

a celebration of life



Nehanda Isoke Abiodun

JUNE 29, 1950 – JANUARY 30, 2019

Order of Service

Musical Prelude

Video

Musical Selection: Down To The River to Pray

Marcelle Lashley

Prayer of Comfort

Pastor Shon Adkins

Reflections

Hannah Janeway

Kathryn Hall-Trujillo

Joseph Mutti

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Eight Bowl Ceremony

Nehanda's Son and Granddaughters

Reflections

Sekou Odinga

Chinganji Akinyele

My Mother Was a Freedom Fighter

Poet

Aja Monet

Musical Selection: I'll Fly Away

Marcelle Lashley

Her Story

Catherine Murphy

Reflections

Nehanda's Daughter

Eulogy and Closing Prayer

Pastor Shon Adkins

Musical Selection: Always

Marcelle Lashley

Recessional



*"What will you do with your
one wild and precious life?"*

- Mary Oliver

On the morning of January 30, 2019, Nehanda Isoke Abiodun passed away with peace and grace at her home in Havana, Cuba, in the presence of her dear friend, her "Esposito".

In her 68 years, she lived many lives and touched people around the world. Each of them carries with them her wisdom, her smile and her love.

Nehanda, born Cheri Dalton, was born and raised in Harlem. She was black girl magic in every sense of the term. Her childhood was one filled with love and adventure thanks to her parents, Wesley and Marge, as well as an extended family that included people from all walks of life. As an only child, she was doted on. Marge instilled in her a love for opulence, people, and culture, which broadened through their travels and Marge's social network. Wesley, an activist in his own right and former bodyguard for Malcolm X, ensured his daughter understood the world around her and her moral responsibility as a citizen of the world.

Her childhood and coming of age, as much as they were marked by politics, were shaped by happy memories she recounted for the rest of her life--the good ol' days with "Boo and the crew", legendary holiday gatherings at Aunt Fannie's house, the sharp tongue and jet setting lifestyle of her mom, Large Marge, the infamous train track story about her dad and many, many more.

Nehanda's first exposure to the concern for social justice, came at the tender age of 10. She participated in a protest to stop Columbia University's plans for expansion that would demolish one of her favorite places to play, Morningside Park. That experience shaped her thinking and planted the seeds for a life of activism. In an ironic twist of fate, she was later accepted into and attended Columbia University.

She began working as a volunteer at West Harlem Community Organization when she was 13 years old. Later, she worked there for several years, serving as the assistant to her mentor, Margaret McNeil, the Executive Director, and Founder. Her early professional

life included a number of roles in community-based organizations. While all of her work was meaningful, one of the projects she was most proud of was the acupuncture clinic at Lincoln Hospital. Here she joined a group of innovators and disrupters who sought to treat heroin addicts through acupuncture; discarding the traditional method of treatment, methadone, which had proven ineffective for long-term treatment. This radical approach to treatment was transformative and recognized nationally. Her work continued at BAAANA, the first acupuncture clinic in Harlem.

In the 70s, Nehanda's commitment to social justice intensified in response to a growing stream of violence and injustices inflicted upon black and brown people. It was common to see her at protests and rallies with her two children, especially her son Ervin (Hekima).

She loved her children fiercely and her maternal instincts to protect them, and create a better world were at the core of her decision to live the life of a revolutionary.

She was a founding member of the New Afrikan People's Organization (NAPO) and an Organizer for the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM).

Nehanda was forced into exile from her home after being charged for her alleged involvement in a series of criminal acts. Being separated from her family was the greatest devastation of her life.

Despite the pain, trauma and unspeakable sacrifice, she continued her work and never wavered.

In Cuba, she lived among the people in her small Havana community organizing, educating, and mentoring. She was affectionately known as Mama Nehanda to many. Nehanda introduced revolutionary culture to the international community of young people who visited Cuba. She was known to hold court in her home, where young people would come to sit at her feet and learn. She was an elder in the community and respected by all. New York was home, but the people of Cuba embraced her and loved her as their own. Her wisdom transcended age and culture, and everyone who came in contact with her felt her spirit and her love for people. She continuously engaged international representatives, journalists, and scholars who visited Cuba.

