We Are Like Bees

A conversation with teacher, dancer, and drummer Kwesi Anku on Ewe wisdom, communal responsibility and joy.[1]

Professor V (PV)

I feel that our elders form us. When you were a little kid growing up, what were the ways in which your elders, your grandma, or your mom taught you about how to be in community? ….how to be responsible even with the smallest lessons?

Kwesi Anku (KA)

Let me start this way: I grew up in my maternal line—in my formative years, when I was a young guy, I spent a lot of time in my maternal part of the family. And obviously it's a large family, because my grandpa had about six wives, and so many kids, I think between 20 and 27 kids. Already that's a large family and being born into that family, what I remember is everything that we did when I was living in my grandpa's house was communal.

The wives were living in the same house, the kitchens are next to each other, so during dinner time you see grandma, you see mom, you see uncle, aunty, cousins, nieces and nephews. We all converge.

The kitchen area was / is a huge area, so you go to your grandma's kitchen, your cousin goes to their grandma's kitchen; we all ate [at] the same time, but the food is coming from different kitchens. So even if you don't want to—which can be disrespectful—eat from your grandma's kitchen, you can go to the next kitchen. There's always food, so that shaped me to understand that we're all the same, no matter what. Those are the values that were instilled in me, as in, you always have to be together.

You take that as a family first and then, when you go into the world, you take that into the world. That's how I learned to be in community, from the house. Obviously, my grandma was very protective, making sure that we do the right thing. My mom as well, my dad as well, and the thing that kind of struck me again in my teenage years: my mom always told me "I only know you when you're in the house, but once you're out there with other people, I don't know who you are, because I'm not there with you. If the police show up [saying] that you're in trouble, I'm not going to tell the police that my son is a saint... he's not a bad boy, because I'm not there with you."

All those things stuck with me, so when I'm out there, doing stupid stuff, the first thing that goes into my mind is like: "oh shit, this is gonna be something my mom told me and I don't want to be part of; if it's a bad thing I don't want to be part of it."

Obviously [they] teach you the values of respecting family and respecting other people around you—how you talk to people, especially elders in society, you know? There is some sort of way you carry yourself when you're talking to elders.

I remember also when you're eating with others, you have to be mindful of how much meat you take from the bowl, because you can eat with your grandpa and you don't want to eat all the meat, that's possession. You have to respect that space,

[1] This dialogue happened in Spring 2022.

because obviously having an opportunity to eat with your elders is a big thing. You don't get it always, that's why we have the proverb:

"A kid that knows how to wash his or her hand will always eat with the oldest."

Meaning when you respect your elders, and you pay attention, they're gonna always impact you with knowledge/native intelligence.

[There are] things that you feel like you should be part of and learn from them, but if you don't respect [them], there's no way they're going to give you that opportunity to learn now. All of this, I carry with me and try to be respectful.

Obviously my dad also played a huge role in shaping me because, as a man, you need a father to be in your life in order to learn that part of being a man… Not only my dad, but my uncles and my cousins who are older than me. Like I said, it is a huge family so even learning how to talk to women, I had to learn from my cousins.

Obviously, music also became an integral part, because there's always music in our society in different ways or forms.

You have a naming ceremony when a kid is born.
A community comes together.
The first seven days are critical when a kid is born.
For seven days you are not given a name.
So when you live beyond that, that is when you are given your name.
So we do what we call outdooring.
After the seventh day that kid is ushered into the Community,
where a name is given to the kid.
Then obviously a Community hears about the name and that's when you are regarded as a human being.

Should you pass after the seventh day, you're regarded as a full blown human being and given a fitting burial. But if you pass before the seventh day, it's like "oh okay this person is just here for a few hours."

Then during the outdooring ceremony, there is music and dance.

When people pass, there is music, there's dance to celebrate life and all the achievements. Sometimes the passing of the person can be really devastating, maybe an accident or the person is young... Grief is definitely there, but we still also want to make sure that there is music.

