

## **About the Artist**

### ***SEKU NEBLETT***

#### **Master Drummer, Cultural Artist, Lecturer**

Seku Neblett was born on a sharecropping farm in Simpson County, Kentucky. He later relocated with this family to Tennessee and then Southern Illinois. He attended Frederick Douglass High School in Mounds, Illinois, graduating in 1960.

He was awarded a music scholarship from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale where he attended before leaving college to participate as a Freedom Rider in the Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties. He was one of the founding members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), serving as A Field Secretary and Organizer, and Project Director of the Natchez, MS Project and Boston, MA SNCC Office. From 1969 to 1971 Seku traveled throughout Africa where he studied for eighteen months under Presidents Seku Ture and Kwame Nkrumah in Conakry, Guinea, West Africa. He returned to the United States to do graduate studies in Political Science at Goddard College at Plainfield, Vermont. While at Goddard, Seku had an adjunct teaching position in the Political Science Department, lecturing on “An Analysis of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.”

Seku’s youth and adult life has been spent being a part of the Civil Rights, Human Rights, and Pan-Africanist movements that have determined his ideological development and growth. His travels throughout Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Canada have expanded his knowledge of the many problems and issues that effect people throughout the world. During these travels he lectured on “African Culture And Its Realities (ACAIR), a cultural diversity concept and program taught to Seku directly by Presidents Seku Ture of Guinea and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

Music being an important aspect of the Civil Rights struggle, Seku used his ability and talent to compose songs that came directly from the struggle of the people and was hot with the fire of contemporary struggle. It inspired the organization of the SNCC Freedom Singers of which Seku was a member of the original group. With the emergence of Black Power in 1966, he traveled to Jamaica where he spent time with Bob Marley and the Wailers and other groups singing freedom songs.

In searching for a more traditional musical expression of his people and their struggle, Seku became exposed to the bougarabou, a six-piece African drum ensemble from the Cassamance region of Senegal, West Africa. In 1994 he began studying with percussionist Mane Badiane and with master bougarabou player Bakary Djedhiou in 1995 in Senegal. Seku now uses his drums to convince, persuade, and inspire all people to learn more about the positive contributions that Africa has and continues to make to humanity. His programs and performances are “edutainment.” He works with children of all ages and adults, using the drum as an instrument of welcome, communication, and liberation, representing a cultural link from the past to the present.