She became known as the 'Godmother' of Cuban Hip-Hop due to her deep influence and encouragement of young Cuban rappers, and hip-hop artists who were creating a uniquely Cuban hip-hop culture. She understood the importance of giving young

people a platform to share their experiences in their own words. She connected young local artists, with the support of the New York Chapter of the MXGM, to artists from the United States such as Jay-Z, dead prez, Common, Talib Kweli, The Roots, Zayd Malik, and Mos Def. They were introduced to the Cuban revolution through MXGM's Black August events.

While the work of a revolutionary is never done, Nehanda has left an indelible mark on the world and all who knew her.

In those dark days when she missed her family most, she found healing and comfort in sharing stories about home, dancing and cooking. She loved nothing more than to have a house full of people filled with great conversation, lots of laughter, music and food.

The world may remember her for her work and sacrifice, but her greatest legacy is her two children, Vanessa and Ervin. She was a proud mom and grandmother who loved telling stories (over and over) about her children and grandchildren.

In life, her light shined bright! May her spirit live on in each of us who knew and loved her. She was a mother and Madre, a Goddess, a force of nature and a true warrior.

She will be missed immensely by her children Vanessa and Ervin and her two granddaughters, Kayla Imani and Zoe. She also leaves to mourn, three first cousins, two stepsisters, and her extended family of sister-friends, brothers, comrades, godchildren, bonus nieces and nephews and a host of others.

"She wore her scars as her best attire. A stunning dress of hellfire."

- Daniel Saint

Ministerio de Cultura
Instituto Cubano de la Música
Agencia Cubana de RAP



El Pasado día 30 de Enero del 2019 el movimiento de hip hop cubano sufrió una de las mas grandes perdidas dentro de sus filas, nuestra gran hermana, compañera, una de nuestras guías mas profundas dentro de esta interminable lucha por los derechos civiles y por nuestra identidad. Nuestra Cheri Dalton o como todos la conocíamos por su nombre de lucha Nahanda Abiodun.

Quien la conocio en persona sabe que que ella fue y es uno de los eslabones fundamentales en los inicios de un movimiento virgen que necesitaba una guía para buscar un camino y ella estuvo ahí siempre.

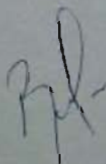
La recordamos en aquellos conversatorios para nada conspiratorio y si muy llenos de conocimientos y aprendizajes de lo que significaban los negros ante la sociedad y cual era nuestro rol.

Explico con una vision muy clara y exacta el papel de la Agencia Cubana de Rap en estos tiempos de lucha por la identidad del negro entre otras muchas cualidades que me serian imposible resumir.

Estamos ante la presencia de una de las personas mas significativas y *que marco* una huella dentro de nuestro movimiento y a la cual recordaremos siempre

Llegue nuestras mas sinceras condolencias a sus familiares y amigos en nombre del movimiento de Rap cubano y la Agencia Cubana de Rap.

Sin Mas
Ruben Marin Maning
Director Agencia Cubana de Rap


Rubén Marín Maning
Director



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*"Such as I am,
I am a precious gift."*

- Zora Neal Hurston



From Cuba With Love...

"May the precious light of our Creator and spirit of our ancestors welcome our loved one home. May she find comfort in the Creator's presence. May we each celebrate in the knowledge that love is eternal and the true spirit does not die."

- Esposito

Hey Mamita....

With an Oops Up Side Your Head - always ready to Get Up, Get On Up.
Always admirers, giving Respect, awaiting your Word Up, or ...to Lets Get It On ...For
Old Times Sake. Our Nia - our Bad Mama Jama.

But now...

Soar up to the sun
And look down on the sea
And sing..
'Cause you know
How it feels
To be free.

Yay! People, Get Ready! Theres a TRAIN a Comin!

- English Sue

"En el tiempo q estuvimos juntas aprendí a respetarte quererte y amarte. Gracias por hacer de mi la persona q soy hoy. Siempre seras En mi vida la luz que me alumbrara para caminar por el sendero de la justicia y la verdad. Viviras por siempre en mi CORAZÓN. Hasta pronto mi NIA"

(In the time we were together I learned to respect you and love you. Thank you for making me the person that I am today. You will always be in my life, the light that will illuminate me to walk the path of justice and truth. You will live forever in my HEART. See you soon my NIA.)

