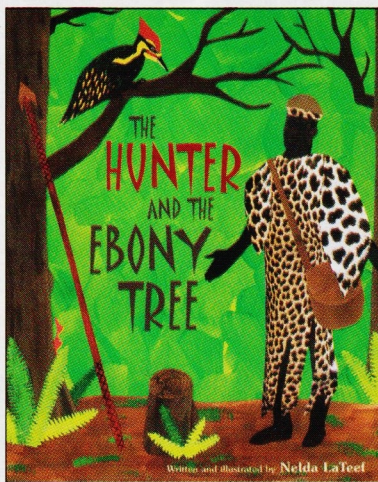




include stints in journalism and advertising. She was founder and chief designer of a textile company and served as director of development of the Foreign Policy Association, the nation's oldest non-partisan organization devoted to citizen education in international affairs. Now living in Great Falls, Nelda is the author of several nonfiction books including *Working Women for the 21st Century*.

In some ways, Nelda is assuming the mantle of *griot* herself. She appears frequently for readings at area schools and libraries, sharing her newly published book and its genesis. "I love to talk with the kids and read the story to them. They always have such interesting responses." Dedicated to her young niece and nephew, *The Hunter and the Ebony Tree* is ideal for parents to read aloud to their children, says Nelda: "The vocabulary is a little advanced, I think. But that's fine—I want the parents to be involved, and I also want the children to learn something."

It seems that other audiences are embracing the book as well. While visiting the Embassy of Niger in Washington, Nelda presented a copy of her book to Deputy Chief of Mission Fatima Sidikou. "After reading it, she said it evoked memories of her country and her childhood that made her homesick," recalls Nelda. "She later sent me a note saying, 'I showed it around and everybody without exception found it marvelous!'" The book recently was named the 2003 Storytelling World Honors Award winner in the category of stories for adolescent listeners.



The Hunter and the Ebony Tree is among Moon Mountain's most successful titles, says Robert Holtzman, vice president of sales and marketing at the Rhode Island firm. "[The book went] into a second printing sooner after initial publication than any other title we have published," he says, adding that during last month's Bologna Children's Book Fair, he met with the Italian publisher of the book who noted that it remains among his best-selling book among titles without movie tie-ins.

"I love folk tales," says Nelda. "They teach wisdom and hope." She is at work on three additional children's books based on African folk tales and plans to develop another eight books. "This is my 'folk tale' period," she says. "Then I'll move on to a different style of story, something more contemporary perhaps."

The McLean Project for the Arts continues its exhibition of original collages from *The Hunter and the Ebony Tree* in the McLean Community Center's Ramp Gallery through

May 24 (see Calendar for details). For more information about the book, visit www.moonmountainpub.com.

ALL IMAGES FROM *THE HUNTER AND THE EBONY TREE*: FACING PAGE TOP: "CELEBRATION!," ACRYLIC AND COLLAGE ON ART BOARD, 17"x11"; DETAIL FROM "DISCUSSING THE FUTURE," ACRYLIC AND COLLAGE ON ART BOARD, 17" X 11"; THIS PAGE TOP: "STREAM OF SUITORS AND THE FATHER," ACRYLIC AND COLLAGE ON ART BOARD, 17" X 11"; BOOK JACKET