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# Experience West African Drumming: A Study of West African Dance-Drumming and women Drummers

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## **Experience West African Drumming**

A Study of West African Dance-Drumming and women Drummers

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One Africa

Carnegie Mellon University study Abroad Office

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Lydia and Dylan, my favourite Liberian couple

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## **Abstract**

Drums have been a vital part of African traditions and celebrations for thousands of years. They play an immense role in Africa's rich oral history. Through the drum, the joys sorrows and every day passages of an entire people are documented, celebrated and mourned. The Djembe is a Guinean drum that is played throughout Africa. The Djembe along with other instruments are used to play Drum-dance songs during festivals and seasonal celebrations. Unfortunately, women are seldom included in these events. As a woman of African descent, I chose to learn how to play the Djembe and researched its history and women's involvement in drumming.

## Introduction

Even as a young child, I harboured an intense fascination with African culture and tradition. In particular, African dancing and drumming caught my imagination. Just seeing the way the dancer bodies moved to the beat of the Drum, made me want to become a part of it. I eventually inquired about how one could learn to drum. The instructors told me that according to traditional African custom women were not permitted to play the drums. This information infuriated me, because I could not understand why someone would not allow a person to drum because of their gender. Later I was told that I could be a wonderful dancer if I put my all into it. I have not taken any dance lesson since last time. I wanted to be able to take part in this African tradition, but I refused to allow any one to determine what role I would play simply because of my gender.

It was not until years later, when I attended the Michigan Women's Music Festival that I heard women drumming professionally. I attended a workshop titled "Women of African Diaspora Drum circle" led by Ubaka Hill. When I arrived to the workshop, I was surprised to see a beautiful African American Woman with long locks with an African drums in between her legs. She began to loudly and enthusiastically beat the drum. A large group of joy filled women quickly gathered around her. The sense of anticipation was palpable in the room, as every woman hoped that someday we would be able to play like the Nubian goddess before us. Yet when I tried to play the drum, I found myself battling my own doubts and fear. I participated in the Drum circle by playing various instruments that did not include the Drum. My lack of drumming skills made me afraid to attempt such a loud instrument in front of so many observers. Later during the week, I attempted playing the Djembe several times. Each time I was very self-conscious and nervous. I wanted to be able to follow in the path of such women as Ubaka Hill, but each time I hit the drum, all I could hear the voices of those who told me I should think about dancing, and drumming was not for women. During the festival I had the opportunity to sit and listen to Ubaka Hill speak to other women drummers. Many of the women spoke of their passion and love for drumming and the rich African tradition from which it came. Yet all of them were disappointed by the lack of women involved in it. Drumming was the way through which the communities created and established their identities, histories, stories and societal structure. Without women players, there was no female voices or perspectives integrated into the culture's social consciousness. Black women especially, deeply felt the need for the conclusion of African women drummers. They spoke of drumming as a speech and empowerment, as a way of preserving a

link to their ancestors not only in Africa but in their present lands. Throughout the history of Diaspora, enslaved Africans used the drum not only as a form of communication, but also as a way of establishing their identity and traditions in a foreign and hostile land. By keeping the tradition of drumming for both men and women, this history of the middle passage is kept alive forever to remind future generations of their roots. Moreover, how the drum gives communities a voice to express to the world, the stories of their past, present, and future. Drumming gives cultures the ability to celebrate and mourn death, births, the right of passage, as well as other events. By excluding women from these celebrations and tributes, they are literally licensed. They cannot help shape the identity and history of the people that they have brought to life. After the Michigan Women Music Festival, I became obsessed with drumming. I could not get pictures of women drummers out of my mind. I so badly wanted to learn how to play and begin my own journey into drumming. Yet it was not until I arrived in Ghana, West Africa six months later that my dreams of drumming became a reality. As soon as I stepped off the plain I felt as if I was being summoned by the rhythm of the drum. I became almost obsessed with purchasing a djembe and I was secretly hoping that I would have enough time to learn how to drum. However, I was fully aware that as a woman might not be permitted to drum alongside my brothers. I knew that I might be asked to either step outside of the drumming circle or be encouraged to dance. This possibility of rejection or limitation made me nervous but I did not allow these thoughts to hinder my quest to drum. I wanted to take part in this oral tradition and was willing to undertake almost anything to achieve this goal. Within weeks upon arrival in Ghana, I purchased a djembe during my launch hour and I was sitting off the shore of the Atlantic Ocean drumming nest to Antoinette, one of the few Ghanaian female drummers. It was truly a powerful experience: sitting in between the Elmira and Cape Coast Castles, with a master female drummer by my side. It struck me that, if I was able to come back a free woman and drum between the very slave castles that held my ancestors, before they were brutally ripped away from their home over three centuries ago as slaves, almost anything possible. I knew at that moment that I wanted to do my independent study on drumming.

