

MY BLACK STARS

From Lucy to Barack Obama

Lilian Thuram

Edited by David Murphy | Translated by Laurent Dubois

“Can you tell me the name of a black scientist? A black explorer? A black philosopher? A black pharaoh? If you don’t know the answer to these questions, then, whatever the colour of your skin, this book is for you. Because the best way to fight racism and intolerance is to educate ourselves and to broaden our imaginations.”
– Lilian Thuram.

In this engagingly written book, Lilian Thuram – World Cup winner and France’s most-capped footballer, turned anti-racism campaigner – brings us portraits of his black heroes, a constellation of stars to empower and inspire those who have found that too often the narrative of popular history has overlooked the black contribution. Starting with Lucy and ending with Barack Obama, along the way Thuram meets Aesop, Dona Béatrice, Pushkin, Anne Zingha, Aimé Césaire, Martin Luther King and many others.

Excerpt from the introduction:

‘I remember the first time they talked to us about slavery at school.

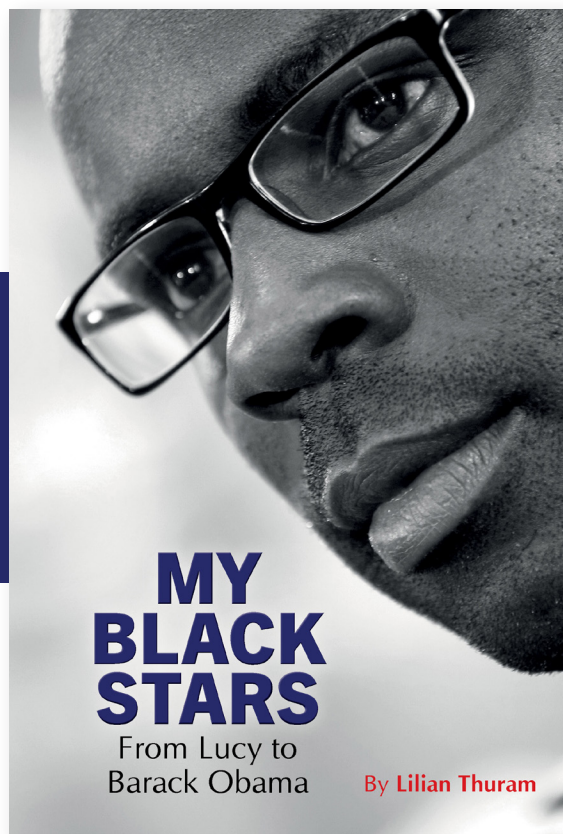
I was the only black person in my class. I was shocked and began to wonder what my ancestors had done before they were enslaved? I didn’t dare to ask the question though, as I felt stamped, branded, and all alone in the classroom. From that day on, I saw the other pupils differently. And they probably saw me differently too. At that time, slavery meant just one thing to me: ‘whites enslaved blacks.’

To understand my reaction, you need to put yourself in my shoes as a child. Just imagine a young white pupil who, never once in school, has heard mention of a white scientist, political leader, revolutionary, philosopher, artist, or writer. Imagine that child faced with a universe in which everything beautiful, profound, moving, delicate, original, pure, good, subtle and intelligent was uniformly black – a universe in which God, the Supreme Being, was also black. Imagine how disturbing this would be for that child. The child would wonder: was there ever a moment, in the history of the world, when a white person did something good? Then one day, as prescribed by the curriculum, the child would finally be offered this information about themselves: ‘Your ancestors were slaves’. – Lilian Thuram

Lilian Thuram was born in Guadeloupe in 1972. In 2008, he created a Foundation for Education against Racism, and he is author of several books, including: Mes Etoiles noires (2010), which won the Seligmann Prize for anti-racism. He enjoyed a highly successful football career, winning the World Cup (1998) and the European Championship (2000). My Black Stars was written in collaboration with Bernard Fillaire.

Laurent Dubois is Co-Director of the Democracy Initiative at the University of Virginia. He is the author of Soccer Empire (2010) and The Language of the Game (2018).

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