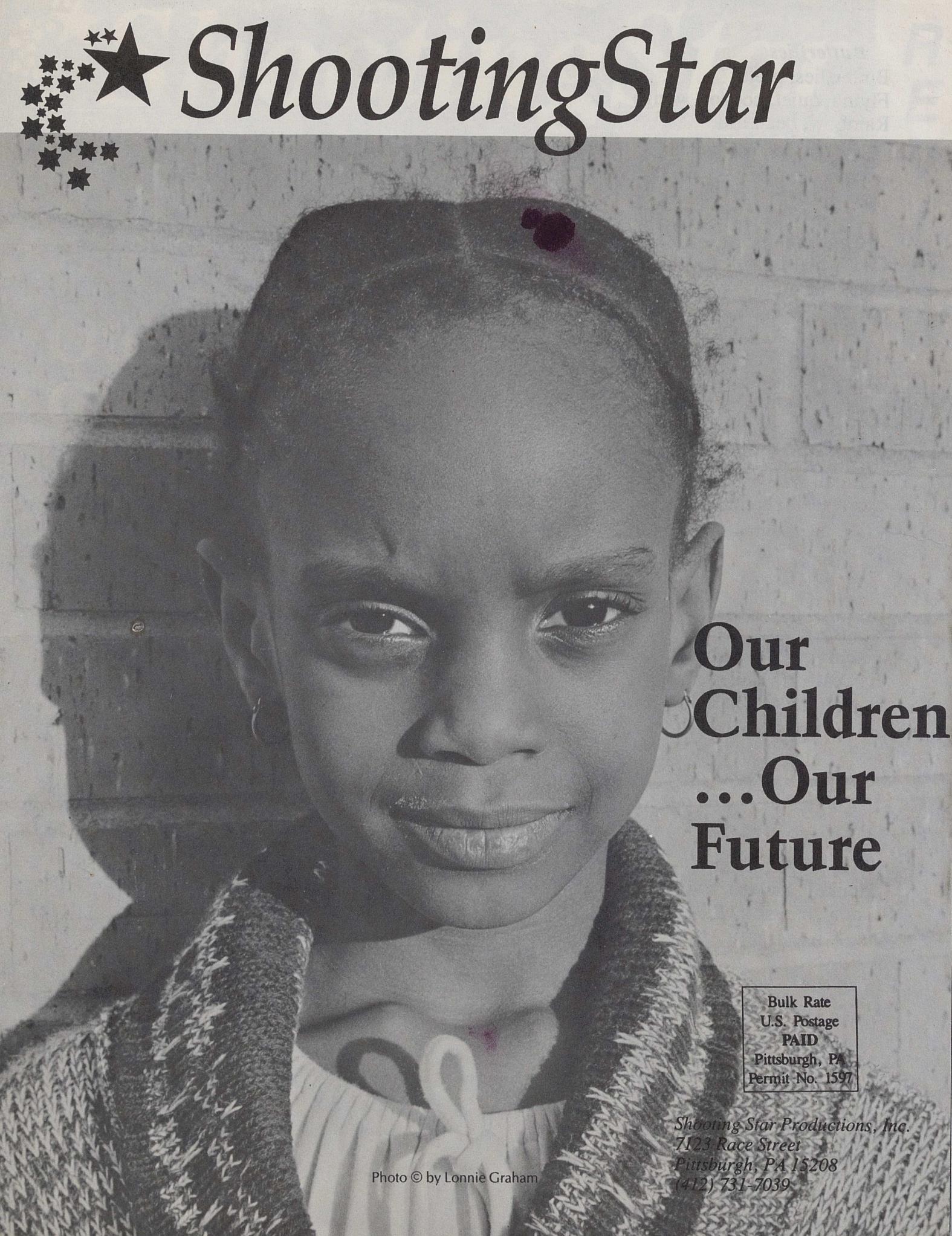


★ ShootingStar



Our
Children
...Our
Future

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Butterflies

Butterflies, pretty
Flying, quiet, cocoon, wings
Rainbow, beautiful

Terika Brown

Caterpillar

Caterpillar, crawl
Sticky, smooth, furry, wiggly
Sneaking, woods, leaves, warm

Jekiesha John

Crockodile

Crockodile, stream
Animal, walking, eat
Slow, teeth, dangerous

Juan Fernandez

Fishing

Fishing, whale, fish, shark
Eat, catfish, river, ocean
Worm, bread, turtle, swim

Eric Burnett

Monkey

Tree, jungle, noisy
Monkey, banana, swinging
Crazy, hanging, zoo

David Floyd



These poems are from 8-year-old students at Carol City Elementary School, Carol City, Florida. Their teacher, Mrs. Kay Unkeker, says: "Writing in all forms has become an important factor in the lives of my classroom children. They are learning that there are many avenues to the future open to them through writing."

Art by Christopher Horsley, 5 years old
Pittsburgh, PA



ShootingStar

ISSN 0892-1407

Black Literary Magazine

Our
Children
...Our
Future

*McDonald's Literary
Achievement Awards
Competition (inside)*

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W

Spring, 1989
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I SEE MY FUTURE

I see my future
clear as I don't know what
not all the things around me
not furniture or houses
or sidewalks and stuff
I just see me
my serious man face
thinking
my laughing man face
my big Nathaniel me
moving through the world
doing good and unusual
things

Eloise Greenfield © 1988

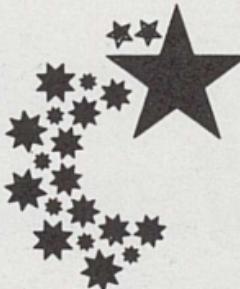


"I See My Future" is from *Nathaniel Talking* written by Eloise Greenfield and illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. *Nathaniel Talking* is the first release of Black Butterfly children's books. "We are here to produce quality children's books that reflect racial pride and cultural literacy," says Glenn Thompson, president of the parent company, Writers and Readers Publishing Inc. For Thompson, *Nathaniel Talking* begins a tradition, "to send important messages to a new generation of young reader's—black and non-black alike."

Portrait by
Gregory Robertson

Photo © by Lonnie Graham

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- ★ The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
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- ★ Heinz Corporation
- ★ And the generous financial and volunteer support of the many who believe in this mission.

Her wavy hair was parted in the middle and pulled into a single braid. Her skin was like buttermilk with a natural blush. Long lashes surrounded dark, lustrous eyes. She was the last to get a seat on the crowded bus and carefully tucked school books behind laced, brown leather shoes. This African-American womanchild smiled with baby pink lips at another girl who perched on a young man's lap. Then she said, "What you sitting on, gal, belongs to me. You be careful. I don't want you to crush it."

Late autumn. The sun pushed rain clouds from the morning sky. Brown puddles nestled in cracked and sunken concrete. One kindergarten-size young man, well bundled and feet in boots, stomped every pool in his path. The old woman who followed, and she wasn't much bigger than he was, said, "What the hell is wrong with you boy?! Get out of that goddamn water."

Summer. Young ones ride big-wheels along the sidewalk. They play with dolls and jacks on wooden porches. Young couples who live in row houses on Lang Avenue leave their doors open. Electric fans drone as blue-black dissolves the crimson sky. Stars wink. Crickets and night birds sing from abandoned lots where weeds have become thickets and trees. And a woman with a ringing voice calls her little boy a motherfucker and a faggot.

This increasingly sophisticated and technological world is still as life threatening as any primeval forest. The predators look different, but their favorite prey is still the young and the unprepared. How can we equip our children to find their way without loosing either their spirit or their lives?

A friend believes that—once upon a time—African people bravely faced all kinds of dangers because they had the strong sense of self worth that is rooted in unconditional love received in childhood. And that boundless love built an essential life force...self-esteem. He says that each generation must generously pour into the next an awareness that we are part of a noble, creative and intelligent culture; and that we must see that the best of ourselves and our heritage is nurtured and survives.

Taking Care of Business in Tomorrow Land

My friend explained that when children are denied this esteem-building love, they can still compensate and build a sense of self worth as they mature. But this manufacturing process, drains energy and vitality from other aspects of life and, at worst, becomes warped and destructive.

As this world becomes a global economy requiring that our children compete with the guy next door, the woman in the next state and the nations on other continents, we must build more ethnic and personal pride and shake off the ignorance and the clinging residue of slavery's cultural deprivation. We must nurture our children with love and with knowledge.

To gain a sense of how fast technology is progressing and how quickly this world is shrinking, keep in mind that in the 1850s, three months were needed to get mail from Connecticut to California. Today, fax machines deliver letters in seconds. Videophones allow face-to-face, inter-continental conversation. This hot-wired world is fast moving out of the John Henry era that applauded hard work and into a future that rewards working smart. While hundreds of African-Americans enjoy glittering professional opportunities, thousands are shackled in cultural and educational poverty. Will today's Black children be ready for the 21st century?

This issue of *Shooting Star Review* explores social, psychological and educational factors that affect our tributes to our ancestors and our gifts to the future...our children.

Sandra ★
Sandra Gould Ford
Founder
Shooting Star Productions, Inc.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc. is a non-profit corporation that exists to promote artistic and educational outlets for expression of the African-American experience through production and distribution of publications, video and other media.

