

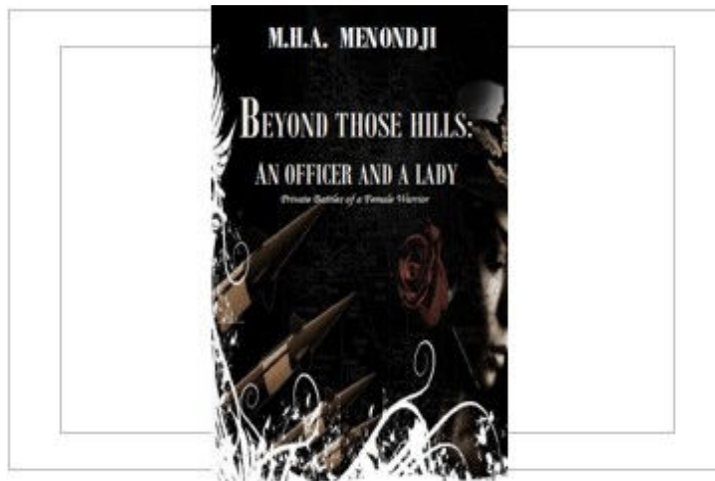


May 19, 2009

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Three Continents, Four Countries, Many Cultures and the Sum of it All -
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When she migrated to the United States a decade ago from the City of Lights, alone and with a mere \$50 in her wallet to survive two weeks in New York, African-born M.H.A. Menondji had a plan: increase her command of the English language, enroll in an American college or university, graduate with honors then fly off to change the world.

Born in Benin, raised in Cote d'Ivoire, educated in France and the United States, Ms. Menondji has long considered herself one culturally confused individual. That was until she learned to embrace her multicultural background, utilizing it in a creative process which led to the draft of her debut novel, *Beyond Those Hills: an Officer and a Lady*, a military drama set in 1980 United States. This graduate of the Universities of Orleans and La Sorbonne and Whittier College (California) with a soft spot for Human Rights advocacy describes the novel as her opportunity to break the mold and explore multiculturalism in an innovative way.

Three characters –Laura Armitage, a young, half-caucasian, half-hispanic, blue-blooded female US Navy officer allowed to join an elite combat unit, Jim Marshall, her wealthy but troubled mentor/Pygmalion and her contemptuous, and Lieutenant T.J. Wilkins, Vietnam war veteran commanding officer- are entangled in an emotional triangle in the wake of the Iran-Contras scandal. The story addresses issues ranging from gender discrimination, redemption, patriotism tested, love, death, lust and sense of duty, as all three engage in self-introspection on background on gunfights, terrorism and personal tragedies.

Beyond Those Hills can also be seen as the anti-thesis of what the publishing world expects from a writer of African descent, and in M.H.A. Menondji's own words, a decidedly "out-of-Africa" story which includes none of the recurrent themes that had defined African literature from the early 1960s to today. Information, knowledge and expertise travel at the speed of a click in an increasingly global world: it may have helped create a new generation of African writers, many of whom are products of multicultural communities. An author willing to wander through uncharted literary territories, Ms. Menondji certainly meets the criteria.

She lives in Los Angeles where she is completing her next literary project.

Beyond Those Hills: an Officer and a Lady is scheduled for release on May 8, and will be available on Amazon.com as well as in select online stores and bookstores. Visit www.mhamenondji.com or www.whoislauraarmitage.com for more information.

Community



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