PRAISESONG

FOR

BABA DYLAN PRITCHETT, SR.



MAY 28, 1959 – AUGUST 16, 2025

By Mama Linda Goss,
Co-Founder of the
National Association of Black Storytellers

I ASK PERMISSION
FROM THE ELDERS TO SPEAK.
ASANTE SANA!
I FEEL YOUR AFFIRMATION.

LET THE DRUMS PLAY!
LET THE BELLS RING!
LET THE DANCERS DANCE!
LET THE CHOIR SING!
LET THE PRAISES BEGIN!

"OH, I KNOW I'VE BEEN CHANGED.
OH, I KNOW I'VE BEEN CHANGED.
OH, I KNOW I'VE BEEN CHANGED.
BLACKSTORYTELLERS
DONE CALLED MY NAME."

PRAISESONG FOR
BABA DYLAN PRITCHETT, SR.
"THE JOHN HENRY OF NABS"
MAY 28, 1959 - AUGUST 16, 2025



"LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT
THEY MAY SEE YOUR
GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY
YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."
MATTHEW 5:16
CALL: ASE! ASE!
RESPONSE: ASE! ASE!

WE REMEMBER! WE RECLAIM!
WE HONOR! WE PROCLAIM!
WE RECALL THE ANCESTOR'S NAME
BLACK! ANCESTOR! WARRIOR! KING!
BABA DYLAN DEMETYRE PRITCHETT, SR.
THE JOHN HENRY OF
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
BLACKSTORYTELLERS, INC.
ASE! ASE!



NO TRUER WORDS, NO FINER WORDS
CAN BE SAID ABOUT
BABA DYLAN "JOHN HENRY" PRITCHETT.
HIS LIGHT CAME SHINING DOWN ON NABS AND HIS
COMMUNITY IN WILLIAMSBURG, VA
LIKE A JOLT WITH A BOLT FROM HEAVEN!
ASE! ASE!



SON, BROTHER, HUSBAND, FATHER,
GRANDFATHER, UNCLE, COUSIN,
FRIEND OF "DA FELLAS",
PLAYER WITH HIS PINOCHLE FAMILY, MASTER
STORYTELLER, DRUMMER,
ORAL HISTORIAN, PUBLISHED AUTHOR,
EDUCATOR, ORGANIZER,
PRAYER WARRIOR AND
SERVANT UNTO GOD.
ASE! ASE!

BABA DYLAN'S CHILDREN,
SHANNAN AND DYLAN PRITCHETT, JR. LOVED TO
SEE THEIR FATHER TELL STORIES. HE ALWAYS
TOLD THEM THAT HE
BELIEVED IN PUTTING GOD FIRST.
HE WAS A MIGHTY MAN!
ASE! ASE!



BABA DYLAN WAS BORN, RAISED,
AND LIVED IN WILLIAMSBURG, VA.
HE WAS LOVINGLY KNOWN AS
"THE STORYTELLER".
HE JOINED THE FIFE AND DRUM CORPS AT 13, AND THEN LATER BECAME THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PROGRAM SPECIALIST FOR THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION.
ASE! ASE!

BABA DYLAN AND BABA REX ELLIS PERFORMED TOGETHER AT THE NABS STORYTELLING FESTIVAL IN OAKLAND, CA IN 1988. THEN IN 1990 **BABA DYLAN** WENT SOLO AND DEVELOPED HIS CRAFT AS A STORYTELLER IN THE BLACK ORAL TRADITION THEN HE CAME BACK TO NABS AND MADE NABS "HIS STORYTELLING HOME" AND HE NEVER LEFT.
ASE! ASE!

BABA DYLAN SERVED ON THE NABS BOARD FOR MANY YEARS. HE WAS THE 10TH PRESIDENT OF NABS, A LIFE MEMBER OF NABS, A RECIPIENT OF NABS' HIGHEST AWARD, THE ZORA NEALE HURSTON AWARD, AND A RECIPIENT OF THE LINDA JENKINS BROWN NIA AWARD FOR SERVICE.
ASE! ASE!



HOWEVER, WHAT **BABA DYLAN** LOVED DEAREST WAS BEING THE FESTIVAL DIRECTOR FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACKSTORYTELLERS. HE WAS RESPONSIBILE FOR PRODUCING THE ANNUAL "IN THE TRADITION..." NATIONAL BLACK STORYTELLING FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE. HE WAS APPOINTED TO BE FESTIVAL DIRECTOR BY THE 11TH NABS PRESIDENT, SISTER VANORA LEGAUX WHEN THE FESTIVAL WAS HELD IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS IN 2009.
ASE! ASE!

