

in the United States. I developed an expanded interest of black history about ten years ago. Breaking the psychological barrier, I used to say to myself, subconsciously, "Oh, I didn't want to study the history," because I didn't think it was interesting. What you read about African Americans was that they were descended from slaves. Ask any African Americans whether they had been interested in school, the answer was "no."

You learned to hate history because it wasn't about you. Psychological barrier there that's very difficult to break through. Now it's starting to come to the surface more and more. African Americans are pretty much tired of hearing about the political icons. What's important to us in our own back yard?

I retraced roots for myself. I'm related to everybody. I write about all the families because they're all related. As I started to do the research, I tried to put the stories with the faces. I wanted to know about them, and I went to the places and met some of the people who were descendants of these people who came out of slavery.

A wide variety of terrains, languages, peoples and cultures make up the 54 nations on the continent of Africa. Yet unless one views the thousands of years behind the overall picture, this global region can still be falsely represented and generally misunderstood. Centuries of interaction have taken place between