



A Black Bookstore Owner's Appeal



Our rich heritage and sacrifices of our ancestors demand that I start this letter with thanks and praises for those who came before us. They generously shared their knowledge, wisdom and traditions so that we might be able to communicate with each other today. I must also give salutary praises and commendations for your continued support and love thru the years; it has truly been such a blessing. You've brought joy to our hearts as we evolve on our journey to positively impact the community through our conscious cultural deeds. **Your spiritual and financial contributions have been immeasurable and have shaped Afri-Ware into what we are today.**

Since the last letter I sent to the community "Open Letter to the Community" dated 10/26/07 and your subsequent outpouring of love and financial support, I am saddened to report that now **two more African-American owned bookstores have closed**; namely Afrocentric Bookstore and Heritage Books and Music. Combined with African American Images this

makes a total of 3 stores to close in 3 years. All three of them were like big brothers and sister to us in terms of years of experience in the business. I must take a moment to give praise to and celebrate their years of service to the community for positively affecting the psyche of our people. The legacy they've left is quite notable and commendable. After all, serving as a cultural voice for the community and performing as an informal independent learning center **teaching what ought to be in the public school curriculum is no small feat.** By meeting not only the essential and corrective literary needs of the community, African-American owned bookstores also function as a safe haven or refuge from the hazards/casualties of racism. **I am sharing this with you to point out that institutions that make attempts to reflect our best interests as a people are under attack and are subject to constant scrutiny to defend and justify their existence. To this end, I must offer that Afr-Ware is now on the offensive to ensure our existence now and for the future.**

This harsh "chickens comin' home to roost" U. S. economic climate increases the challenge to bring the necessary substantive cultural gifts to the community. What a grand testimony it has been to the heights of greed and incompetence that this country (in spite of receiving free labor off the backs of our ancestors thru slavery) still can't get it right. **It is in this context that I come to you with this letter that forces us to face these challenging economic times and sustained attacks on our cultural institutions.** It calls for taking bold, courageous yet well-thought out actions.

After analyzing the financial health of Afri-Ware within this context, I've had to shift my original economic vision for Afri-Ware. The cultural goals and responsibilities will remain in tact. It is the financial structural support which must change. I am asking for your support for this. **It will require a paradigm shift to include our charging for some events, and, asking the community to financially support Afri-Ware as a cultural institution above and beyond the retail end of the store.** Our goal thru the years has been to

structure our programs to reflect the community we serve. Many of you have expressed your appreciation for this. **This appeal is to you who know about the high caliber of speakers, workshops and pertinent literary information we've provided and would like to assist in continuing this for the future.**

In the weeks and months to come we will be featuring avenues on our website/facebook/myspace/email to facilitate this. Please continue to support thru our retail establishment. We are always grateful to you for this. These additional efforts are being asked to structure the support to directly affect Afri-Ware as a viable cultural institution able to pull its own weight and carry us into the next millennia. **If this is important to you, we ask that you urgently lend your support to this effort.**

To begin, we are asking your assistance with 1 or more of the following:

1. **Please make immediate purchases/donations/contributions (non-tax-deductible) at Afri-Ware by end of October. This will assist with some serious and urgent financial needs we are working on.**
2. **Join our www.facebook.com 'Afri-Ware' group and add us as a friend on our www.myspace.com/Afriware web pages. We will be structuring a pledge/investment drive with promotional gifts for your pledges. Place orders for items now and order by phone.**
3. **Meet with me to discuss other creative financial expressions. We are thankful that one customer has already expressed an interest in making monthly contributions.**
4. **Stay tuned/Attend specific upcoming fund-raising events**
5. **Please feel free to call us if you do not hear from us as a follow-up to this letter to discuss other creative ideas.**

Afri-Ware is:

1. Forming a team to bring in the expertise to best transition into this paradigm shift.
2. Getting more information about transitioning the cultural institution side of Afri-Ware to a not-for-profit.
3. Getting more information about structuring Afri-Ware as an

investment co-op.

Please understand that this decision was not done with haste nor was it one that was extremely comfortable for me. **It is however a decision absolutely necessary to move forward as an entity that reflects the true dual-functionality and identity of Afri-Ware as a powerful African-centered retail establishment, and, independent community supported cultural institution.** I am trusting that those who are familiar with our work and reputation will understand that this was a principled and practical decision. Your support will better anchor our roots for the future. Thank you in advance for your patience as we embrace this new paradigm.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Nzingha Nommo

owner, Afri-Ware Inc.

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www.afriware.net

ON BEHALF OF AFRI-WARE INC...I'd like to welcome all newcomers to our email list! We are happy to send you updates on our events throughout the year. Thank you for signing up and please feel free to send this on to your friends/family. We will happily add new members to our list as well, just email us: afriware@aol.com - Nzingha Nommo, President Afri-Ware Inc.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email, visit our website and/or store. It is our committed goal to give you our best service possible, which is what you deserve. We welcome and appreciate all comments and or feedback in helping us achieve this objective.

In the Spirit of our Ancestors, we Thank YOU.

[send email to Afri-Ware](#), call 708-524-8398, fax 708-524-8397, or
write to: Afri-Ware Inc. 266 W. Lake Str., Oak Park, IL 60302.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE @

WWW.AFRIWARE.NET

Hours: Mon-Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun 10am-4pm