African drumming has such an extensive history that I was chose to limit my research to West African drumming. I chose to focus on the Djembe, a few popular dance-drumming songs, limitation of women drummers and my personal experience learning how to drum in Ghana.

Throughout my independent study period I was able to find books and articles written on African dance and drumming. Unfortunately, I was not able to find books and articles that focused on the history women drummers in detail. I used an informal interviewing process to find out information on women drummers.

The death of information on women and drumming proved to me the need for research in this area. Without extensive academic research coupled with programs geared towards developing and education women drummers, very little will happen to fully integrate women into the world of drumming.



## **Methodology**

Data for this study was collected by means of interviews, participant observation, and informal conversation, lectures, internet, and literature reviews.

### **Interviews:**

I conducted six short interviews with men and women in both Cape Coast and Accra. I interviewed Antoinette, a Ghanaian female master drummer in Cape Coast, because of her rarity and level of expertise in drumming. I interviewed Michael, Ghanaian drum instructor at the University of Ghana, Legon, because of his knowledge of the social aspects of drumming and dance. I interviewed Frank, a dance and drum instructor at the University of Ghana, Legon, because of his knowledge of the history of drumming and djembe. I interviewed Aisha, Michelle and Surreal, all three student at the University of Ghana, Legon, because of their interest and expertise in African drumming and / or dance and also because they were women who were engaging in this art form.

I primarily asked each person the following question

- How did they become interested in African dancing or drumming?
- How long have they been studying this art form?
- Did they know of any female drummers? If so how many and where did you see them perform?
- Did they know why women drummers were so rare?

Follow-up questions included, but were not limited to the following:

- Are you aware of the origin of the djembe?
- Are women drummers prevalent in other countries?
- What stops women from drumming this day and age?

### **Participant Observation:**

While travelling to the northern regions of Ghana, I played the djembe in various towns and village, playing at times by myself or with men, women and children who asked to play with me. During ISP, I took drumming lesson 3-4 times a week at the University of Ghana, Legon. I also watched four dance- drumming performance in Ghana.

### **Informal Conversation:**

Informal conversation were held with both men and women who either drummed with me in the village or who asked me question while I was drumming in the village, towns,

and cities. I was also able to talk with Kwesi, the SIT bus driver, about the history and tradition of drumming in his village.

### **Lectures:**

Two professors during African Diaspora Studies lectures spoke about drumming and women drummers. Dr F.A.K. Saighoe and Esi Sutherland

### **Internet:**

While browsing the internet, I was able to find four articles that related to drumming and women empowerment through drumming.

### **Literature Review:**

Agordoh, A.A., Studies in African Music, Revised Edition, 1994, Ho New Age Publication, Ghana.

Kewi, Mama, Complication of African Drumming, 1982, Belgium Publication, Belgium.

Nketia, Kwabena, Our Drums and Drummers, 1968, Ghana Publishing Corporation, Ghana.

### **Data Analysis:**

Data was analyzed using the following observation:

- Field notes from interviews, participant observation, and informal conversation were filed in an ISP journal.
- Information was reviewed and discussed with advisor
- Field results were related to information gathered from literature reviews.

## Chapter One

### *The Heartbeat of a People: Djembe and other Drums*

I focused my research on the djembe, since it is the drum I learned to play during my studies. Its distinct and resonant sound instantly attracted me to it. Its shape, reminiscent of a woman's body, also had a special charm. The shape is that of an hourglass: the upper portion of the djembe is round and large, with a small waist, and with a large lower half. Its variety of sound and range makes it to be played a solo instrument or accompanied with other instrument. Many people told me that the djembe was originally from Senegal. I found this statement inaccurate after doing much research.