- Bobbie

“The ancestors could not send me a better partner. You will always be my girlfriend, my sister, my friend, my wife, my piece of sunshine. Thank you for bringing into my life your beautiful smile. Thank you for our beautiful kids. They will always be my children. And thank you for the hands that held me in times of happiness and in times of pain. We are not dancing the last song yet. You just go ahead to get ready for the hell of a party that we are going to have when I meet you again, my beautiful Queen.”

- Mario

Alguna gente llega a la vida de uno para marcarnos tú lo hiciste Nehanda, cada día junto a ti fue una oportunidad de aprender y darme cuenta que solo el presente cuenta que cada minuto de esta vida hay que vivirlo como si fuera el último pero responsablemente ...no me estoy despidiendo de ti estoy diciéndote nos vemos luego y se que desde donde estás me estarás cuidando y sonriendo gracias por llegar a mi vida y hacerme sentir especial... gracias

(Some people come into your life as one to mark us, as you did Nehanda. Each day with you was an opportunity to learn and realize that only the present tells that every minute of this life must be lived as if it were the last but responsibly. I'm not saying goodbye to you. I'm telling you see you later and I know that from where you are you will be taking care of me and smiling. Thank you for coming to my life and making me feel special ... thanks)

- Babi

You have a way of saying things without words. A way to make cornbread that tastes like heaven. You could party all night and embrace and say, “te amo,” like no one else. You gave me a name when I did not know who I really was. You empowered this young black woman and taught me when to come in peace but always be ready to defend. Right on mama. I am not saying goodbye mama. I can see you in every sunflower. I can hear your voice when you call my name and say, “Be strong Thaliba this is not over yet.” God bless you mama.

- Thaliba

“Call your mother. I love you.” If my memory is correct, this is the last thing you said to me. Always giving love, and reminding me to give it to others—that’s the Nehanda, or “MA!” I know and love. What began as a chance encounter developed into the relationship we both needed, a decade-plus of long nights and sunny days filled with friends, food and that couch that always sucked you in for a nap. A mother’s love and a daughter’s stubbornness—and vice versa! A new book, CDs with the latest jams, costume jewelry that I came but never left with, impromptu dance parties and a stark words of wisdom delivered with honey that only you could give. You are, were and forever will be love... forever will be home. Black girl magic before it had a name. Thank you for your sacrifice. For your spirit and your love.

- Shannon

Creo q tengo q dejar q pase tiempo papoder escribir sobre Nia, soy incapaz d sacarlo ahora, traté pero sencillamente no puedo, y menos resumirlo en pocas palabras.

(I think I have to let time pass to write about Nia, I am unable to take it out now, I tried but I simply cannot, let alone summarize it in a few words.)

- Alexey, Grupo Obsesion

I met you when I was 12. I will never forget your eyes. I am a grown man now and never saw eyes like yours. Over the years the same question came into my head -- is she real? Or was she just a dream that I had? I can still remember your beautiful and powerful voice. My mommy doesn’t know where I get my pride when I desire to honor the sacrifices that other people make so that black young men like me have an inheritance of resistance and their own voice to say black lives matter. God bless you Mama Nehanda. Today, I can say I learned everything from you.

- Yusbel

Hermana, mi único deseo es que descansas en paz.

(Sister, my only wish is that you rest in peace.)

-Magia



“If you’re a writer, write about the revolution.
If you’re a teacher, teach revolution.
If you’re a painter, paint the scenes of freedom.
If you’re a computer specialist, design the leaflets.
If you’re a community organizer, organize the next rally.
If you’re an MC then rap about Kuwasi Balagoon, Sandra Pratt and Mtayari Shabaka Sundiata.
There’s a job for everyone.”

- Nehanda Isoke Abiodun

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are those whose lives death cannot diminish. Their love radiates forever in the hearts of family and friends. We felt that love in your thoughtfulness. Thank you so much.

