a passion. I would even venture that she is actually jealous of me. She makes frequent remarks about my curvy figure and my straight, white teeth and even comments on how my hair is less kinky than that of the other slaves. Although she shows her teeth when she says these things I do not feel that she is really smiling. I feel that her words are said to hurt and to wound me, which they do. Because of this I try to stay as far away from her as I can and I keep my hair covered with a big scarf whenever I am around her. I have what God has blessed me with and there is nothing I can do about that.

As well as the mistress hating me, the other slaves now look at me as if they would do me harm. In low whispers they accuse me of doing less work than them and receiving better food from the Master, but I have no choice. Things here are exactly the way Master wants them.

The best times of all are when I am with Master and Mistress's children. They have three; Laura who is twelve, Elizabeth, who is ten and Master Toby who is only five. We have such fun together. After midday, when I've finished all of my tasks, we play hide and seek in the beautiful garden, which is so large, it can take us a while to find each other. Little Toby is not very good at hiding; he is always the first to be found. He makes me laugh as he is so silly in his little childlike ways. Sometimes we all go down to the lake, toss in our sailing sticks and watch to see whose stick will reach the bridge first. Brother dear, it is at times like this, when the children treat me like an older sister, that I forget for a moment that I am indeed just a black and a slave.

Sometimes I hear rumours about slave uprisings in far away places like Jamaica, people say that one day we will not be slaves anymore, that there will be no more plantations and we will all be free.

I must close now. Please give my love to ma and pa. Oh, I almost forget to ask! How are my brothers and sisters? I hope they are not giving you too much trouble now that I am no longer there to help you look after them all. Kiss each one for me and tell them I love and miss them so.

*I know you will probably never get this letter as I have no way of sending it, but Lathan, if you close your eyes and think of me you will feel my thoughts across the ocean and know that I love you and pray everyday that, God willing, we will meet again. Goodbye for now, my brother.
From your loving sister,*

*Loretta,
Property of Captain and Mistress James,
England.*

REFLECTIONS ON KENWOOD HOUSE

By
Jackie Brown

I'm sitting on the coach in Hampstead, North London. We're about to leave the grounds of Kenwood House and make our way back up the motorway to Birmingham. It looks like it's going to be a slow journey, it's rush hour on a slightly chilly, wet Bank Holiday and the driver informs us that the traffic is already building.

Firstly, I must say thank you Father for giving me a second chance to learn from history without bitterness. You have allowed me to forgive the past and to embrace this day with thankfulness. It was hard but you gave favour and brought equality.

There were a lot of new things to see at Kenwood. One of the paintings showed a black child on a leash posing in the garden next to a dog. This gave me a profound sense of sadness as pet dogs were obviously more valued than black children. In the minds of these people this child was placed at a level that was lower than a dog!

Walking into the grand library was an interesting experience which gave another insight into the mindset of the owners of this grand weekend residence. The walls and ceilings were filled with murals of Romans, Greeks and the Corinthians. I couldn't help wondering; did this family feel that they were gods on earth?

If this is so then I cannot say for sure that the compassion of God was borne out in their treatment of slaves. Whilst wandering through the rooms I decided to give them the benefit of the doubt and believe that their hopes for their slaves and their black descendant, Dido, were lodged in their hearts.

"..... the thoughts I think are the thoughts of God and the thoughts of peace not evil, to bring you forth with an unexpected end."

Jeremiah 29: 11

Although I am aggrieved because of this terrible treatment of slaves, I do feel that from God's perspective it was all a part of his plan. How else could we have benefited from such great change? Man's heart had to be touched by sight and feeling, recognising that beyond skin colouring there is a heart and soul. Through faith and the prayers of the slaves, God has brought about the unexpected and we are here today as living proof of that.

VISIT

By
Jackie Brown

Me a go a one house
Some where inna Nart London
Dem call it 'Kenwood'
Me see one pretty black gyal
Inna one pikcha deh pon de wall
Dem seh she name Dido Belle
Me did wonda if dem wan fe call him 'Dumbelle'

Dido Belle puppa name Captain Lindsay
Im well wan memba
How him pregnant de ooman
Deh pan im ship
An when de pickney barn
Im carry him come a Hinglan
Fe live wid im huncle, Lard Mansfield.

Mansfield an im wife love off de gyal-pickney
Becar dem nuh have no pickney fe demself
Dem mek sure Dido safe an nebba go hungry
Have playmate, Elizabeth,
And tap deh inna de house
Whe she happy an safe fram slave catcha

Dido, a black pickney, nuh inna no kitchen
Or deh pan de field a pick cotton ar cut cyane
No Sah!
Dis ya pickney get de best
Even siddung a table an a nyam with knife an fark
Read one book an den two more
Come like she aristocrat fe real!

Soon Dido tun big ooman
She tan up in love
Wit one Head Servant John Davinier
Dem marry an get
Twin bwoy pickney, Charles and John
Den anoda one come, William Thomas
Dido bwoy chile learn dem book up a Belgrave

Dido legacy last fe at least two hundred years!
Protection, acceptance an heducation fram white people
Becar, mek no mistake,
Black people a smaddy yu know!
Yu nuh fe treat dem like pet dog.

