

In The Valley: A Poem and Interview, Mama Linda's Chapbook
The Peale, Baltimore
Recorded in January 2020

Mama Linda ([00:14](#)):

In the Valley. In the Valley of Ancient Kings and Queens, Mama Africa first reigned supreme. Into the belly of Mother Earth, the creator planted the seed of birth on a sunlit morn. Humankind was born. We are all sister and brother. Let there be peace and love one to another.

Myles Banks ([01:08](#)):

I like it. I like it. So tell me Mama Linda, what inspired you to write that poem?

Mama Linda ([01:14](#)):

Well, actually I wrote this poem about four years ago, but I have updated it. I have kind of changed it around a little bit, and I wrote it as a tribute to the Mama Africa storytelling dolls. These dolls were in a series, a one of a kind series, created by Laura Carson. She's a doll maker and mosaic designer, and she created about 20 dolls, 20 different, one of a kind dolls. And each doll had his own name, but they were under the whole title called the Mama Mary Storyteller Dolls. And all 20 were sold, and so they're considered collector's items.

Mama Linda ([02:08](#)):

And when they were unveiled, they were unveiled at a special program at the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum. And I think this was in June or July of 2017 and people came, storytellers were there, we had a printed out program and the unveiling of the dolls was just awesome to see all these 20 dolls just looking so beautiful. And sister Laura did just a fantastic job. She's extremely talented. And the dolls had Kente cloth head wraps and beautiful African jewelry on them. And so each doll had a special name and that name had a special meaning.

Mama Linda ([02:53](#)):

And I wrote this piece really in tribute to the dolls, and I have two of the dolls. As a matter of fact, one of the dolls is on display at the visitor center down here, downtown Baltimore at the visitor center down there under the Harbor because the Peale Center has a doll in its collection. And so does the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum also has a doll. Dr. Joanne Martin purchased a doll.

Myles Banks ([03:26](#)):

That's pretty cool.

Mama Linda ([03:29](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). As a matter of fact, people all over the country purchased a doll. So, they're all around. They're all around the country.

Myles Banks ([03:42](#)):

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That reminds me. I used to have, not me, but my aunt used to have dolls that were dressed up. And I always found those to be interesting. In her living room, she has a bunch of pictures and the whole thing and above her doorway, there's a doll that kind of sounds like the dolls that you're talking about.

Mama Linda ([04:05](#)):

Oh yes, dolls are very powerful. They're a very powerful symbol, go all the way back to the beginning of time. Dolls were used to represent fertility and creativity, motherhood, sisterhood, women being initiated into becoming wives and mothers and caregivers and caretakers. And that was one of the reasons why children played with dolls. And some dolls, depending on what group of family of African nation you belong to, some dolls were highly prized and they were passed down from mother to daughter and so on and so forth. So some dolls were very, very old and just passed down in that family. And some dolls are highly collectible.

Mama Linda ([05:06](#)):

And Barbara Whiteman used to have, I guess she still does, the doll museum. She started the Black National Doll Museum, which is in Philadelphia. And I had a chance to go there. And her collection is unbelievable because you'd be surprised just how valuable black dolls are. And she has so many thousands of dolls, thousands of black dolls. And that's, again, it's a treasure. We have so much that's a part of our culture, part of the African and African-American heritage and culture that are valuable. And a doll is one of them.