

Nailah Folami Imoja at Eden Mills Writers Festival

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANN KORNUA

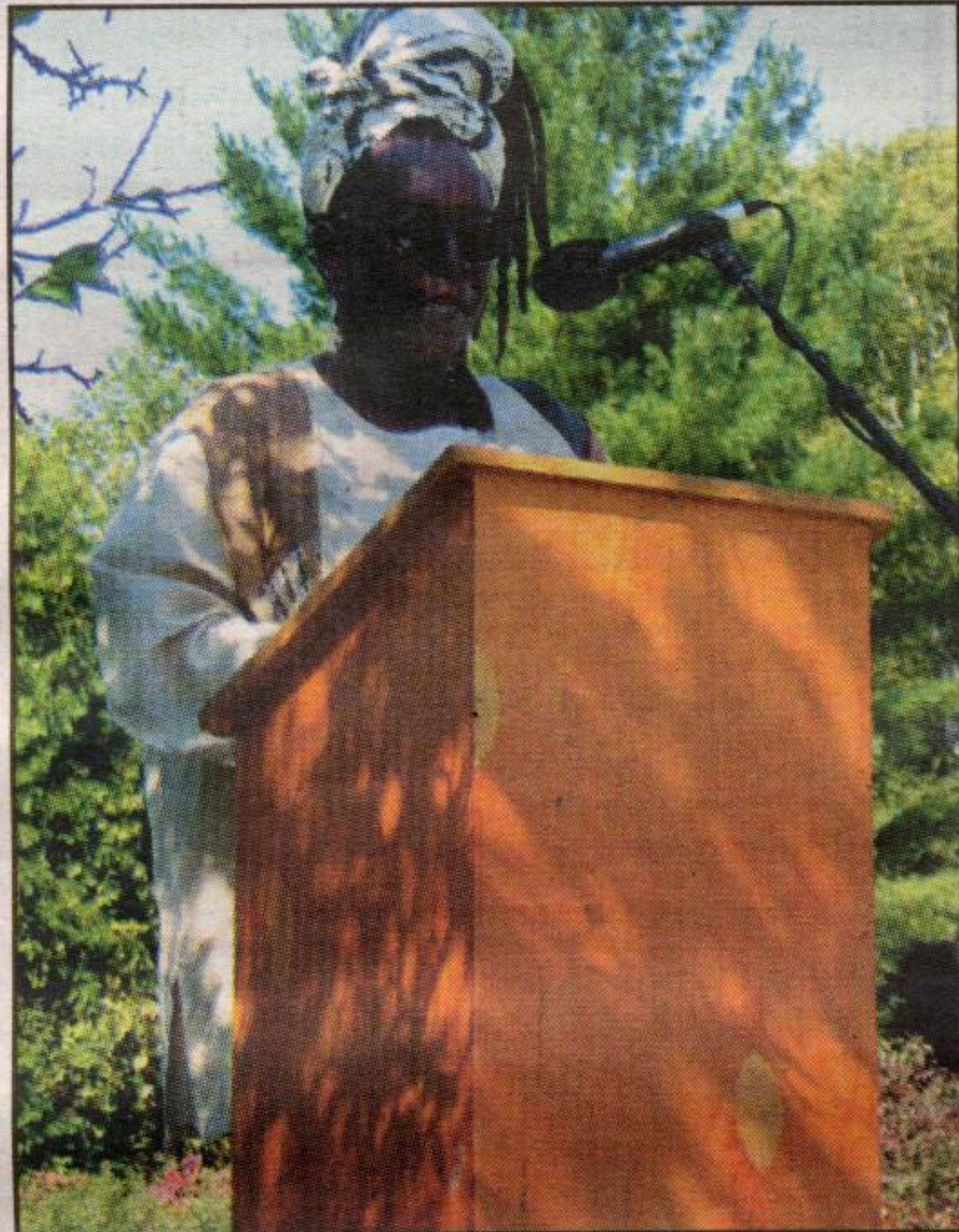
In her best voice, Barbadian author Nailah Folami Imoja sings out from the podium to the crowd below. She reads a passage from her new young adult book, "Pick of the Crop" written to highlight and immortalize the importance aspects of Barbadian culture. Nailah is one of the international guest authors at the 2005 Eden Mills Writers Festival held September 11th in the hamlet of Eden Mills. It is her first chance to read for a Canadian audience and to share with them her creative writing style.

She is a Barbadian/British writer with experiences as a journalist, cultural administrator and teacher that have played important roles in her success as a novelist. Her works celebrate aspects of Barbadian and Caribbean culture. She is known in her homeland for having her own independent publishing house. "We have to think of the export side of business. Barbados is very small so we have to speak to the Caribbean and beyond with our books. My day job is teaching and being the principal in my school."