When we grow crops, and we harvest, there is also music to thank the ancestors, or whatever we believe in, for giving us food.

In the rainy season, there is also music to usher in the rainy season, because we're going to be growing crops. So all these things you learn as you grow and that shapes you to be who you are going to become in a community. And, obviously, education is also part of it with all the traditional beliefs.

With colonization, obviously, some of our grandparents learned from the colonizers. My grandpa was one of the first folks who had access to the missionaries that came to the Volta region, the Germans. He learned how to speak English and all that. He became a Christian, even though the house he came from is a shrine, so obviously he understands the ancestral background of how they worship.

And my paternal grandpa also had access to the missionary. He worked with the Germans as well, traveled to Germany and became a preacher, a presbyterian preacher and that's how music was in their house, like playing piano.

You go to my maternal house and it is solid: traditional music and practices. Then you go to my paternal house and it's a little bit of a mixture of the traditional and also the Western.

PV That's deep.

KA I am an Ewe. I'm from the south eastern part of Ghana, our region is called the Volta region. I speak Ewe, that's our language.

PV What does Ewe mean?

KA That's a good question. I don't know. For me it's a word that defines a people from a particular geographical area and it entails the language that we speak, the food that we eat, and how we dress. It goes on and on and on. The Ewes actually, if we go back to history the Ewes, are perceived to have come from Dahomey, currently, Benin. Migrated and spread throughout the region. The region used to be called Trans Volta Togoland. But obviously with the Europeans coming in, they decided to split that whole region, so you can find Ewes in Togo, which is a neighboring country east of Ghana, and obviously Benin. Beninois speak Fon which is pretty much Ewe, but I believe the Ewe language came out of the language Fon.

Do you know the musician Angelique Kidjo? She is from Benin and she speaks Fon. Fon is the old Ewe. When the Beninoi speak Fon, I understand a bit of it. And when I speak Ewe to somebody who speaks Fon, they understand that as well.

PV Sibling languages.

KA Mhmm. Like sibling languages. Going back to the Trans Volta Togoland, obviously you see some Ewes in some parts of Nigeria as well. Togo, Benin, some parts of Nigeria and Ghana, that whole region used to be Ewe land, but because of colonization that area got divided into pieces, if I should put it that way.

So yes, both of my parents are from the same tribe, but funny enough, the Ewe accents are different depending on the geographical area within the Volta region.

So the **Aŋlɔ** Ewe—that's what my mom speaks—you find the **Aŋlɔ** Ewe's in the coastal area of the Volta region. And then my dad is from the northern part of the Volta.

My dad's people speak what is called a Vedome language. It's also Ewe, but the accent is different. Even where my dad is from, they also have their own language called Avatime.

History says my dad's people migrated from different places during a tribal war and finally settled in a small town on a hill. They picked up a bunch of languages along the way, so when they finally settled, what they did was put those languages together to form their own language, so that's how we have Avatime language. Unfortunately, I don't speak it.

PV Who in your family speaks Avatime?

KA My dad spoke Avatime, some of my cousins speak it, and some of my uncles and aunties that are still around speak it too.

PV Mmhmm, that's powerful. I'm thinking about it from my own point of reference, as a ceremonial dancer. I grew up with ceremonial dance (mitotilistli) outside my grandma's house and then eventually, years later, I started dancing. Now I do this dance. I feel like some of the principles that are in mitotilistli teach us so much about
how to be,
how to be together,
how to work together,
how to be aware of your space and other people's space,
how to move in synchronicity
and also how to answer.

I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how the principles of dance and drumming, the call and response, shaped not only your cosmovision of the world but also the way that people come together and engage?

I'm thinking specifically about your work with CK Ladzekpo, and about the way that you grew up.[2] What does it mean to be part of the ensemble?[3] And what is your role in the tradition? And how does the tradition shape the community and the way in which you come together?

KA A lot of times when you hear people talk about tradition or how they got involved with traditional music and dance, you hear people say "I started this when I was three years old...and then from there on I just realized this is for me."

