

Written by

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David G. Brown, celebrated cartoonist, graphic artist and publisher, has been selected by the U.S. State Department and U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazil to join 20 internationally known artists to exhibit his political cartoons and comic book work at the Museu Afro Brasil in Sao Paulo, October 11-16, 2009, as part of the Picha traveling exhibition. Picha presents a colorful image of the rich continent of Africa. "Picha" is also the African Swahili word for "drawing" and is a corruption of the English word, "picture." The exhibit showcases original drawings, comic books and comics published in newspapers and magazines from continental Africa, Brazil and the United States and focuses on the African Diaspora.

Says Brown, "I am very honored and humbled to be selected to represent North American by the U.S. Consulate. I am so passionate about my work. Art transcends racial and political landscapes. I am proud to be part of an effort that seeks to foster cultural and racial understanding through cartooning."

Cartooning, while growing popularity in the 20th century, has been an art form for thousands of years. Our ancestors began depicting what was important to them on cave walls and these drawings ranged from the very simple to extremely intricate. As our society became more sophisticated and technologically advanced, so did the art of cartooning and it permeates virtually every medium. It not only celebrates our history, but also our present condition.

Political cartooning has long been used as a light-hearted subterfuge to point out societal ills, ideologies and opinion. The Picha exhibition, originally created to highlight African comic artists, demonstrates that the art of cartooning is very much alive in Africa. The life of Mandela has been told in comic form in South Africa and the medium was used to warn soldiers about the dangers of AIDS in Ethiopia. By adding the comics of Brown and Brazilian artist Mauricio Pestana, Picha demonstrates the similarities and differences of African descendents on a global scale.

In addition to the exhibition, Brown will participate in a series of panel discussions with the 19 original African artists to offer Brazilian residents an original and creative view of the diversity and richness of comic culture.

Also part of the program, Brown will sign copies of his 2009 NAACP Image Award-winning book, *Barack, Race and the Media: Drawing My Own Conclusions*, a collection of political cartoons that he created and published at HQMIX Bookstore in Sao Paulo, along with Brazilian artist Mauricio Pestana on October 16th.

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“It is a signal honor for Brazil to be able to have Brown join this traveling exhibit,” says David C. Brooks, Consul for Political Affairs, U.S. Consulate General Sao Paulo, Brazil. An admitted Marvel Comics collector himself, Brooks added, “Having an African American cartoonist from the United States accomplishes one of the exhibit’s goals: to foster international mutual understanding and encourage discussions of diversity and common heritage between African and North Americans.”

Concludes Brown, “These 20 artists have a body of work that will inform, educate, entertain and politically sensitize every visitor who attends the exhibit in their home town.” He surmises, “By including my political pieces, especially on our first African American President, Barack Obama, a poignant statement is being made about how connected we continue to be to Mother Africa.”

An animation/digital media instructor at David Starr Jordan High School in Watts, CA, Brown is looking forward to sharing his experience with his students upon his return from Brazil.

Picha is an initiative of the Dutch NCDO and is a twofold project. The exhibition highlights the works of 18 African comic writers and 1 scenario writer and a database has been created to which contains detailed information on comic artists and cartoons from 55 African countries.

Joost Pollman, managing director at the “Stripdagin” Haarlem, Netherlands and comic journalist for the Dutch newspaper “De Volkskrant”, organized the exhibition. The exhibit was created at the Afrika Museum in the Netherlands in 2008 and has been to Lagos Africa, Palma de Mallorca, Spain and will culminate in Goes, Netherlands in December 2009. NCDO and The Prince Claus Fund provided funding for the exhibition. Picha in Brazil was curated by Dr. Sonia M. Bibe Luyten and Mauricio Pestana. The U.S. Consulate sponsored this cultural exchange as it strongly supports the objectives of the Brazil/U.S. Memo of Understanding and the Joint Action Plan for Racial and Ethnic Equality (JAPRE)

When Brown is not busy putting together timely editorial cartoons to coincide with updated current events, he is at work conducting art workshops for kids and producing award-winning comics for children. His versatility as a commercial artist and producer has produced excellence in other areas including photography and multi-media. His personal client roster boasts promotional work for Los Angeles International Airport, Automobile Club of Southern California, Warner Bros, City of Los Angeles, Wells Fargo Bank, California African American Museum, ABC-TV and others. For more information, visit www.davidgbrown.net.