Then Comes the Queen (for Adenike)

They smile
& shake their heads
ignoring
I'm sure
my amateur braiding job
or the rough dried
color coordinated ensemble
plus Pony sneakers

they smile
from the gitgo
shake their heads
a heartbeat later
say
“Is that your daughter?”
before letting you know
“oh she’s so beautiful”
“my you’re a pretty girl”

each time/it’s happened everytime
you say thank you
with 7-year-old shyness
sometimes muffling your words
from behind my legs
or from the crook of my neck

even I say thank you
not taking credit
but to the long line
of royalty come before you
they/
hair sprouting parted crowning
kinky wavy sculpted
& wearing matchless matching threads

eyes turn toward you & me
hand in hand tripping
down the street
wishing “have a good day”
to each other/your brother
even birds/buildings/cars/telephone
poles

(and the world itself)
holding hands with you
I feel royal myself
announcing with every step
here I come yall...
then comes the queen

Peter J. Harris (7/15/87)
Temple Hills, Maryland



Photo by Saihou Njie

Peter J. Harris is the founding publisher and editor of *Genetic Dancers*, the magazine for and about African/American fathers. He has published poetry widely, including *Blind Alleys*, *The Black Scholar* and *Race Today*. He is the author of *Six Soft Sketches of a Man* (poetry), and *Wherever Dreams Live* (folktales).



Shooting Star

REVIEW

SHOOTING STAR REVIEW
ISSN 0892-1407

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COVER ART BY RONNIE PHILLIPS (See page 22)

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I wish I'd known

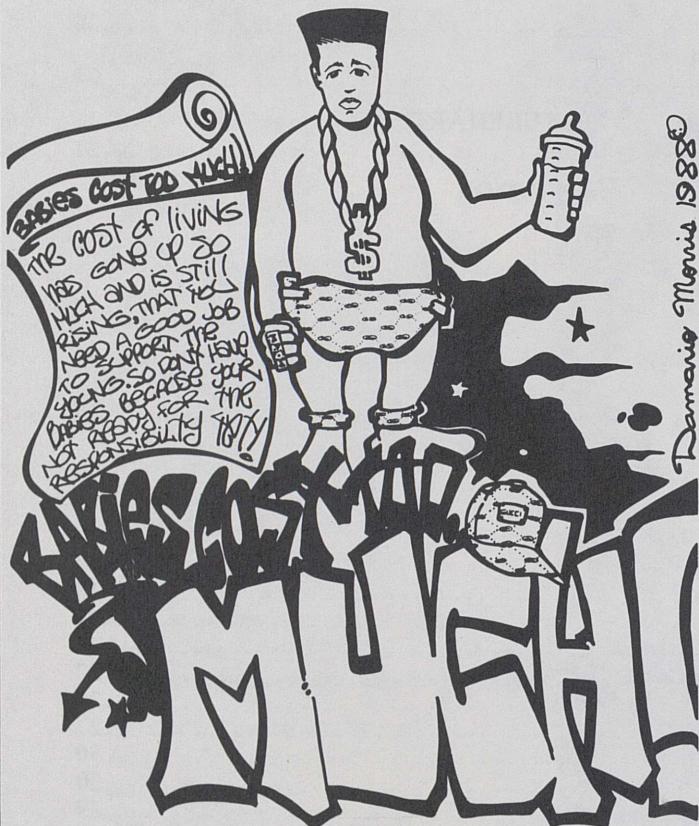


Illustration by Damario Morris of Westinghouse High School © 1988

Several Pittsburgh high schools offer special, parenting classes for students like April. Although the two-part program is available as an elective to all students, the daily classes in parenting theory and in the practical application lab are required for girls enrolled with babies. While April attends her high school classes, Tanaeya spends the day with students and instructors in the parenting program's child care component. Unlike the times when pregnancy ended a girl's public education opportunities, Pittsburgh's schools now want to assist girls in need, but they do not want to encourage.

My name is April, and I am a teen-age mother who will graduate from high school this June. What I am about to tell you is not a fairy tale, it is very true.

When I was 16 years old, I had a baby. In my mind, I knew I wasn't ready for any children, financially or mentally. I knew that I could have had an abortion, and I knew that this pregnancy deeply hurt my parents and others in my family...believe it or not, it even hurt some of my closest friends...but it happened, and I chose to go ahead with it.

Please don't get me wrong; not one minute do I regret having my daughter, nor do I regret the relationship with her father, but I wish that Kenny and I had been more careful.

My parents and I never discussed sex. I learned about sex in school and from talking to my brother. Red is two years older than me. He would tell me about his experiences with girls, and I don't think he knew too much more than me. And my older girlfriends used to tell me what they did. Some of them did use birth-control pills, but some of them got sick so they quit using them. And Kenny didn't know much either. Kenny had used a condom occasionally. He had just turned 16 when we met. A year later, we started having sex and one year later, Tanaeya was conceived.

Our daughter is now 19 months old and Tanaeya is a very happy baby. Luckily Kenny is there for us, but not all boyfriends are. I learned that if you're a teen, you've got to be careful with sex because the consequences might be pregnancy, and that's nothing to play around with.

Even though I'm a mother, I still want to go to parties...although I don't want to go out as much as before the baby. Before Tanaeya was born, I used to go out every night. Sometimes, I'd hang out over girlfriends' houses or at the Kentucky Fried Chicken at Homewood and Frankstown. I liked to fight a lot. I was a little tom boy. I was always at the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people. I stayed in trouble.

But now, I only go out some weekends to parties at Wilson's or Top Charlies. I don't fight any more, and am more ladylike. And I stay away from bad crowds. Sometimes friends ask me, "Don't you hate that you can't go out no where?" Some other girls who are mothers at school sometimes say, "I wish that I never had this baby," or "That child makes me sick." But the baby never asked to be here. If I had the chance to do it all over again,

I would take more precautions.

When we had these meetings at Letsche—where there is Ed.Med., an educational/medical school for pregnant girls and young mothers with babies who are still in school—they'd have different speakers who'd come in and tell us that society says:

"You're a teen-age mother, so you won't be able to finish school."

"You're not expected to get good jobs."

"Your children's IQs won't be as high as children who are born to older mothers."

And my thought about that was and is, "You can do whatever you want to do if you put your mind to it, and my baby started school earlier than most [she's been going to school with me since she was 6 weeks old]; she's more aware. She can say her ABCs a little bit."

But I believe that if you have a baby that you don't want, it will usually affect the child, and he/she will either be a high-school dropout or in and out of jails, or in some other bad situation. And I feel that way because, most likely, if you don't want it, you won't give it the kind of attention it needs.

Sometimes I sit and think to myself, "I wish I knew then what I know now because I probably would be better off."

SHE GAVE HIM BABIES

*She gave him babies,
Boy, did she give him babies.
Boy look jus like him and girls
with thick black braids, dark eyes
and laughter jus like hers.*

*She gave him round young hips,
a strong back, and babies
tall ones leanin in doorways,
round fat ones
with eager smiles.*

*She gave him her summer in the park
years,
her kissin in the dark years,
her smooth brown skin and fine young
hands,
her stubborn determination and babies.
Boy, did she give him babies.*

*Quiet ones sittin in corners,
fast ones racin down alleys; babies
in pink puff dresses and high-top shoes.
Boy, did she give him babies.*

Boy look jus like him, they say.

Maisha Balon
Albuquerque, NM

I wish I'd known how hard raising a baby is. It's hard because sometimes I want to do so many things—like get a job—and I can't because Tanaeya's there. Raising her hasn't been too hard for me because my family has been so helpful and supportive. And I realize that my experience is better than most. At Ed.Med I met girls whose families were not supportive. Maybe they were living with just their mother, and nine-times-out-of-ten their mothers were working, so if their babies got sick or something, there was no one to leave the baby with. And some of the girls were having problems with the fathers claiming the babies. And it was hard on some of them because they were having so many problems and they'd just give up. They'd get sort of lazy, as though they didn't care about anything. So, I realize that I'm very lucky to have the family that I have and the boyfriend that I have. But sometimes I want to do so many things for Tanaeya, like buying her cute little toys and outfits, and I can't because I can only do a little at a time.

So please, think before you act and, if you decide to act, be careful when you do and I guarantee that you'll be glad that you did.

To be a good mother, you have to always be there for your child. Anyone can play house, but only someone RESPONSIBLE and caring can be a real father and mother.

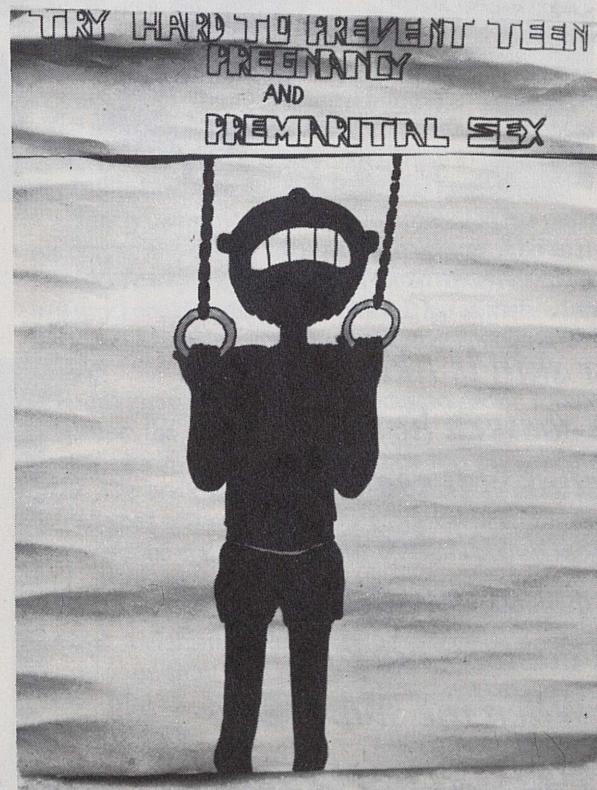


Illustration by Alvin Moore, 8th grade student

Karintha

by Jean Toomer



Photo by M.R. Grant © 1988

*Her skin is like dusk on
the eastern horizon,
O cant you see it,
O cant you see it,
Her skin is like dusk on
the eastern horizon
... When the sun goes
down.*

Nen had always wanted her, this Karintha, even as a child, Karintha carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down. Old men rode her hobby-horse upon their knees. Young men danced with her at frolics when they should have been dancing with their grown-up girls. God grant us youth, secretly prayed the old men. The young fellows counted the time to pass before she would be old enough to mate with them. This interest of the male, who wishes to ripen a growing thing too soon, could mean no good to her.