There are times where your parents or your family will try to get you engaged, but I was not forced to. For me it was different, because growing up, those traditions were around me.

My dad's side of the family is musically inclined. My mom's side of the family—my grandpa's house—is a traditional well-rounded house... Obviously, when you walk through the doors, it's like you're in a shrine.

But I was not interested in that. Funny enough in my teenage years, I remember when I was in middle school and high school, I was one of those kids involved in rap. I wasn't rapping; we listened to a lot of like Western rap, especially rap from the US.

You talking these groups out of LA:
NWA,
you talk about Tupac,
you talk about Snoop Dogg, B.I.G.;
obviously you go to the east coast: Public Enemy,
and you talk about old school: Grandmaster Flash, and all.

We were in tune with that. We thought okay, this is the new stuff. I remember when

[2] Ewe Elder, drummer, choreographer, composer and director of the African Music program at UC Berkeley and the West African Music Ensemble within East Bay Center for the Performing Arts.

[3] West African Music and Dance Ensemble

Bow Wow started coming out and everybody was screaming all over the place, and then came freaking, this white boy, what's his name?

PV Eminem?

KA Yes. Biggie. That whole crew, the '90s, were really critical for me. I will say, coming from a middle class family, if I should put it that way, I had access to all these things, you know MTV, watching musical videos... so you want to be like them, so I started wearing baggy jeans and big ol' headphones.

PV The vibes, the vibes.

KA We have Walkman, you put the cassette in. [*laughs*]

Anyways, I remember on weekends I go from the city to my grandpa's, especially during the summer. My mom would send me. I need to go down and learn something, because when you are in the city you don't really have access to Indigenous tradition.

On Sunday—every Sunday—there is a town circle, an area where people converge and we just make music. The funny thing is people go to church, and then from four on, they play hardcore traditional music and just dance into the night.

I remember me, my cousin, and a few friends were into rap, just wearing baggy jeans and timbs and we actually will walk to the arena, where the music is popping, the traditional music, with our headphones, we're just hanging out but looking different, you know? Dressed like Americans and shit like that.

Traditional music is part of you and it will always be part of you. 'Cause you hear it. But it wasn't until I was in college, that's when it hit me again. At the time my dad was teaching a lecture at the university. Obviously, what was he teaching? Music.

PV In Accra?[4]

KA Yeah. I had access to the recording studios and ethnomusicologists. I had access to a lot of musicians around and the national dance company. Moving from the hip hop scene, then, realizing this is actually what I want to be part of.

It wasn't until my college years that I started getting involved with the performing arts. That's how it came back to me again and I said "okay, I'm going to college, I'm going to learn dance and music to build a theater." That's when I met Kwaku, and Kwaku had already been involved at a younger age.[5] A few of the folks in the school had started doing things at a younger age. I had a lot of catching up to do, but it was something that was in me but I wasn't expressing at the time... It was a lot easier for me to catch up, because all these guys were already on top of it. I just said "I am going for it, and I am going to be competing with you, and we'll make sure I can get what you know." In a humble way like, "I need to learn, so teach me."

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4 Capital of Ghana

5 Kwaku Manu is a drummer, teacher and dancer from Ghana, who part of CK Ladzekpo's West African Music and Dance Ensemble

PV It's interesting you mentioned hip hop. Because hip hop is call and response, and it's coming from the polyrhythmic tradition... In a major way, the movement is a call, and there is a response.

Mmmk. What I'm trying to understand is how the ceremony is carried out? And how the structure of the ceremony is also reflecting the structure of Ewe society?

KA See. I don't think we're ever going to have access to the way our ancestors lived and what they left for us. You know, those people were so talented. It baffles my mind how they even created some of this music. You're talking about polyrhythm. You have different beats playing simultaneously, there's a lot of work your brain needs to be accustomed to to be able to hear every single thing and a lot of times our generation, we struggle with that.

But our ancestors, I don't know how they were able to. One thing I've learned from CK is that some of these things started as a way to train your mind to be tough.

