



Le Var Burton as young Kunta Kinte

by Bob Brubeck  
DTH Staff Writer

"Let us make a name."—Genesis 2:4

A little more than 35 years ago, my great grandfather wrote these words as he began to trace my own family roots. He said that there were no flashing, daring heroes in the family, but they were heroes all the same because they endured. They were farmers turning the soil in northern Indiana and had a story as did millions of others in America.

My ancestors could look back and be proud to be freeborn independent farmers. What about the Blacks who were farmers, but not free? Alex Haley brought his relatives and many other Blacks their family heritage when he wrote "Roots." Yes, Blacks too have a proud heritage to look back on and to use as a springboard to the future.

The impact of "Roots" brought me great joy and great sorrow. My sorrow was caused by seeing the inhumanity practiced by my own race upon Blacks. I could easily say my ancestors never held slaves and absolve myself of the blame of the inhumanity, the pain and suffering which slavery brought to Black people.

It cannot be done. The act of slavery was more than a southern tradition. It was national in nature; and more than a tradition, it was a way of life that the nation would not give up. Just as Rhodesia and South Africa depend upon the principles of white supremacy, so did the United States until very recently. Kunta Kinte found there was really no place to run. The unwritten law chained and shackled him to his state of slavery.

Slavery was a national crime in which all whites shared. Freedom was a house with a sign over the door, which read "Whites Only."

Yet, freedom lived in the heart of Kunta Kinte. His endurance brought me joy. The indomitable will to be free endured from Kinte down to writer Alex Haley. Beneath the aspect of the slave, lived a free man who could be seen with every move, every glance. The desire to return to a position of being a man, nothing more, nothing less, persisted in the soul of Kunta Kinte and his descendants.

Kinte wanted to cross the "great river" to be a free man again and stand with only the sky greater than himself. His wish burned on in a dream he passed on to his children and to their children.

Servitude nor shackles could kill the dream as it lived on generation after generation. It was carried from the shipyards of Annapolis; through the fields of Virginia, clanking in shackles, through the late 19th century with second class citizenship, lynching, burnings, on and on into the 1960s.

It lived!

Alex Haley found his roots in a free man. He and countless other Blacks were not born to be slaves. Yet, their past is clouded with the suffering of their servitude. I saw that Blacks were born to be men, not slaves.

"Roots" showed me what the white man's burden really was: the guilt of attempting to make a man anything less than a man, and forcing him to act as if he were anything less. That is the burden. The burden has been exposed.

Yet "Roots" is not over. The program is off the air, reviews clog every publication in the nation, but the spirit it created goes on.

We, Black and white, must decide whether the dream continues to be reality or whether we let it slip back into suppression and obscurity.

We are the vehicle of history. What we do in our generation is as important as what Kinte and my white ancestors did in theirs. As James Baldwin wrote in a recent review of the book "Roots": "We can perish in this vehicle, children, or we can move on up this road."

# 'ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

Editor's Note: When the ABC television network aired a TV version of Alex Haley's "Roots", America watched and was changed. The most-viewed TV series in history affected the attitudes of Black and white people across the country. Some were shocked, others simply happy to see the truth exposed. Here we present opinions of Black and White students who were affected by the series.

by Robin Neamo  
Staff Writer

After the final lines had been said and the cast had been presented, "Roots" concluded its eighth and final night of consecutive broadcasting. The production was over, but reactions to and the effects of it were far from finished.

"Roots" had provoked a wide span of emotion in me and my friends. We had felt pride in seeing our African heritage depicted in a positive manner for once, rather than the common notion of cannibalism. We had felt hatred and anger for the white slave catchers and all whites in general.

This anger transcended the boundaries of television and found its place in our feelings for whites of today. After seeing many of the things which I had read of before, I often could not force myself to return to my room and my white room mate. While we are friends

and get along fine together, she was still white and stood for all the demeaning things her race had done to mine.

As the show unfolded, a sense of loss and sadness found its place with us. We were able to see how the white man's system of slavery had stripped us of our African culture. We became neither African nor American. We were a lost people. But even these negative feelings all added to the sensation of "Roots." For it was the fact that it could and did evoke such emotions which made it great. And although it did not show all the horrors and realities of slavery, it is the closest thing we have.

After the final episode had concluded a group of us who had viewed the production together celebrated the fact that we do have roots by singing "We've got roots, You've got roots, all Black people got roots" to the beat of the old Negro spiritual "All God's Children got shoes."

Because it was not enough to carry our message only within our suite, we carried it out to the balcony of 6th floor James. More importantly, after the anger, hatred, dancing and singing were over, Alex Haley's "Roots" had created in us the desire to go out in search of our own roots.



Edward Asner as an American slave trader