Karintha, at twelve, was a wild flash that told the other folks just what it was to live. At sunset, when there was no wind, and the pine-smoke from over by the sawmill hugged the earth, and you couldn't see more than a few feet in front, her sudden darting past you was a bit of vivid color, like a

black-bird that flashes in light. With the other children one could hear, some distance off, their feet flopping in the two-inch dust. Karintha's running was a whirl. It had the sound of the red dust that sometimes makes a spiral in the road. At dusk, during the hush just after the sawmill had closed down, and before any of the women had started their supper-getting-ready songs, her voice, high-pitched, shrill, would put one's ears to itching. But no one ever thought to make her stop because of it. She stoned the cows, and beat her dog, and fought the other children. Even the preacher, who caught her at mischief, told himself that she was as innocently lovely as a November cotton flower. Already, rumors were out about her. Homes in Georgia are most often built on the two-room plan. In one, you cook and eat, in the other you sleep, and there love goes on. Karintha had seen or heard, perhaps she had felt her parents loving. One could but imitate one's parents, for to follow them was the way of God. She played "home" with a small boy who was not afraid to do her bidding. That started the whole thing. Old men could no longer ride her hobby-horse upon their knees. But young men counted faster.

*Her skin is like dusk,
O cant you see it,
Her skin is like dusk,
When the sun goes down.*

Karintha is a woman. She who carries beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down. She has been married many times. Old men remind her that a few years back they rode her hobby-horse upon their knees. Karintha smiles, and indulges them when she is in the mood for it. She has contempt for them. Karintha is a woman. Young men run stills to make her money. Young men go to the big cities and run on the road. Young men go away to college. They all want to bring her money. These are the young men who thought that all they had to do was count time. But Karintha is a woman, and she has had a child. A child fell out of her womb onto a bed of pine-needles in the forest. Pine-needles are smooth and sweet. They are elastic to the feet of rabbits... A sawmill was nearby. Its pyramidal sawdust pile smouldered. It is a year before one completely burns. Meanwhile, the smoke curls up and hangs in odd wraiths about the trees, curls up, and spreads itself out over the valley... Weeks after Karintha returned home the smoke was so heavy you tasted it in water. Some one made a song:

*Smoke is on the hills. Rise up.
Smoke is on the hills, O rise
And take my soul to Jesus*

Karintha is a woman. Men do not know that the soul of her was a growing thing ripened too soon. They will bring their money; they will die not having found it out... Karintha at twenty, carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down. Karintha...

*Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon,
O cant you see it, O cant you see it,
Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon
... When the sun goes down.*

Goes down...



Born in Washington, D.C., Nathan Eugene ("Jean") Toomer begins his "Outline of an Autobiography" with "When America was in winter I was born the day after Christmas, 1894."

Jean's maternal grandfather was Pickney Benton Stewart Pinchback, a light-skinned black man who was acting governor of Louisiana for 40 days. In high school, Jean withdrew into himself and later wrote, "inner things became more important than outer..."

In 1914, Jean attended the University of Wisconsin. Even though he was popular, often invited to sorority parties, he became disenchanted in his studies and fellow students saying that life should be more than, "following the shifting winds of popularity."

In 1919, Jean began writing essays, poems, short stories and reviews, but a lack of harmony between his mind, his emotions, and his body prevented him from becoming happy and successful. He noted seven ethnic strands in him, including African, and it wasn't until his trip to Georgia in the fall of 1921 that Jean Toomer found his literary voice:

"...my growing need for artistic expression has pulled me deeper and deeper into the Negro group. And as my powers of receptivity increased, I found myself loving [it] in a way I could never love the other. It has stimulated and fertilized whatever creative talent I may contain within me."

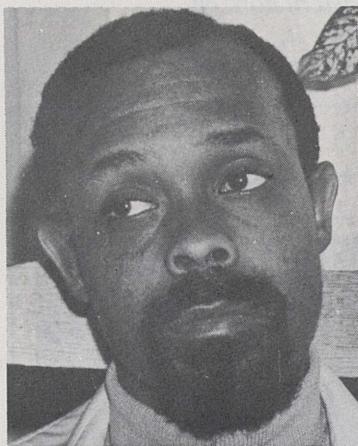
Reuniting with his African ancestors, Jean Toomer produced the dazzling book, *Cane*, a collection of poems, stories, and one play, which was published in 1923. The book was successful and was seen as an unprecedented accomplishment for a Black writer. The fact that everyone considered him a "Negro" and not, as he said, an American writer upset Jean Toomer.

By the fall of 1923, Jean Toomer, who had traveled through socialism while achieving success as a writer, disappeared from the literary world.

On March 30, 1967, Jean Toomer died of arteriosclerosis.

Biography by Rob Penney, Pittsburgh, PA





When we respond to painful experiences with our tears, we soothe our inner pains. We use a natural gift that is essential to our spiritual, emotional and physical release from the bondage of stored pain.

On more than one occasion, I have had the painful experience of watching parents discipline their children by severely reprimanding them in public both verbally and physically and then threatening further punishment if the child cries (i.e., "Now stop that noise or I'll really give you something to cry about."). I remember even as a youngster thinking what cruelty to whip a child and then threaten to continue the whipping (with even more severity) if the child cries. What is the child supposed to do with the pain? If you must inflict pain on the child in the first place, it is almost cruel and unusual punishment to deny him or her the opportunity to release the pain through crying.

When adults have been suppressed or over-controlled as children, they often grow up without permission to be aware of the pain in their lives. If their childhood had been left to its natural flow, their exposure to both the sweet and bitter lessons of life, would have taught them that life is not always predictable, that the world is complex, and that there is often a precarious balance between pleasure and pain. Their parents were unable to offer them models for opening themselves to the beauty of life, learning how to face what is painful, and discovering the pleasure on the other side. Instead, they were given illusions about life, by being taught to avoid life's pain, thereby distorting its true meaning. Pain, in reality, is an opportunity for healthy growth when a child can allow it in, take in its message, and move beyond it.

When I was in college and chose to join a chapter of a national fraternity, I remember thinking one of the most absurd and difficult aspects of the hazing process was to be instructed by a "big brother" to "bend over and assume the position" (for purposes of receiving paddle blows to the rear extremity). After assuming said position, we were required to receive the expected assault with, "Thank you big brother. May I have another?" The words literally choked in my throat. Considering the pain involved in such assaults, it was outrageous to be forced to openly express gratitude for it and to then request additional pain. I laugh about it now, but it was less than

Let The

funny then and it is just such contradiction's that create serious inner conflict for children.

It is unnatural, and therefore, the source of much unnecessary and destructive conflict to have pain inflicted on you, and to be told at the same time not to express your feeling of that pain. To repeatedly bind up such feeling in children leads to acting-out adolescents and distressed or disturbed adults. Containing such contradictory experiences leads to distortions of reality. If it continues for any length of time, it not only contributes to the development of "neuroses" but can lead to greater disturbances when combined with other unresolved childhood problems.

One of nature's most important vehicles of release and relief is to cry when one is in pain or discomfort. Babies come out of the womb with a burst of crying as the first expression of their presence. Thereafter they use crying as a major form of communication until they learn to use language.

Crying is essential to the life process and tears are a natural process which are biologically inspired to release hormones which in turn help relieve tension and stress. Studies now tell us that, perhaps, one of the reasons women live longer than men is their ability to experience their grief, losses, and even their fears through the natural expression of crying and tears. Tears may also be responsible for the release of critical hormones in the body, hormones that defend against certain illnesses.

When children have minor falls and bruise themselves, they can either be open to the hurt, thereby minimizing the amount of time it stings or aches, or they can tighten up in protest or anger at having fallen, thereby intensifying and prolonging the pain. In both cases children will cry, however, one cry is in protest and frustration, while the other cry is in pain and release. The first crying is inhibited by the resistant feeling of protest that later includes shame and humiliation about feeling vulnerable. The second crying is facilitated by the pleasure of release, and the freedom to be vulnerable. Parents can either rush in and try to protect the child from the hurt, or can offer support and understanding while allowing the child to move through the experience until they begin to feel better. In the former case the parent attempts to shield the child from the hurt, keep them from feeling the pain and even attempting to absorb it themselves. In the latter case, the parent accepts the hurt as part of the growing experience and offers the child a "way station."

There is certainly something very relieving about crying. When a person gives in to a healthy cry, the entire body is involved. The respiration changes, the musculature expands

Children Cry

and contracts more deeply and there is often a profound sense of a burden being let go, even if it is only during the time one is actually crying.

Perhaps the problem is that as parents and adults, many of us have lost our ability to cry in a healthy, relieving way. Babies are the best pure example of the natural release nature meant for us to experience through tears. If you watch and/or listen to babies when they cry, they have much to teach us of our own lost art as adults. When babies cry there are long wails followed by deep respirations, which seem to be charging up for the next wail. The entire body participates in this experience, by vibrating from the head to the feet. The breathing is deep and the cry comes up from the solar plexus like a wave, each one giving way to the next. It is a deeply moving experience for both the child and anyone exposed to the crying, assuming they can let themselves feel the experience.

When my daughter was in her first year, her crying was an emotionally moving experience which sent reverberations through the entire house. The cry penetrated my very being. I found it very difficult to listen to that sort of painful wail for very long without being moved to action, especially when it became intense. With my daughter, it was a reliable indication that something was wrong and needed fixing—NOW.