Polyrhythm is mental health. You know how you have psychologists and social workers working with people who have mental health issues? Back then, we did not have that in our society, but the thing that carried our people is the complex rhythms that we play.

They're challenging, but if you're able to learn them you are automatically training your brain to be responsible. You're training your brain to be able to deal with obstacles you are going to be facing in life. You're training your brain with those polyrhythms. In life when you grow, later on when those obstacles start hitting you, you're already here (pointing to head). You're mentally strong and you're able to deal with them.

That's polyrhythm and that's how I perceive it.
But we, our society, these days see that to be "old,"
like "that's nothing"...
like "these traditions don't exist anymore, put it on the side,"
and then we are having problems.

PV Mmhmm.

KA Our ancestors were brave in order to put these structures in place.

And when you delve into it, you see the music, there is history in it... Something might have triggered something in order for that music to come into existence. There is also calculation in it, that's where the math is in it. You have the history, you have

the math, obviously there is science in it. You can incorporate them into the teaching curriculum to make teaching more fun for our kids in the classroom.

The ancestors took life happenings and then transformed that into music and that music is consumed by our people themselves. The songs obviously reflect what happened in our society.

Some of the movements are depicting some wars that happened over the years. The folks that went to this battlefield and saw the movements and saw how people were shooting, how people were slashing other people with their machetes...

They came home and put those into choreography. You see, sometimes dancers use machetes to make throat slashing gestures. It means:

"If you mess with me I'll slice your throat."
"If you mess with me I'll put this knife in your belly."

We're not promoting violence, but we are promoting the horrors of the warfare that happened in the past. We don't want to continue with these atrocities, so we are using this in a way to bring everybody together in peace. We want to forget the horrors of warfare, but in order to do that, you have to revisit all the crazy stuff in order to be in life, to be in harmony with all the things that happened in the past.

Obviously there are dances for joy. There is joy.

There is a dance called Dipo. The ladies go into seclusion for weeks, they are taught how to be women, how to be responsible. You cannot get pregnant before doing Dipo. If you get pregnant before the Dipo ceremony you become an outkast, they will kick you out of the town. It's a way to prevent teenage pregnancy.

But now those things are seen as archaic, because it's like "what are you doing taking a kid into a shrine?" But they put all those rules in place so kids are scared and say "I don't want to get pregnant before my Dipo ceremony." There is music, and dance drumming during the Dipo ceremony.

PV When is it done? I ask because originally we had something similar that happened at the 13 year mark, because we count in 13. Every 13 is a full cycle. And then it shifted, now through colonization it became the Quinceañera (15)... It became the big dress and the whole thing and lost the focus of what it was supposed to be: a ritual to help that person transition into the new stage of life.

KA Yes, it is just a way to transition into adulthood. So in your teenage years, that's when you have to do the Dipo before you transition into adulthood, when you're able to get married and have kids.

Back to the music, I cannot understand how our ancestors put these rhythms together. The bell is pretty much the timekeeper. The bell keeps the timing, keeps the pulses going. The bell player is not regarded in that ensemble because they say "you're just playing a little bell and nobody cares" you know? And a lot of times when people are watching people play and they don't understand that they're just paying attention to the drummers. You're feeling the rhythm, you're feeling the drum—it carries you. If you understand the tradition, obviously, you have a different way of perceiving what is being played.

If you're just somebody who admires the music and you're listening, obviously it takes you somewhere. But we all forget about the bell player, the bell player is the person who carries everything, because once you go off, everything is off, so you have

to concentrate the whole time. And there are various drums depending on which repertoire. If you're playing Agbekor or Atsiagbekor, from Aŋlɔ Ewes, it has five to six drums,

you have the Kaganu (supporting), which is the little drum,
you have the Kidi (supporting),
Kroboto (supporting)
Totodzi (supporting),
and Atsimevu (Master drum)
You can't forget the Gankogui (bell)
and Axatse (rattles).

