

Négritude Movement

Leopold Sedar Senghor, Négritude poet and first president of independent Senegal, his *Prayer for Peace*, 1948

Lord, forgive those who made guerrillas of the Askias, who turned my princes into sergeants, Made houseboys of my servants, and laborers of my country folk, who turned my people into a proletariat. For you must forgive those who hunted my children like wild elephants, who trained them to the whip and made them the black hands of those hands were white. You must forget those who stole ten million of my sons in their leprous ships, And who suppressed two hundred million more.

A lonely old age they've made me in the forest of my nights and the savannah of my days. The glass before my eyes grows misty, Lord. And the serpent Hatred stirs his head within my heart, the Serpent I'd thought dead...

Kill it, Lord, for I must proceed upon my way and strangely, it is for France I want to pray. Lord, among the white lands, set France upon the Father's right. Oh, I know she is too is Europe, she too like some northern cattle rustler raped my children to swell the cane and cotton fields, for negro sweat is like manure.

Yes, Lord, forgive France, who expresses the right way so well and makes her own so deviously, who invites me to her table, and tells me to bring my own bread, who gives her right hand while the left take half back again.

Yes, Lord, forgive France, with hates all occupations and imposes hers so heavily on me Who throws open her triumphal routes to heroes and treats her Senegalese like hired hands; making them the black dogs of her empire Who is the Republic and delivers her countries to the concessionary companies That have made my Mesopotamia, the Congo, a vast cemetery beneath the white sun.

Bless these people who break their bonds, bless these people reduced to their last extremity who confront the wild greed of the powerful, the torturers.

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