A happy and satisfied baby will not cry, contrary to some popular beliefs, just to be manipulative. The child does not have to engage in such maneuvers when the environment (including the parents) is sensitive to its needs. When adults are uncomfortable with the feelings that are generated by deep crying or any kind of crying, they move to get away from, shut off or shut down the source of the discomfort. In doing that, they are teaching their infants and children at both the conscious and unconscious level,

1. *How not to be vulnerable in the world and to associate vulnerability with getting hurt, being victimized, abused, etc. Crying is seen as a sign of vulnerability. It is, therefore, discouraged.*
2. *How to control their feelings when hurt and to adopt an outer veneer while inwardly crying.*
3. *How to will themselves not to feel or to at least not reveal such feelings to the public.*

When children learn these patterns, they may begin to experience certain symptoms such as becoming unable to cry at all, unable to trust another person with their feelings, or unable to tolerate painful feelings in themselves or others. They may only be able to weep in a controlled way, with very little feelings and no relief.

Crying is not just a physical release, it is an emotional catharsis. It is nature's way of healing or beginning to heal the pain in our life or the wounds in our psyche. The deeper the cry, the greater the healing.

When the pain in our lives has no outlet, it gets stored inside of us and we become containers for it. As such, we increase and prolong our suffering, making our own physical body a torture chamber of pain and sickness. We may be able to "tough through it" while we are young but as we get older our bodies wear down and the pain we learned to defend against begins to get the upper hand.

For children it is both an emotional and physical release of pent up anxieties and emotions. If one is being subjected to painful, frightening, or anxiety producing situations, which children often feel no control over, crying is certainly a natural release. Those who are free to cry and feel their own pain when they are hurt are much less likely to punish others by committing acts of violence against fellow human beings. To be in touch with one's own feelings and particularly pain, allows a child to be sensitive to the pain of others.

Allowing children and adolescents to freely express themselves through their tears is often sex linked. Female crying is more easily tolerated than males. Little boys are often made to feel that they must be tougher than girls and "stronger." Their tears are often equated with weakness so boys often find themselves trying to live up to a masculine model of strength. This translates into no crying in public, not letting any sensitivity or vulnerability show, becoming a competitor, warrior and winner no matter who you hurt, including yourself. Little girls are free to cry, be sensitive, and feel but they are often discouraged from being too competitive or too masculine (pushy). The sex role constraints on our children allow girls their tears at the expense of their assertiveness and rob boys of their tears at the expense of their sensitivity (humanity).

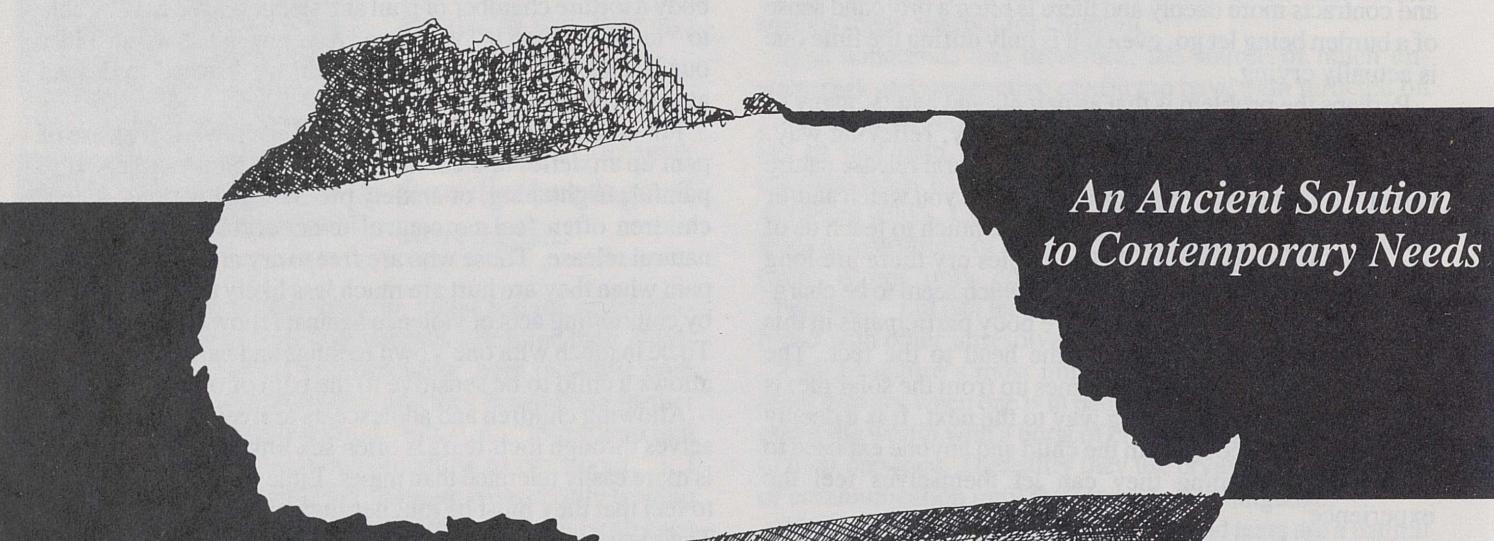
Our children all need their tears to be whole persons. Since life is painful at times, one must be free to respond to that pain, by expressing it, feeling it, and then dealing with it. Pain need not be debilitating. It is another vehicle through which we learn about life as we grow up and develop into adults. When we respond to painful experiences with our tears, we soothe our inner pains. We use a natural gift that is essential to our spiritual, emotional, and physical release from the bondage of stored pain. Without them, life can become a painful burden, a denial of pain, and a retreat from the strengths contained in our vulnerability. As parents, we need only to keep contact with our own tears, and move out of the way to leave the child's gift of his or her tears intact. For the sake of humanity, our personhood, and capacity to love and heal ourselves—let there be tears!



Earl Braxton is the Director of the Training and Development Institute (T.D.I.) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and President of Edge Associates which specializes in stress management for high risk occupations, and organizations in transition.

Rites Of Passage

By Huberta Jackson-Lowman, Ph.D.



*An Ancient Solution
to Contemporary Needs*

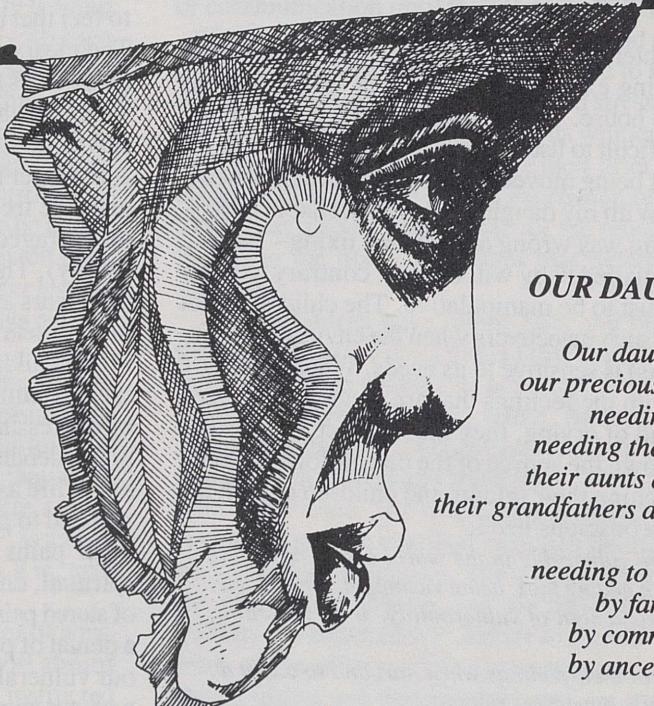
OUR SONS

*Our sons—
our displaced sons
of single, burdened mothers,
of unknown fathers,
of father struggling to be fathers.*

*Our sons
of queens and kings exiled,
of unsung warriors.*

*Yearning for their Manhood
in streets,
in prisons,
in bottles and needles,
in foreign arms.*

*Needing us to answer their pleas
to be
MEN
strong
and
free
to fulfill their destiny.*



OUR DAUGHTERS

*Our daughters—
our precious daughters,
needing us,
needing their fathers,
their aunts and uncles,
their grandfathers and grandmothers—*

*needing to be cradled
by family,
by community,
by ancestors—*

*so they can be
THEMSELVES
beautiful,
healthy,
loved
and
loving.*

Illustration by Darnell Loper



Haven delivers many gifts. The birth of a child—son or daughter—is one such gift with the potential for stirring in us a renewed sense of hope about the possibilities of life and opportunities for redemption and transformation. Too often, though, in the course of these very sensitive and dynamic relationships our hopes are betrayed and opportunities become burdens. And, we as parents are left baffled, hurt and distanced with the gnawing and little understood sense that we have gone wrong.

Challenged by the exigencies of contemporary society and unresolved historical experiences that consciously separated us from the collective wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors and from identification with them, the tasks of delivering men and women to society prepared to be responsible, contributing and healthy all too frequently has eluded African-Americans and left countless African-American youth with too little guidance, nurturance and protection to assume their rightful places in society.

As we have struggled for freedom, equality and justice in this society, as we have battled on many fronts of our rights, it is only fair that we ask ourselves whether in focusing on the battles, we are losing the war—for our children represent the only real future that we have and significant percentages of them are falling by the wayside. Examining the ramifications of unadoptable African-American children, of African-American children entrapped in our protective services systems, of our delinquent, adjudicated and institutionalized youth, of the growing number of African-American males imprisoned and the declining numbers of our men on college campuses, of burgeoning numbers of African-American females with no husbands, children with no fathers and families with no homes, of families and youth who are victimized by inadequate education, unemployment, unhealthy living environments, drugs and alcohol, and gangs and violence dramatically illustrates the overwhelming need for grand scale intervention by African-American adults and those institutions that represent us on behalf of our youth and families.