A feel seh de way dem treat Dido
 Help white people today
 To accept we wid we black skin
 An ting
 Hinglan haffi change how it see an treat black people
 Dem haffi learn fe treat we EQUAL
 Becar we FREE!
 Jus like tings should be!

GLOSSARY

Patois		English
Inna	–	in
Nart	-	North
Dem	-	them
Gyal	-	girl
Pikcha	-	picture
Deh	-	there
De	-	the
Seh	-	say
Wan	-	want
Fe	-	to
Him	-	her
Puppa	-	father
Im	-	him
Memba	-	remember
Ooman	-	woman
Pan/pon	-	on or upon
Hinglan	-	England
An	-	and
Pickney	-	child
Huncle	-	uncle
Lard	-	Lord
Becar	-	because
Nuh	-	not
Mek	-	make
Nebba	-	never
Ungry-	hungry	
Tap	-	stop
Whe	-	where
Fram	-	from
Ar	-	or
Cyane	-	sugar cane
Sah	-	Sir
Dis ya-	This here	
Siddung	-	sit down
Nyam -	eat	
Fark	-	fork

Fe real	-	for real
Tun	-	turn
Tan	-	stand
Bwoy	-	boy
Anoda	-	another
Chile	-	child
Smaddy	-	somebody
Yu	-	you
Wid	-	with
Ting	-	thing
Haffi	-	have to

THE DAY I WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE WOMAN

By
Fredericka McFarlane



Image: Women Chained

The Past

In order to understand where you are going, you first have to know where you are coming from.

I was born to slaves in St Thomas, Jamaica, "*my name is Pearl*" the name given to me as a child by my slave master. I remember tall trees stirring in the wind, a cool breeze on my skin, the fresh smell of sweet juices running down my face as I drank from the coconut shell; my mother combing my hair while singing harmonies of home sweet home, a land now so far away. I was forced to leave behind all of my family; my mother, father, brother and two sisters. I wonder if they ever think of me. I know that I may never see them again and this distresses my heart and destroys my soul.

The Present

My body is bound and twisted as I wriggle and bend trying to understand this unfamiliar, foreign place in which I find myself. Iron shackles pierce beyond my skin into my very being.

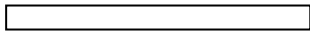
"*Stand still! I must check you over!*" There is no pity for my plight in the auctioneer's tone.

"*You will not get a better worker, one so fine, clear skin, good bone structure, good health, straight white teeth,*" says another man holding a whip twice as long as his arm. "*Open your mouth and show my buyer what he is getting.*"

I am treated like an animal, an object devoid of dignity, receiving no hope or sympathy from those around me. I resolve to be inwardly strong, to hide my self-pity and rein in my tears, to show no emotion.... but within my heart, my shrinking soul weeps. Slowly I am dying. My strength is weakening and I am unable to resist the injustice of it all. Rank smells of the market place; the aroma of human despair assaults my nose. Even sour milk smells better than us.

In a twinkle, I am sold to another "MASTER" to start again, as another man's property.... still less than human.

I am woman enslaved from birth until now. The only existence I have ever known is a life of pain, bitterness, hardship and the loss of those closest to me. I have never tasted the sweet scent of freedom. But most importantly I have never known me or what I could be.



THE BAGABAGA SISTERS

**By
Pam Hughes**

Ganga and Annang were two beautiful young girls from Ghana. They were full of spirit, always with a smile on their faces and always hopeful for the future. Their days were spent playing with their friends, chasing birds, staying active, bright and lively. The sun shined on their skin which glowed full of the joys of family, fun and freedom. They ate Tuwo, Zafi and Dawadawa fruits which grew naturally in the woods where they lived, simple foods designed to keep them slim and healthy. As they grew they, along with their five boisterous siblings, counted the moons waiting for 'Dipo' and the celebrations that came with it.

But one terrible day in the small town of Bagabaga, all of this changed for the worse. Strange men on horse-back rode in quickly, surprise on their side, killing whoever opposed them and stealing the youngest and hardest as labour for their mines.

Women, horribly disturbed, screamed and shouted. "Leave us in peace. Get away!" Children cried and ran around wildly in response to their parents anguish as their homes and belongings were torched with burning flames. Men on horse-back snatched Ganga and Annang. The sisters were separated and eventually ended up many, many miles away from each other and from Bagabaga in towns called Ho and Somanya.

Alone and surrounded by strangers, bewildered and overwhelmed, Ganga and Annang wept and grieved for the family they would never see again.

Ganga and Annang were forced into slavery for fifty years. During that terrible time they lived and worked with dignity, in the face of their trauma and the loss of everything they had ever known. Despite being forced to live among strangers they humbled themselves and made the most of their unfortunate circumstances. They worked hard, married and soon had families of their own. When the time was right and they had saved enough, they bought their freedom and left their captors behind for good.