The master drum calls the shots, it's like communication, you have to understand the language in order to move.

The dancers need to understand the language. Obviously, the support team players also need to understand the language in order to switch so it's like a dialogue, but you have one person who is leading everything, and that's the master drummer.

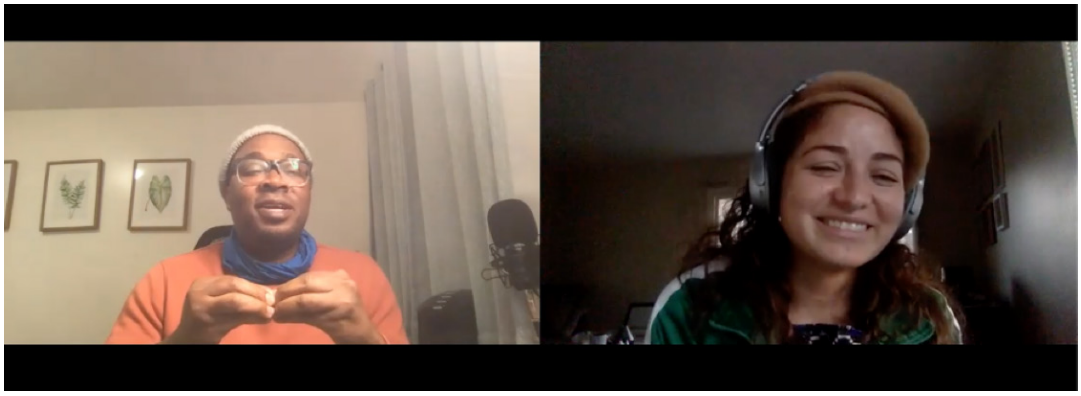
It's like you said, call and response. I call and then you respond; you have to know what I'm calling and you respond to it. If you don't understand, it is very hard to do, but it can be learned. You can learn it and that's how I've been able to learn it. These things have been in existence for so many years, and so, if you're interested you just have to go in there and learn.

And I know I'm not from here, we carry some things we've learned... It's putting food on the table for us today. We're able to bring those traditions into the West and are able to share because there's so much interest in the things that we have as Africans, or Indigenous people, if I should put it that way. Every repertoire has its own unique way of what needs to be played and how it should be.

There is structure and you can't go out of alignment; the structure shows this is the way it is and that's how it has to be, but you can also improvise.

Kpalongo dance drumming has a lot of room for improvisation within the structured framework [*vocalizes rhythmic pattern*]:

A A A
A A



The master drummer can do a lot of improvisation.

You have some families, clans that are inheritors, from a long time ago. If you go to CK's family, it's generations of master drummers, and he even doesn't like the word master drummer because you don't put that title on yourself. As a master drummer, it is the society that gives you that title.

So when I hear people here say I am a master drummer, blah blah blah… [*laughs*]

PV [*laughs*] That's facts!

KA A lot of times in the West you hear the word "drama," the theater elements. You know, in the West you have to have a stage, you have to have the lighting. When you go to a typical, traditional setting where we make music, I [have] heard that "those things don't have theater elements" and it's like, what are you talking about? Are you insane?

Our ancestors know when the moon is up, so obviously they used the moon as their lighting. We have our local lighting, lanterns that we light up. There is a stage, even if you're doing it in a circle. We know where the stage is, we know where the drummers are supposed to set up, and then we know where the dancers are supposed to go and also the audiences, right? And most of the time, in the music that we make, our audiences are also the dancers and the singers too.

It's a communal thing.

The only thing is, the drummers have to know what you're doing in order to sit there and play, but most of the songs you have somebody who's leading the songs. Once he or she calls a song the community already knows the song, and they respond.

The audience there knows how to sing a song, they become part of the whole thing. That is a communal thing.

PV Could you talk a little bit more about the collective enjoyment, the joy and how important that is for the health of a community? I think that's something that survived in our communities. Where we don't need a lot, we'll figure it out, it will be fun, you know what I mean? We are responsible for our own joy. Could you talk a little bit about that?

