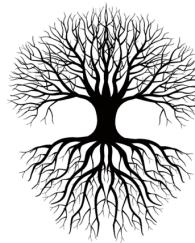


## **W. Yusef Doucet**

I was born and raised in Los Angeles California, and have been a life-long Californian. I am the father of four incredible daughters and one fantastic son, and the grandfather of four precious granddaughters and two shining grandsons. I have been a faculty member of the Santa Monica College English Department since 1999. I co-founded and facilitated the Dyamsay Writers' Workshop with DJ Watson in Santa Monica, CA, the Third Root Writers' Workshop with Lisa Marie Rollins in Pomona, CA, a poetry reading series at the former Velocity Café with Edgar Montgomery in Santa Monica, CA, and produced seasonal readings and performances at the City Market of Los Angeles Gallery, all projects of the Ubwenge Artists Collective (co-founded with DJ Watson and Lisa Marie Rollins). I currently co-program and co-host Liberation Cinema!, a monthly film screening at the AFIBA Center in South Los Angeles, and I am a member of the Joko Collective, a grassroots community education project (Check us out on Facebook). Through submitting to Root Work Journal, I hope to join a wider circle of cultural workers engaged in re-imaging a world that affirms life, re-visioning a world that affirms Black life, African humanity. I hope to learn that We are approaching a critical mass of consciousnesses, enough to break through the wall between Us and the world We want.



# A Negro Substratum:

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*A term from physical (and cultural) anthropology re-purposed*

## A Negro Substratum:

1)

A phrase scholars use  
 To say that black people  
 Once peopled a place  
 When it was a new place  
 To people, the first to arrive  
 And leave their footprints  
 Across the land their names  
 On the hills and rivers  
 Traces of themselves  
 In the curve of the hips  
 The full lips or curl in the hair  
 of the current population.  
 The older, the curlier, the swarthier  
 The more submerged

2)

Those neighborhoods  
 Tourists and visitors  
 Are warned to avoid  
 Except in search  
 Of exotic delights  
 Readily available at home  
 But without the heady taint  
 Of danger or the purge  
 Of authentic adventure.

3)

That aspect of the black bourgeois  
 Personality that must be repressed  
 At all costs in public least  
 One betray oneself  
 Should an unconjugated  
 Verb to be tumble  
 Inelegantly from one's  
 Tied tongue, like cement blocks  
 Dragging one back to the muck

4)

That part of the black bourgeois  
 Personality compelled to feel  
 Embarrassed by unconjugated  
 Verbs to be

5)

The human  
 Social floor

6)

The foundation