Ushering youth from childhood into adulthood for our foreparents was a communal task and responsibility. So crucial and vital to the survival of the group was this activity that it was rarely left solely to the management of one's biological parents and family. Rituals that lasted over a period of time and involved the community of youth entering adulthood and adults from the community in the enactment of agreed-upon separate and interactive tasks that informed and prepared youth for the roles

and responsibilities that they were to carry out as adults characterized these rites. Through these rituals, many African tribal societies ensured that youth

knew who they were,
had adequate opportunity to sheer their roles as children,
were well-informed about their new roles,
had the guidance necessary to carry out these roles and
passed on the responsibility for the viability and future
of their group to the younger generation.

The institution of slavery along with economic priorities that have consumed this nation from its early beginnings have offered an unfavorable climate for the continuation of such traditions by African-Americans. Nevertheless, in many instances the black church has filled this void for youth and for families. Today, however, many African-American youth are not connected with a church. Furthermore, to a large extent the stronghold that the black church once had in African-American communities as an institution for socialization has been weakened.

Our schools represent another key institution for the preparation of our youth for adulthood. Although there is certainly a level of responsibility that should be charged to schools for facilitating the preparation of our youth for adulthood, it is blatantly apparent that this responsibility is much too vital to leave in the hands of an institution that has differentially treated African-Americans from its origins.

In this cursory analysis it is evident that there are no clearly identifiable institutions or systems charged with ensuring that our youth are prepared for adulthood beyond the family and that the level of support that families receive in carrying out this awesome task is, at best, minimal.

Rites of Passage are meant to ensure a smooth transition from childhood into adulthood and to maximize integration of youth within their communities. When planfully executed, Rites of Passage fulfill individual, familial, communal and cultural purposes. The rituals and ceremonies around which these activities are implemented, though variable from culture to culture, prescribe roles for parents, other adult family members, adult members of the community and ancestors, because each of these groups is viewed as having a significant part to play in the preparation of youth for adulthood.

We can learn much from our ancestors in fashioning rituals and ceremonies to meet the needs of today's youth. It will be necessary however, to reconsider time

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parameters for where once there was no such thing as 'adolescence,' today that period of life has not only been well-defined but its length has even been extended over the past two decades. Provided here are some essential principles and themes that should be included in Rites of Passage activities and African proverbs that support their significance.

1. Children are the wisdom of the nation.

Grebo-Liberia

Build structures within the community, churches and schools to ensure that youth, our most valuable resource, regardless of their unique family situation, have proper guidance, ongoing support and nurturance from a community of respected adults.

2. However far the stream flows, it never forgets its source.

Yoruba—Nigeria/Dahomey (Benin)/Togo

Promote a sense of identity, meaning and pride in our youth by informing them about their African past and their personal ancestral past and show them how their identity is shaped by this history and these cultural experiences.

3. We are people because of other people.

*Sotho—Lesotho/Botswana/
Republic of South Africa*

Express, enact and reinforce those values within our communities, schools and churches that promote those behaviors in our youth important for their success as adults: Unity, Self-determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Sense of Purpose, Creativity, Faith, Love and Respect, Learning Orientation, Persistence, Self-reliance.

4. Woman is king.

*Sotho—Lesotho/Botswana/
Republic of South Africa*

Teach males and females the importance of respecting and valuing the other, as well as self, and the real meaning of being men and women.

5. Instruction in youth is like engraving in stones.

Berber—Libya/Ageria/Morocco/Tunisia

Provide youth with the information key to their functioning as adults in the areas of sexuality, family living, relationships, life skills, etc.

TROUBLE TIME

By: Glen M. Rinehart, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

vices; loaded dice/black/white and
almighty green!

scintillating streets so full of
so mean... bang! bang!
the sweetness of anticipation, (aaaaah)
life,
so bitter in actual taste!
Black Boys! Black Boys!
Where are the men?

fatigued and failed... tired and
uninspired, by

"black is beautiful!" and "Say it loud,

I'm black and I'm proud!" and...

the blacker the berry,
the sweeter the juice...

Black boys so empty of compassions for
jassin',
we improvise life to the chorus of
sorrow and despair.

Black Boys! Black Boys!
We are the beginning!
We must be an end.

(My Greatest granddaddy taught me,
nothing is greater than I. Nothing?)

Not sinful airs, up the nose!
Not insignificant shuffles in welfare lines.

Black Boys! Black Boys! Where are the
Men?

6. An old man was in the world before a chief was born.

Ashanti—Ghana/Togo/Ivory Coast

Gradually introduce youth to adult roles, responsibilities and privileges with the guidance of a mentor, family members and/or other respected adults.

Quoting from an unknown source:

To expect the system to educate our children is to expect the lion to educate the lamb; the anteater to educate the ant; or the leopard to educate the antelope.

Bringing African-American youth into adulthood is the responsibility of African-American adults. By drawing upon the vast, under-utilized repository of culture, traditions and knowledge of our foreparents to restore order to what has become a chaotic and purposeless existence for many of our youth, we can renew the hope, possibilities and opportunities offered by their births.



Dr. Huberta Jackson-Lowman is a clinical psychologist. She is the Director of the Mayor's Commission on Families in Pittsburgh and maintains a private practice serving youth, adults and families.

I
LOOK
IN THE
MIRROR
&
WHAT
DO
I
SEE?



A little black girl
staring back at me!

—Cassandra Ford

Photo © 1988 by S. Gould Ford

to loose our rhythm, to fumble with
our steps,
we MUST not!
let our children impregnant our
children
with sperm and killer germs.
and drugs of/in immorality.
Black boys?
Where...are...the...men?
while the boys run wild in the streets,
utterly confused and mesmerized at
going nowhere so fast, so damn fast.
(so and so was here today, but, we be
swift, so swift that we be so gone
tomorrow.)
Black boys, where are the men?
Rolling like stones,
insane excuses,

black boys...
struggling...battling to win...a long
hard war,
to be...men.
Black boys,
we have our secret weapons
that penetrate and purify our sins,
our beautiful black women that pick
us up,
time and time and time and still time
again.
Black boys,

we also have inside of us,
the knowledge,
the whereabouts
of all the strong
black men...

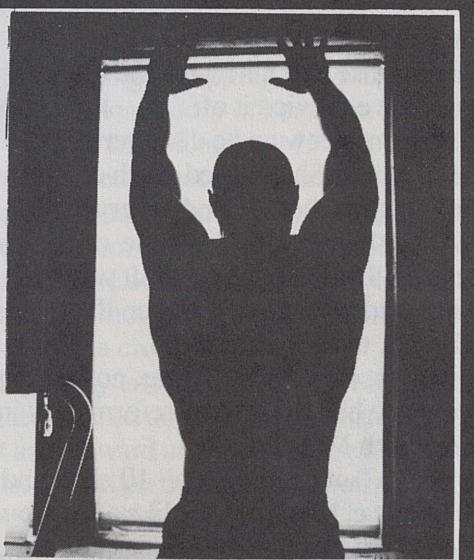


Photo @ 1988 By John Arthos

T H E L I

By Martin Terrell

Thanksgiving Eve, and the line in the supermarket had taken its toll. Tony's feet hurt. As he gingerly placed one throbbing foot on the third-floor landing, Tony's bag split, sending groceries scampering down the stairs like frolicking pups.

The door to 3-A creaked open and a wizened brown face peered out. "Well boy, you done it now."

Like a well-worn LP, Miss Louise's voice was faint and scratchy, but her soft brown eyes twinkled as she peered at Tony's apologetic form standing in the patch of light from her doorway.

"Wasn't my fault, Miss Louise," said Tony. "The bag boy didn't give me no double bag like I asked. I knew them canned goods would bust through. I knew it, but he wouldn't listen to me," Tony explained.

"Umph!", Miss Louise snorted. "You jus' git them groceries up and in here, boy!" she commanded. "I ain't got all night to stan' here list'nin' to no excuses."

Miss Louise turned back into her apartment, leaving the door ajar. As he hunched down to retrieve the scattered cans, Tony remembered the first time he'd met the old lady.

He was four years old, "just a little rug rat" as Miss Louise had called him then. Tony remembered how the spittle from her snuff-filled lower lip had splattered on his forehead when she leaned over to give him a quarter. Miss Louise told his mama the spit was good luck, "He don't have to wipe it off."

As Tony grew up he discovered that everybody knew Miss Louise. She seemed much older than anyone else in the neighborhood, and everyone deferred to her. Whether young or old, male or female, Miss Louise treated all of them the same. It was as if they were all errant children and it was her duty, one she evidently relished, to look after them.

In response to her chiding, no one, not even the older boys who had been to the reformatory in Mansfield, got sassy with Miss Louise.

At 12 Tony wore a size 10 shoe and felt like a man already, yet he always felt like a kid around Miss Louise. Men much older than he put a cap on their cussin' when she was near. Yet Tony had seen her cuss out men his daddy's age and keep on steppin'. Because of all this, he

felt it was best to stay on her good side. Not that he was afraid of the old lady. After all, she was so tiny she couldn't do much harm, although she had been known to pop a head or two with that cane of hers.

Tony removed his jacket and spread it on the landing to wrap the groceries in. At five feet eight he was tall for his age, but he wasn't hefty. He had his mama's curly hair and his daddy's light brown eyes. Tony liked to let his hair grow over his collar because the girls at school liked it that way. But his daddy was always after him to get it cut, saying he'd have to register at the pound for dog tags if it grew any longer.

Picking up one dented can after another, Tony smiled as he placed a can of Bruton snuff in his jacket. To his relief, it wasn't dented. Miss Louise got real hancty when anything happened to her snuff. He gathered up two more cans of Bruton. One of the cans was dented slightly, but none of the snuff had spilled. Miss Louise will be happy to see that, he thought.

