

ROUTES

A Weekly Guide to African-American Culture

December 16-22, 1991

• (212) 627-5241 •

Vol. I, No. 29 • \$1.00

**LISTINGS INSIDE: ART • CABARETS • CONCERTS • THEATER
RESTAURANTS • FREE-FOR-ALL**

REMEMBERING SISTER ALMA JOHN

I remember the day I met her, a Tuesday afternoon in 1976 at her 10th floor apartment in the Riverton Houses in Harlem. I went there to enlist her participation in a health education program I was developing for a hospital in the community. She welcomed me with a warm smile and big, brown, twinkling eyes that illuminated her caramel-colored face. With a gentle wave of her hand she offered me a seat on a couch in the living room and after adjusting her headtie, which matched her orange and red African dress, sat beside me.



We talked like old friends, first about the numerous plaques decorating the living room walls, then about the program, in which she readily agreed to participate. Needless to say I was delighted, but what made me even happier was her accepting me as a member of *The Family* which, for her, included everyone of African descent. For Alma Vessells John was the quintessential community mother who dedicated her life to serving her people, most of whom, she said, "are God-fearing, hardworking and upstanding citizens. And there isn't anything wrong with the other five percent that more love, more understanding and more opportunity wouldn't help." Sister John, as she insisted on being called, *helped* people.

I remember those Saturday mornings when she would share a wealth of information with actors, students, entrepreneurs who came to her place seeking assistance in starting a career, developing a

business, or on locating grants to finance a college education. She would also share her credo "If you know, teach. If you don't, learn. Each one, reach one. Each one, teach one."

I remember her visiting schools and telling the children "any people who could build the pyramids and the Sphinx in the middle of the Sahara Desert in Africa can do anything." And, I remember how she would promote me at social affairs, or whenever we went to the theater. At the end of the play, she would grab my hand, march me backstage and take me right up to the producer or director and say "This is Estelle Whiting. She's a writer, so take her card. And you (turning to me) take his!"

Sister John was born on September 27, 1906, and grew up in South Philadelphia in a shotgun house as the eldest of nine children. After her mother's death in 1927, she did domestic work and other menial jobs to help her carpenter father support the family. Despite hard times, "many good things happened to us during our upbringing," she said. "A neighbor gave my father a copy of Marcus Garvey's newspaper *The Negro World*, and Dad made us all read it. It instilled in us racial pride and a desire to make our own employment. My brothers collected wooden crates, chopped them up and sold the pieces for 25 cents. After school, I worked as a vegetable peeler making \$3 an hour. We were a happy family. " But Sister John wanted more than a vegetable-peeling career. So she came to New York and studied nursing at New York University and Harlem Hospital School of nursing. After working at Harlem Hospital for ten years, she went on to achieve many lofty goals.

She founded a school for practical nurses, and established a radio program called *Brown Women in White* which aired on 69 NBC stations. Later on, she created the *Alma John Shoppers' Guide* on radio station WWRL, and *Black Pride*, the biweekly talk show she produced and hosted on WPIX Channel 11. At some point in her busy life she married C. Lisley John, with whom she had no children, but enjoyed 40 years of happiness.

A few years before her death she established the Alma John Workshops Association, Inc., an organization dedicated to community service. Sister John died on April 8, 1986, the year she was celebrating what she called a silver anniversary in radio and television, a golden anniversary in nursing and a diamond anniversary on the planet earth. What a life. And when my gaze falls upon the the gray and white candy dish she gave me, I remember.

The Alma John archives are housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City.

—Estelle Whiting

Volume 1, Number 29. Published by OCR for Publishers, Inc. • 521 W. 23rd Street • New York, NY 10011. Subscription rate U.S. \$36. Send subscription to ROUTES, A Weekly Guide to African-American Culture, P.O. Box 20103, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011. ROUTES is published 48 times per year. For advertising rates call (212) 627-5241. Publisher/Editor in Chief, Ronald Bunn, Associate Editor—Estelle Whiting, Editorial Staff: Perri Gaffney.