The djembe is central to the musical heritage of the Malinke and Sousou tribes of Guinea in West Africa. The common culture and historical of these tribes can be traced to the great Mali Empire, which once encompassed of all the present day Mali as well as most of the coastal regions of West Africa. Blacksmiths from the caste Malinke in Guinea created the djembe. The open mouth shape of the barrel came from that traditional grain grinder. The skin of djembe is either goat or antelope. It is played bare handed. It is a very high sound spectrum and produces a great richness in pitch. The djembe was played by Sewa Kan and it originates from the Mandingo musical tradition. The djembe was embraced by all the neighbouring ethnic groups and it is now found under various forms in nearly all of West Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In Malinke country, the djembe is accompanied by the three bass drums called, in the Malinke tongue, Doundoun, Sangban, and Kenkeni. These drums are double headed and are played with one stick. They are covered with thick cow skin. A bell is hung from each of the three drums, which is struck with the left hand while the right hand strikes the cowhide with a wooden stick. The amalgamation of the two rhythms the three bells and hides combines with the improvisational sound of the djembe.<sup>2</sup>

The success of the symphony is dependent not as much as skills of the djembe soloist as it is on the harmonious interaction between the drums on several levels:

Between each bell and each hide

Between the individual bass drums, each with its own bell

Between the entire bass ensemble and the djembe

A tense surge of movement and sound is experienced as the djembe, leads the ensemble. In response to a signal given by the djembe, the entire ensemble burst into a

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<sup>1</sup> Kewi, Mama, Compilation of African Drumming, 1982, Belgium, Publication, Belgium

<sup>2</sup> Kewi, Mama, Compilation of African Drumming, 1982, Belgium, Publication, Belgium

chaotic sounding free style playing until finally, the djembe gives the signal to return to the repetitious pattern of rhythmic motion. The djabara, a calabash surrounded by rather loose nets, on which are fixed shells (cowries), grain or even pearls often played with the drums.

All Malinke percussion music is entirely devoted to dance and played at all occasion of village social life. The extremely subtle and complex interdependence between dancers and drummers permit changes, rhythmic variations which are extremely complex. The music as well as the choreography sequence is extant at the same time. The doundoun provides melodic aspect of the music while the improvisational part is primarily played by the djembe whose sound gives value to the technical and inventive qualities if the musician. Singing the often-improvised lyrics occurs a dialogue between the soloist and chorus formed by the whole audience.<sup>3</sup>

The variety of sounds that can be obtained by the different ways of beating the drum covers a broad sonic spectrum. It is used as a solo and accompanying instrument.

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<sup>3</sup> Kewi, Mama, Compilation of African Drumming, 1982, Belgium Publication, Belgium

## Chapter two:

### *The Makings of an Oral Tradition: Popular Dances- Drumming Songs*

The drum has been an important part of oral traditions and histories in Africa for thousands of years. Drums are played to herald and documents weddings, birth, deaths, declare war and make peace, as well as celebrating seasonal festivals. These songs weave together to create the rich histories that provide each generation with the tradition and societal framework of their ancestors. There are many songs in which drumming, singing, and dancing are combined to celebrate or remember a moments in history.<sup>4</sup> The following is a sample of few chosen West Africa songs and their significance:

#### ***Takada***

Takada dance drumming comes from the Anlo-Ewe people of south-eastern Ghana. It symbolizes a historic struggle of Anlo-Women to excise their human right to free speech. Traditionally only men were given the opportunity to be the spokesperson, composer to the choreographer of African rituals. Women were expected not to argue with the men for the right to participate in the information of these rituals. Drum playing was the central medium of communication among the Anlo-Ewe people. So when women were denied of their access to drumming and creation of music they were being denied the right to communicate.

About fifty years ago a group of Anlo-Ewe women challenged the tradition of excluding women and exercised their right to free speech by organizing Takada dance drumming. Takada served as a social platform for women to express their perspectives on virtually every aspect of their lives. This movement started a bitter conflict between the men and the women. In the end the women succeeded in gaining the right to play the drums for themselves and their daughters.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Atsia***

Atsia is popular community dance drumming dialogue traditionally used in disseminating the qualities of womanhood among the Ewe people who reside in Togo. Atsia was later updated to address the contemporary issues of the Togolese Ewe people. Atsia dance drumming is a prospering social platform to express their perspective on virtually every aspect of culture. In Atsia dance drumming dialogue, women are the spokes person or composers or choreographers. With all their might they speak to the community. They speak of the qualities of both womanhood and manhood; they speak of equity and of human

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<sup>4</sup> Nketia, Kwabena, *Our Drums and Drummers*, 1982, Ghana Publishing Corporation

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/reportoire>

dignity; they speak of peace and of unity. Their commonly expressed perspectives are very vital in the social, culture and political dialogue.

