



IN MEMORIAM

Beverly Robinson
Professor of Theater, Film and Television
Los Angeles
1945 — 2002

Beverly Robinson, African- American folklorist, theater director and historian, documentary photographer, author, and pioneer champion for cultural diversity in the Theater Department, was foremost an illustrious role model to her students and a wise woman and friend to her colleagues. Her loss this year to the theater department is inestimable. To her colleagues it is simply irreplaceable.

Beverly's life long commitment to UCLA began when she enrolled as a full time student in Ethnic Arts (later renamed World Arts and Cultures). A Phi Beta Kappa, Danforth Fellow, and a Chancellor's Marshall and Outstanding Senior, she graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1974. Born in Los Angeles and raised in Berkeley, she then went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in folklore from U.C. Berkeley in 1976 and a doctor of philosophy in performing arts and history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1983.

Upon returning to UCLA, Beverly assumed a most important mantle in the Theater Department – the teaching of a course, "History of Black People's Theater in America", originally created by veteran actress Madie Norman. Under Beverly's visionary guidance, however, the course achieved legendary status.

During the 20 years that she lovingly taught it, the course grew into a three- quarter long celebration of African American contributions to American Theater. Extraordinarily popular with students and well known in the Los Angeles African- American community, Beverly's three courses, now called African- American Theater History, had the highest attendance rate of any course offered by the department - in spite of the fact that she taught the classes on Friday afternoons. Professor Michael Hackett, one of Beverly's colleagues in the Theater Department, recalls innumerable instances when, walking by on a Friday afternoon, he would be swept into the excitement of her classroom. "There was always an event in her class. You could go and see Leroi Jones, four gospel singers from a local church, someone giving a lecture on Josephine Baker, or Pulitzer Prize winning playwright August Wilson speaking with students."

In addition to her courses, Beverly also created a speaker series that brought to campus such celebrated artists as Maya Angelou, James Baldwin and John Bubbles.

Besides her phenomenal teaching at UCLA, Beverly was known nationally for documenting expressions of African American heritage in such studies as Aunt (Ant) Phylis, which focused on the role of wise women in African American communities, and Home and Yard: Black Folk Life Expressions in Los Angeles. In 2002, she finished co- editing The Life and Work of Oscar Micheaux: Pioneer Black Author and Filmmaker and was the lead scholar on a survey of Eatonville, Florida, home of Zora Neale Hurston, also a professionally trained folklorist. As a professional photographer, Beverly's photographs are part of the Library of Congress Traveling Photographic Exhibitions Sketches of Southern Folklife and Generation to Generation – Sharing the Intangible.

But, above all, Beverly is remembered by those of us fortunate to have been her colleague as a moderating voice always infused with a visionary spirit. The entire Theater Department shares the feelings of Professor

Hackett who included in the program for his departmental production this year, the following dedication to Beverly:

“O dayspring
Torch of god
And glorious light!
To another world I go
Out of this place
Out of time
To dwell
And now, and now
Beloved light
Farewell!”
(From Iphegenia by Euripides)

A celebration honoring Beverly’s life and her impact on the arts was held at the Los Angeles Theatre Center in downtown Los Angeles on April 14th, 2001. For many of Beverly’s friends and colleagues, it was the last time they had an opportunity to see her as she preferred to be seen, dressed in bright African dress, thrilled that a theater house was filled with people celebrating her life with songs, poems, dancing, drumming, music and prayers.

Those who were able to attend her funeral will forever remember an African song sung in her honor:

Awa nwa, ao ri
we do not find,
Awa o ma mo bi iya re
BEVERLY ROBINSON
Robinson.

We are seeking,
We do not know the destination of
Our beloved mother/ friend, Beverly

E wa ba wa jo o
with us,
E wa ba wa yo
celebrate the warm
E wa ba wa sariya
mother/ friend
Iye- ye wa to sun

Come dance, sing
Come, let us
Reception of our beloved
Who has slept.

To further honor Beverly and her deep love for UCLA, The School of Theater, Film and Television has established a scholarship in her honor, The Beverly Robinson Award.

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