CLUBS AND CABARETS

African/International Night Club

Club Harambee • 127 W. 43rd St (Bet. 6 & 7th Aves) • 819-1133

- Lisle Atkinson Trio
Dec 16
- Dave Morgan Quartet
Dec 17

• Maria Pia Devito
Dec 19

• Ronnie Cuber Group
Dec 20 & 21

Birdland • 2745 Broadway /105th St • 749-2228

The New York Jazz Orchestra
Dec 16

Ruth Brown
Dec 17-22

The Blue Note • 131 W. 3rd St • 475-8592

John Hicks, piano
Walter Booker, bass
Carl Allen, drums
Dec 16-21

Bradley's • 70 University Pl/11th St • 228-6440

Bobby Short
Through Dec 31

Cafe Carlyle • Madison Ave/76th St • 744-1600

• Aron Burton Blues Band
Dec 17-19

• Jimmy Johnson Blues Band
Dec 20-21

Chicago B.L.U.E.S. • 73 8th Ave/13th St • 255-7373

• Lou Donaldson Quartet
Dec 17-22

• Clifford Jordan Big Band
Mondays
Condon's
117 E. 15th St • 254-0960

Black Tie, a vocal trio
Dec 22, 3 pm

Duplex • 61 Christopher St/7th Ave • 255-5438

Scott Hamilton
Dec 17-22

Fat Tuesdays • 190 Third Ave/17th St • 533-7902

Russ Kasso, piano
Linc Milliman, bass
Dec 18-21

Knickerbocker Bar & Grill
33 University Place
228-8490

• Average White Band
Dec 17

• Willie Colon
Dec 18

S.O.B.s • 204 Varick St (Houston St) • 243-4940

• Barbara Lea, vocalist
Wes McAfee, pianist
Dec 18, 12:30 pm

• Jazz Vespers: Rolando Briceno Sextet
Dec 22, 5 pm

• L.I. University Big Band,
Pete Yellin, director, plus soloists
Dec 22, 7 pm

St. Peter's Church • the Living Room • Lexington Ave/54th St • 688-6022

• The Leaders

Lester Bowie • Chico Freeman • Arthur Blythe
Cecil McBee • Kirk Lightsey • Don Moye
Dec 17-22

• Eddie Chamblee Quartet
Saturdays, 2-6 pm

• Doc Cheatham
Sundays, 3-7 pm

Sweet Basil • 8 Seventh Ave/Bleecker • 242-1785

Ronnie Laws
Dec 20 & 21

Sweetwaters • 170 Amsterdam Ave/68th St • 873-4100

Mingus Big Band
Dec 18

Time Cafe • 380 Lafayette St • 533-7700

David Murray • Geri Allen • Richard Davis • Andrew Cyrille
Dec 17-22

Village Vanguard • 178 7th Ave South • 255-4037

• Ray Schinnery Quartet
Dec 17

• Michael Formanek
Dec 18 & 19

• Nat Dixon
Dec 20 & 21

Visiones • 125 MacDougal St • 673-5576

Jay Leonhart

Joe Beck

Dec 16-21

Zinno • 126 W. 13th St • 924-5182

• Long Island •

Sugar Ray's
(Formerly Machines)
Thursday Nights, Melonie Rose of WBLS
2686 Hempstead Tpke • Levittown • (516) 731-1010

• New Jersey •

Jackie Cain & Roy Kral
Dec 20 & 21

Trumpets • 6 Depot Square Montclair • (201) 746-6100

CONCERTS

Amateur Night
Wednesdays

Apollo Theatre • 253 W. 125th St • 864-0372

Afro-Cuban Extensions:
Israel "Cachao" Lopez & his Orchestra
Dec 21

A pre-concert lecture on Jazz and the Afro-Cuban Musical Tradition by noted musicologist Rene Lopez provides an excellent complement to the concert. It's free to ticket-holders.

Alice Tully Hall • B'way/65th St • 874-2424

An African Mass in Congolese Style

The Missa Luba
Dec 22, 3:30 pm

Special features: African Dance, Traditional Caribbean Folk Music, African-American Gospel.

