

N'COBRA

National Coalition Of Blacks for Reparations in America



QUEEN MOTHER ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY

NANA YAA ASANTEWAA OHEMA
(Ms. Dorothy Benton-Lewis)

June 24, 2006 Indianapolis, Indiana

Officiants

Abusuapanin Kwabena Abremkwa
(Hannibal Tirus Afrik)
Elder Head of Family
Agona Duakwa, Ghana

Mama Awusi Naomesi II
(Mashariki Jywanza)
Queen Mother Fiare-Kpotame
Tefle Traditional Area, Ghana

AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERSHIP

Africans have always honored and respected the leadership of women on every level of society; not only in motherhood, but also in business, spirituality, government, as well on the battlefield; for example Hatshepsut, Queen Nzingha, Harriet Tubman, Winnie Mandela and President Johnson-Sirleaf. Female leadership titles vary throughout Africa, such as *Iyoba* and *Erelu* in Nigeria, *Kpojito* in Benin, *Ndlovukazi* in Swaziland and *Ohema* in Ghana. Regardless of location they are highly respected, loved and sought for wise council and leadership.

Among the Ashanti traditions in Ghana, West Africa is the highly respected role of *Ohema* (Queen Mother). As a mature family and community member, she displays qualities of wisdom, compassion, integrity and benevolence. By providing assistance and counsel to youths and adults, the Queen Mother engages in the political and social affairs of her town or region. The socialization process is a fundamental aspect of assuring intergenerational adherence to positive behavioral values.

The Queen Mother is the co-ruler and has joint responsibility with the King for all affairs of the state. With the King or Chief, she shares the duties of holding court or council over small and important issues of the people. The Akan Queen Mother wields true political power and could under certain conditions; assume full control of central authority. She is the only person who can rebuke the King openly in public.

Following African tradition of respecting and utilizing female leadership, the N’COBRA Constitution requires gender-balanced leadership by having National Co-Chairs – male and female.

HONORING N’COBRA’S QUEEN MOTHER



Seated: Queen Mothers Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema & Awusi Naomesi II (Mama Mashariki)
Standing: Nana Kofi Amowi I, Milton McGriff & Kibibi Tyehimba (Nat’l Co-Chairs), Abusuapainin K. Abremkwa (Baba Hannibal)

The African struggle for Reparations in America is blessed with many committed and talented female leaders. Three especially stand out for their extraordinary steadfastness, personal sacrifice, unyielding faith and wise leadership. They inspired many to join the fight for justice for the victims of the African Holocaust of Enslavement and their rightful inheritance. The first two were Ms. Callie House (1861-1928) who co-founded “The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association” in the 1890s and Queen Mother Audley Moore (1898-1997) who founded the Reparations Committee For The Descendants of American Slaves in 1963; and now the third – Ms. Dorothy Benton-Lewis.

June 19, 2004, during the N’COBRA annual conference in Washington, DC, Ms. Dorothy Benton-Lewis was the recipient of the Queen Mother Audley Moore Award for her dedication to the Reparations Movement, nationally and internationally. Ms. Lewis co-founded and provided leadership to four national reparations organizations: Restitution for Involuntary Servitude, Inc. (Alaska, 1968); the Black Reparations Commission (Maryland, 1978); the African National

Reparations Organization (New York, 1982); and, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (Washington, DC, 1987.) Within N'COBRA, Ms. Dorothy Lewis has served as National Co-chair, International Affairs Commission Co-chair, an officer in the Fund Development Committee and member of the N'COBRA Legal Defense, Research and Education Fund (LDREF) Board of Directors.

Consequently, N'COBRA felt it appropriate to use the title of Queen Mother to link us back to a time honored tradition which honors the critical role that extraordinary women have and will continue to play in our liberation struggle's leadership. Our use of this title is an example of our determination to adopt the best of what it means to be African!

N'COBRA's QUEEN MOTHER LINEAGE

As N'COBRA grappled with the historic and spiritual significance of a Queen Mother in the Reparations Movement, there was a compelling need to reach back to the continent in the spirit of Sankofa (reaching back to the past as we move forward to the future). It was imperative that our approach be rooted in our historical experiences, both in our liberation struggle and in spiritual guidance. N'COBRA's Queen Mother Lineage is established through blood (African) and service (contribution to the Reparations Movement, Justice, Liberation and Self-Determination). As Pan Africans or New Afrikan People, we draw from the finest of our historical experiences (Africa and Diaspora); though we heavily use the Queen Mother model of the Akan people of Ghana, our intent is not to replicate it. Our Queen Mother lineage includes Queen Mother Harriet Tubman, Queen Mother Callie House, Queen Mother Yaa Asantewa of Ghana, and Queen Mother Audley Moore.

N'COBRA's definition of Queen Mother:

An extraordinary female leader of the people, especially for Reparations, social justice and social order. She earns and maintains her position through her good character, good works and the people's approval.

