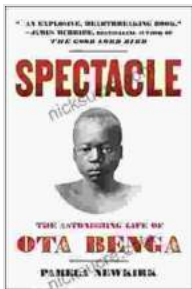


Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga

Ota Benga was a Congolese pygmy who was brought to the United States in 1904 and exhibited in the Bronx Zoo as a 'missing link' between humans and apes. His story is a tragic one, but it also sheds light on the racism and exploitation that was rampant in the early 20th century.



Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga

by Pamela Newkirk

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1235 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 333 pages



Early life

Ota Benga was born in the Congo in 1883. He was a member of the Mbuti tribe, a group of pygmies who lived in the Ituri Rainforest. Pygmies are a distinct group of people who have lived in Central Africa for thousands of years. They are typically short in stature, with an average height of around 4 feet. They are also known for their hunting and gathering skills.

Ota Benga's early life was spent in the rainforest. He learned to hunt and gather with his family and friends. He also learned about the traditional beliefs and practices of the Mbuti people.

Arrival in the United States

In 1904, Ota Benga was brought to the United States by Samuel Verner, a businessman who had traveled to Africa to collect animals for the Bronx Zoo. Verner had heard about the pygmies, and he thought that Ota Benga would be a perfect addition to his collection.

Ota Benga arrived in the United States on September 20, 1904. He was immediately taken to the Bronx Zoo, where he was put on display in the Monkey House. The zoo's director, William Hornaday, described Ota Benga as a "missing link" between humans and apes. He claimed that Ota Benga was a primitive savage who represented the early stages of human evolution.

Ota Benga was not treated well at the zoo. He was kept in a cage with a group of monkeys. He was often poked and prodded by visitors. He was also subjected to racist taunts and insults.

Public outcry

The public outcry against Ota Benga's treatment was immediate and widespread. Many people were outraged that a human being was being exhibited in a zoo. They argued that Ota Benga was being exploited and humiliated.

In 1906, a group of African Americans protested outside the Bronx Zoo. They demanded that Ota Benga be released. The protest was successful, and Ota Benga was eventually released from the zoo.

Later life

After his release from the zoo, Ota Benga lived with a family in Brooklyn. He worked as a janitor and a handyman. He also became involved in the African American community in New York City.

In 1916, Ota Benga returned to Africa. He lived in the Congo for a few years, but he eventually returned to the United States. He died in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1916.

Legacy

Ota Benga's story is a reminder of the racism and exploitation that was rampant in the early 20th century. It is also a story of resilience and hope. Ota Benga endured incredible hardship, but he never gave up on his dignity and humanity.

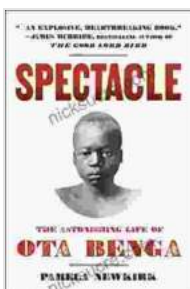
Today, Ota Benga is remembered as a symbol of the fight against racism and exploitation. His story continues to inspire people around the world.

Additional resources

* NPR: Ota Benga, The Congolese Man Who Was Displayed In A Zoo *

Smithsonian Magazine: Ota Benga, the Man Who Was Displayed in a Zoo

* PBS: Ota Benga



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