Guest Artists: Clinton, Ingram, tenor, Charles Johnson, Gospel artist, Kimati Dinizulu, percussion

Transfiguration Lutheran Church • 74 W. 126th St

RESTAURANTS

B. Smith's
Southern & American cuisine
Trendy
771 Eighth Ave • 247-2222

Copeland's
Southern cuisine
 A Harlem institution
 547 W. 145th St • 234-2457

Caribe
Jamaican cuisine
 Pleasant and informal,
 cash only.
 117 Perry St/ Greenwich St
 255-9191

Honeysuckle
Southern cuisine • Trendy
 507 Columbus Ave
 496-8095

Jamaican "Hot Pot"
 Small restaurant of 7-8
 tables—but has a large
 reputation for good food at
 bargain prices.
 2260 Adam Clayton
 Powell, Jr., Blvd/133rd St
 491-5270

Vernon's Jerk Paradise
Jamaican cuisine
 Jerk preparation of meats.
 252 W. 29th St • 268-7020
 • Reviewed in 7/29/91 issue.

Jezebel
Southern/American cuisine
 Scarfs, swings and
 sophistication.
 630 Ninth Ave/45th St
 582-1045

La Famille Restaurant
Southern cuisine
 Roomy and informal
 2017 5th Ave/ 125th St
 534-9909

Livi's Restaurant
*Caribbean & Southern
 cuisine • Informal*
 29 E. 126th St/ Mad. & 5th
 Aves • 831-4931

MoBay
*Jamaican & Southern
 cuisine*
 248 W. 14th St (Bet. 7th &
 8th Aves) • 255-7735

Mr. Leo
Southern cuisine
*Authentic Southern
 cuisine*
 17 W. 27 St/ (Bway & 5th)
 532-6673

**Pan Pan 5th Avenue
 Restaurant/Cafe**
Southern cuisine
 Informal
 1325 5th Ave/110th &
 111th Sts • 996-1212 •
 Reviewed in 10/20/91
 issue.

Perk's Fine Cuisine
Fine cuisine
 Elegant & trendy
 Dancing Wed- Sat, 11 pm.
 553 Manhattan Ave/123rd
 St • 666-8500 • Reviewed
 in 9/8/91 issue.

The Shark Bar
Southern cuisine
 Saturday Gospel Brunch
 12:30 & 2:30 pm
 307 Amsterdam Ave/74th
 & 75th Sts • 874-8500

Sylvia's
Southern cuisine
 Relaxed and informal
 328 Lenox Ave • (126 &
 127th Sts) • 996-0660

Third World Cafe
*Third World cuisine (spices
 used are from West Africa)*
 A very special little cafe.
 700 W. 125th St /West
 Side Hwy • 749-8199

**Wilson's Restaurant &
 Bakery**
Southern Cuisine
 A Harlem institution.
 1980 Amsterdam Ave/
 158th St • 923-9821

• Brooklyn •

Keur n' Deye
Senegalese Cuisine
 737 Fulton St (S. Elliot St.
 & S. Portland Ave • (718)
 875-4937

McDonald's Dining Room
Country home cooking
 327 Stuyvesant Ave •
 (718) 574-3728 • Tues-Sun

Greene Avenue Grill
*Grilled American &
 Southern cuisine*
 13 Greene Ave/Fulton St •
 (718) 797-2099

• Queens •

Carmichael's
Southern cuisine
 Informal
 117-08 Guy Brewer Blvd •
 Jamaica • (718) 723-6908

La Detente
*Continental and Caribbean
 cuisine*
 23-04 94th St • East
 Elmhurst • (718) 458-2172

Manhattan Proper Cafe
Southern cuisine
 217-01 Linden Blvd/ •
 Springfield Blvd • (718)
 341-CAFE

Minnie Tee's
Southern home cooking
 Chicken & Waffles
 specialty
 200-05 Linden Blvd • St.
 Albans • (718) 341-2664



