



The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness (W.E.B. Du Bois Institute)

By Wole Soyinka

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Nobel Laureate in Literature Wole Soyinka considers all of Africa--indeed, all the world--as he poses this question: once repression stops, is reconciliation between oppressor and victim possible? In the face of centuries-long devastation wrought on the African continent and her Diaspora by slavery, colonialism, Apartheid, and the manifold faces of racism, what form of recompense could possibly suffice? In a voice as eloquent and humane as it is forceful, Soyinka boldly challenges in these pages the notions of simple forgiveness, confession, and absolution as strategies for social healing. Ultimately, he turns to art--poetry, music, painting, etc.--as the one source that can nourish the seed of reconciliation: art is the generous vessel that can hold together the burden of memory and the hope of forgiveness.

Based on Soyinka's Stewart-McMillan lectures delivered at the DuBois Institute at Harvard, *The Burden of Memory* speaks not only to those concerned specifically with African politics, but also to anyone seeking the path to social justice through some of history's most inhospitable terrain.

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