

Elombe Brath Selected Writings and Essays, by Herb Boyd. The Elombe Brath Foundation, Inc., 2018, 470 pp., \$24.95, paperback.

Reviewed by Richard D. Williams, George Washington University

Herb Boyd has written a comprehensive anthology of Elombe Brath. Elombe has been a prolific writer and speaker. The text consolidates some of his most influential writings to provide an index of thoughts regarding world affairs, and most interestingly, the role of the U.S. The following book review examines each section of the book highlighting influential texts and their context, followed by a reflection of the entire book.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raising in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-

Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes

Introduction

Elombe Brath was born September 30, 1936 to an immigrant father from Barbados (“The Elombe Brath Foundation, Inc.”). Brath exploited his platform as host of AfriKalidescope on WBAI-FM 99.5 for 30 years to expound his message and educate domestically and abroad (The Elombe Brath Foundation, Inc.). Brath is most famously known for his work to end the use of negro, the creation of the Black is Beautiful campaign and as the founder of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition.

Herb Boyd has compiled a comprehensive anthology of the writings and essays of Elombe Brath, entitled Elombe Brath: Selected Writings and Essays with a forward by Bernard White. Boyd’s anthology compiles a vast collection of writings on topics from his thoughts on Africa, Pan-Africanism, the Caribbean, and the United States. Through these texts, one can begin to see the world through Brath’s eyes. The following review will highlight select texts in each section, their context and a reflection of the book in its entirety.

Africa

The anthology begins with Brath’s writings and essays regarding Africa. Boyd begins with Brath’s essay on the Somali Crisis of 1992. In this essay, Brath expounds on the thoughts of Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan, a Somali poet, and to Brath’s esteem, a brilliant military leader. In this powerful condemnation of the United States’ involvement, Brath writes “One morsel is the fact that Bush [George H.W. Bush], as well as his predecessors, simultaneously supported some of the most despotic, reactionary forces in these same respective countries who are responsible for the tragic conditions being assailed today” (Boyd, 2018, p. 5).

Pan-Africanism and Marcus Garvey

Following the collection of writings on Africa, Boyd takes us to the thoughts of Brath and Pan-Africanism and Marcus Garvey. Within this section, Boyd offers a critical piece *from 1900 to 2000: The Pan-African Century: A Vindication and Victory for the Vision of Marcus Garvey*. This essay chronicles the origination of Pan-Africanism, through a discussion of the meaning of the word, which originated in the 1889-1890 First International conference of American Pan-States (Boyd, 2018, p.153). Brath pens concerning the influence Garvey had in Africa, specifically on Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who led the Gold Coast colony to independence on March 6, 1957.

The Caribbean

In Brath's expositions regarding the Caribbean, he pays careful attention to an American coup in Haiti in 2004 that removed elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide from office. In this essay, Brath highlights the abuse of power by the United States in their interfering with Haitian politics. There is a discussion of U.S. involvement that has gone wrong, such as the arming of the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti's (FRAPH) leader, Guy Phillippe and his murdering of 5,000 Haitians; and, the arming of infamous FRAPH slaughterer, Louis-Jodel Chamblain. Through this searing account of the meddling of the United States into the sovereignty of Haiti, Brath highlights a common theme in American geopolitical policy which continues to degrade this country today.

The United States

This section includes topics of the Vietnam War, the bastardization of the Autobiography of Malcolm X to a seminal writing in response to the 9-11-2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S.

In the 9-11-01 essay, Brath argues that we cannot end terrorism and extremism unless there is justice in the world. He evokes an adage "Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice." (Boyd, 2018, p.353) Brath is aware of the consequences of the United States and their efforts to create a world in which the governments of sovereign nations are in accord with their standards and share similar views, as well as the false idea that the cessation of war means there is peace. It is a critical point that without justice, there will never be peace, as if someone feels persecuted, as Brath argues is the case in the Middle East feels, they will respond, which can be violently.

Brath continually evokes the spirit of Langston Hughes' poem *Harlem*. He links the suppression of the dreams of countries to rule in the way that they choose and to obtain and retain autonomy in their political affairs. This essay, in combination with others in the United States section illuminate the complex and intricate thoughts of Brath regarding the actions of the United States domestically in politics, pop-culture, and internationally through interference with sovereign nations and condemnation of governments that the U.S. finds deficient.

Conclusion

Herb Boyd has painstakingly compiled an anthology of the writings of Elombe Brath into a text that is well organized and easily read. The absence of a biography forces new readers to engage in further research to understand the context of the writings and better understand the historical influencers on Brath. Which may be cumbersome and a barrier to reading and understanding the text. Along with the absence of a sufficient biography, the text is riddled with mechanical and grammatical errors that can make it hard to read.

Aside from those shortcomings, the anthology provides an excellent resource for understanding the actions and consequences of the actions of the United States through the lens of the minority and conflicting world views. Throughout the book, Brath evokes the thoughts of

celebrated African-American intellectuals and activists such as Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, and Marcus Garvey along with international leaders from Africa and the Caribbean. This book is a must read for those who disregard biased information and wish to come to independent and comprehensive conclusion on domestic and global events involving the United States.

REFERENCES

Boyd, H. (Ed.). (2018). *Elombe Brath: Selected Writings and Essays*. The Elombe Brath Foundation.

Who Was Elombe Brath. (n.d.). Retrieved October 15, 2018, from <https://www.elombebrathfoundation.org/legacy>