

THE LOTUS LAMP

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A Season For Celebration



Both the Concerned Lotus Academy Supporters (C.L.A.S.) and the Lotus Academy got into the swing of the holiday festivities with African-Centered events which were fun for young and old. C.L.A.S. had its annual pre-Kwanzaa celebration on Saturday, December 12th. The event was well attended, and brought out many recent Lotus students and parents. One of the special treats was a music group of which our own Mothuri Rasheed was a part. They warmed up the crowd (as well as themselves) with soulful sounds from the past and present. The vendors were plentiful, the food was good, and it was a perfect way for everyone to begin the Kwanzaa season.

On Wednesday, December 23rd, it was the Lotus Academy staff's turn to host and entertain parents, supporters, and students at the Seasonal Celebration. They did not disappoint. The day was filled with acknowledgments of birthdays, African drumming and dancing, Kiswahili, stiltwalkers, and festive singing. If that was not enough, there was food, food, and more food in any classroom in which you walked. As usual, the parents made their presence felt with the many dishes and desserts which filled the tables.

As one can see from the pictures at the left, the charged and African-Centered atmosphere was truly punctuated by colorful and cultural dress by those in attendance. This was both a party and a celebration, and a fitting tribute to the end of the fall season, the end of the trimester, the end of the year, and the start of a holiday season known for its family gatherings, goodwill, and warm spirituality.

“If you expect the present day school system to give history to you, you are dreaming. This we have to do ourselves.” **JOHN HENRIK CLARKE**

Special Events Committee Update

The special events that are scheduled for 1999, and the committees that are putting them all together have been meeting and planning over the last few weeks. The Lotus Fashion Show committee (Julie Wilcher and Janice Fullard, among others) now has a date and a venue for the first fashion show sponsored by the Lotus Academy. It will be held on Saturday, April 10, 1999, at the North American Motor Inn at 4444 City Line Avenue from 11 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with lunch being served from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m.

Speakers and workshop coordinators are being lined up for the African-Centered Education Conference to be held at the Lotus Academy on May 21-22, 1999. Invitations to potential participants will be mailed out in late January, along with a brochure which will provide details about the conference itself. We hope that the parent body will be well represented at this most important event, as many of the workshops will cover topics that are important to healthy parenting.

As the students, parents, and teachers begin to sharpen the presentations that will take place at the Oratorical Contest, the Event Program Book committee will commence its efforts with the program book for this time honored event. The program book will include much of the material that the students will be presenting at the Oratorical Contest, and it will also feature text and photos from this event over the years. It will be on sale at LaSalle University on the day of the contest finals, February 28th.

The Capital Campaign Committee will begin its work the first week of January. Letters will be mailed to our patrons, supporters, and alumni with the plans that Lotus has for upgrading its students' computers, building a scholarship fund, and improving the physical plant. The financial goals will be announced then.

Year-Round Education Update

Approximately sixty questionnaires were received from parents. They were analyzed by the Lotus staff, and formed the basis for the first meeting on Tuesday, December 22nd, to discuss the issues surrounding this proposal. In addition, the administrative and teaching staff met on December 17th to talk about the "pro's and con's", with the teachers also completing their own questionnaires to summarize their thoughts about the subject.

Despite the fact that the meeting on December 22nd was sparsely attended, those in attendance offered great insight into how this proposal would best work for parents. In addition to some very constructive criticism, many suggestions and alternative methods were proposed.

Though the goal of the meeting was not to make any firm decisions, there were several points about which there appeared to be a clear consensus: (1) if there is to be a year-round education program at Lotus, the exact annual calendar should be planned around the practical needs of Lotus parents; (2) the most workable way to increase the number of days available for instruction and to alleviate the very long period of "summer break" is to extend the school year somewhat past the typical June date and to look to possibly beginning the school year earlier than the traditional first or second week of September; (3) year-round education will only be worth the additional time, energy, and costs if it is able to significantly strengthen the academic program, and not just free up time for activities that are "summer camp" in nature; and (4) any such effort must be coupled with ways to make our existing program more effective, especially as it relates to science and math.

