

the
bakari
institute

1200 NO. 13TH STREET EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS 62205 (618) 583-2585

September 9, 1994

Monsanto
The Chemical Group
W.G. Krummrich Plant
500 Monsanto Avenue
Sauget, Illinois 62206-1198
Attention: Keith Miller

Dear Keith,

Thanks to you Keith, I have received perhaps the most honored token of appreciation that a private citizen can receive from his or hometown, and that is a proclamation and a day set aside for you every year. Last Saturday, September 3, 1994 was Jahi Bakari and The Bakari Institute Day in East St. Louis, and without your contribution of funds; none of this could have been possible. I am truly grateful for your unselfish commitment to the inner city, and I am very proud to be associated with a fine gentleman such as yourself. I look forward to expanding the program this Fall. Give a special heartfelt thanks to Kevin Cahill for passing our information to you and to Russ Sackett for having faith in your judgement to give us a shot. Thanks again.

Very Sincerely,

Jahi Bakari, M.P.A.
Project Director

The East St. Louis Monitor

EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS—THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1994

Peaceful African Summer Nights Came To An End



Jahi Bakari & the Bakari Institute Day Kelvin Jones of the Mayor's Office Bestows Proclamation upon Jahi Bakari & student of the Bakari Institute during the afternoon edition of Peaceful African Summer Nights Program of the ESL Farmers Market.

BY MONULITA CEUISE

The last installment of the "Peaceful African Summer Nights" series ended Saturday, Sep. 3 at the East St. Louis Farmer's Market.

Besides the ever present musical performances, there were a few surprises.

The original program included music and dance from Rikk-A-Thon Productions, Kumasi Kambeng, the East St. Louis Community Ensemble and Harvesting New Generations.

There were also poetry readings and selections by Shanta Smith and Delia Payne.

One of our senior citizens was so moved by the selections, she decided to get involved.

Ms. Dorothy McCombs, age unknown, recited two poems that were cultural, real-to-life and well spoken.

and Ollie May Stewart from Southside Senior Citizens Center in St. Louis. Without them, I wouldn't have a program."

Specifically Monsanto and King Dodge bent over backwards to put money into this community. Businesses and companies that care, such as these, should receive much support," Bakari said.

But wait! There was another surprise. Kelvin Jones, Press Secretary for East St. Louis Mayor Gordon Bush, dropped by.

Jones presented 29-year-old Bakari with a Proclamation from the Mayor's office, for work he's done with youth in the community, leadership in molding young people and for presenting cultural programs to the community.

"I am so happy right now. I thank you and Mayor Bush for recognizing me as making a difference in the community," Bakari said.

"This proclamation gives me the motivation to continue to achieve my three major goals within three years: To reopen the Mary Brown Center; reopen Jones Park; and get businesses in the community more responsive to the citizens. Bring to fruition the full capability of the East St. Louis Farmer's Market."

Jahi Bakari, Executive Director of the Bakari Institute, and Harvesting New Generations were the proud sponsors of this summer long "cultural-awareness" activity.

Although the program did not take place at its original home, Jones Park, the crowd was equally receptive.

About 40 participants were on hand from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. to support Bakari and Harvesting New Generations.

"I would like to give Kirk Goodrich, Director of the Farmer's Market, a very special thanks for allowing us to bring our concert to his business," Bakari said.

Ken Sewell from King Dodge and

Cops

50

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EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS—THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1984

NUMBER 34

Kudos To Bakari, King Dodge & The Monsanto Fund



Russ Sackett, Plant Manager at the Monsanto Sauget Plant presents a \$5,000 check on behalf of the Monsanto Fund to the Bakari Institute Executive Director, Jahi Bakari.



Ken Sewell, President of King Dodge, Inc., presents Jahi Bakari, Executive Director of The Bakari Institute with a Mini-Van. King Dodge donated two vans to The Bakari Institute.

BY MONULITA CRUISE

The Monsanto Fund presented Jahi Bakari with a check for \$5,000 to further enhance the Bakari Institute.

"It's a pleasure for us to be a part of making Harvesting New Generations successful," said Russell F. Sackett, Plant Manager for Monsanto Chemical Plant in Sauget.