### *Kpanlogo*

Kpanlogo originated in Accra, the capital city of Ghana and the traditional home of the Ga people. It is essentially an urban youth dance drumming and a symbol of commitment of a rapidly growing Ghanaian urban neighbourhood youth in advocating their perspective in shaping the political vision of past colonial Africa.<sup>6</sup>

### *Agbeko*

One of the most important ancestral dance-drumming repertoires of Anlo-Ewe military culture is Atamga, “The Great Oath.” Atamga derived its name from the highest oath of loyalty and patriotism among the Anlo-Ewe people. Its choreography drew directly from directed Anlo-Ewe war fighting tactics, notably military operation and the expertise of traditional heroes. During the last three centuries the Anlo-Ewe state evolved gradually into a peaceful coexistence with their neighbours and the institutional function of Atamga was also modified. The name was changed into Agbeko, which means, “live are safe” and was dedicated to the pursuit of peace through a spirited remembrance of horrors of warfare.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Agordoh, A. A., *Studies in African Music*, Revised edition, 1994, Ho New Age Publication, Ghana

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/repertoire>

### **Chapter Three:** **Becoming Part of the Circle: *Women and drumming***

All though throughout my studies with SIT, I wanted to find out why women were absent in drum circles and ceremonies that I have witnessed. I asked both men and women to find out if women were choosing not to drum, or if they were being discouraged, and why. I discovered that women were taught of a number of myths that essentially barred them from drumming.

Many believed that women are physically incapable of drumming. According to Frank, a drum and dance instructor at the University of Ghana, Legon, “women at times do not drum because of strenuous amount of work that is required to beat the drum over a long period of time. But as time progresses women began to beat the drum.” When I ask about the many of women that I saw who pounded fufu and carried loads on their head. How they seemed to be very healthy and strong so I did not understand why these women would not be able to beat the drum. The answer to this question was that “women are viewed as queens and delicate. Therefore it is not often that you will see a Ghanaian woman attempting to be masculine. Women mostly want to be pretty and wear their nails long and wear beautiful clothes.”<sup>8</sup>

When I asked Michael a father of an eight- year- old girl and drummer why does not he teach his daughter to drum, his first response was that she does not like drumming and that she does not have any interest in drumming. Within a few moments, I saw the little girl pick up drumsticks and started to beat the drum. Then the father said that she is old enough to help the mother out in the kitchen, grinding vegetables and cooking. Therefore, therefore she would not have any time to learn to drum<sup>9</sup>. Next I ask a female dancer Aisha, also a business administration second year at the university of Ghana, Legon, why she did not drum as well as dance. Her response was that she really enjoyed dancing and that drumming was usually reserved for the men. However, she did not note that she has seen many women in Guinea (the country in which she is from) drum with an instrument that was made out of calabash. In addition that woman often at times play rattlers during songs. Therefore she felt there were many alternatives and options for women and that they were not limited in any ways. In addition she felt to drum that she could always learn. Then she began to learn a small part of kpanlogo from Michael. Her eyes were so filled of joy when she mastered the first few beat of the song. She might be a drummer in the future<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Frank, African Dance and Drumming Instructor, interviewed by author, May 1, 2003

<sup>9</sup> Osei-Kpolong, Michael, African drummer, interviewed by author, April 28, 2003

<sup>10</sup> Aisha, Business Administration Student, interviewed by author, May 1, 2003

Another myth is that drumming cause's sterility in women. I spoke to Shabazz, an African American repatriate working at "One Afrika", on several occasions. According to Shabazz, he felt the vibration caused by the drum would shake the uterus and ovaries causing her to become sterile if the drum was played in-between the legs. He also felt it was not safe for any for a woman to place any foreign object too close to the uterus. He believes that ancient women practiced this by sitting in way that would always protect the woman's vital organs. He closed his legs very tightly and swayed slightly to the left showing in that position how none of the private part is exposed. Therefore he said it would be all right for women to drum if only they place the drum to their side<sup>11</sup>.

