

Spirit Dance

for Marta Moreno Vega

When Spirits dance Mambo
Elegba opens the roads
carnival colors fly in circles
ancestors call our names
through drums that speak
mixing cultures in rhythms of
Spanish Saints with African slaves

Spirits come
like the heart of Africa
beating our Nigerian history
from the land of Yoruba
herbs, animals, rocks
and sacred symbols
in harmony with nature

The essence of ancestors comes
to dance the Black culture of resistance
teaching values and ethics
for conflict resolution
and protection from colonialism

They come as Orisha
hidden from Catholic conquerors
behind brilliant curtains
keeping God alive
in the back room of roots united
in respect from one to one

They dance in Regla de Ocha,
Palo Muerto, Bantu, Muerteros,
Cimarron Spiritistas
who receive the energy
messengers of spirit
healers from
Mother Goddess and Father Creator
visible presences
rooted in Congo culture
struggling to create a nation

Landing on the shores of America
with nothing but their bodies
no books, no sacred carvings,
no special photos
of loved ones back home
Just knowledge stored
in the mind and body of their memories

Bringing their religion of reverence
to be shared with the world
to plant seeds of life
meant to grow great and grand
beyond the chains that enslaved
that forbade them to dance
in Oro Seco
where only the drum talks
in the language of Bata,
Abakua, Arara
and Congo Rumba
giving birth
to Salsa, Son and Guaracha
through tamboreros in Matanzas
becoming mother
of Rap, Hip Hop,
Jazz, Blues, Reggae and Rock
in contact with the young avant-garde
of African thought

When Spirits dance Mambo
African and Hispanic traditions merge
into new bloodlines
of God Love full of Light

When Spirits dance and move our feet
our hearts beat to drums that speak.

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