

ADVICE

DEAR ABBY

DEAR ABBY: I am a single mother with two young daughters and a 21-year-old son, "Billy," who dropped out of high school during his senior year. When it happened, I was very upset. I told him if he wanted to continue to live at home, he would have to get a full-time job and pay rent. Billy didn't like that idea, so he went to live with his girlfriend and her parents, who didn't seem to care that he had no job. About a year ago, Billy's girlfriend broke up with him. Because he had no place to go, I told him he could stay with me temporarily. He has been sleeping on my couch and only has a part-time job. He says that's all he can find. I'm tired of supporting him, and I think he should be on his own by now, but if I kick him out, he'll have nowhere to go. His father is no help. Billy rarely sees him. I'm at my wit's end. Please tell me what I should do. — Fed-Up Mom in Massachusetts

DEAR MOM: Billy may have trouble finding full-time employment because he lacks a high school diploma. His first priority should be to contact his high school and find out how to get a GED. Then, he must start studying again and pick up where he left off when he dropped out.

I know it's frustrating, but be patient a little longer. I don't know what Billy's talents are, but if he isn't college material, he should consider going to a trade school and learning a marketable skill. The job market is difficult right now, so accept the fact that a part-time job and getting his GED may be all Billy can manage for a while. As long as your son is willing to work toward success, you should be willing to compromise. However, if he isn't willing to go to trade school or get a GED, he should get a full-time job. There are jobs at fast-food places, supermarkets, etc., that don't require skills and / or diplomas. At 21, your son is too old to be supported. Be prepared to be firm, because if you aren't, he may never learn to fly on his own.



DEAR ABBY: I need advice. I'm in my mid-30s, married more than 10 years and the mother of two children. My husband, "Howard," is a good father and has an important job with a six-figure income. I don't have to work. I buy whatever I want, and Howard doesn't mind.

My problem is, I don't think I'm in love with Howard. He has an extremely low sex drive. We haven't been intimate in years. In fact, out of frustration, I moved out of the bedroom last year. I have tried talking to him about our problem to no avail. He refuses to go to counseling.

To complicate matters, three years ago, I began an affair with a married man. Although he and his wife have children, they are divorcing. We want to be together, but I don't know if I can leave Howard. My lover earns less than half of what Howard makes, plus he will have to pay child support. I don't know if I can manage on his salary. Please understand, I don't work because I don't want to put my kids in day care. As I see it, I have three choices:

(1) Continue the affair and hope nobody finds out. (2) Leave Howard and hope my lover and I can make it on his small salary. (3) End the affair.

If we end the affair, I think one of us would have to move. We live in a small town and travel in the same social circles. This whole thing is driving me crazy. What should I do? — Frustrated in Florida

DEAR FRUSTRATED: It comes down to this: Which is more important to you — sex or money? Both are powerful motivators, but only you can answer that question. ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069 or visit www.Dear-Abby.com.

The Fabrics of Their Lives

FABRICS from B15

ing clothing with Afro-flair. Some of their designs are traditional African styling — tunics and loose-fitting trousers, long flowing boubous, swaths of cloth draped, tucked and tied in an improvised way. But the designers also incorporate new twists, borrowing from the sartorial standards of the world outside Africa.

As a boy in his native Nigerian village, Babatunde Olujimi "Jimi" Gureje began learning how to weave etu — he calls it "the foremost fabric of the Yoruba people" — at the feet of his great-great-grandmother and other women relatives. Upon the death of his father — a retired military man and government accountant who wore "French suits and a cowboy hat" — Gureje found himself curious about the African attire his father reserved for leisure or extra-special occasions. He dusted them off and wore the great robes himself, which struck his teenage cronies as weird.

"It was an accepted thing then that the more Western you dressed, the more people thought you were very successful. But once I started to walk down the alley, everybody was, like, 'Wow.' They were not sure what to make of it," he said.

The items in his boutique include ones for the urbanite hipster who believes no wardrobe is complete without baggy denims or the more conservative type ascending the corporate ladder. Taken as a whole, they are what Gureje terms "ancestral clothing," constructed of cloth woven by 15 employees in his home village and dyed and printed by Gureje in Brooklyn.

"There's a saying in Yoruba: 'I'm clothed with people.' It's like a prayer. When you make something to clothe another person, you are also clothing yourself," said Gureje, who formally studied textiles at Hamburg University in Germany.

"I needed something to let me be me," said Leon Love Jones, a street vendor and sometimes photographer who wears Gureje. "I am 43 years old and have made a kind of peace with myself. The things I buy here are one-of-a-kind."

Madona Cole was born in the Ivory Coast and schooled at the London College of Printing before deciding she would fare better as an artist in the

United States. She transferred to Marymount College in upstate Tarrytown, switching her focus from art and design to cultural and social anthropology.

When one Marymount professor finally agreed to let Cole do a project on African women and their arts, Cole shared with her classmates what she had learned from people she says were masters in their crafts. "I did not get the A-plus I deserved — the professor gave me a B-plus — but the standing ovation, the reaction from my classmates . . . told me that I did the right thing," Cole said. "I started doing this clothing thing when 'African-inspired' was a bad word. I didn't care. It was never about commercialization for me."