Last year in 2004, Nailah published her first international novel, "Pick of the Crop" under Heinemann press. "This is a novel where a young boy is discovered singing on his block and tells about his talent and what he faces with instant fame singing for Caribana," Nailah explains. "Caribana is just a happy time where a host of people move around from different locations around the island and it tells the story of what happens as he goes along the festival."

Nailah discovered the Eden Mills Writers festival at a reading in the Barbados which a director of the festival attended. "Jane Hastings was down for Lit Fest and I was the MC for the show," Nailah explains. "Jane wanted me to come to the festival. Last year, a contingent came to the festival in Eden Mills and I heard great things about the festival, and I just wanted to come."

As Nailah performs, her song hushes the crowd. The power from her voice behind her words is enough to erupt the crowd into a fury of applause which she is almost embarrassed to receive. "It was fantastic. I cannot even describe it," Nailah says coming down from the podium. "Especially when it is something like this about my culture and most people here have never been to a calypso nor have they ever been to the Barbados. To get that kind of response feels great. I feel very thrilled because I was so nervous and I just want to thank everyone again for their hospitality."



Nailah Flami Imoja reads to the crowd.

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JustMiltonFolks

JustMiltonFolks is the working name for a series of house concerts hosted by Rose Brooks, who with her husband shares a love for great music by Canadian artists in the singer/songwriter "folk" tradition. House concerts are a fairly new concept in Ontario, although they've been growing in popularity. The idea is based on the premise that "if you build it, they will come"; in this case "if you have an audience and a space you can attract incredible talent".

It turns out that although the Brooks house is too small to host concerts, Milton has a perfect venue in Hugh Foster Hall, which has the charm of a heritage building, wonderful acoustics, and enough room to fit an audience of 50 music lovers. The small size of the venue means that every concert is an up close and personal experience.

On select Friday evenings between September and June, Rose has the privilege of introducing some of her favourite performers. In the venture's first season

guitar virtuoso Terry Tufts, folk singer and activist James Gordon, songstress Katherine Wheatley and ex-Miltonian Dave Hadfield and his band made Hugh Foster Hall ring with music and laughter. This year, in addition to the Hugh Foster Hall season comprised of comic songwriter and CBC personality Nancy White, entertainer Gregg Lawless, folk artist Jory Nash, Regina finger-style guitarist Joel Fafard and modern Celtic singer Heather Dale, JustMiltonFolks will host a special CD release event for Terry Tufts' 3rd solo CD "The Better Fight" on October 12th at Milton Bible Church.

Friday concerts start at 8:00 p.m., which means audience members have time to enjoy a Milton restaurant before or after the show. Tickets to all events are \$20 per person, including fair trade coffee, herbal teas and baked treats at intermission. Visit www.justmiltonfolks.ca for more information and to order tickets, or call Rose at 905-876-2645. She'll call back... She's just Milton folks!

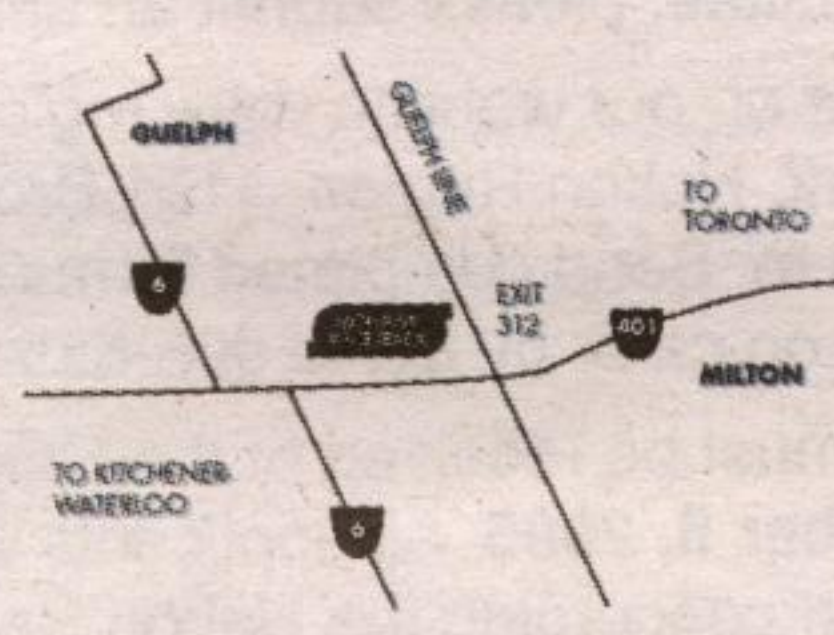
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