

# *Enduring Bounty*



Jasmine Thomas-Girvan

[yartgallery.com](http://yartgallery.com)



**ENDURE** v , -dured, -during.

1. to keep on; last; continue in existence, permanent.
2. to hold out; suffer patiently

**BOUNTY**

1. whatever is given freely; generous gift.
2. generosity in bestowing gifts.
3. a reward.





**'Miss Lou'** The Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverley,  
O.M., O.J., M.B.E., Hon D. Litt., is for me the essence  
of the Caribbean Spirit and Culture. Her life's work  
is a celebration of the True Self.

From humble beginnings, as a child she thrived  
on the stories that "country people" shared in her  
mothers dressmaking parlour, recognising very early,  
the power of storytelling...

*"I learned everything about history, manners, geography, philosophy, love, morals and religion from stories my grandmother told me. And she learned from her grandmother's stories... I grew up on stories. All culture comes from stories."*

Her interest and delight in these tales grew into her lifelong quest to celebrate our indigenous language "patois" and in so doing, our authentic selves. Through her efforts, we became more comfortable with ourselves and a society once content with aping imposed traditions and "virtues" of the empire, gradually became more able to define itself... for itself.

In our own language His-tory became Our-story. The tales of Anansi, proverbs, the land, food, folk medicine and our music, to name a few, were finally viewed with pride and reflected with dignity, affirmed by a universe with a moral centre undeniably rooted in our Caribbean. She understood that this re-centring of our culture was a fundamental ingredient in our struggle to build our Caribbean society.

As George Lamming notes in – The Sovereignty of the Imagination:

*"Freedom is where you are and where you start... that is your original spiritual oxygen... and the struggle is to discover the ways in which potential can be made to exercise itself in a variety of ways..."*

Ms. Lou is the embodiment of that freedom and bountiful potential. To see her perform is to feel "the generosity in bestowing Gifts". Like an Earth Mother, She recognised the true capacity of our people and was actively engaged in the constructive use of this potential in building Caribbean society. Her zeal and pride in our Caribbean identity resonante not only in her laughter, song and girations but in the breadth of her work and more profoundly in the pride, respect and love that her work evokes.

She has bequeathed to us an invaluable collective memory of our culture, and it is up to us... the inheritors of this Brilliant and Triumphant legacy to ensure that it... 'Endures' and continues to be 'Bountiful'.

Walk Good.  
– Jasmine, 2009

## PRAYER IS AN EGG

On Resurrection Day God will say, "What did you do with the strength and energy your food gave you on earth? How did you use your eyes? What did you make with your five senses while they were dimming and playing out? I gave you hands and feet as tools for preparing the ground for planting. Did you, in the health I gave, do the plowing?" you will not be able to stand when you hear those questions. You will bend double, and finally acknowledge the glory. God will say, "Lift your head and answer the questions." Your head will rise a little, then slump again. "Look at me! Tell what you've done." You try, but you fall back flat as a snake, "I want every detail. Say!" Eventually you will be able to get to a sitting position. "Be plain and clear. I have given you such gifts. What did you do with them?" You turn to the right looking to the prophets for help as though to say, "I am stuck in the mud of my life. Help me out of this!" They will answer, those kings, "The time for helping is past. The plow stands there in the field, You should have used it." Then you turn to the left, where your family is, and they will say, "Don't look at us! This conversation is between you and your creator." Then you pray the prayer that is the essence of every ritual: God, I have no hope. I am torn to shreds. You are my first and last and Only refuge. Don't do daily prayers like a bird pecking, moving its head up and down. Prayer is an egg. Hatch out the total helplessness inside.

– RUMI





Anansi is an Ashanti ( West African ) Spider God, the hero and villain of Caribbean Folktales. His stories were brought over from the West Coast of Africa during the Middle Passage and have been told and retold for generations .



*"Our truest life is when we are  
in our dreams... awake." – Thoreau*



UNFOLD YOUR OWN MYTH



Several parts of the soursop plant have been used for centuries by indigenous peoples of the Amazonian rain forest and the Caribbean to treat a wide range of illnesses. One of America's biggest pharmaceutical companies recently "discovered" the amazing anti-cancer properties of the soursop. Research results showed that extracts from the soursop plant effectively target and kill malignant cells in twelve types of cancer, including colon, breast, prostate, lung, and pancreatic cancer; that compounds from the plant are up to 10,000 times more effective than the chemotherapeutic drug, Adriamycin, in slowing the growth of cancer cells; that unlike chemotherapy, the compound extracted from the soursop tree selectively hunts down and kills only cancer cells, leaving healthy cells unharmed; and it both protects the immune system and prevents deadly infection. Whether the company's researchers were tipped off about the soursop's anti-cancer properties by observing indigenous practice as happened with the "discovery" of the contraceptive pill, is not known. But it is quite likely. Perhaps we should have greater regard and respect for our landscape and its Bounty.

In modern pharmaceuticals, one fourth of all prescriptions contain active ingredients extracted from plants and over three thousand antibiotics are derived from microorganisms.

We must protect the biodiversity of our planet. This awareness and appropriate action is vital for our very survival.

**For more information:**

<http://www.rain-tree.com/graviola.html>

<http://kureru.wordpress.com/2009/02/25/secret-of-the-miraculous-graviola-tree/>

With thanks to Mervyn Claxton.







## I KNOW WHY A CAGED BIRD SINGS

A free bird leaps on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream till the current ends  
and dips his wing in the orange sun's rays and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill  
of things unknown but longed for still  
and his tune is heard on the distant hill  
for the caged bird sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill  
of things unknown but longed for still  
and his tune is heard on the distant hill  
for the caged bird sings of freedom.

– Maya Angelou



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