

stood in the galleries of the National Museum of the American Indian at the opening of our curated exhibition “To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions,” we overheard the pleased comments of many visitors, both Native and non-Native, as they viewed the exhibit. Days later, *The New York Times* ran a major article on the exhibit. “To Honor and Comfort” is now traveling to major museum venues across the country, with a smaller version traveling to tribal museums and cultural centers. Needless to say, it has given us great pleasure to know that our goal of documenting and bringing quiltmaking and regional traditions to a wider public is indeed being achieved.

Transcending Differences and Celebrating Achievements: Folklore as a Conduit of Understanding

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Alf Walle, my grandfather, immigrated to the United States in 1905. After falling in love with Margaret Petersen, he abandoned plans to return to his native Norway. My grandfather had training as a blacksmith, and, after mastering the basics of his craft, he apprenticed as a carriage maker. But fate was cruel, and just as he mastered the subtleties of carriage making, the automobile emerged as the standard of personal transportation.

An immigrant craftsman with a heavy accent and skills out of step with the modern world, my grandfather provided for his family using his knowledge of metallurgy in generic ways, employing none of his artistic sensibilities. Nevertheless, as an avocation, he always maintained a fully functioning blacksmith shop, and he wiled away his leisure hours producing a variety of artistic products (chandeliers, candlesticks, and an occasional utility trailer).

My maternal great-uncle was a man named Maurice La Claire, a professional portrait photographer. Due to his personal interest, La Claire ventured through the countryside of rural Michigan photographing what professional folklorists call “traditional craftspeople.” My uncle had no training in folklore, but he did have a great deal of respect for what we call “the folk arts.” His portraits of craftspeople did not have a political bent (like the photographs of Walker Evans or Dorothea Lange), and even though he did use the technology of the photograph to do so, his portraits did convey a sense of humanity along with a reverence for what was being lost as mass, technological culture entrenched itself throughout our country.

Learning that my grandfather was a practicing blacksmith, La Claire wanted to photograph him at work in his shop. Arrangements were made to bring the two of them together. My grandfather was flattered and quickly accepted the offer.

La Claire arrived at the blacksmith shop and was met by my grandfather, dressed in a suit and tie in anticipation of a "formal" portrait session. This, was hardly what my uncle wanted; he sought to photograph craftspeople "in situ," practicing their art. Although my grandfather had a strong sense of self-worth, his years as a welder in the salt mines of Manistee, Michigan made him believe that his craft and artistic vision had little significance to most members of mainstream society.

But my grandfather was surprised in a positive way. He was happy to get into his work clothes, put on his long apron, stoke the forge with coal, and pound red-hot iron for my uncle's camera. Because he did so, my uncle was able to create a permanent vision of the village blacksmith that is both personal to me and archetypal for all who see it.

Folklorists typically strive to do (in a more "professional," systematic, and organized way) what my uncle did as an avocation: interpret and present traditional people in a manner that builds mutual respect and understanding. My hope for the future of public sector/applied folklore is to consciously develop methods, strategies, and visions that facilitate artists and craftspeople understanding their own significance, learning how to successfully interact with the larger, mainstream society on their own terms, and mitigating the disruption and alienation so often caused by massive social change.

Nuff Respect for Jamaican Women: On the Experience of Organizing a Celebration of Female Dub Poets

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Dub poetry, or reggae poetry, emerged in the late 1970s as an art form that combines traditional Jamaican verbal and musical components. Unfortunately, the existing scholarship on the genre focuses primarily on male practitioners. In recent years interest in the work of established female poets such as Lillian Allen, Jean "Binta" Breeze, and Cherry Natural has grown significantly. Despite the increased interest, joint female performances remain rare. More commonly, a single female performs along with a line-up of male artists.

While conducting fieldwork with Jamaican poets in 1996, I shared my vision of organizing an all-women dub poetry program at Indiana University. I first approached the poets Cherry Natural and Queen Majeeda during an interview in Kingston. I invited them to participate in the project, and they accepted. Soon we discussed adding another poet, as well as a female drummer. After many conversations, phone calls, and faxes, we successfully recruited a third poet, Jean "Binta" Breeze, and a drummer, Joy Erskine.