Queen Mother Character and Qualities: Unyielding Faith and Commitment to Reparations and Justice; Benevolent; Wisdom; Integrity; and Leadership.

Queen Mother Responsibilities and Work: Wear the mantle of Queen Mother with dignity and respect; A speaker and organizer for Reparations and justice; A Peacemaker (counsel and resolve disputes); Always builds and preserves the Queen Mother tradition.

People Approved: Queen Mothers are elected, elevated and remain in their status by the will of the people.

ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY

During the 17th annual N'COBRA national conference at Martin University, Indianapolis, Indiana, the formal Enthronement Ceremony as Queen Mother was conducted on Saturday, June 24, 2006. The Officiants were N'COBRA officers who had previously been elevated to official duties in Ghana, West Africa: Abusuapanin Kwabena Abrewkwa (Hannibal Tirus Afrik) is an Elder Head of Family in Agona Duakwa, Ghana; Mama Awusi Naomesi II (Mashariki Jywanza) is a Queen Mother in Fiave-Kpotame, Tefle Traditional Area, Ghana. Assisting in the ceremony was Nana Kofi Amowi I (Kofi Lomotey), Sub-Chief, Agona Duakwa, Ghana.



Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema address the General Membership Meeting after receive their endorsement.

The ceremony began with a spirited Drum Call to assemble the African community, followed by Libations to our Ancestors for their blessings. During the festive ceremony, an explanation was given on the traditional role of governance by royalty for socio-political issues and the lofty status designated as a Queen Mother.

The Naming Ritual was based on both the cosmological significance of birth date and the ancestral/clan lineage. Sister Dorothy was renamed:

Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema

Which means: first her title, a person of note in the community (Nana), Thursday-born female child (Yaa), courageous warrior (Asantewaa) and women's leader (Ohema).

This particular name is of great importance to our understanding of African traditional life. Due to our inquiries, Brother Kwesi Odaoku, while traveling home to Ghana after a 15 year absence, and upon hearing of the noble work of Sister Dorothy Lewis and the significance of our fervent quest for Reparations, offered to acquire directly from Ejisu, some items that are needed when bestowing the title of Queen Mother.

Ejisu is the famed town of Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa (1840 - 1921) who is known for her leadership role in rallying the Akan people to fight against the onslaught of the British invaders at a time in Ashanti history when the men were initially reluctant to wage continuous war.

During conversations with members of Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa's family line and traditional priests of the Ejisu Ancestral Palace Shrine, responsible for maintaining the 'sacred stool' (*Ahemmaadwa*/throne) of her family line, Brother Kwesi explained in detail Sister Dorothy's life and years of work in the Reparations Movement on behalf of our people. The Elders were told of our history of racial oppression in America and our emboldened spirit of active resistance and Nation-building.

The priests then presented *Suman* (Talisman) that will bring Queen Mother Dorothy blessings; assist in bringing people together; good health; the strength needed to continue the job and path we are following; wisdom to lead; protection from the spirits and God Almighty (Odumakrama); and peace!

In keeping with Akan tradition to identify the day of the week upon which Sister Dorothy was born, it was discovered that she also was born on Thursday or Yaa, "a sacred day of observance for the earth as all that we depend upon for life ultimately comes from the earth." The *Suman* connects Sister Dorothy Lewis' Queen Mother status directly to Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa.

Therefore, the community now proclaimed our Sister:

NANA YAA ASANTEWAA OHEMA

N'COBRA's Queen Mother of the Reparations Movement



Officials: Abusuapanin Kwabena Abremkwa and QM Awusi Naomesi II, placing *Suman* on Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema

Next came the *Ahemmaadwa* (Royal Seat or Throne) sitting procedure during which she was elevated and seated three times to signify her elevation as a royal leader. The Queen Mother now has her personal Ashanti *Ahemmaadwa* and Swazi (fly wisk) to carry as a symbol of authority and respect.

As she sat regally on her *Ahemmaadwa*, Queen Mother had several traditional herbs placed around her *Ahemmaadwa* to drive away evil and negativity and for healing. This provides both spiritual and physical medicine for all those associated with the Queen Mother.

Her formal attire included a *Suman* worn on her neck, and an armband, along with smaller Talismans given to her by the priests of the Ejisu Ancestral Palace.

Next came the Community Declaration of Acceptance of the new Queen Mother and her Statement of Responsibility. Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema declared that her service project would

focus on fund development - acquiring critical resources for N'COBRA's leadership in the international Reparations Movement.

Nana Kofi Amowi I, Sub-chief of Agona Duakwa, gave words of wisdom. He extended congratulations to our new Queen Mother and offered assistance to her and N'COBRA in maintaining our African traditions of socialization and the necessity of ensuring intergenerational transmission of cultural excellence by leadership example.

The youth of N'COBRA's Indianapolis chapter performed a vibrant dance amid drum praise to conclude this memorable occasion.