BABA DYLAN HAD A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR AND COULD SEE THE FUNNY SIDE OF ANYTHING EVEN WHEN HE WAS HELPING YOU OUT OR DOING YOU A FAVOR. WHENEVER SISTER SPARKLE MOSELY, THE 8TH PRESIDENT OF NABS, WOULD COME TO A FESTIVAL, SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FINDING FRIED CHICKEN. BABA DYLAN WAS HER "FRIED CHICKEN WING BUDDY". HE WOULD CHECK OUT THE BEST CHICKEN WINGS TAKE-OUTS FOR HER.
ASE! ASE!



"BROTHER DYLAN "AESOP" PRITCHETT, A MASTER JEMBE DRUMMER WHO MADE MY HEART BEAT BY CLAIMING HIS STORYTELLING SPACE WITH NO SHOES ON HIS FEET."
BABA BUNJO BUTLER,
7TH PRESIDENT OF NABS
ASE! ASE!



“BABA DYLAN WAS A GOOD LISTENER AND COMMUNICATOR! HE WOULD GIVE ME HIS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION. I WOULD CALL HIM TO WISH HIM ‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY’ EVERY MAY. HE WOULD SAY, ‘THANK YOU, MAMA FELLISCO FOR REMEMBERING ME.’ BABA DYLAN WAS SUCH A GENTLEMAN.”

MAMA FELLISCO KEELING,
ESTEEMED ELDER AND “THE VOICE” OF NABS

MAMA JANICE CURTIS GREENE,
16TH PRESIDENT OF NABS RECALLS:

"ONE OF MY FONDEST MEMORIES OF BROTHER DYLAN IS HIM TELLING THE STORY OF HIS GRANDMOTHER. HE REMEMBERED HER WORKING AT HER SEWING MACHINE, MAKING A JACKET FOR HIS GRANDFATHER. HE MADE THE SOUND OF THE SEWING MACHINE, 'WOOSHEE, WOOSHEE, WOOSHEE.' TEARS COME TO MY EYES EVERYTIME I HEAR HIM TELL THE STORY. I SEE HIS TEARS, AND I FEEL THE LOVE HE FELT FOR HIS GRANDMOTHER."

“BABA DYLAN WAS MY CONFIDANTE. I WENT TO HIM WHEN I WAS TROUBLED. AND HE WOULD SAY, ‘VANORA, TAKE A BREATH.. AND BREATHE. IT’S GONNA BE ALRIGHT.’ HE WAS A GIANT. A GENTLE GIANT.”

SISTER VANORA LEGAUX, 11TH PRESIDENT OF NABS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NABS



“DYLAN WAS AN INSPIRATION. HE ALWAYS FOUND A WAY TO LIFT YOU UP, NO MATTER HOW DOWN YOU WERE. AFTER MY STROKE, HE WAS ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO TAKE ME TO THERAPY SESSIONS. ONE DAY I CAME OUT OF HAND THERAPY LOOKING DEJECTED. MY HAND THERAPIST HAD INFORMED ME THAT I WOULD NEVER RECOVER THE USE OF MY LEFT HAND. DYLAN, SEEING HOW BADLY I WAS FEELING ABOUT THAT NEWS, IMMEDIATELY SAID, “BUT THAT THERAPIST DOES NOT KNOW THE GOD YOU SERVE”!!! WITHIN A MONTH, I HAD REGAINED THE USE OF MY LEFT HAND. DYLAN MAY NOT HAVE COME WHEN I WANTED HIM, BUT HE WAS ALWAYS ON TIME!!”

DR. REX M. ELLIS, AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM CURATOR, AND DEAR FRIEND OF BABA DYLAN

BABA DYLAN WAS ECSTATIC AND ELATED WHEN HE RECEIVED A "JOHN HENRY" DOLL IN HIS LIKENESS SITTING IN A ROCKING CHAIR HAND MADE BY MAMA KOOKI DAVIS, ESTEEMED ELDER OF NABS.



BABA DYLAN WAS FESTIVAL DIRECTOR IN MINNEAPOLIS IN 2011 AND THERE WAS AT LEAST TWO FEET OF SNOW IN THE CITY. HIS MOTHER WAS CRITICALLY ILL IN VA. WE BEGGED BABA DYLAN TO LEAVE THE FESTIVAL AND SEE ABOUT HIS MOTHER. HIS FAMILY TOLD HIM IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME. BUT BABA DYLAN STAYED AT THE FESTIVAL SAYING HE HAD TO FINISH THE JOB. GOD WAITED FOR BABA DYLAN TO RETURN TO VIRGINIA TO BE WITH HIS MOTHER BEFORE SHE WENT TO HER FINAL HOME. HE WAS THERE TO KISS HER FACE AND HOLD HER HAND. GOD KNEW THAT BABA DYLAN WAS A MIGHTY GOOD MAN. ASE! ASE!

