



Blacks Before America

By Mark Hyman



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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

"Blacks Before America" tells the story of Blacks thousands of years before Columbus landed in America. Blacks were in the forefront of human civilization. Dr. Hyman describes the course of the civilization from Egyptian dynasties to the African pharaohs and queens, to early Christian priests, bishops and popes, traders, artists and many more.

Blacks made extensive migrations to distant parts of the world for many centuries and left evidence of artifacts, paintings and languages as proof of their advanced civilization.

Among the historic figures presented in "Blacks Before America" are Aesop, the Black Fabulist; Imhotep, Black Egyptian physician; Saint Augustine; Hatshepsut, first queen of Egypt; three Black African Popes; Makeda, Queen of Sheba, and many others.

About the Author

Mark Hyman was born in Rocky Mount, North Carolina and went to Howard University, where he was inspired to research Black history by William Leo Hansberry. His research continued through service in World War II and a career in journalism and public relations. He received a doctorate in African Studies from Temple University in 1992. Dr. Hyman passed away in June 1995.

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1: INTRODUCTION: "Blacks Before America" had a providential beginning. A client, Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, had requested a book written on Black history. Self-awareness among African Americans was skyrocketing as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. Major universities were being pressed to include curricula on African American Studies. The rapidly evolving history of black people was rich and bountiful.

The author proposed he be commissioned to write a book on the black experience thousands of years before Columbus touched the shores of the New World. Reason? To say to African American children they were somebody long before they were brought to America in chains.

"Blacks Before America" does just that. The story of Clitus Niger is an example. He was a major military assistant to Alexander the Great. Other stories were included such as the great migrations of black people thousands of years ago in Europe, Southern Ireland, Russia, Siberia, Asia, China, Japan, and into Malayan Peninsula, Philippines and Hawaii.

The book tells of Egyptian dynasties and their African pharaohs and queens. The early Christian Church is explored with blacks playing an integral role in North Africa. There were priests, bishops, and popes in the early church. Included is the very important description of the ancient trade and commerce among African traders and the world. The East African ports of Mombasa and Kilwa traded with the world with ships to China, Japan, Arabia and Egypt, thousands of years before Columbus was born - before Europeans dreamed of invading the continent.

One hundred and eighty one years before Columbus was born, Abubakar II, Malian emperor sent 2,000 ships into the western hemisphere. Today West African artifacts and parts of West African languages are found in Mexico, Central and South America.

"Blacks Before America" dispels once and for all for black children that their history began in slavery. It tells them that they, indeed, were a part of the first civilization of humans and that they really mattered in all ages of man.

THE HOMECOMING

In August of 1981, the author toured the Nile Valley in Egypt. This was the area from which the first civilization sprang - and black people made it happen. The most impressive and lasting experience was an emotional homecoming among the Nubians. The tears and embraces were deeply moving as he was welcomed as a brother Nubian. What an honor to be called an African!

No words can describe how he felt to be in the physical presence of black people whose forefathers had ruled Egypt.

The dusty villages, the sparse date farms, the skinny goats and the sleepy donkeys tell little of the magnificent past of the Nubians; the museum at Cairo does. Inside is a play of artifacts one city block-long that tells of the grandeur that was Nubia and of their discovery of the science of embalming which was passed on to the Egyptians. The fancy trappings their horses wore during the Punic Wars with Rome recalled how the success of the nimble Nubian riders forced the Romans to create their own cavalry. Then there were iron instruments like tongs, scissors and tiny tweezers and the pottery, clothing and other items used in daily Nubian life. All of this vividly told the history of a people who had both ruled Egypt and been ruled by Egypt.

Then there was the sadness that only the moving finger of history can bring. These people are now the menials of Egypt, the footstools of the economy. They are often the hustlers and beggars from tourists. To survive they speak three languages: Arabic for dealing with the government, English for working for tourists, and their own language which they have spoken for thousands of years. The greatest tragedy is that they are being moved from the homelands they have occupied for thousands of years. The new Aswan Dam is causing their villages to be flooded.

After such a journey, the reading of Nubian history becomes more alive than ever. The author will remember forever the smiles, the pride, the deep knowledge they have of themselves. Without saying it, they expressed hope for oppressed Africans throughout the world.

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Part III: XVIII; Treasures of Ancient Nigeria

Arnold Toynbee was one of the many distinguished English scholars who degraded Africa. A world famous sociologist and economist, he wrote the Industrial Revolution in 1884. This book has been relied upon by economists. Since that time, Toynbee has been quoted throughout the world as having said that Africa contributed nothing to world civilization.

Among the scores of recent discoveries now disproving the negative claims of Toynbee and others, is the traveling exhibit entitled "Treasures of Ancient Nigeria: Legacy of 2,000 years." Those alive today, who agree with Toynbee, may reverse their opinion, especially when they see ancient Nigerian art. World art critics have judged it to be "the greatest art created by mankind."

Some of these masterfully done pieces were created 500 years before Christ. The handiwork shows a superior intelligence and a facile adaptation to the environment in which the Nigerians lived.

When it is realized that the ancient Nigerians worked with bronze 2,500 years ago, no opinions which demean them are true. A comparison of the history of this period of high creativity with general history reveals that the Romans of that time were crude farmers with a nagging and worrisome relationship with the nearby Etruscans. Yet at this time, the Nigerians were creating magnificent figures of heads, people, animals, and jewelry in bronze, terracotta, ivory and stone. One hundred pieces of this revealing art are now on a world tour.

The immortal artist Picasso was significantly influenced by African art. This is admitted and taught in art classes everywhere. At first, some European art critics could not accept African art, "which said what it meant" rather than being elaborately descriptive. Some say African art broke all of the rules that modern artists have been taught in learning how to tell African art from European. But African art is realistic in form, classical in style, finished to perfection and definitely advanced in technological skill. Some of the cast and sculpted heads are compared with classical Greek work. The intricate and complex vases also have been compared with the finest examples of Chinese bronzes.

Without preaching against the negative critics of Africa in general and blacks in particular, the Nigerian art exhibition silently proclaims that Africans did contribute to world progress and civilization. They lived in a healthy, intellectual and progressive society. Their art lends dramatic support to the overlooked facts that ancient Nigerians were tradesmen, farmers, herdsman, miners, scholars and healthy worshippers of their God. Societies best prove their level of civilization through their art. As such, through their art, Nigerians have debunked all criticisms.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Teresa Howard:

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