

A herbalist who claims to cure AIDS is nabbed

HAROLD L. JAMISON

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He calls arrest racist and smear campaign

By HAROLD L. JAMISON

A Black herbalist, arrested last year for dispensing and practicing medicine without a license after advertising a cure for AIDS, will appear before state Supreme Court on Sept. 27.

On February 10, 1987, Attorney General Robert Abrams called for the arrest of Wilfredo Bowman, popularly known as Dr. Sebi, following claims he made in *The AmNews* and the *Village Voice* that he could cure AIDS. The 55-year-old Honduran born practitioner of African herbal medicine and founder of the USHA Institute, 616 Pacific Ave., Brooklyn, asserts Abrams' "smear and fear" campaign against him is simply "racist."

"African indigenous peoples have, since ancient times, observed, used and maintained a relationship with the natural environment, the soil, its inhabitants, and its vegetation," Sebi, who has studied herbology



DR. SEBI

for the past 17-years in Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Russia, Asia, India and the United States, explained. "The experiences and knowledge gained by peoples of African descent can assist in the restoration of health to the peoples of the world. This trial will be the first time I will have an opportunity to tell my story."



ROBERT ABRAMS

According to Sebi, who proudly admits he is not a doctor, Abrams' attacks are not personal, but are just consistent with history and the plight of Black inventors in America.

"The Black man in America invented everything there is," Sebi said. "When they needed blood plasma, here comes Charles Drew, when they need-

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ed a White House, there was Benjamin Banniker. They needed rubber and plastics, they had George Washington Carver. And let's not forget Elijah McCoy. Now they need someone to deal with AIDS. Here is **Sebi**."

All of these inventions, including the discovery of electricity, **Sebi** attributes to Black men in America.

"It was Banniker who discovered electricity through the use of copper and carbon," **Sebi** said. "But Benjamin Franklin got the credit for it."

The charge of dispensing medicine without a license has already been addressed and defeated in civil court. **Sebi**'s attorney, Simeon Greenaway, a Black man **Sebi** says he's proud to have representing him, said the more serious charge of practicing medicine without a license, was to have been heard in May. But it was postponed to Sept. 27, in New York State Supreme Court.

"I'm not surprised by his (Abrams) actions," Greenaway stated. "It is consistent with most of the scientific research that has historically been suppressed by the medical community. But this time the attorney general proceeded on the er-

diagnosing, treating or prescribing for any products or procedures to aid in the diagnosis, cure, treatment or prevention of disease in humans or other animals. Attorney General Abrams failed to return our numerous calls for comment.

"There is a total lack of proof that he was practicing medicine within the meaning of the statute. And the claim of a cure came from individuals that had had these experiences and reported them. The institute merely echoed their sentiments," Greenaway said.

Sebi was also given 60 days to advertise in AmNews and the Village Voice, an offer of a full refund to consumers dissatisfied with any of his products or services.

"His deliberate objective was to create a lot of fear in the public mind," Greenaway stated. "What we are dealing with here is African American herbal folk medicine, and we feel that **Sebi** is within the tradition and feel that it is a valuable medical technique within the Black community."

Sebi contends the compounds he uses fall within a category the government considers GRAS (generally regarded as safe).

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"I'm not surprised by his (Abrams) actions," Greenaway stated. "It is consistent with most of the scientific research that has historically been suppressed by the medical community. But this time the attorney general proceeded on the erroneous assumption that the products being marketed were medicinal compounds," Greenaway added. "First of all, no investigation was conducted into the products before 2 was arrested and after, the arrest. they did not analyze the products to ascertain their contents... The products in fact, are vegetarian natural liquid compounds."

A decree has been issued literally prohibiting I from claiming, orally, or in writing, directly or by implication, the ability to relieve or alter the course of AIDS, herpes, leukemia, sickle cell anemia, lupus, or any other human disease, pain, injury, deformity or physical condition; or distribute, publish or broadcast any advertisement or brochure claiming the same.

He is further prohibited from

diagnosing, treating or prescribing for any products or procedures to aid in the diagnosis, cure, treatment or prevention of disease in humans or other animals. Attorney General Abrams failed to return our numerous calls for comment.

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"Abrams is so busy criticizing the government in the Soviet Union for not allowing Jews to practice certain cultural values as Jews." Greenaway stated. If he was to express the same degree of sensitivity for an African American folklore perspective, this whole action would not be proceeding. The research that confirms many of our findings, that there is a direct correlation between nutrition and certain pathologies are articulated in the recently released Surgeon Generals Report on Nutrition and Health"

Adds2"Abrams is trying to scare Black folks into the closet of bad nutrition. I don't have to ask them for permission to say that I cure AIDS."

"If an individual is capable of performing a particular feat; if he can do it, say it. They don't shut me up," he stated.