

## OTA BENGA



1881

The Pygmy tribesman [Ota Benga](#) was born in what would later be called the Belgian Congo. He would reach a height of 4 feet 11 inches and a weight of 103 pounds. His incisors would of course be filed.



He would marry twice. According to Phillips Verner Bradford's and Harvey Blume's *OTA BENGA: THE PYGMY IN THE ZOO* (1992), the Force Publique in service to the King of Belgium, Leopold II, the ruler of what was then the Congo Free State, engaged in a pygmy genocide or hunt which resulted in the death of his wife and two children. Another wife would die by snakebite. He was sold by the Force Publique into [slavery](#) to the Baschilele tribe, and purchased by Samuel Phillips Verner of South Carolina along with eight other pygmies. Verner would take them to St. Louis and exhibit them in the 1904 World's Fair.

1904

The [enslaved](#) pygmy [Ota Benga](#) was purchased in the Belgian Congo by Samuel Phillips Verner of South Carolina, along with eight other pygmies, for exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair. He would be known to Americans as "Bi," meaning in his language "friend." When the exhibit closed Verner took these pygmies back to Africa.

1906

August: [Ota Benga](#), who had been purchased as a slave in the Belgian Congo and exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, after which he had been returned to Africa, had in this year at his request been again brought to the United States. For a brief period he wandered the halls of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in a white duck suit — until he threw a chair at the rich donor Florence Guggenheim.

September 16, Sunday: [Ota Benga](#), who had been purchased as a slave in the Belgian Congo and exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair, after which he had been returned to Africa, had in this year been brought again to the United States, where he had made a mess of things at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. During this month, crowds thronged the monkeyhouse at the New York Zoological Park to view “man’s evolutionary ancestors,” monkeys, chimps, Dinah the gorilla, Dohung the orangutan, and Ota Benga the pygmy. The New York Daily Tribune joked cruelly, in regard to the wife that he had lost during the African genocidalist “pygmy hunt” of King Leopold II, that what must have happened was that she had “excited the hunger of the rest of the tribe, and one day when Ota returned from hunting he learned that she had passed quietly away just before luncheon and that there was not so much as a sparerib for him.” This Bronx Zoo, created in 1899, was under the direction of Dr. William T. Hornaday, who “apparently saw no difference between a wild beast and the little Black man” and pointed out that this use of his monkeyhouse made for an “intriguing exhibit.”



A sign explained that this pygmy’s height of 4 feet 11 inches and a weight of 103 pounds, and that he would

be on exhibit every afternoon. Some black reverends, fearing that Dr. Hornaday’s exhibit would subtly influence incautious people to believe in Darwin’s theory of evolution, or that this would encourage white Americans to think of blacks as being animals without souls, registered a protest. With a threat of legal action against the institution, Dr. Hornaday put Ota Benga back into his white duck suit and had him circulate around the zoo during the day, handing out free soft drinks. At night, Bi’s quarters continued to be a hammock in an unused cage at the monkeyhouse. The Zoo classed him as an “employee” although he received no paycheck. On this Sunday, according to a report in the New York Times, 40,000 people were at the zoo and crowds pursued Ota Benga “howling, jeering and yelling.” “Some of them poked him in the ribs, others tripped him up, all laughed at him.” He would be growing increasingly more irritable under such abuse, and at one point would pull a knife on a visitor to the zoo, at another point almost get into a fight with a park soda jerk who was dissing him. He would wind up shooting arrows at the zoo visitors. Pretty soon the zoo would pack him off to the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum in Brooklyn. Eventually he would be sent to the asylum’s facility in eastern Long Island. From there he would be sent to a Baptist college in Lynchburg, Virginia. After awhile he would get a job in a tobacco factory in Lynchburg, but would never earn enough to pay for a ticket back to the Belgian Congo (and would become more and more homesick, hostile, and despondent).

1910

January: [Ota Benga](#) had been kicked out of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City for throwing a chair at a rich donor, and out of the Bronx Zoo for shooting arrows at its patrons, and had wound up at the facility of the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum in eastern Long Island. At this point the Reverend James H. Gordon, the superintendent, arranged for the pygmy to move to Lynchburg, Virginia, where he had already spent a semester at a Baptist institution, the Virginia Theological Seminary and College. The New York Times reports that “In Lynchburg, Ota Benga had his teeth capped and became known as Otto Bingo.



He spent a lot of time in the woods, hunting with bow and arrow, and gathering plants and herbs. He did odd jobs and worked in a tobacco factory. He became friendly with the poet Anne Spencer, who lived in Lynchburg, and through her met both W.E. Burghardt Du Bois and Booker T. Washington.”

1916

March 20: In the Armenian Genocide of Turkey, Talaat was informed from Aleppo that 95,000 Armenians had died from sickness and other causes in the past week: 30,000 in Ras-el-Ain (Ras ul-Ain), 35,000 in Bab and Meskene, 10,000 in Karluk (Karlik), and 20,000 in Dipsi, Abu Herir (Abuharar), and Hama.

Instructions were sent to entrap Armenian orphans under the pretext of giving them food — and then kill them.

That afternoon [Ota Benga](#) —the African pygmy who had been kicked out of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City for throwing a chair at a rich donor, and then kicked out of the Bronx Zoo for shooting arrows at its patrons, and had labored for years in a tobacco factory, using the name Otto Bingo, growing more and more homesick for Africa and unable to earn enough to purchase a steamship ticket across the Atlantic— at the age of 35 got his hands on a pistol, chipped the caps off his teeth, went out into the woods near Lynchburg, Virginia, built a ceremonial fire, performed a dance, and shot himself through the heart.



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



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# ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

## GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.  
Arrgh.