With all the snuff safely added to his collection, Tony knotted the arms of his jacket together and hefted the load onto his shoulder and pushed his way into Miss Louise's kitchen.

Ever since he'd been able to cross the streets by himself, Tony had been going to the store for Miss Louise. But no matter how many times he entered her apartment, he never got used to the smell. Confined heat and stale air filled the apartment with a tart mustiness. The taste of age lay like a thick finger in the roof of Tony's throat.

Miss Louise nailed her windows shut each fall and stuffed rags into the sills against the cold. She didn't open them again til spring. With no air circulating in the wintertime, her tiny two rooms were as hot as a kiln. Tony rubbed his eyes. The trapped heat stung and forced tears. Tony wiped the beginning beads of sweat from his brow and wondered aloud, "What's going on back there?"

It certainly wasn't like Miss Louise to go to the back and stay without inviting him there. She had been back there for 10 minutes and hadn't called him once. Tony started toward the back and then pulled up. Maybe she's trying to find me something special, he said to himself.

Continued on page 17

G A C Y

So he stood and looked around the kitchen again.

Miss Louise's apartment consisted of a kitchen and bedroom that originally was part of one large room. The kitchen doubled as her living room, and most guests were stopped there and told to take a seat at the table. Miss Louise slept in the back and only her special guests were invited into her bedroom. Tony had been running to the store for her for years before she trusted him enough to let him enter it. Now, not a week passed without him being invited into her inner sanctum, and he could barely wait til the next time.

For Tony, Miss Louise's back room was an open sesame to adventure. It contained curios and what-nots, a shrine to her past. Photos of Miss Louise when she was a young and energetic beauty, her long-dead husband, and her globe trotting Air Force sons adorned the walls and dresser.

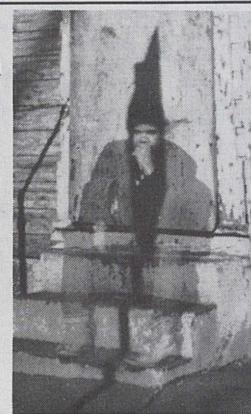
The greatest treasure of all was Miss Louise's scrapbook of her husband, Punchin' Pancho, the Cuban Hurricane! Pancho wasn't really no Cuban. He was just plain Pete Jackson from Bessemer, Alabama. Folks back then didn't care much about seeing no Alabama nigger whippin' white boys in the ring. According to Miss Louise, Jack Johnson was the reason for that. Anyway, Pete's manager decided they'd get more fights as a foreigner, so Pete became Pancho Santiago.

Pancho was one of the best lightweight fighters of his day. He had 38 wins and two losses. Thirty of his victories were knockouts. By the time sportwriters nicknamed him the Cuban Hurricane, Pancho had KO'd 17 fighters in a row. Every bout was carefully preserved in Miss Louise's scrapbook, and Tony never tired of poring through it.

Pancho's career ended quickly. As Miss Louise put it, "Cause of his record, they let Pancho fight the No. 1 contender. But they needed Pancho to take a fall so their boy could go on to fight the champ. When they came to his dressing room and ordered him to lose, I thought they

"What's going on back there?" It certainly wasn't like Miss Louise to go to the back and stay without inviting him...

Photo © by Eric Jones



were going to have to kill him then. Pancho couldn't lose a checker game on purpose, let alone a fight.

"He told them gangsters to kiss his ass, and went out in that ring and damn near killed that white boy. The fight went two rounds with Pancho winning by a knockout. Three hours later he was dead."

Pete was gunned down as he and Miss Louise left the Silver Fox, a nightspot on Chicago's eastside where they'd gone to celebrate. The newspaper accounts read like something straight from the *Untouchables*, and Tony thumbed through them with awe.

Miss Louise had two sons by Pancho, Hector and Luiz. They both were career Air Force men and sent her curios from air bases all around the globe. She had the most fantastic collection of eagles Tony had ever seen outside of a jewelry store. Some made of crystal, others

of ivory, and even some made of jade—all hinted of magic as they roosted on every available surface in Miss Louise's backroom. And for someone very special, she wasn't above giving one of her precious eagles as a gift.

Tony lifted a can of snuff from the pile on the table and wondered again what was keeping her so long. Stepping toward the half closed door of her room he called, "Miss Louise, Miss Louise."

He'd known for months that her hearing had gotten worse. Nowadays she had to be almost on top of Tony before she could hear him. Tony stopped outside her door and called again, "Miss Louise." Still no answer. "She's really gotten bad," he thought. "I'm gonna have to tell mama so we can keep a closer eye on her."

After knocking softly and still getting no reply, Tony pushed the partially opened door all the way back. She lay with her head at an awkward angle against the headboard. It looked as if she had sat on the bed to dig something out of her cedar chest and had suddenly fallen asleep.

Tony's grandmother fell asleep suddenly like that often. She would be talking to him and if she sat down for just a second, she'd be fast asleep. "Maybe Miss Louise

The Legacy

Continued from page 17

is getting like granma," he thought. "I'll just go in and straighten her neck so she doesn't wake up with a crick."

When he placed his hand on her head and she didn't respond to his touch, Tony was puzzled. Not an eyelid fluttered; not even the whisper of a sigh escaped her lips.

Tears stung his eyes and his chest tightened. Miss Louise couldn't die, she looked out for everyone in the neighborhood. Who would be there waiting when he came in late from playing basketball, telling him not to bounce the ball on the landing? Who would he share her magic scrapbook with now? She had promised to teach him how to make ice cream out of snow this winter.

In agony, Tony gently straightened Miss Louise's

body on the bed and picked up the contents of her spilled chest. As he did so, he noticed something held tightly in her hand. He bent down and tenderly opened her fingers. Inside lay a 24-carat golden eagle. It was her favorite treasure, the one her youngest son had given her 10 Christmases ago.

Tony looked down at Miss Louise once more, and this time he didn't feel so miserable. She seemed to be smiling, knowing that he had found her gift. Tony straightened out a fold in the bedspread, kissed Miss Louise lightly on the cheek, and rushed upstairs to get his mama.



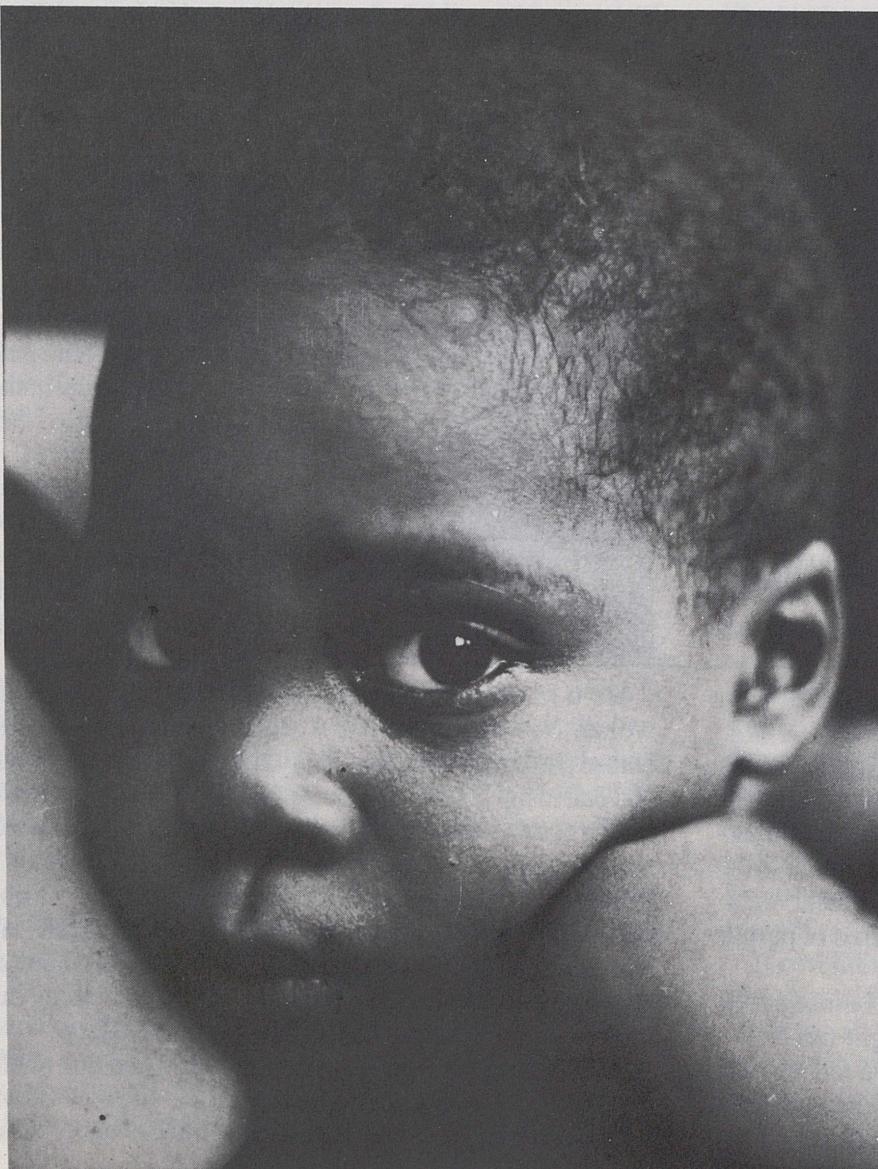
Love Baby

*C'mere
ole boy of
a baby
bundled brown
C'mere*

*rock in steps
on chocolate chippy/tippy toes
cherry pie eyes in cupcake face
Momma's dessert at supper's end
You giggle dribble taffy strings
C'mere*

*C'mere baby boy
sticky kiss
your Momma's cheek
UMMMMM UMMMMMM
Ole boy
of a baby
bundled brown
I stuck on you.*

Jaleelah Karriem
East Orange, NJ



How To Have High-Achieving Children (By Having High-Achieving Schools)

Parents are probably the last bastion for saving public education," says Dr. Lou Venson, Director of Pittsburgh's School Improvement Program. And high expectations, he feels, inspires academic success. When parents possess:

- **a good knowledge base*
- **an ability to check progress at home, and*
- **a grasp of their legal rights*

parents can create high-achieving schools that produce high achieving children.

