

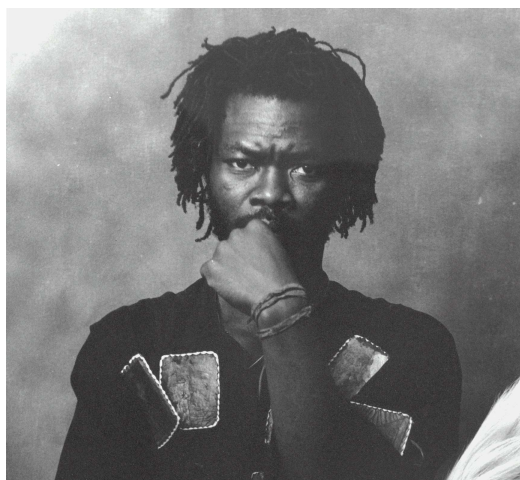
# Culture Workers Bureau (CWB)

## ARTISTS BROCHURE



**“Ideas are to be explored, not ignored”**

## **Kwame Bediako**



**Kwame Bediako performs original root's rock reggae.**

**Musician/Poet Kwame credits his musical upbringing to his "elders" and the general environment of his home base in Ghana, West Africa, where his roots first blossomed. "There was drumming, and dancing, and of course singing," says Kwame.**

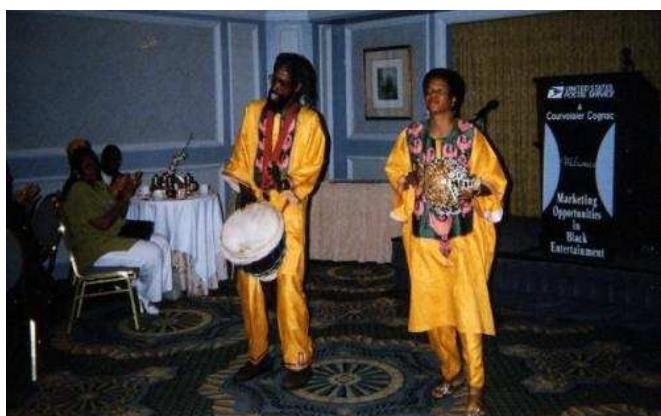
**Kwame hits the stage and lets you know that the African Roots Ambassador has arrived. He sings of the joys and sorrows of humanity, never forgetting his humility. The band has performed throughout the USA sharing the bill with notables like Third World, Mutabaruka, Pato Banton, Sonny Ade, Wailing Souls, Sonny Okusun and many others. Kwame has been the recipient of many industry awards and honorable mentions including: Martin International's Chicago Reggae Music Awards "Best Artist" and "Most Culture-Oriented Band".**

**To educate and entertain, Kwame incorporates his heritage into the performance. "I feel education goes beyond the classroom. We bring culture to the people. We teach knowledge of the self," he said. Kwame has the advantage of dual residency which enables him to keep his finger on the vibrant pulse of reggae music here in the US and throughout the Diaspora. Kwame and Wan-Afrika are reflective of a universal harmony. Bringing people together through music.**

**In June of 2000, Kwame released "How Sweet It Is." This critically acclaimed CD has been featured on WNUR, KCRW, WHPK, WLUW, and KRCL to name a few. Kwame's current release "O.A.U." features guest guitarist Junior Marvin of the Wailers.**

**Kwame Bediako is available for campus and community engagements throughout the United States.**

## Chavunduka and Kwame Cobb



In 1987, Cobbala Productions began producing benefit concerts for the United Negro College Fund, the most ambitious being a concert at Mandel Hall in Chicago featuring Roy Ayers, Steve Cobb and Chavunduka. It was a great show, but a financial disaster. About 25 people showed up! We had to regroup emotionally and we suffered for a while from what Kwame calls, "promophobia," that is, fear of promoting anything. But we got over it. We continued to plan, develop our studio, write songs, book gigs, record, grow our family and become stronger. In 1988 we released our debut albums, *Shammin' or Jammin'* and *Chavunduka*, on our own Cobbala record label. And we began to promote again. In 1991 we performed to a standing room only audience. What a charge! The community came out and it was all we needed to get our promotional juices flowing. We performed at clubs, colleges and festivals around the country and opened concerts for Roy Ayers, Peabo Bryson and others.