Chez Antoine

Christmas Eve Dinner

December 24, 1991 — 7 pm to 11:30 pm

Les Hors D'oeuvres

Les Petits Plats Du Reveillon

Les Desserts Du Reveillon

Prix-Fixe \$26.95/person

Half-price for children 12 years or under

590 Sunrise Highway • Baldwin, Long Island

(516) 223-9426



RTB's Kitchen*Gourmet Soul Food &***The Crazy Crab Shack
Maryland Style**

Takeout Service

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Market • 137-07 Bedell St
• Jamaica • (718) 276-5180**• Long Island •****Chez Antoine***French Caribbean cuisine*
Elegant590 Sunrise Highway •
Baldwin • (516) 223-9426**Nakisaki International
Restaurant***Jamaican & Chinese
cuisine*276 Fulton Ave • Hemp-
stead • (516) 292-9200**THEATER****Negro Ensemble Company
presents*****Just a Night Out***

Through Dec 22

A musical love story in
that takes place during the
1950s Chitlin' circuit
period.At the Top of the Village
Gate • Bleecker/Thompson
Sts • 295-4694 or 307-4100**Billie, Malcolm & Yusuf**
Through Dec 29A musical, drama. Emmy
Straight, fourth-rate comic,
turns up in Heaven to find
Billie Holiday, Malcolm X
and Yusuf Hawkins
trapped in their own
greatness and brings them
"down to earth."Castillo Cultural Center •
500 Greenwich St • 941-
5800**From The Mississippi
Delta**Written by Endesha Ida
Mae Holland, directed by
Jonathan Wilson. Endesha
Ida Mae Holland's boldly
inspirational, gutsy and
often hilarious autobio-
graphical play. It follows
her life as she blazes her
way from rebellious young
prostitute to PhD.Circle-In-The-Square
(Downtown) • 159
Bleecker St • 254-6330**The Wake**

Dec 27-Jan 5, 1992

A comedy about a man
who plans to attend his
own wake.The Gene Grankel Theatre
• 24 Bond St (Bet.
Lafayette & Bowery) •
(718) 452-3952**Thoughts of A Confused
Black Man**Fridays & Saturdays, 8 pm
An African's experience in
AmericaHarlem School of The Arts
• 645 St. Nicholas Ave •
926-4100**Six Degrees of Separation
Courtney B. Vance**Set in Manhattan, about a
con artist at an elegant
dinner party.Vivian Beaumont Theater
B'way/65th St • 239-6200**The Good Times are
Killing Me**A play with music, follows
the comic coming of age of
two girls, one white and
one black, as they explore
the mysteries of adoles-
cence.Minetta Lane Theatre
18 Minetta Lane (Bet. 3rd &
Bleecker) • 307-4100**Don't Explain**

Through Dec 29

Written by Samuel Harps,
directed by Rome NealA dramatic presentation
with music about the late
Jazz trumpeter Lee Morgan.
Recipient of 7 AUDELCO
awardsNuyorican Poets' Cafe •
236 E. 3rd St (Bet. Aves B &
C) • 465-3167**The New York
Shakespeare Festival****Pericles**

Through Dec 22

A play about how people
cope individually and
collectively with the loss of
people loved. It examines
cycles of death and birth/
resurrection. Featured in
the cast: Robert Beatty, Jr.,
Paul Butler & Sandra
McClainPublic Theater • 425
Lafayette St • 598-7150**Zion**

Through Dec 22

Directed by Thomas Jones.
A gospel musical about the
30-year struggle by
African-Americans to
found the first Black
church.Theatre of the Riverside
Church • 490 Riverside
Drive • 869-3981**• Brooklyn •****Lotto**

Through Jan 26, 1992

The Benson family, a
typical family, convinced,
that winning the lottery
will solve all of their
problems. One day they
actually hit the jackpot for
\$20 million. Lotto is zany
and funny.The Billie Holiday Theatre
• 1368 Fulton St • (718)
636-0918/9**DANCE****Alvin Ailey American
Dance Theater**

Through Dec 29

City Center Theatre • 131
W. 55th St • 581-7907**LaRocque Bey School of
Dance Theatre Kwanza
Christmas Celebration**

Dec 19, 9 pm

Fordham University
School of Arts & Sciences •
Pope Auditorium • 61st St
& 9th Ave • 841-5100**• Queens •****Theatre of Dance
Movement 10th Annual
Kwanzaa Celebration**

