

The Power of African Myths

By Dr. Clyde W. Ford

My interest in traditional African sacred wisdom, especially as it is reflected in African mythology, was an unlikely outgrowth of my efforts to understand the relationship between social and personal healing.

As a chiropractor and a therapist, I sought answers on how individual groups, particularly African-Americans, might heal from long-standing trauma and pain. I knew that a turning point in the individual healing process often came when the "personal stories" of trauma shifted from victimization to empowerment, and I felt that something similar must be true about social healing, though it was harder to grasp what those "social stories" might be.

Myths are, in fact, the "social stories" that heal. For myths supply more than the moral tag lines we learned early on to associate with nursery rhymes and fairy tales.

Properly read, myths bring us into accord with the eternal mysteries of being, help us manage the inevitable passages of our lives, and give us templates for our relationship of these societies to the earth we share with all life. When trauma confronts us, individually or collectively, myths are a way of reestablishing harmony in the wake of chaos.

Mythology is interested in the timeless questions of humanity: What is the relationship of human life to the great mystery of being behind all life?

How are we to understand our relationship to the earth we inhabit and to the cosmos in which we find ourselves? How am I to pass through the stages of my life?

The movement of human consciousness from birth, through life, and into death can be found in African mythology.

As an example, death appears in many African creation myths; in fact, one form of its entry into the world is so common that it has earned the name "the failed message." From the Khoi of Southwest Africa comes a simple and exemplary version of the tale:

The Moon, it is said, once sent an insect to men, saying,

"Go to men and tell them, 'As I die, and dying live; so you shall also die, and dying live.'"

The insect started with the message, but while on his way was overtaken by the Hare, who asked, "On what errand are you bound?"

The insect answered, "I am sent by the Moon to men, to tell them that as she dies and dying lives, so shall they also die and dying live."

The Hare said, "As you are an awkward runner, let me go."

With these words he ran off, and when he reached men, he said, "I am sent by the Moon to tell you, 'As I die and dying perish, in the same manner you also shall die and come wholly to an end.'"

The Hare then returned to the Moon and told her what he had said to men. The Moon reproached him angrily, saying, "Do you dare tell the people a thing that I have not said?"

With these words the Moon took up a piece of wood and struck the Hare on the nose. Since that day the Hare's nose has been slit, but men still believe what the Hare told them.

The failure of humanity to receive the moon's message adds a marvelous twist to this myth, for the hare is the trickster figure. By inaccurately delivering the moon's message, the hare serves as a lure to the spiritual quest; the challenge is to discover the intended message of the moon in spite of what the trickster says.

And this message—the ability of human beings to find immortality through their mortality— informs the mythic wisdom of traditional Africa.

Still, in an age where technology allows for the instantaneous transfer of information anywhere on earth, why bother with African mythology, coming as it does from an era when information flowed simply from the storyteller's mouth to a small audience? A very short creation story from the Bulu people of Cameroon offers one answer:

Zambe, son of the supreme god Mebe'e, created a chimpanzee, a gorilla, an elephant, and two men—a European and an African—each of whom



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was named Zambe as well.

To these creatures, Zambe gave the tools of survival—fire, water, food, weapons, and a book. In time, Zambe returned to check on the earth. "All the tools you were given for survival," he asked each creature, "where are they now?"

The chimpanzee and the gorilla had discarded all but the fruit, and Zambe banished them to the forest forever. The elephant could not remember what he'd done with his possessions. The European kept the book but discarded the fire, while the African discarded the book but kept the fire. Thus, Europeans remained keepers of the book, but Africans keepers of the flame.

The book is symbolic of human efforts to control the natural world, and humanity within it, through reason and intellect; this is the course Western civilization has taken.

Fire is symbolic of the sacred wisdom that sees beyond the created world of humanity to the divine mystery which is its source. Fire signifies the passionate burning of the light of the human soul.