In '92, while in a spontaneous session of creativity with our children, we wrote a song that we named *It's Kwanzaa Time*. In a matter of weeks the song was recorded, manufactured and being marketed. The community responded so well to the cassette single that we embarked upon the writing and recording of an entire collection of songs for Kwanzaa, *Seven Principles*, which was released in December, 1993. The most wonderful aspect of the *Seven Principles* production was the financial collaboration that made it happen. A group of committed supporters invested in the project to get it completed. It was truly the actual practice of the *Seven Principles* that ensured our success.

The *Seven Principles* CD has been a true blessing for us. It has taken us to schools, churches and cultural centers and universities, locally and internationally and has connected us to so many wonderful people. The youth's response to our music is especially gratifying. They internalize it, they relate to it. Even the high school students who've seen us perform, sing it to taunt and tease us. What's beautiful is that they sing it. And we love it.

Our work with young people has expanded and it keeps us mindful of our responsibility to create positive and spiritually uplifting music.

## Mutabaruka



Mutabaruka (formerly Allan Hope) was born in Rae Town, Kingston on 26th December, 1952. After primary education he attended Kingston Technical High School, where he was a student for four years. Trained in Electronics, he left his first job after about six months and took employment at the Jamaica Telephone Company Limited. During his time at the Telephone Company he began to examine Rastafarianism and to find it more meaningful than either the Roman Catholicism of his upbringing or the political radicalism into which he had drifted.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's there was an upsurge of Black Awareness in Jamaica, in the wake of a similar phenomenon in the United States. Muta, then in his late teens, was drawn into that movement. Illicitly, in school he read many "progressive books" including *Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice* and some that were then illegal in Jamaica, such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Muta saw himself as a young revolutionary. But when he deepened his investigation of Rastafarianism, which he had once regarded as essentially passive, he came to find its thinking more radical than that of the non-Rastafarian group with which he had associated. While still employed at the Telephone Company, he stopped combing his hair, started growing locks, altered his diet, and declared himself Rastafarian. A number of his friends thought he was going mad.

After leaving the Telephone Company, Muta found life in Kingston increasingly unsatisfactory. He and his friend Yvonne left Kingston in 1971 in search of a more congenial environment. They have settled in Potosi District, in St. James. They have two children and the house that Muta built. Muta has had periods of close contact with the Negril Beach Village,

where he has explained to guests certain aspects of Jamaican culture. He has talked at great length with many foreigners, and has found the experience broadening. To Muta now, Rastafarianism is part of a universal quest which may also be pursued by other routes, such as Hinduism or Buddhism or Christianity. He disapproves, however, of institutionalized religion: the priest "has used your mind/to make love/with the/dead."

Muta was the first well-publicized voice in the new wave of poets growing since the early 1970's. They have developed a living relationship between a poet and a fairly wide audience such as, in Jamaica, only Louise Bennett has achieved before them. Early work by Muta regularly appeared in *Swing*, a monthly that gave fullest coverage to the pop music scene. Introducing *Outcry* (March, 1973) John A. L. Golding Jr. wrote: "In July 1971, *Swing Magazine* published for the first time a poem by Allan Mutabaruka...Our readers were ecstatic. Since then, and almost in consecutive issues, we have derived much pleasure in further publication of this brother's works... They tell a story common to most black people born in the ghetto... And when Muta writes, it's loud and clear." That his poems in *Sun and Moon* (1976), a volume shared with Faybiene, are quieter is one indication of Muta's particular development.

Like Louise Bennett (and like many of the Black Americans of the sixties whose work they had sampled) the new and popular Jamaican poets write mainly in the unofficial language of the people, feel close to Black musicians (to whom they sometimes allude), and make good use of opportunities to perform. I can still vividly recall the pleasure of hearing Muta read the Creative Arts Centre in the early 1970's. He more than holds his own in the company of other skilled performers such as Mikey Smith and Oku Onuora (formerly Oralndo Wong) with whom he has recently shared programmes. But though, like the others, he is on intimate terms with reggae lyrics and he sometimes does angry poems. Muta resists the label of "dub poet" as much as "protest poet". Each, he feels, refers to only one aspect of his work.