Dec 21, 6:30 pm

A.M.E. Church • 111-54
Merrick Blvd • Jamaica •**ART GALLERIES****Holiday Prints, Drawings**
Through Jan 20Robert Blackburn, Betty
Blayton, Edward Clark,
Nanette Carter, Gregory
Coates, Nadine De
Lawrence, Alejandra
Delfin, Melvin Edwards,
Gilbert Fletcher, William
Hutson, Gerald Jackson,
James Little, Al Loving,
Tyrone Mitchell, Jack
Whitten, Charles White,
Frank Wimberley, Richard
Yarde

The Cinque Gallery • 560 Broadway/Prince St • Room 504 • 560-2098

Marble & Granite Gallery

Featuring Zambian sculptor Rennie Siachwe, and a granite sculpture collection from Zimbabwe.

Marble & Granite Gallery
340 West 14th St (bet. 8th & 9th Aves) • 741-3399

MUSEUMS & CULTURAL CENTERS

Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art
Through December '91
Exhibit explores the continuing vitality of traditional art which coexists today with a modern art that is uniquely African.

The Center for African Art
54 E. 68th St (Bet. Mad. & Lex Aves) 861-1200.

Come all you Gallant Heroes: The World of the Revolutionary Soldier
Through Aug 14, 1992

The exhibition chronicles the experiences of soldiers in the Continental Army during the War for American Independence. Excerpts from the diaries of soldiers are posted on the walls, including one from ex-slave and freeman Jacob Francis.

Fraunces Tavern Museum
• 54 Pearl St • 425-1776

• Picturing Africa: Photographs of the Zulu, 1870-1900

Through Jan 31
Mezzanine, Michael C. Rockefeller Wing
19th century albumen prints by European colonial photographers of the Zulu peoples..

Metropolitan Museum of Art • Fifth Ave & 82nd St • 535-7710

• Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort
Through-Dec 31

The current state of the American Dream of domestic happiness is examined in this photography exhibition. Con-

tributing photographers:

Albert Chong, Marilyn Nance, John Pinderhughes, Carrie Mae Weems

• Word 2 My Mother
Through Jan 19, 1992

Video installation by Tony Cokes. Employing visual and textual materials, Coke examines his mother's life and experiences.

The Museum of Modern Art • 11 W. 53rd St • 708-9400

Interrupted Life

Through Dec 29
A multi-disciplinary exhibition examining the theme of death in the Western world.

• James Van Der Zee
photos are a part of the exhibition.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art • 583 B'way/Houston • 219-1222

• The African Presence in the Americas
Through December

• African-Americans in Space Science
Through December

• Guided tours by appointment only
The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
• 515 Lenox Ave/ 135th St
• 491-2200

• Africa and the Diaspora: Selections from the Permanent Collection
Through Jun 7, 1992

Includes 95 paintings. Exhibition examines the influence of African art and culture on the art, artists, and culture of the Americas and the

Caribbean.

• From the Studio: Artists-in-Residence, 1990-91
Ada Pilar Cruz, ceramic sculptor; Leonardo D. Drew, sculptor; Eve Sandler, painter

Studio Museum of Harlem
144 W. 125th St • 864-4500

• Long Island •

Climbing Jacob's Ladder
Through Dec 19

A Traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian and Anacosta Museums giving an overview of the rise of African-American churches in the Eastern United States, 1740-1877..
African-American Museum
• 110 N. Franklin St.
Hempstead • (516) 485-0470

FREE FOR ALL

Holiday in Harlem with the Songs of Visions
Dec 19, 6 pm

Visions will sing Gospel and holiday songs.

Harlem Branch of the NY Public Library • 9 W. 124th St/5th Ave • 348-5620

First Night Celebration
in and around Grand Central Terminal Dec 30 & 31. For *First Night* bulletin about the 50 or more events call (212) 368-6906.

CLASSIFIED

Brennen's Value Flea Markets • (718) 276-5180 • Ken Brennen, President.

3 MONTH TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION \$9

ROUTES

A Guide to African-American Culture

Old Chelsea Station, P.O. BOX 20103
NEW YORK, NY 10011

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