BABA DYLAN WAS THE AUTHOR OF TWO BOOKS, "THE FIRST MUSIC" AND “THE YELLOW - SPECKLED BLACK BIRD.” HE WAS ONE OF THE EDITORS OF "SAYIN' SOMETHIN': STORIES FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STORYTELLERS” PUBLISHED BY NABS, ALONG WITH DR. CAROLIESE F. REED, 4TH PRESIDENT OF NABS AND MYSELF. HE INVITED US TO COME TO WILLIAMSBURG TO WORK ON THE BOOK. THE WHOLE TIME WE WERE THERE, HE TREATED US LIKE QUEENS.
HE WAS A GENTEEL HOST “IN THE TRADITION” OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN AMERICAN GENTLEMEN.
ASE! ASE!





WHEN THE LORD CALLED BABA DYLAN HOME. WE, THE NABS FAMILY, COULD FEEL THE GROUND SHAKING UNDERNEATH OUR FEET. WE COULD SEE THE WALLS CRACKING AND CRUMBLING AND THE CEILING CAVING IN ABOVE OUR HEADS.
ASE! ASE!

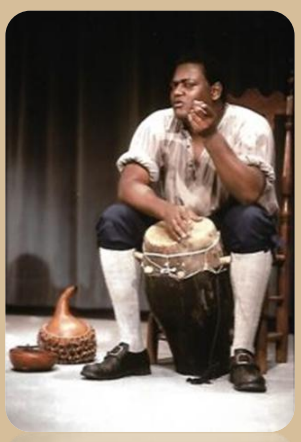
BABA DYLAN'S BIG STRONG FEET HELD THE GROUND TOGETHER WHERE NABS STOOD. HIS JOHN HENRY ARMS AND HANDS STRETCHED OUT TO KEEP THE WALLS FROM CRACKING AND CRUMBLING. HIS HEAD STOPPED THE NABS' CEILING FROM CRASHING DOWN ON OUR FEET. WE FELT A GREAT SENSE OF LOSS. BUT THEN WE REMEMBERED WHAT BABA DYLAN STOOD FOR. WE REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD ALREADY DONE MOST OF THE WORK. HE HAD ALREADY ORGANIZED THE FESTIVAL. WE JUST HAD TO PICK UP WHAT HE HAD BEGUN. THE 43RD ANNUAL "IN THE TRADITION…" FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE LIVES ON! LORD WILLING, WE SHALL BE IN ATLANTA. IN NOVEMBER 19TH THROUGH THE 23RD, 2025.
ASE! ASE!



OH, GREAT ANCESTOR, BABA DYLAN,
WE THANK YOU FOR SO MUCH,
BUT WE MUST CONFESS.
WE DIDN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
OH, ASANTE SANA! OH, ASANTE SANA!
WE LOVE YOU AND WE MISS YOU.
ASE! ASE!



THE LEGENDARY JOHN HENRY WAS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HERO. JOHN HENRY REPRESENTS THE HARD-WORKING LABORER. THE GREAT JOHN HENRY DIED WITH THE HAMMER IN HIS HAND.
ASE! ASE!



OUR JOHN HENRY, BABA DYLAN, HELD
THE HAMMER OF WISDOM IN HIS HANDS.
HE DROVE THE BOLTS OF KNOWLEDGE, SERVICE,
AND DEDICATION INTO THE STRUCTURE OF NABS.
HE WAS A MIGHTY MAN.
HE WAS A MIGHTY GOOD MAN.
HE WAS A MIGHTY GOOD BLACK MAN.
ASE! ASE!

WE STAND ON THE BROAD SHOULDERS
OF OUR ANCESTOR,
BABA DYLAN "JOHN HENRY" PRITCHETT.
THE ANCESTRAL CIRCLE OF NABS IS GROWING
WIDER, STRONGER,
AND MORE POWERFUL.
ASE! ASE!



"NABS LIVES IN HEAVEN
NABS LIVES ON EARTH."
MOTHER ONAWUMI JEAN MOSS
ESTEEMED ELDER OF NABS



WE SIT ON THE BANKS OF MEMORY
AND SOAK OUR FEET INTO
ANCESTRAL WATERS AND
RECALL THE MAN,
WHO WORKED WHEN OTHERS DIDN'T.
WHO SPOKE UP FOR PEOPLE,
WHEN SOME WOULDN'T,
WHO PRAYED LIKE THE ANGELS ON HIGH WHEN
EVERYBODY COULDN'T.
ASE! ASE!





LIGHTING THE WAY, STORY WALKING
LIGHTING THE WAY, RHYTHM TALKING
THROUGH THE NIGHT
THROUGH THE DAY
OUR

JOHN HENRY BABA DYLAN PRITCHETT

WILL CONTINUE TO LIGHT OUR WAY.
ASE! ASE!



THE ANCESTORS ARE ALIVE
AS LONG AS WE REMEMBER THEM!

OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES,
LOVE AND PRAYERS
ARE WITH THE FAMILY.



HOPE AND RESILIENCE,

MAMA LINDA GOSS, 1ST PRESIDENT OF NABS,
CO-FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF BLACKSTORYTELLERS, INC.

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