KA In the community sense, we are like bees. Bees, they make honey, they eat the honey themselves, right? So we make the music and we consume it ourselves as the communal thing. It's as simple as that, we don't make music for anybody else.

At that moment when the music is blasting, we are playing music and singing the songs together and dancing together... It's our way to honor our ancestors depending on the ceremony, is a way for some of us going through life experiences and having a bad day to forget about all the things that are happening behind the scenes, to just come out and celebrate life.

A lot of times [some folks] say: "there's poverty in some of the communities in Africa."

We understand that, but you have to talk to the people to understand whether they're in poverty or not. If you are able to farm, to feed yourself, and you have clean drinking water, and you have a place to sleep, and you are not asking anybody for anything... life is good, and most of the villages, obviously, they have that sort of life.

When somebody dies the music brings us all together. Even if you are mourning the songs that we sing to send the dead away... it's a communal thing.

Somebody is celebrating life, whether birthday or bought a new car and wants the community to be part of that success. The music is a communal thing, we can all come together and sing. Those songs reflect the society we are coming from, so a lot of times we already know that song; when somebody calls, instantly everybody will chime in because we already know the songs.

You have great musicians or composers from the society, who compose songs about somebody that did something great: maybe a king who in their time did something great, or a kid who out of nothing became somebody and now is carrying the whole community—a kid who didn't have money but was able to go to school, was able to go to college and become maybe a scientist, a doctor who is supporting the community, helping everybody—or somebody donated something, built a center...

Songs are composed by these great musicians about things like that... they will compose a song to honor this person. All this is a communal thing bringing us all together. Of course, it's not always rosy; there are always fights and songs are also composed. In today's day, politicians who are supposed to be doing the right thing and not doing it, the community will compose songs against [that].

PV I remember that, from the Kpalongo[6] songs that were sung in the '60s protests, I remember CK telling us.

KA That's a protest song, yeah. If people are not happy about something, they'll get together and put a song together against whatever is happening. It's not always about nice things, but anything that is not good for the Community or society as well, those songs come on.

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6 "Kpanlogo originated in Accra, the capital city of Ghana and the traditional home of the Ga people. It is essentially an urban youth dance-drumming and a symbol of the commitment of a rapidly growing Ghanaian urban neighborhood youth in advocating their perspective in shaping the political vision of post colonial Africa." (Text and excerpt Sewɔhu from elder CK Ladzekpo's *Kpanlogo Song Book*)

Sewɔhu

Lead:	Sewɔhu nye bɔ hose	Sewɔhu should sound hose *(collective patriotic voice)*
Group:	Hose ye, hose ye, hose ye aye	Hose ye, hose ye, hose ye aye
Lead:	Sewɔhu nye bɔ hose	Sewɔhu should sound hose *(collective patriotic voice)*
Group:	Hose ye, hose ye, hose ye aye	Hose ye, hose ye, hose ye aye
Lead:	Sewɔhu	Sewɔhu
Group:	Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu	Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu
Lead:	Sewɔhu	Sewɔhu
Group:	Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu	Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu, Sewɔhu
Lead:	Sewɔhu	Sewɔhu
Group:	Sewɔhu nye mɔ mi na wɔ he	Sewɔhu should be supported and strengthen

Language Notes

Sewɔhu = A metaphoric statement symbolic of people dedicated to truth among the Ga people of Ghana.
Sewɔhu translated freely means "Now you found the truth you previously denied."

hose = collective patriotic voice of people

bɔ = sound

PV As you were mentioning, the tradition in and of itself is the memory, but it's also a way to bring joy and it's also a way to put out a critique.

KA That's it, that's the way to put it.

For me, growing up, when you're young you think you know it all... As I'm getting older, I realized I'm still learning... but at the same time it is not too late.

I was like damn, all those times that I wasted, wear my baggy jeans and go to shows and be acting like I'm not part of that community. If I humble myself—I was humble in a way—but if I put myself down and get down to learn I would probably be way, way, way, way better than I am now. But, again, these things actually shaped me to be who I am now.

