

## **Beats, Turbans and Languages: Decoding Diaspora in San Souci and Pinkney's *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella***

In 1784 Louisiana's governor, Esteban Miro, decreed in his *Edict of Good Government*:

“[I] order the quadroon and negro women, wear feathers, nor curls in their hair, combing same flat or covering it with a handkerchief if it is combed high as was formerly the custom.” (105)

This edict stemmed from the mixing of black slaves and freed people with colonists in New Orleans. While this decree intended to shame black and multiracial women, they instead took the opportunity to reach back and embrace their varied history of wearing elaborate headdresses emphasizing their creativity and the power of diasporic knowledge.

Brian Pinkney's illustrations and Robert San Souci's text in *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella* invoke a similar sense of sankofa, or reach back and fetch it, by rejuvenating a well-worn story within a complex and new world in the African diaspora. In my paper I will examine how *Cendrillon* presents the transmission and fusion of language, clothing and music to emphasize the importance of diasporic representation.

Each cultural piece in the book quilts together a story of resilience and celebration from multiple parts of the African diaspora shining many mirrors for children and creating a story as salient today as it was when first published. This book threads connections between experiences on Caribbean islands, experiences of Louisianans in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and those of our contemporary intersectional world. By focusing on the aforementioned cultural artifacts and bringing them into conversation with socioeconomic representation and the visual inclusion of dark-skinned Black people, I will argue for this texts' place as a critical picture book to celebrate and deconstruct the reclamation of marginalized narratives.

### Works Cited

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