She works almost exclusively with hand-painted and tie-dyed silks of various weaves. The scenes and abstracts overlaid on her fabrics, in the main, are copyrighted and kept in her basement on screens used for printing on silks. In addition, she uses in her work what she says are the fruits of the earth — shells, beads, rocks. "Art in Africa is functional," she said. "That is an enormously common thread."

The motif of the Tribal Truths line, which boasts articles of hand-woven African cloth as well as silks, woolsens, cottons and other fabrics from textile-makers around the globe, is "Afri-cenfusion," said Brunson Bey, who studied merchandising at the Fashion Institute of Technology and began her career as a buyer for the old Abraham & Straus department store. When the glamour of that gave way to the tedium of crunching numbers, she rediscovered her roots as a seamstress and began toying with designs for herself and close friends. Then a Brooklyn boutique owner saw her in one of her original designs, and he commissioned one for his store. It sold swiftly and her course was set, Brunson Bey said.

Her designs also bear the influence of her Aunt Ruth, who first taught her to sew when she was growing up in Georgia. "We didn't know then that we were really African. We knew we were black, colored, Negro. Learning about the kinte, the mud cloth, adds another element to what we do," Brunson Bey said. "So we call it Afri-cenfusion because it's a fusion of all the things we're fused with as Africans. White, African, Asian, Native American. But the basics are always African. I feel these clothes. They are who I am." ■

Orchestrating A Masterpiece

DISNEY from B6

The ceiling's great sails of Douglas fir swoop down, and the organ Gehry designed bursts above the stage like a spray of warm wood and brass. To the eye, at least, there are no bad seats, and some of the best are those directly behind the timpani, which, when they are not occupied by the chorus, sell for \$15 apiece.

Democratizing music is all well and good, but donors want an enclave of their own in exchange for their generosity, and they have it in the exhilarating Founders Room. From the outside, where its steel cladding is coated in a polished mirror finish, it looks like a bonbon wrapped in foil. Inside, it is a vertical cocoon full of energy. The ceiling starts low at the edges of the room, corkscrewing upward toward a lofty skylight in a series of wavy planes.

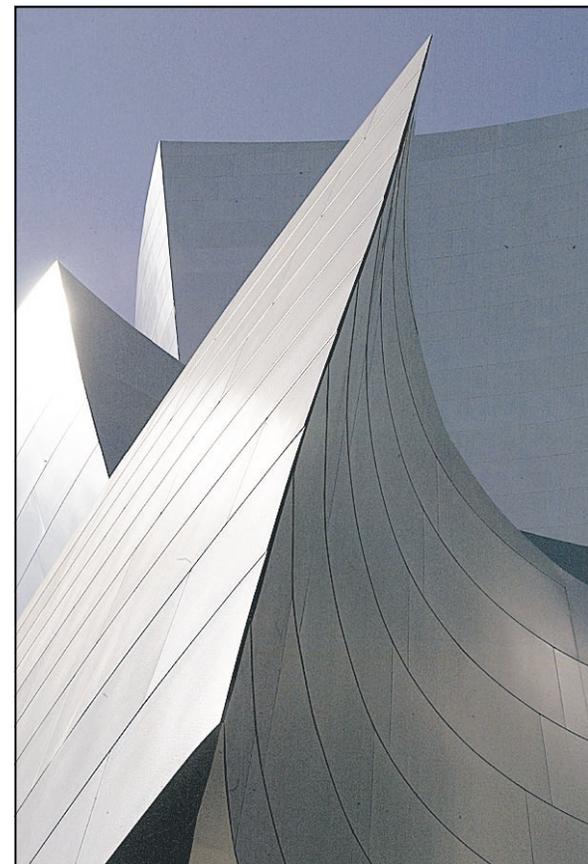
The room is Gehry's most explicit homage to the curvaceous baroque architecture of Borromini — particularly the scalloped flamboyance of the church of Sant' Ivo della Sapienza in Rome. But this is a sanctuary for music-lovers, not worshippers, and it is a sublimely playful space. Its irregularities and scrumptious, airy folds might have been sculpted out of stiffened egg whites — the plaster surfaces, which Gehry left rough to contrast with the buff exterior, look edible.

Like the auditorium itself, the Founders Room is a deeply rhythmic space. Stand anywhere inside it, follow the sinuous lines with a hand in the air, and your gestures will naturally arrange themselves into a complex sequence of downbeats, accents, phrases and syncopations. An observer might conclude you were conducting something by Richard Strauss.

In the Los Angeles press, much ink has been devoted to the question of whether Gehry's concert hall can exert "the Bilbao effect," named for the rejuvenating financial effect that Gehry's Spanish Guggenheim museum had on that gritty industrial city. Downtown L.A. does seem to be grudgingly acquiring some liveliness, but even if his latest work doesn't revive the inner city economically, Gehry already has supplied his town with a transformative place. Bleakness and beauty rub together extravagantly here, and in Disney Hall, a neighborhood of boxy office towers and six-lane streets has acquired one of the most ravishing constructed spaces in the world. ■



Hear an audio clip of the Los Angeles Philharmonic perform "Mother of the Man" at www.newsday.com/music.



An exterior view of L.A.'s new Disney Hall.

Getty Images