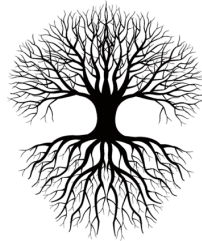


Iansã Black

In this life I am called Iansã Black. I'm a writer, poet, and caregiver providing spiritual and educational support to my community. I am dedicated to the cultivation of liberating/healing practices in rootwork, art, and community that are by and for Black people. With my submission to the Rootwork Journal, I am hoping to encounter thoughts and emotional responses I've never been met with in the past as well as express my belief that Black people are spiritually and lovingly tethered.



Strange Fruit Make Bright Lanterns

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A poetic description of lucid visions that have returned to me time and time again throughout my life. There are so many stories told me by ancestors that trusted me, I felt obligated to make something that shows I hear every single one of them.

The first fruits of mid-autumn, miracles of the Black faith, watered with blood or fed with bone?

Planted as bodies, sown like seed, rooted to Earth but forced to watch the sky.
Red waters drip from their family's backs and through the dirt and into their mouths.

The two-hundredth spring comes and there is violent overwatering, constant overfeeding, growth without care. Emancipated spirits abandoned still living bodies, desperate to see their next life. Fear manifested as fury to power their love, forcing them out but letting them wait.

There were prayers for children lost, bloomed and beautiful and too soon wilted. And there were battles fought for children not yet born, flowers aching to blossom. But no gardens were grown, no seed or tool prepared, no hands to work the land.

Even those alive to see it were unsure of what nursed the unborn through centuries of sleep. The relief, caretaker, beloved, and farmer to a new world's orchard of strange new fruit... was it the warm drip from still tortured sisters or the cold remains of mothers long dead?

The Earth herself wonders what nurtured these fruit 'til they ripened, what picked and carved them, what placed the flame inside. She was midwife to the flowers these fruit were born from, those patient wavering spirits, and she heard the spirituals sung by the ones who planted them.

It is still a question, though, of who decided to make lanterns with their harvest's first fruits.