Our community is proud to elevate our Queen Mother for the Reparations Movement. May the Ancestral blessings bestowed upon Nana Yaa Asantewaa Ohema be honored by our collective commitment as we continue forward to victory!

From this day, June 24, 2006, may we demonstrate our pride as New African women, men and children "for as long as the sun shines and the waters flow." Reparations, Now!!



Sister Sala Jywanza dance in the Queen Mother honor

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF NANA YAA ASANTEWAA OHEMA

Also known as

Queen Mother Dorothy Benton Lewis (Oravouche)

Queen Mother Dorothy Benton Lewis: The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) has bestowed upon Ms. Dorothy Benton Lewis the title of Queen Mother, for her lifelong commitment and exemplary service to the liberation and reparation struggle of African people.

QM Dorothy Benton Lewis is the former National Co-Chair of N'COBRA and the current Co-Chair of N'COBRA's International Affairs Commission. She is a researcher, writer, and lecturer on reparations and related social and economic development issues. She has been quoted in numerous newspapers, magazines, and books; published several articles, and written three "Black Reparations Now!" booklets: 1) 40 Acres, \$50.00, and a Mule; 2) Black Reparations, Religion and Faith: Raising the Contradictions; and 3) A Black and White Perspective. These self-published booklets and the questions they addressed shaped the conversations that guided the early reparations discourse in the general public. She is in the process of completing her fourth book on reparations.

Queen Mother Lewis has appeared on numerous radio and television talk shows, including British Broadcasting of Canada and London, Tony Brown's Journal, C-SPAN's AM Journal, CNN, Fox News, and BBC Television in the United Kingdom. She has debated the issue at college campuses throughout the country, including Howard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton University, and Spellman and Morehouse Colleges. She has represented the reparations issue at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland; Suriname, South America; and Amsterdam. She has spoken on numerous national forums including the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Million Family March, Fortieth Anniversary March on Washington, and Millions for Reparations.

QM Lewis co-founded and provided leadership to four National reparations organizations: Restitution for Involuntary Servitude, Inc. (Alaska, 1968); the Black Reparations Commission (Maryland, 1978); the African National Reparations Organization (New York, 1982); and, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (Washington, DC, 1987.) For the past four years she has been serving as the Co-Representative from North America with an International Working Committee laying the foundation for a Pan African reparations movement, via the Global Afrikan Congress, which was formed in Bridgetown, Barbados in follow-up to the UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR). She is the current Co-chair of the NCOBRA International Affairs Commission (NIAC) and is facilitating, along with a coalition of Pan Afrikan and reparations organizations from around the world, the launching of its first Global Pan Afrikan Reparations and Repatriation Conference (G-PARRC) in Accra, Ghana in July 2006.

While reparations is her mission, she started her public service career as a Social Worker for the State of Alaska, in Fairbanks, and has remained in public service in the public health field. Queen Mother Lewis has children and grandchildren to whom she would like to leave a better world.

A graduate of the University of Alaska, Ms. Lewis' passion for reparations arose out of her childhood experiences in predominantly white schools in Fairbanks, Alaska. She views herself as a reparatationist and a children's advocate, dedicated to bringing truth to the world and exposing the lies that still plague the American educational system, and distort the realities of children, especially African American children.

Year after year, she endured class lectures on the "Benefits of Slavery" (to the African) from the slave owners' perspective. Although the painful memories of those classroom experiences have faded, she still recalls the snickering of her white classmates, and her haunting thought, "Will anyone ever speak for those enslaved?" In answer to her own youthful inquiry, her mission, for almost four decades, has been that of speaking for and seeking redress on behalf of Africans held as slaves. Her understanding that there was a process for a redress of grievances came out of her experience in the Fairbanks, Alaska Chapter of the NAACP, and support for the successful Alaska Native Land Claims movement.

She was instrumental in the successful endorsement of HR 40 by the national body of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, of which she is a proud member, and serves as chair of her Chapter's, International Committee. (HR 40 is a bill to study the impact of slavery on African Americans, has been introduced in the US Congress each year, since 1989, by Congressman John Conyers of Michigan.)

In keeping with her view that Black Reparations is an international issue and should be supported by all freedom and democratic loving people of the world, Queen Mother Lewis has taken the Black Reparations message to a number of African countries, and to several international conferences including the 1985 International Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa; the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland in 1998 and 2002, and to a conference on Development in Honduras, Central America in 1999. She has been a constant voice for Black Reparations since the early 1960s, and is among the most articulate and active reparations' advocates in the country today. She has influenced (and sometimes coerced) a number of national leaders and organizations to take a public stand for reparations. QM Lewis reflects that when she first went to Kenya, East Africa to the UN International Women's Conference in 1985, she was a lone voice for reparations. When she went to Durban, South Africa to the UN Conference on Racism, Black Reparations was a major issue, about which everyone was talking.