

# Spider Woman and the Twin War Godz Lynching Tree Memory, Cotton & the Lynching Tree Gang

by

Ayodele Nzinga, MFA, PhD  
wordslanger@gmail.com  
founder director of The Lower Bottom Playaz

Ayodele Nzinga, MFA, PhD is a writer, director, theater producer, playwright, and scholar creating work in Oakland, California. She is the founder director of The Lower Bottom Playaz, Inc a non-profit theater company in Oakland, California. She is quietly making theater history by presenting the entire American Century Cycle by August Wilson in chronological order of the decades presented in the series often referred to as The Century Cycle (photo credit: TaSinSabir.com).



## Spider Woman and the Twin War Godz

riding with spider woman and  
twin war Godz born into a state  
of war divined to be she who remembers  
shield carrier spear chucker  
hard to duck her up right in storm  
moving forward like water  
persistently efficient at removing obstacles  
climber striver dream walker talking to the dead  
i only fall forward i stand on what came before me  
i do not recognize fences so i can't sit on them

nothing divides me i only multiply my shadow  
covering all the ground upon which i stand  
unafraid born free unapologetic in possession of  
dignity i promise you nothing you will know  
me by the works of my hands moving mountains  
and making crooked places well-lit being very  
straight about what lies in the dark ignorance is a  
good excuse but a poor shield so i bleed light  
i have come to make change and nothing but  
change can change that no scrambles for cheese  
prosperity follows me the abundant shiny one  
seeking justice done three eyed with an inability to  
act blind as time waits for no one i make time to  
wake the deaf and see to it that the blind are reminded  
to remember what they were born knowing it's not their eyes that  
have failed I will prevail one path only forward into  
change or the void i remain who i came to be  
she who remembers  
silently in small moments  
will deliver reciprocity like the  
new take out you found will  
never forget its my duty to remember  
its me rattling your cage  
tapping on the window  
resilient determined after me i

have insured there will be more  
all of us riding with spider woman and  
twin war Godz with freedom on our mind  
forever forward three eyed  
with an inability  
to act blind  
we pray with our  
hands moving  
promising nothing  
save reciprocity

### Lynching Tree Memory

there are things I can never do  
i do not take certain things for granted  
no rose garden  
only grey tinted glasses  
blessed with memory too many people  
afraid to remember least the scars come  
open pus all over the crowded bus holding  
small lives on their way to stale holes in  
compressed realities with ghost hovering  
over their sagging shoulders weighted by  
impossible histories packed into tight  
airless boxes no light no memories  
no pain in amnesia curious freedom  
i remember so i am not free to chain  
others i can not be overseer can not  
probe with blue gloves over hands that  
are not part of the answer just more  
of the question of how to be sane  
with the memories of lynching trees  
the shadows of broken bodies swinging  
sorrowfully in southern breezes i remember  
the name of black boys i never knew in life  
just the memories of horrendous deaths

i remember the roads my great great grans  
walked in emancipation freed into poverty  
the shadows from the lynching tree breathing  
shallowly in jim crows reach afraid of joe turner  
remembering stories of ships bad masters cruel  
mistresses i can not carry chains can not lash backs  
can not stop and frisk count your pennies taxing you  
in pharaohs name can not deny you i love you better  
than peter loved jesus love you well enough to  
remember what you have forgotten in order  
to open your eyes to something other than  
the nightmare of real reality easier to sleep  
easier to be sheep not all of them are slaughtered  
only those that point out wolves  
only those that can see  
only those who remember  
i remember all the reasons you are too afraid  
to remember i sharpen weapons for the war  
you won't see i can not wear the uniforms  
do the dances barely learned to speak the  
language only did it to help me be of value to you  
i am because we are  
i remember  
i can't sell you god  
i remember godz of thunder  
dog stars and pyramids  
i remember to pray with hands moving  
i can not live on my knees  
i remember being born free with dignity and everything  
i can not settle for less i own my all-ness  
the broken places from which we have risen  
stumbling falling forward  
remember us like a sky full of shiny midnight black crows  
all together mystical and resplendent  
rising above snares  
that are not our imagination rather their machinations  
wrought of fear designed to contain i remember  
all the ways the songs been sung  
the rope the whip the startled surprise  
in bewildered eyes rough hands curses

no quarter in the madness no limits to  
the transgressions under the authority  
of tyrannical texts making profane things  
seem sacred i remember being well before  
the virus came the departure the separation  
though doors of no return the abyss of  
the ocean water burning lungs howling  
from the pens home receding in the distance  
the insistence that i was less than human  
no tears no love no pain not human  
beast animal property i remember being  
human so i cling to it i will not be made  
less i remember the shadows  
the soulfelt sorrow  
in bleak quarters the morning after  
picnics & photographs of  
visible hate poured on  
like gasoline  
the smell of sulfur  
as the flame is lit  
there are things i cannot do  
things i do not take for granted  
no rose garden  
only grey tinted  
glasses i  
remember

### **Cotton & the Lynching Tree Gang**

there was a gang of them holding us down  
we were no match for such fierce cruelty  
we fought back best we could but they  
had friends in high places with last  
words to say we had the right to last rites  
sometimes  
if bodies could be  
found or were whole enough to recognize  
sullen petulant times in the harsh grace of  
cotton riding with joe turner & jim crow

in the shadow of the lynching tree that  
would stretch forth through centuries to come  
becoming legacy and millstone  
around the slender neck of equity  
marking us like the melanin  
no place for us  
in the world after cotton  
sugarcane railroads and telephone poles  
forever set apart by the sins of  
founding fathers who were not  
saints merely flawed men building  
fences around stolen things preaching  
law and justice as they slaughtered and divided  
spoils manifest greed exceptional ignorance and  
superior suppression spoon feed through religion  
god bless us swinging in the wind bloated  
birds picking at our eyes as a chorus wails  
lamenting our bloodied escape while they are still tethered in  
terror seeking north stars even ground singing to  
remind the Godz where we have landed after falling  
through cosmology do you hear us  
brave voices raised in a terrible storm  
the dust knows  
ink lies  
cotton has memory  
slaved sharecropped  
for no crops  
jim crow left but joe turner stayed  
incarceration is the new plantation  
we got 13th amendment blues  
mementos of literacy test  
grandfather's clause  
black codes  
merciless black robes  
poll tax  
spooks in sheets with a craving  
for carving black genitalia  
at picnics

hoping not to get picked  
we remember the struggle  
muffled through cotton we recall the swinging  
bodies in the shadow of long days melting into the  
void of endless nights trying not to be  
seen remembering  
quietly carrying  
the leaky bags of body parts trauma and overwhelming  
grief down hungry streets  
past the fences  
on the other side  
of knowing  
we were born free  
with dignity  
and  
everything  
there was a gang of them  
we fought back best we could  
they got friends in high places  
with cotton on their breath  
saying last words  
we got the right to last rites  
sometimes  
if the bodies  
can be found  
or are whole enough to recognize  
while cotton dreams wide awake out loud  
of us falling down