Another argument is that women do not drum simply because they are not allowed access to education and training. Antoinette, a Ghanaian female master drum believes that women did not drum primarily because they were taught to drum. She began to drum while in high school primarily because it was offered to her as a special elective in her school. In addition, quite a few girls signed up for that class. And she believes that if women were encouraged to drum and taught to drum then there would be more female drummers. Antoinette also thought that historically the reason why women did not drum was that they would become sterile. Moreover, she believed that women thought that if they did not become pregnant then they would be considered worthless. And not too many women wanted to be labelled worthless. However, Antoinette never believed that myth. She continued to drum. Moreover, she has given birth to a one girl since she began drumming.<sup>12</sup>

Through an informal conversation with several men in Wa I heard that women do not drum because they are consider not pure because of their menstrual. Drums used to be considered sacred as sometimes even worshipped as Gods. If a woman were to touch the drum then she would cause harm to the drum and make the drum lose all of its power. Therefore, she was not permitted to touch the drum.

These myths hinder women from drumming. For many years, women have been stereotyped as docile and meek individuals. These rigid gender roles have disenfranchised women on a number of levels. They are taught that drumming, along with a number of other cultural and economic opportunities are out of reach because women do not have the capabilities to achieve them. With access to such opportunities such as drumming, as well as the erosion of rigid gender roles, women will be able to be empowered and be fully participating members of their communities and economies.

Although currently women are sometimes seen in the drumming worlds, their presence is rare and few. It is very important that women be present in all aspects of society

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<sup>11</sup> Shabazz, One Afrika staff member, interviewed by the author, April 28, 2003

<sup>12</sup> Antoinette, Ghanaian African Drummer, interviewed by author, March 18, 2003



because they have a unique and important contribution that differs from their male counterparts.

#### **Chapter Four:**

##### **Personal Experiences:** *The Beginning of my Journey into Drumming*

Drumming in Ghana has been at times an overwhelming and intense experience. I did not realize how difficult it would be to learn how to play the drum. While our SIT group was travelling around up to the northern regions of Ghana, I had a very limited amount of time to practice drumming. Moreover, I did not have that many drummers readily available to teach me techniques.

I first began to drum after purchasing a drum at Antoinette's drum shop. I drummed alongside her for approximately two hours. She taught me the different ways in which you could hit the drum. The three techniques that she taught me were the slap, open and close hit. After practicing these three hits for awhile, she began to show me a few combinations.

I was very apprehensive about learning how to drum. I was intimidated by the loud noise that came from the drum, which exaggerated each mistake that I made. I also put a lot of pressure on myself because I knew that I was limited by the amount of time that I had to learn how to play.

After only a few moments of playing the drum with Antoinette I was asked to play what I have learned by the women who were sitting in Antoinette's shop. To my surprise, I had literally forgotten almost everything that I had learned. It was very difficult for me to remember the complicated combinations in which I had learned. So I began to wonder if I should even pay a lot of money to drum when I was not going to be able to retain any of the songs that I had learned. Therefore, I began to think of other ways in which I could learn how to drums.

I decided to discontinue my lessons with Antoinette. Instead of taking private lessons in Cape Coast, I wanted to take my drum with me during my travels with SIT. I was hoping that I would be able to drum with the local drummers in the villages and towns that we travelled.

To my dismay, there were a very limited number of drummers in the villages and towns that we visited. I was only able to drum in Komenda during the village study trip with a professor of music at Cape Coast University. I also drummed with several children in Komenda. It was especially exciting drumming with the young girls. I noticed that when one of the young girls started to drum she was usually very quiet and timid then as time progress she will begin to play louder and faster with a lot more complexity in the

combinations that she chose to play. Many times, I played along with the children at the same time encouraging them to play more and encouraging the other children to dance. The girls seemed to enjoy playing the drums a lot. Therefore, I could not understand why some men would say that women did not like to drum.

When we visited a small village in Kwabeng, we spoke to council of men and a queen mother. To my surprise, the Queen Mother answered almost all of the questions that the group had. Therefore, I was not surprised that after the interview... the village drummers played for us while members of SIT danced. I ran to the bus and grabbed my drum. I was curious to see if the male drummers would allow me to drum alongside them. When I first approached them with my drum they looked at me and smiled. I was not sure did that mean that I was permitted to drum with them. Therefore, when I asked that immediately made a little space for me to stand and drum. By this time, I had only taken one drumming lesson so I was unable to play anything of substance so I stood there and tapped my drum along with a small boy. I was very grateful to have the opportunity to drum alongside the village drummers especially when the Queenmother dance with my friend Yaneris Rosa.