He continued, "Jahi has done a wonderful job with these kids and we've seen big results."

While the Monsanto Fund provides funds for programs, educational purposes, etc., King Dodge provides the transportation for the Bakari Institute.

"Jahi teaches students and in return, they teach others what they've learned."

All funds donated go directly to benefit the students in the program. Bakari is looking forward to next Fall. He anticipates 100 students.

"With more student involvement, our program can really take off. We're blessed for all of our good fortune and we do spread it onto others," Bakari said.

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GREGORY FREEMAN
URBAN VIEW

Elderly, Teens Harvest Ideas

WHEN IT COMES to teen-agers, seniors are often wary.

Why not? The two seem to come from opposite ends of the spectrum. Teen-agers are loud, seniors think, they're wild, they're . . . well, they're downright dangerous.

Meanwhile, seniors, teen-agers will tell you, are slow, they're boring, they can't get around.

What could these two groups possibly have in common?



Jahi Bakari and Ollie Mae Stewart have found a common denominator: gardening.

Bakari is the founder and head of a program called Harvesting New Generations. Based in

East St. Louis, the program is set up to motivate poor, urban youngsters.

Last year, Bakari's youngsters grew a garden on the grounds of State Community College. This year, Bakari wanted the participants to work with seniors. "They've got so much knowledge," he said. "I saw it as a great opportunity for them to share that with the students."

Through a mutual friend, Bakari hooked up with Stewart, director of the Southside Senior Citizens Center at 3017 Park Avenue. The two put together plans for a fruit and vegetable garden next door to the center.

All summer long, Bakari's 16 kids have worked on the garden with the seniors, growing tomatoes, herbs, squash, peppers and honeydew melons. The seniors, many of whom were born or grew up in the rural South, know a lot about gardening.

"It's amazing," said Bakari, 29. "I couldn't tell the difference between a weed and a plant. But many of the folks here could just look at it and say, 'Oh, we've got to pull that out, that's a weed.'"

Stewart said many of the seniors had raised flower and vegetable gardens over the years. "Many of the people weren't necessarily people with money," she said. "They may have been teachers or done domestic work, but managed somehow to scrape up enough money for a house. But they always had pretty yards, with lots of flowers in the front and small vegetable gardens in the back."

The seniors shared their expertise with the youngsters. Many of them enjoyed having young people interested in what they knew. Many of them have taken to the students as if they were their own grandchildren.

The seniors will cook the harvest and share them with the teens at a special event later this month.

Jerome Moore, 15, is one of the participants. He said, "I've learned lots of new skills in gardening. I've learned how to plant, how to turn over the soil, how to weed, all sorts of things I never knew before. And I've enjoyed working with the older people. They know a lot."

Bakari said, "Many of the youth come from young parents and their grandparents are relatively young — in their 40s or 50s. This is the first chance they've gotten to actually work with and talk to people in their 70s and 80s. And they've found it fascinating."

Many of the seniors have passed along stories their parents taught them.

"A lot of the youngsters have no idea what it was like being black in this country years ago," he said. "They're used to their life as it is and have never realized that there was a time when African-Americans couldn't do this or couldn't do that, simply because of their color. This has been a living, breathing history lesson for all of us."

Gardening is an important part of Bakari's program. He compares gardens with life. "I tell them that the weeds in the gardens are like drugs or teen pregnancy," he said. "You've got to weed those kinds of things out or they can choke out most of the good things in life. We're like vegetables and fruits, good things that can be hurt or even killed by drugs."

Of course, gardening isn't the only component of the program. He views it as a way to expose the students to areas and ideas they may have never considered. They participate in African dance, listen to professionals, learn karate and take part in a myriad of activities.

Earlier this year, for example, the students went to Greenville College in Greenville, Ill., and performed African dance. "While they were there, they were surprised to learn that there were white students who were working their way through school. Growing up and living in East St. Louis, where they just don't see many white people, they thought that all whites were rich. The trip gave them a better understanding of life."

Bakari expects his charges to teach what they've learned to younger kids. "The program's called Harvesting New Generations," he said. "This is how we hope to harvest them."