To control the mundane, the myth tells us, Europeans sacrificed the sacred. To hold on to the sacred, Africans sacrificed the mundane. And now, as we are poised at the millennium, we cannot hope that page in the book of intellect and reason alone; there must also be turnings of the soul, and here the mythic wisdom of Africa keeps a flame that may help light the way.

out of the sea and several very powerful Beings coming toward him unconscious, with a smell of perfume all around him. She carried him home. From that day forth, he never suffered from the migraine headaches again.

Learning to survive as a pre-teen, Eric found two jobs. In between jobs, he went to school, and although he had a tough time catching up with other students, he persevered, managing to learn basic reading, writing and math. His academic difficulties made life miserable in school and at home. Eric believes that he was in some way "blocked" from learning traditional linear way of thinking. He thinks it may have been another part of

his Spiritual development which encouraged his intuitive "knowing" and a deeper sense of the people and world around him.

At age seventeen, Eric was ready for his journey out of Africa to Europe and, eventually, to the United States and Canada. The journey lasted five years and is a tale of great hardship and great faith. He was jailed, he begged, he walked, he hitchhiked, he slept in the desert. Burned by the sun and freezing at night, he often felt the "warmth" of his guides but they never interfered with his "initiation."

It took some years for Eric to use his healing gifts again. In 1984, with several other people, Eric began "The World Federation for Spiritual Healing" in

Belgium. His vision was to create a place where people could receive healing, and where he could teach as many students as possible his techniques of energy healing.

Eric's intention is to bring healing to any situation. One of Eric's deepest beliefs is, "Healing is a matter of simplicity and honesty. We are all born with an innate ability to heal. We need only the will to serve without discrimination."

Eric is especially interested in the children of the world. He believes that the children, from very young to teenagers, can be taught to use their "hidden healing powers" to help us to change the world and provide a brighter future for themselves and all of us!

Fasil Ghemb



Photo caption: Built by Emperor Fasilides during the 17th century, Fasil Ghemb stands still to this date to grace Gondar, A Northeastern city of Ethiopia. Surrounded by a 900-metre wall, the enchanting royal compound contains palaces, churches, monasteries and extraordinary public and private buildings. Although factual documents do not support it, the castle is said to have been built with mixture of wheat flour and thousands of eggs in order to hold the building together. Today, the castle stands among other sites as the most visited tourist attractions in the country.



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Master Healer from Ghana

By Donna Selby

Throughout history, people the world over have told stories about special individuals who gave the ability to heal. Of particular interest lately by the "civilized" Western world is the study of how physical, emotional and mental disease may be affected by working with the "unseen" energy of a person. Very few Western minds are able to breakthrough the veil of physical form and see this field of energy. Eric Vormanns is such an individual.

Eric was born in a tiny village in Ghana, West Africa. Before his birth, his parents and Grandmother were told by the village elders that this child would possess the gift of healing and bare the responsibility of teaching healing to others. After his birth, he was taken to the Oraclist, who confirmed the predictions. During this first seven years, Eric gained a reputation in his community for being able to tell people many hidden things about their lives and health.

Eric "healed" by simply doing what his Spirit guides instructed him to do. He also received spiritual instruction in the gathering and application of plants and leaves that could be used as a talisman to protect an individual.

Eric's paternal Grand-

mother wanted him to live with her as she knew about his healing potential. Strict, but with an unconditional love and acceptance, she gave Eric a strong sense of boundaries and self-responsibility. She was well aware of his destiny and always encouraged his communications with the Spirit guides he called his "friends."

During this period of time, Eric suffered from migraine headaches. These attacks were so severe that he could not move for days at a time. His entire head would feel as if it was on fire and when cold water was applied to soothe him, it immediately turned to steam. When he was seven, his aunt decided it would be best to seek medical advice since the medicine men and herbalists could not affect his condition. An operation was



then recommended.

Draped for surgery, with a nurse wheeling him down the hall, little Eric heard the voice of his Spirit guides instructing him to tell the nurse he had to go to the bathroom. Without question he made his sudden request. Annoyed and baffled, the nurse allowed him to go. From there, the Spirit guides told him to go home to his Grandmother. Later that day, on a nearby beach where Eric often went, he had a life altering experience. All he remembered is seeing a swirling, colorful, smoke coming