Being here as an immigrant, when I see things happening in the communities here where sometimes a kid is behaving a certain way, I try to sympathize with them, in a way, depending on the situation. Because you also hear:

"Oh, Black people are aggressive,
oh, Black people are this
and Black people are that."

I've been thinking, all these people that were taken into slavery, all of them are coming from ancestral homes. And every ancestral home has something, spiritually, okay? So when you displace that spirit, what do you think is going to happen? *When you displace that spirit, what do you think is going to happen?*

If you take me to a land that I don't like and those spirits follow me, obviously it's going to be affecting generations. Until you find your way back toward the source. So you see a lot of African Americans with rage, obviously because of slavery, there is rage.

Some folks say "we don't understand why this is happening. This is mental health, this

is this, this is that," but nobody is talking about the spiritual aspect of it. Nobody's talking and they themselves, they don't know.

How do you trace and go back? Take those spirits, because they were taken, they were displaced. How do you take those spirits back to where they're from, in order to be at peace... so the human beings that are on this side of the world can also be at peace? All these problems we are having sometimes could be spiritual, but nobody understands; that is the way I feel. Sometimes when I see people behave a certain way, I don't judge them, I don't blame them.

In this part of the world, that aspect is neglected, because there is no understanding. There is no understanding that when the African comes from a place where every ancestral home has something. I don't care who you are, something! I don't know what it is, Spirit... if they displaced them, generations are going to suffer for it. That's what I've seen.

PV Yeah, that's facts, that's facts. There's an elder that just passed away. I don't know if you heard about him, he used to live in the Bay, Malidoma Patrice Somé.[7] He was Dagara, from what they call Burkina Faso now. He said in his book called *Ritual*, "A village in turmoil is a village that has some unfinished business with its dead."[8]

I feel like that's exactly what you're saying. I feel that's part of the work that you're doing, that CK Ladzekpo is doing, that Kwaku is doing... not only for all the folks that you are teaching but also [those you are] in contact with at the Center.[9] I feel there's an element of healing. You are essentially a father figure, a brother figure. CK is a grandfather figure. I feel that many of the problems in this society are because people don't have that spiritual support, you know? Sometimes they don't have somebody to teach them this way of living. Your role is doing so much healing to not just the folks in your community, but to so many different communities that you're working with. So shout out to you, Kwesi, shout out to you.

KA I wouldn't even think about it like that, but I appreciate you.

PV You're big brother. Just thinking about when I worked at the Center with y'all, you are/were some of the first faces that the little kids would see. And having you and folks that have worked there be a figure of consistency... Consistent like the drum.

I want to thank you personally for your time and for what you shared. I really appreciate you, man, and I have always had a lot of love for you, and for CK, and for Kwaku. I love y'all so much, and I learned a lot from y'all, so I want to honor that and I want to thank you for that.

KA Thank you, It's always a pleasure talking to you for sure. We are learning every time right?

PV You know, every single time.

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7 Ibaye Ibaye, Rest in peace.

8 Pg. 84 of *Ritual: Power, Healing and Community* by ancestor Malidoma Patrice Somé.

9 East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, located in the Iron Triangle, Richmond, CA

Kwesi Anku received his training in West African music, dancing and drumming at the University of Legon, Ghana. After obtaining his BFA in Dance in 2004, he became a teaching assistant for the School of Performing Arts, working with local students and study abroad participants, namely from: UC Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford and San Francisco State University. He is also an accomplished performer, having performed with the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the Performing Arts Workshop, two of Ghana's most prestigious dance ensembles. Since moving to the East Bay, he worked for World Arts West and the SF Ethnic Dance Festival. Kwesi is the Director of Student Development and Training at East Bay Center for the Performing Arts. In addition to maintaining classes as a West African drumming dance instructor, Kwesi is also a principal dancer in elder CK Ladzekpo's West African Music and Dance Ensemble.