When Dr. Venson became principal at Beltzhoover, it was one of Pittsburgh's lowest achieving elementary schools. He found that by letting parents, "reach their full potential, it made my job easier. I didn't have to worry about motivation, aspiration, or any of those things. The parents put those qualities into their children and into the school."

Dr. Venson reminds that, "Board of Education regulations (nationwide) state that parents are, in fact, the bosses of the people that run the schools, and educators are there to service the citizenry (i.e. the parents.)

"But nobody ever talks about parents as a vehicle for [improving] public education. They [educators] just play right on by parents as though they don't even exist."

Knowledge Base:

To explain knowledge base, Dr. Venson asks parents, "What are the academic standards for [your school] building? At what percentage does the school certify that a child has reached mastery of any subject?"

Based on the child's test scores, Dr. Venson feels parents should know, "Is it 75 percent for a C, or is it 80 percent for a C? What is an A—90 to 95 percent?

Venson wants parents to understand, "Academic standards of the building relate to the grade that the child receives on a report card. When a child gets a C, if the standard is 75 percent, that means the child has mastered 75 percent of what was taught to him.

"Most parents don't know whether a C means the child has mastered 40 percent or 60 percent," of school requirements.

And, academic standards vary. That is why an A in one school can be a weak C in another. Principals set their school's standards.

Knowledge base also includes understanding the learning program's pacing. Dr. Venson explains, "In order to have achievement, you must have pacing... which is movement through the curriculum, and you must have mastery as you move through the curriculum.

"Pacing," says Dr. Venson, "means that if I send my kid to school for 10 months, and he begins the first grade curriculum—where should he be at the end of 10 months? If he is a normal kid, with normal intelligence, he should finish the first-grade reading program.

"If [the child] does not complete the pacing process, then he will be behind in the first-grade reading program."

Pacing is helped or hurt by the period portion actually used for learning. Thus, Dr. Venson says, "When you walk in a building, you [should] get a general sense of order and productivity." Disturbances in the classroom and distractions outside should not exist.

Achievement Monitoring:

"When you find parents teaching their kids homework, that's crazy," says Dr. Venson. "Homework is a review of something that has already been taught, and already been mastered."

Homework is one, "informal way of knowing that whatever the child was taught, the child (either does or) does not know it." When homework difficulties arise, Dr. Venson tells parents that the teacher must explain why the child does not understand the lessons that homework reinforces. Parents should also find out what tutoring adjustments the teacher will make.

Early in the school year, Dr. Venson suggests that parents ask:

What skills are expected of a child in a particular grade?

What could a parent expect in terms of pacing?

How much progress is expected within a semester?

Using reading as an example, Dr. Venson says that once a parent has the answer to these three questions, "the parent can now—with pacing—track their child through the reading program." She does this by:

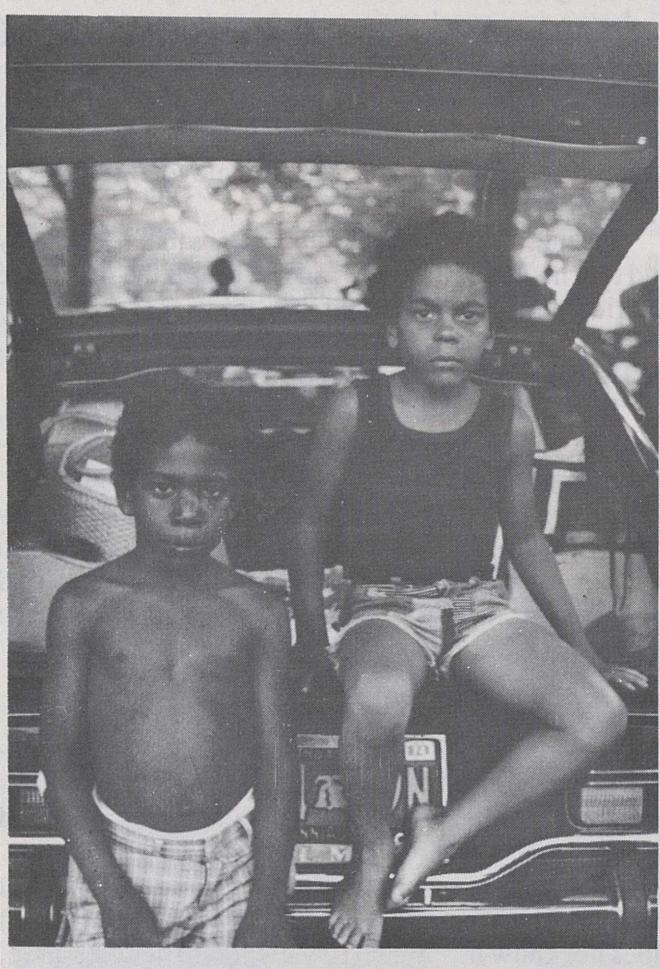
*reviewing the papers the child brings home, and

*checking movement on the report card (reading and/or unit level is shown).

Even a working mother can check her child's

Continued on page 42

ON FATHERS NURTURE



I never doubted that my father loved me. He often did things that demonstrated his love. Like the times he took me bowling when I was barely large enough to hold a bowling ball. Or the times he took me to the pool hall, much to the chagrin of his buddies, and allowed me to walk on the pool tables while I knocked balls into the pockets in golflike fashion.

He showed his tender nurturing side most times when no one was watching. When I finished my military service, I was going to college full time and working full time. I couldn't afford my own apartment so I was staying with my parents in the room that had been mine for as long as I can remember. Because of my work schedule, studying was usually done in the hours between 12 and 4 a.m. After one particularly long day, I apparently fell asleep on the couch (as I did from time to time). I was awakened by a shadow falling over my face. It was my father placing a blanket over me. I opened my eyes and

by Ralph Proctor

said "Hey what you doin, dude?" He jumped back startled and mumbled something unintelligible and dashed off to the bathroom. I suspect that he would have let me assume that my mother had covered me.

I am certain that although he did not overtly nurture me, he must have sent me enough clues to say that a father can be nurturing too. How else would I have learned? Of course my mother constantly taught me to be nurturing but I'm absolutely certain that my father played a, quite often, unseen role in this drama.

When I grew older and had sons of my own, I decided to be openly nurturing. I often held them, rocked them to sleep and made certain that I frequently said "I love you." One day, as I thought about my sons and my father, I realized that I had never heard dad tell me that he loved me. Furthermore, I had never said those words to him. I recalled the warm glow I felt when my sons said those magic words to me and I decided to do something about the situation. I did not want my father to die without ever hearing me say "I love you dad."

I picked up the phone and dialed his number. "Hello" came his usual booming voice. "Hi dad" I said "How are you?—Fine, fine" he replied. "How about you?—" "Still working yourself to death?"—I laughed and said "I learned that from you but I just called because there is something I want to know. I love you dad."

There was a long pause. I chuckled when dad said. "Funny weather we been having. How's them boys?" "Fine dad," I laughed, "You take care of yourself and call if you need anything OK?"

My dad's generation did not easily say "I love you" to their children but somehow they got the message through. Today we are both a little older and hopefully, a little wiser. He says "I love you" as easily as I do.

So to my fellow fathers I would suggest that it is OK to hug your son. It is OK to nurture your man-child. Nurturing is not a feminine trait. It is a *human* trait. You will not be weaker. You will be stronger and so will your sons. There must be strength in gentleness and gentleness in strength. As for me I will nurture my sons for as long as I draw breath or until they say "listen old man I don't need that stuff no more."



STRUCTURING SONS



FOR VANCE

*My Son the years go by
so quickly
I remember like yesterday that little bundle
sitting on my lap
I wondered if I could
help you grow without
forcing you to be me
I wondered if I had the
wisdom to be a good
Father,*

*I've watched you grow
You're so much like me
in Temperament
in Intellect
in Taste and Style
in Mannerisms*

*Watching you is like seeing an ancient film of myself
I'm proud that you are my Son
I'm pleased that I am your Father
I will be Here for you
Until you no longer need me
or until I am called home to see my Mother
Be proud
Stand Tall
Be Gentle
Be Strong
I will Love you
Until the other side of Tomorrow.*

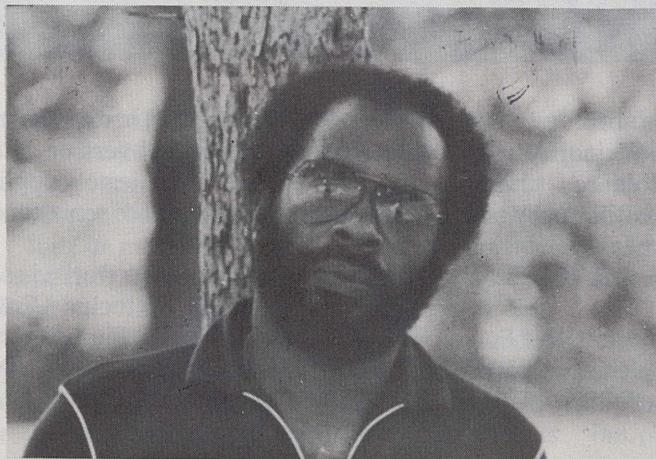


FOR SHAWN

*You're grown now
Have I told you often
enough
How important you are
to me?
Have you heard me say
often enough
I love you?
Have I been a good
Father?*

*Have I taught you to be strong yet gentle?
Time passes too quickly
like fleeting grains of sand speeding through our fingers.
You're grown now*

*I can't recapture lost moments
the times I couldn't be with you
I can't erase your pain
Your confusion
You're grown now
But I can be here now
I can help
I can stay here
for as long as you need me
I'm proud of you
You are my son
You are my flesh
You are my blood
My link to eternity
Thank you
for being You.*



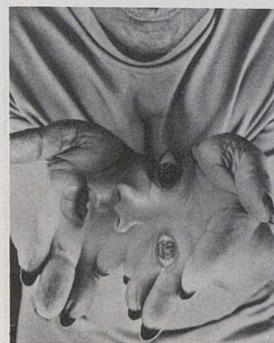
Dr. Ralph Proctor is Executive Director of The Kingsley Association in Pittsburgh, PA, and a scholar on African art.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

We have Greenpeace
for whales, and
bumper stickers for Right to Life,
but nothing to save
a child from puberty,
no group to help
a kid through an abortive
adolescence.

