

GuyFolkFest.org

Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage

Dr. Ivan Van Sertima

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A Tribute to the life of

Dr. Ivan Van Sertima

literary critic, linguist, poet and anthropologist.
1935 - 2009

THE GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
NEW YORK Inc./Guyana Folk
Festival share with you the
passing of Dr. Ivan Van Sertima
a former professor of the
University of Rutgers and an
important son of the soil of
Guyana.



Dr. Ivan Van Sertima

Ivan van Sertima (26 January 1935 -) is a Guyanese-British historian, linguist and anthropologist. He is a noted for his Afrocentric theory of pre-Columbian contact between

Upcoming Events

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Africa and the Americas.**Early life and education**

Van Sertima was born in Kitty Village, Guyana, on 26 January 1935, when it was still a British colony. He has remained a British citizen. Van Sertima's father Frank Obermuller was a trade union leader. Van Sertima completed primary and secondary school in Guyana, and started writing poetry.

He went to London in 1959 for university. In addition to producing an array of creative writing, Van Sertima completed undergraduate studies in African languages and literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London in 1969, where he graduated with honors. During his studies he became fluent in Swahili and Hungarian languages.

He worked for several years in Great Britain as a journalist, doing weekly broadcasts to the Caribbean and Africa. In doing field work in Africa, he compiled a dictionary of Swahili legal terms.

In 1970 Van Sertima immigrated to the United States, where he entered Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey for graduate work.

Career

Van Sertima began his more than 30-year teaching career at Rutgers as an instructor in 1972. In 1977 he completed his master's degree. He is Associate Professor of African Studies in the Department of Africana Studies. As editor of the *Journal of African Civilization* and author of numerous books, he has addressed topics in literature, linguistics, anthropology and history. Van Sertima has written a number of books in which he argues that the Ancient Egyptians were black

His 1976 book *They Came Before Columbus* was a bestseller and achieved widespread fame for his claims of prehistoric African influences in Central and South America. It did not receive much professional attention when published, and has been criticized by academic specialists.

Van Sertima also treated the topic of African scientific contributions in his essay for the volume *African Renaissance*, published in 1999. This was a record of the conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 1998 on the theme of the African Renaissance. His article is titled *The Lost Sciences of Africa: An Overview*. In it he presents early African advances in metallurgy, astronomy, mathematics, architecture, engineering, agriculture, navigation, medicine and writing. He notes that such higher learning, in Africa as elsewhere, was the preserve of elites in the centres of civilizations, rendering them very vulnerable in the event (as happened in Africa) of the destruction of those centers.

On July 7, 1987 Van Sertima appeared before a United States Congressional committee to challenge giving credit for the discovery of America to Christopher Columbus.

Condolences may be sent to his wife:

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