The issue of increased tuition costs was discussed in light of the fact that it is obvious that teachers would have to be compensated for the extra time that they would be in the classroom. This situation would be less burdensome on the teachers if we are able to develop a calendar which still has enough of a July-August break to allow for alternative employment for those months.

The January 5th meeting will represent an opportunity to discuss all of these points and any others that need to be raised. A final decision as to whether, when, and how we might implement year-round education will be made on or before January 8, 1999. That decision will be communicated to parents, and will be included in the mailing about the procedure for re-admission applications that will go out during the second week of January.

As has been previously reported in the Lotus Lamp, the whole subject of year-round education will be **one** of the workshops available to parents at the Parent Workshops scheduled for Wednesday, January 27th. There will be other workshops (Children and the Media, Peer Pressure, Study Skills, etc.) in addition to this one.

Whether we are able to make year-round education a part of the Lotus program or not, we will continue to explore any creative possibilities for enhancing our children's education. In the competitive world that they are about to enter, we have no choice but to constantly look for ways to better prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead.

All parents should be reminded that the second and final "Year-Round" Education meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 5, 1999 at Lotus from 6:30-7:30 p.m..

The Sankofa Experience

On a Friday night in mid-December a number of Lotus staff members (and some very appreciated parents) watched the acclaimed independent movie, "Sankofa", by Haile Gerima. For those who have seen it, you certainly know that it is a very gripping and emotional movie that presents a very powerful message that has both historical and contemporary significance. Two of those who viewed the movie share their thoughts and feelings about a work which should be seen by everyone interested in the African-Centered perspective.

MOTHURI AKONO:

Sankofa was about bringing back the wisdom of the past to make changes in the future. This is what took place that Friday night in the Lotus Academy conference room. Ten of us gathered together to view the spirit-moving movie about one sister's experience of Sankofa.

A true experience of Sankofa is what needs to manifest in every African person dwelling in America. Maybe we as a people will awaken from our sleep, feel the connection, and answer the call of nation building, re-Africanizing, and re-spiritualizing.

Many of us talk of Africa. However, we do not "feel" her. Africa does not ooze from the pores of our mere existence. My brothers and sisters, in the spirit of Sankofa, "It is time to work". Not for self, but to work for the collective. It is time to reconnect to the ways of our righteous ancestors. To say we remember our ancestors while continuing to perpetuate the same system that destroyed them/us is heresy. In essence, you have become a traitor.

So, let your experience of Sankofa begin. Let us rebuild our nation by re-Africanizing/re-spiritualizing our center. Remember our ancestors by making the African worldview primary.

PEACE, LOVE, AND POWER

MOTHURA SEROUURR:

The initial scenes as I viewed the movie, depict a young woman who uses her Het Heru (Venus) energies, the seventh sphere on the tree of life, to gain fame and recognition as a model.

Mona, as I believe she was called, shows a lack of understanding and recognition of her past, her history, and her ancestry. While being pulled into the Slave Castle, she is yelling, "I ain't no Afrikan. I'm Mona. I'm a model. You've seen me. You've seen my pictures. I'm American. I'm from America! I AIN'T NO AFRIKAN!"

Mona uses sensual behavior, which is common in the modeling scenario today, to gain the attention of a captive audience. This behavior is derived through imitation.

Much of our learning is associated with the ninth sphere on the tree of life and gained through indiscriminate imitation. As children, we are not partial to whom we copy or mock. Usually it is someone who is very close to us, such as a parent or care giver. As adults, our interests widen, but we become more selective about whom we decide to imitate.

As we get further into the movie, Mona is forced to SANKOFANIZE her image. She is taken back through time to make that necessary connection with her ancestors. Her spirit is returned to a Southern plantation as a person born into slavery. She is called "Shola", and then the story begins...

