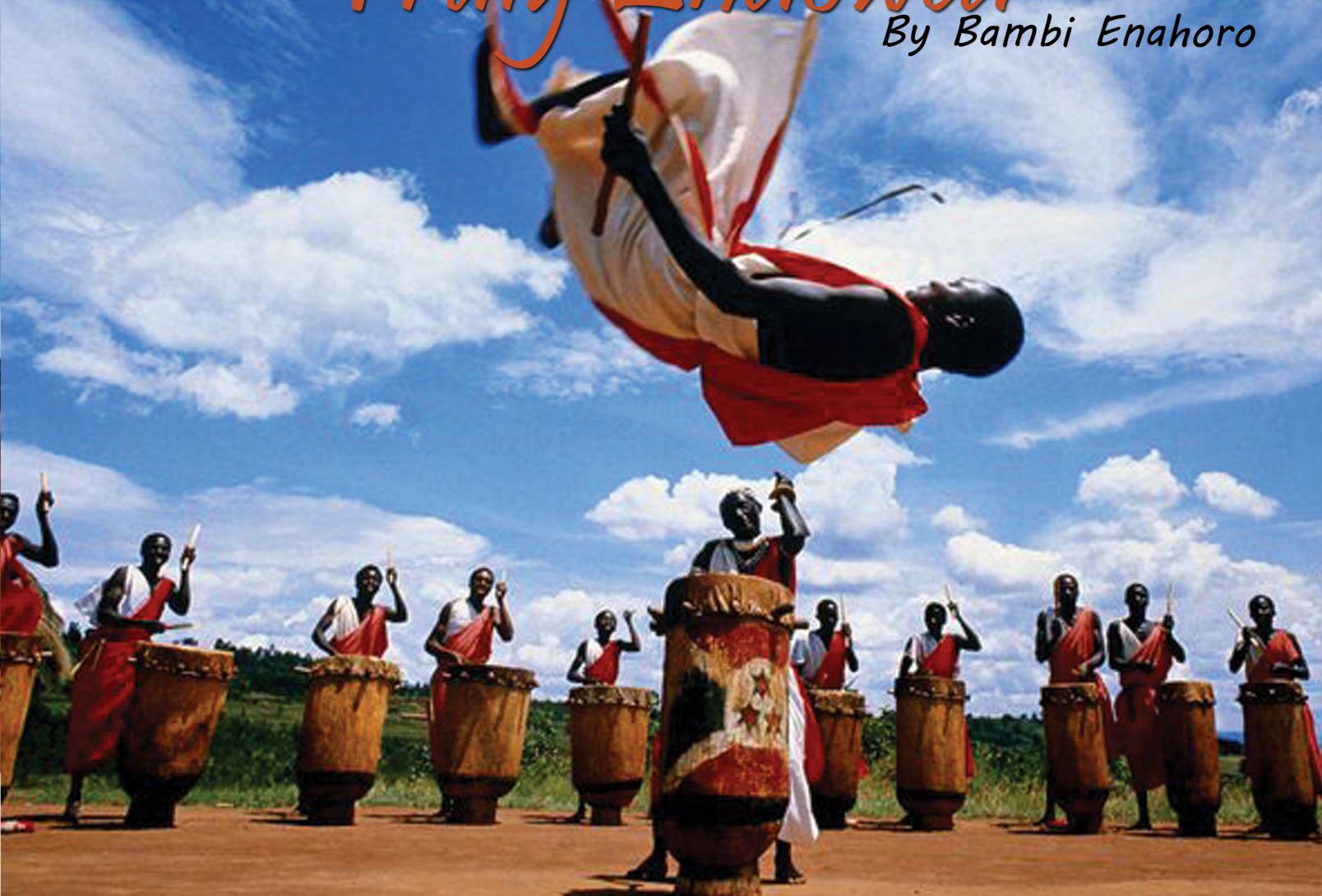


CENTRAL AFRICA

Truly Endowed

By Bambi Enahoro



Several months ago, I had a very interesting conversation with an American. The conversation was initially centered on the norm of lifestyle, marriage and politics, but when he discovered that I am African, the discussion quickly shifted to my place of origin and the continent as a whole.

His first statement was that he had heard a long time ago that in Africa, ladies had no choice in who they marry. He

also said he was aware that Africa was full of bombings and terrorist attacks resulting in the death of the innocent and wondered how I was able to survive. I listened intently while mentally thinking of the best way to respond. The conversation however, hit its peak when he discovered that I am married and living legally in the United States; he asked if I had gotten married to become a US citizen!

To say that I was appalled does not even begin to describe

how I felt. Of course, I wasn't new to the flawed perception that the Western Culture had about Africa but I was taken aback by the innocence and intensity with which he asked those questions. He really wanted to know what it was like to be African! Needless to say, I defended my homeland. I didn't deny the challenges in Africa and the inhuman treatment meted out to the weak and disadvantaged, nevertheless, I was quick to point out that our continent was a developing one with all

the resultant issues, but the people oughtn't be defined by them.

Sadly though, my American friend isn't the only one with such misconception about Africa. Oftentimes, people believe that Africa is all about poverty, suffering and barbarism. The mainstream media has done a great job of painting Africa to be where the unfortunate ones reside which in turn, evokes "unnecessary sympathy" from outsiders. Nothing could be further from