One fateful day Ganga and Annang's daughters were both in Accra shopping for textiles to sell in their respective businesses. It had been over fifty years since their mothers had seen each other but the recognition was strong and unmistakable. In surprise and wonderful delight they cried for joy at their long parting and their unexpected reunion.

With tearful hugs they departed and went home to spread their great joy at finding each other again. It had been so long that they could only communicate through translators; one sister speaking Ewe, the other speaking Krobo. At their gathering they ate 'Druwe', sweets that signified and celebrated their finding of each other and the reunification of family.

Their sister's best days turned out to be their last three months of ever living together. After they died the remaining members of the 'Abusua' family went to Bagabaga in the north of Ghana and made a pathway straight down to the Volta region in the South of Bagabaga where the descendents of Ganga and Anang now live and flourish.

When the ancestors of the women were traced the wonderful extended family was clear for all to see. Cousins, formerly strangers, now tied by blood, spoke the Bagabaga dialects of Akan, Krobo and Ewe. Their association has continued to this day through making special visits to each other's towns for marriage, births and funerals where they exchange gifts and partake in the ceremonies knowing that they are among kin. Perhaps God was able to take what had been meant for evil and turn it to good.

This story is my personal experience. My name is Pamela Hughes and I am lucky enough to have visited Somanya in Ghana where I met people from the tribe of 'Krobos.' This is my family, the descendants of the two women, Annang and Ganga, who are my grandmother and my grand-aunt.

People need to be told about this parallel slavery which was enforced by colonialists in Africa. It was engendered to support rubber plantations, cocoa farms, diamond mines and gold mines and to bring forth the riches of the earth to make the minority wealthy and enslave the indigenous peoples. People like my grandmother and grand-aunt were forcibly removed from their homes and made to work as slaves for white masters until they earned enough money to buy their own freedom. It took my ancestors fifty years.

One day I hope to return to Ghana and make the journey to Bagabaga to see the land where my ancestors lived and loved. I hope to tell the full and untold story of the true history of Bagabaga and many other places like it.

MARIA BELL'S DIARY
a fictionalised account
by
Michelle Hughes
Aged 13 years

Dido and her cousin, Elizabeth, are two young ladies who live at Kenwood House in Hampstead, North London. Kenwood house is the weekend residence of Lord Chief Justice Lord Mansfield who is great uncle to the girls. Dido is the daughter of Admiral Lindsay and a slave woman called Maria Bell. The two girls have spent the evening wondering the extensive grounds surrounding the house and are now about to retire for the night.

"I shall get ready for bed, now, Elizabeth."
"All right, goodnight Dido and Happy 20th birthday once again."
"Thank you and good night to you too."

Dido goes upstairs. Her uncle awaits her on the landing.

"Dido are you busy?"
"Not really, uncle, I was just going into my chamber."
"I forgot to give you this. A colleague said that a friend had passed it on to him. Happy birthday again my dear."

Dido's uncle hands her a diary.

"Thank you uncle. It is beautifully bound."

Dido retreats to her room and sits on her bed. She opens the journal and begins to read. The diary has been written by her mother, Maria Bell.

'Some day I know that I shall be dead or free and there shall be no more slavery. Who is this that makes such painful whips and chains? If the makers of these felt the pain I feel when forced to put them upon my body they would not have made them so heavy or so painful. The sailors forced us to be squashed together in ships like hundreds of ants on the shore. We had no place to escape to and nothing to pass the time which seemed like hundreds of hours in the dark hold of the ship's belly. Babies were born in this place, my fellow men and women had to go to the toilet right there, the stench at times becoming unbearable. Our captors gave us little light or air.'

I feel so sad that my mother, Maria Bell, had to endure such horrendous circumstances. I am glad she has written this diary for me to keep and to read so that even after so many years of being apart, she no longer has to bear this pain alone.

'Today another slave told me that she'd heard that a female slave was ordered to the Captain's cabin and made to lie on his bed where he did

shameful things to her body. The kinds of things that only a man married unto a woman in the eyes of God should even be allowed to contemplate.'

Oh how sad and terrible for a woman, slave or no slave, to have to endure such treatment. I cannot bear to read the rest of this account I shall turn to another page. Oh, but what is this? A separate note from my mother...

*'To whoever finds this note, please see that it is delivered
to Admiral John Lindsay.*

*"Master please give these, my humble words,
to my beloved daughter, Dido."*

'My dear, sweet daughter Dido, do not ever think that I have forgotten you. I think of you constantly and will love you, forever and ever. Even if we never meet again I hold you in my heart.'

I hope that we shall meet again one day, mother. If not now on earth, then perhaps in heaven, if God be so good as to grant us that. In the meantime I too will love you always and forever.

'I had no choice whether or not to keep you, Your father took you and I had to obey. At least I knew for certain that this way you would not become a slave like me.'

I understand the choice you made, mother, for you were really left with none. I love you more than words can say and on this my birthday, if I could be granted one wish it would be that you could be here with me in my great uncle's house. Rest well, Mother. I shall keep your words close beside me always.