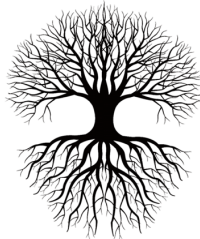


W. Yusef Doucet

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-imagining 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