Granted that many of Muta's poems are fully realized only in performance, some of them seem to me far more successful than others. My own favorite is "Nursery Rhyme Lament" which, I am told, is now discussed in some of our schools. In "Dan is the Man in the Van", the famous calypso song by The Mighty Sparrow, British nursery rhymes taught in colonial schools are pilloried as absurdly irrelevant in that context; in Muta's "Nursery Rhyme Lament" they are distorted into local meaning, they are reworked as history into the patterns of harsh reality - water rates, light bills, overpopulation, meat shortages and so on. The poem (especially when performed) is very funny; and deadly serious in the criticism it implies. Another special favorite of mine is "Revolutionary Poets" - "revolutionary poets/have become entertainers" - with its multiple ironies, including some that surely touch that poem itself. If few of the other pieces in this volume seem as fully achieved as these, this is, after all, a collection of "the first poems", in

which the voice of the young Mutabaruka speaks to and for a host of troubled young people.

## Dead Prez



Many of today's youths are not too familiar with the freedom fighters of the turbulent sixties. These men are. As rap faces its most challenging era, two revolutionaries in their early twenties emerge to pave the way for a stronger tomorrow.

They call themselves dead prez, and for a good reason. M-1 and sticman are leading the charge towards a topic that seems to be a dead issue in rap - the necessities in life. In conjunction with 7G Entertainment founded by Lord Jamar of Brand Nubian, the DPs offer an alternative to the common pursuits of short term grandeur. Inspired by self defense parties such as the Black Panthers, dead prez is the most politically conscious group since Public Enemy. They speak the song of Huey and Malcolm with such a modern day pulse that grabs your attention and broadens your perspective on life.

First introduced on the Loud '97 Set Up tape, "Food, Clothes and Shelter" debuted, conveying their main focal points. Money and power are both their energies and their enemies as explained on the eerie "Root Of All Evil." They examine the so-called New World Order in a song called "These Are The Times (Novus Ordo Seclorum)." And raising a curious eye at the mysterious deaths of many controversial figures and unsolved incidents in the news is "Propaganda."

Born and raised in Tallahassee, Florida, sticman embarked on familiar course... *"sipping quarts, became the man of the house when my parents divorced. In and out of court, smoking Newports 'cause my friends did"* ("Rights of Passage")

But around the time of BDP's Criminal Minded came out, stic began to internalize life and music as one culture. A couple of years later, in the midst of a dangerous drug situation, M-1 fled to Florida and the two became as tight as brothers.

At first, they were united in a national activist organization which allowed them to travel around the country learning social and political science and studying history. Realizing that they also had to make a living, (hustling proved to be a dead end), they decided to channel their energies towards music.

dead prez elevate themselves through knowledge of yesterday and its significance in the present day. The symbol in their logo comes from an ancient Chinese oracle called the I-CHING (the book of change). Very briefly, this system was used by the wise men and women of China some three thousand years ago as a means of analyzing reality and perfecting the art of foresight. That process of change is symbolized in their music and they believe there is a common link between all historically oppressed people.

Obviously the first interpretation of the term dead prez is slang for the six inch paper that rules the world. But for sticman (the yin) and M-1 (the yang), dead presidents represent a spectrum beyond capitalism, addressing the common issues of the most endangered members of human society.

## Morikeba Kouyate



Morikeba Kouyate is known throughout West Africa for his electrifying performances and virtuosity with the traditional African stringed instrument, the Kora.

Morikeba Kouyate was born and raised into a family of Griots, or Jalis, in Bounkiling Senegal. He began his training at the age of eight and was performing professionally by the age of fourteen. He became successful and well-known for his expert storytelling and Kora playing. As a result of his success, Morikeba was given the opportunity to have his own radio program in Dakar. His show was aired throughout Senegal and several other African countries. He also made numerous appearances on Senegalese television. Morikeba Kouyate has played before African royalty and the Presidents of several countries, including Senegal and The Gambia.

Morikeba Kouyate is a recipient of a 2002 Illinois Arts Council grant for the Master-Apprentice Program; a 2003-2005 Illinois Arts Council Artstour artist; and a recipient of a 2003 City of Chicago, Department of Cultural Affairs Community Arts Assistance Program (CAAP) grant.

Currently, Morikeba is planning an upcoming trip to his native Senegal and nearby Mali for research on the oral histories and musical traditions of the Manding peoples.

Morikeba Kouyate performs year-round throughout the United States. Since 1991, Morikeba has resided in Chicago, Illinois and has become known as, "Chicago's Griot".