News From The Lotus Age Groups

Mothura Lizz of Shaish I-B would like to let everyone know that her students will be participating in a spelling bee each and every month beginning in the month of December, 1998. Prizes will be awarded to the many winners who show their skills at mastering the spelling of the tough words that she will be giving them. It is sure to improve their reading and self-confidence.

Mothura Pam of Shavi I would like to say Asante Sana ("Thank You") to Sharon Garland, Vincenteen Ingram, Kathy Moore, Daisy Tinson, and Cheryl Preston for taking time out of their busy schedules to accompany the Shavi I students on some of their recent trips. More in the way of "Asante Sana" should go out to Pamela Moss and Mary Leftwich for lending their considerable skills to the classroom this past trimester.

Mothura Terri is proud to report that she has recently begun a booklet on "The Family" with Shaish II which has been both a very exciting and creative project. Pupils have been focusing on the importance and functions of the family by writing, drawing, and coloring in their booklets

Other age groups, Shaish I and Shavi I have also embarked upon this project with enthusiasm, and have produced beautifully colored booklets. She is hopeful that the family booklet will allow even our youngest children to see how precious our families are, and to understand how we have survived as "Afrikans in America" because of the role of the family unit.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the Age Groups for their preparation and participation in the recent Spotlight On Young Artists and this past week's Seasonal Celebration. The work that went into their contributions was very obvious and very much appreciated.

The Lotus Academy Teacher Of The Month

Mothura Marcia is our Teacher of the Month. She has consistently demonstrated a dedication and commitment to her students, and has established a standard of academic excellence for her students to strive for.



Mothura Marcia, as is the case with so many of the Lotus staff, always shows her willingness to contribute to Lotus' development by volunteering her "free" time and talent. Her class is now in the midst of preparing for the Lotus Oratorical Contest, Science Expo, and the challenges ahead.

Early Learning Center Open House Is Jan. 13th

The three and four-year olds of the Lotus Academy Early Learning Center will be traveling a few blocks next week to their new "home" at 6110 Wissahickon Avenue. They should be quite comfortable in their new space, with a building that is perfectly suited for their needs. There is much in the way of trees, grass, and park land in the area to remind them of how close they (and we) are to nature.

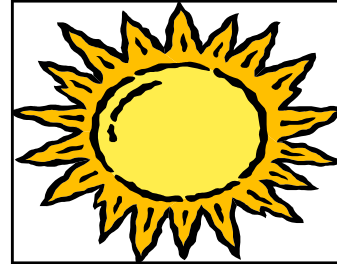
The Early Learning Center will be holding an Open House at the new building at 10:00



a.m. and again at 6:00 p.m. Though it has been set up for prospective parents, all of our parents and staff are invited to come out and participate in this Lotus "housewarming".

Monthly Reminders

Early Learning Center



- Tue., Jan. 5 – Year-Round Education Meeting 6:30 p.m.**
- Tue., Jan. 12 – Teacher Planning Session (ELC OPEN)**
- Wed., Jan 13 – Early Learning Center OPEN HOUSE**
- Mon., Jan. 18 – M. L. King Birthday – ELC CLOSED**
- Wed., Jan. 27 – Parent Workshops – 7:00 p.m.**

Lower & Upper Schools (Grades 1 to 8)



- Tue., Jan. 5 – Year-Round Education Meeting 6:30 pm**
- Tue., Jan. 12 – Staff Meeting – NOON DISMISSAL**
- Wed., Jan 13 – Early Learning Center OPEN HOUSE**
- Mon., Jan. 18 – M.L.King Birthday – SCHOOL CLOSED**
- Wed., Jan. 27 – Parent Workshops – 7:00 p.m.**

"We must stand tall knowing the power, strength, and wisdom of the ancestors is as close as a breath."

IYANLA