In Kumasi, I drummed with my friend Ama Awotwe. She plucked a little small guitar while I played the drum. While we were playing inside of the hostel room a few of the guests who walked by stopped and listened to our beats. Later Yaneris came by and danced to our music. I find this especially wonderful because the sign of a good drummer is whether people want to dance to their beat.

In Wa I found out that our bus driver Kwesi was a dancer as well as drummer. He was able to sit and play the drum with me. He began to tell me about the village and the tribe that he belonged to. He made it especially clear to me that he only drummed for a purpose and he refused to dance my drumming if I only played free-style. I had to learn one of the traditional songs for him to dance. In addition, he would only teach me traditional music to play. This frustrated me a little because I wanted to have fun and just dance and drum to good beats. However, I had to be mindful that that the drum is very serious in a lot of African customs and traditions. And in some tribes the drum were said even to worshipped as gods. Therefore, I could understand why Kwesi took drumming so seriously. While Kwesi and I were drumming an older came up to me and scolded me for not sitting in the right position while playing the drum. And he also told Kwesi to tell me that the drum is very serious and that I should treat drumming that way. He stressed that when I played I needed to sit up straight and hit the drum with force, power and purpose and to play very clear. I took these words of advice very seriously because I thought that I might be one of the first women that some people ever saw drumming and I did not want to perpetuate any stereotypes about women drumming.

Finally we went to Accra where I met Michael who later became my primary drumming instructor on drumming. He instructed private drumming lessons at the University of Ghana, Legon. Each week I drummed with Michael for several hours. In the beginning I was not able to drum for long periods because of the soreness of my hands. I would oftentimes complain about the way the drum felt on my palms. However, after two weeks I became used to drumming for long periods.

I also had difficulty remembering the combinations that were taught to me. Eventually I began recording my lessons so that I would be easier for me to recall the routines later. I slowly became more confident with my drumming abilities to the point that I could freestyle without any hesitation. Throughout the ISP time, I was able to learn as many as thirty combinations in which I can interchange to make a variety of sounds. I am very proud of the fact that I learned to drum while in Ghana. I feel as if I am member of a new tribe of women who feel as if they can drum along with the men. I have begun my journey in the world of drumming, I have a new voice, and believe me it a loud and clear!

## **Conclusions**

Drumming is an art form that has been a part of the African oral tradition for centuries. For a long time, women were barred from this practice and as a result were unable to share their voice and perspectives with the stories and identity of their very own culture. In the present day, women have become less isolated in their cultures, and some now play supporting and master drum with the passage time, there is hope that these societal barriers will erode and women will be able to beat their very own voice: proud, empowered and enfranchised.

As for myself, I will continue to play the djembe. Playing the drum has become not only a form of meditation, but also a way of connecting to my ancestors and dealing with our painful, yet beautiful history. It empowers me to beat our rhythms and songs that connect me with a whole world of drummers, waiting to hear and know my voice and my song.

I hope that others will be inspired by me and my path, and find their way to drum. It has truly been an amazing experience, one that I hope to share with as many that are willing to listen.

### *Suggestions For Further Study*

While I was researching women drummers from all around the world, I came across a website that was primarily about the Catskill Mountain Women's World Drum and Percussion Happen'n: a three-day event. The Happen'n was inspired by a dream that women all over the world playing the drums together in a safe and peaceful environment.

Four workshops take place simultaneously on Saturday and Sunday in beginner and advanced drumming styles from around the world taught by pioneers in the modern women's drumming movement. Also throughout each day are classes in musical notation, drum tuning and repair, instrument building, and movement. The founders of the festival believe that in many cultures it is the drum that connects the people to the spirit of the world. When the women drum together they are connecting more with their own power. Reconnecting with the drum is also a way of connecting with our power, individually and collectively.

I would suggest that someone do research on all female-drumming festivals such as Catskill so that could really see and understand the power of women drumming. It would be interesting to find out what made these women want to drum. Also how they have been received in the world of drumming.

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