

DEDICATION

Baba Raul Canizares

9/24/55 Ð 12/28/02

On 28 December 2003, Baba Raul Canizares passed from this plain. A celebration of his life was held on January 1st at Clayton's Gallery in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Friends and colleagues gathered to share their memories of Baba and artwork inspired by his influence. A traditional Misa Espiritual (Kardecian s'ance) led by Baba's successor Narayan Ramos followed the celebration. Described as Santeria's Renaissance man, Ó Baba was an artist, writer, scholar and spiritual Godfather.

Baba was born in Cuba where he was initiated into the mysteries of Obatala Oba Moro at age seven in the lineage of the legendary, visionary priestess Yamaya Ferminita Gomez Oshabi. Baba was a blood descendant of Oyo royalty on his mother's side and European nobility on his father's. While still a small child in Cuba, Baba was also initiated into the tradition of Palo Monte by Demecio Gomez Camposanto Medianoche.

He earned an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida; a bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies, and a Masters in Religion, all from the University of South Florida, where he served as adjunct professor until 1994. While at USF, he designed the first full-credit course on Santeria ever offered at American university.

His scholarly work has appeared in numerous journals such as the Journal of Alternative Religions, Journal of Dharm (India), Caribbean Quarterly (Jamaica) and

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Ethnic Studies Reports (Sri Lanka). Baba has lectured at academic institutions throughout the country including The American Academy of Religion, UCLA and Colby College, as well as, the Open Center, the Afro-Caribbean Cultural Center and the Learning Annex in New York City.

Baba authored over a dozen books, including *Cuban Santeria: Walking With the Night*, *The Life and Works of Marie LaVeau* and *The Book on Palo*. He published several more practical volumes under the name Robert Laremy including *The Psalm Workbook* and *Spiritual Cleansing*. He produced three collections of spiritual music *Sacred Sounds of Santeria*, *Rhythms of the Goddess* and *Cuban Trance*. Baba won the prestigious Enrique Jose Varona literary prize in multiple categories: poetry, essay and short fiction.

Also an accomplished artist, Baba's work has been exhibited in the Cavin-Morris Gallery, the leading venue for Afro-Caribbean folk art in New York City, the Folk Art Museum in Baltimore and three different one-man shows at Clayton's Gallery. In *El Espectador* (Puerto Rico), art critic Luis Perez described Baba's works as "some of the most important sculptures of the latter part of the twentieth century."

Under the guidance of his head orisha Obatala Oba Moro and the spirit guide known as Lord Jagga, Baba established the Orisha Consciousness Movement (originally called the Ashram-Ilé Oba Moro) in New York City on 24 March 1995. The Movement received official recognition as a religious corporation on 14 August 1998. Since 1995, OCM has grown into an international body with members from all parts of the world. The organization continues under the direction of Baba's spiritual successor, Narayan Ramos and continues to be based in New York City.

"Baba is not gone just separated from us by a thin veil," read the official announcement of his passing.

Baba Raul was a friend and supporter of Ashé, since the very beginning of the project. He was in fact the first person who agreed to join our council of advisors. Despite his extremely busy life, he graciously shared his blessed wisdom and keen insights with our editors. It was his beautiful portrait of the Santeria Orisha (goddess) Oshun that graced our first cover.

The belief that the ancestors (*eggún*) continue as a presence within the world is an integral component of Santeria. They are available to advise the living with their wisdom and the living, in turn, honor the ancestors' blood that flows within their own veins by their honorable actions. In this spirit, Baba Raul will continue to be listed as a member of Ashé's advisors.