Some teens should have
“Endangered Species” etched
on their foreheads
so parents and teachers
might be aware that a hurt human
dwells within, and
then some adults might learn
to read the pregnant silence.

Rev. Benedict Auer, O.S.B.
Aurora, IL



Ronnie Phillips is a lifelong Los Angeles resident whose individually printed and hand-coloured photography is collected by Bill Cosby and is seen on the “Amen” television show. Phillips has produced two series. The first is titled “Coloured Nostalgia.”

The cover photograph is from the “Real Surreal” series—that involves multiple exposures of children’s images—and is actually Phillips’ mother

with his daughter’s face in her hands. In addition to sepia toning, the original version of this print is further enhanced with delicately applied blushes. All of Phillips’ creations are sepia-toned and hand oiled.

For 12 years, Phillips has worked as a free lance photographer. His clients include *Essence*, *Black Enterprise*, and *TV Guide*. Phillips can be reached at P.O. Box 38053, Hollywood, CA 90038, (213) 232-7319.



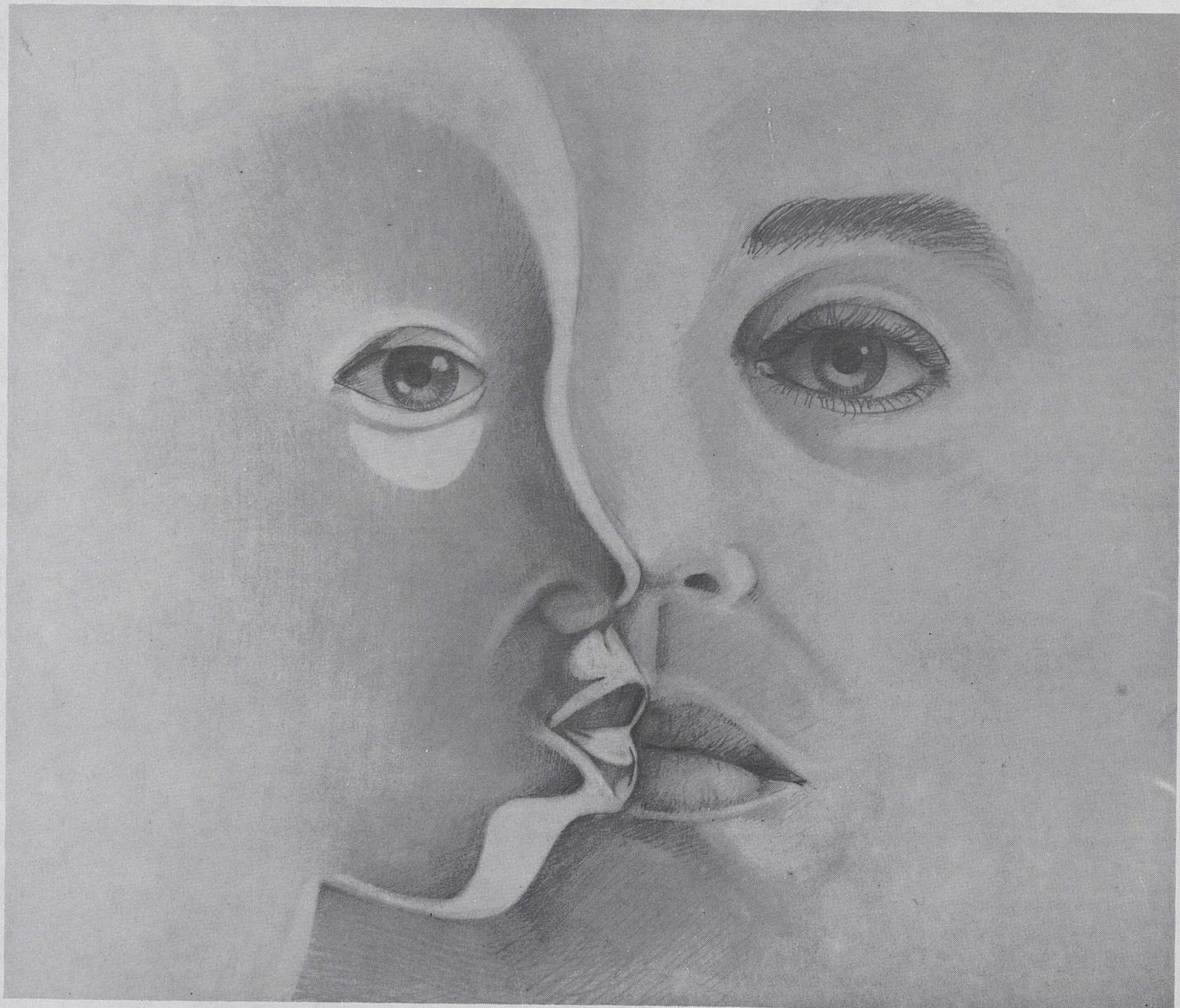
Bruce Davidson, photographer and film director, became the youngest (he was just 24) member of Magnum, the "definitive photographers' cooperative agency," following a year working for *Life* magazine.

Born September 5, 1933 in Oak Park, Illinois, Davidson studied at Rochester Institute of Technology and at Yale University's School of Design. Davidson's talent is best understood through his ability to capture "the poetry of everyday life." His photography, "combines a vision that sees beauty in the meanest of surroundings with a sensibility that prevents

sentiment from dissolving into sentimentality."

This image is from Davidson's study of life in New York City's subway system. Among his many achievements is the collection *East 100th Street*, published in 1970 and *The American Negro*, published in 1966 with an introduction by President Johnson.

In addition to frequent national and international assignments, Davidson is one of the specially-commissioned photographers who is completing an artistic study of Birmingham, AL. Davidson can be reached c/o Magnum Photos, Inc., 72 Spring St., New York, NY 10012, (212) 966-9209.



Illustrated by Darnell Loper

Wanderers in the Wilderness

by Eugenia Collier

I can use her real name now; there's nobody left to care.

Kathryn, called Catty.

I evoke her from the mists of the past and I see her as she was when we were children in that grand house with the velvet curtains. I see her now—tall,

solemn, gentle, with that straight hair framing her face.

She is so *present* to me, even at this moment, for although the undertaker buried her in that unknown grave, *I* never buried her. So I call her forth, out of the peace that she finally found, to help me tell the story that is not hers alone.



My Aunt Fiddie brought her from an orphanage in Washington, all those years ago, way before agencies began checking out adoptive homes. You just went shopping for a baby, I suppose, pointed out the one you wanted, and said, "I'll take that one." I can imagine Aunt Fiddie sweeping imperiously into that orphanage and overwhelming those people with her stern dignity and her air of getting precisely what she wanted. I have seen pictures of the Aunt Fiddie of that time, in the early '20s, some years before I was born. She was most impressive, a slender, handsome, fashionably-dressed woman with fine features and wavy light hair, her delicate lips gently smiling, her eyes steady and knowing.

Who would have guessed that Aunt Fiddie was a Negro? Certainly not the sales ladies who waited on her in the stores where blacks were forbidden in the segregated Baltimore of those days, nor the waiters who served her in the white restaurants that she patronized when she had money, nor her fellow-worshippers in the church downtown where she went upon occasion to worship the white God who had blessed her with fair skin.

And certainly not the people who ran the orphanage. I wonder now why Aunt Fiddie selected this child from all the others. Catty was a dark-haired little Irish baby, deathly sick. Perhaps beneath Aunt Fiddie's tremendous ego there was a softness that responded to the needs of the dying baby. Perhaps. In any case, I can see Aunt Fiddie now, pointing her finger and announcing, "I want that one." And when she left, proudly bearing her miserable little bundle, she had reached the pinnacle of her dreams: She was the mother of a white child.

For our whole culture told her, with deadly certainty, that to be black was to be subhuman. We were ridiculed, shunned, told that we were the missing link between man and monkey. We were shut out of schools, stores, jobs, housing, public transportation, shut out of everything except the bare subsistence, which the white folks allowed so that we could survive and serve them. We were humiliated at every turn. We were raped and murdered with impunity. For we were less than human. And we believed it. Some of us believed it. Aunt Fiddie believed it. So childless and dealing with a rocky second marriage, Aunt Fiddie went to a white orphanage in a nearby city and emerged a step closer to wholeness. A step closer to being white.

When we were children, of course, I didn't know these things. Neither did Catty. She was Aunt Fiddie's daughter, and we were cousins. When we finally talked about it, we were both grandmothers and Aunt Fiddie had been muted by death. When we were children, we were among the many inhabitants of our grandma's house.

Years ago affluent white people had occupied that neighborhood—probably Jews, since there was a magnificent synagogue in the next block up, where on Saturdays we watched the worshippers emerge from their sleek cars, dignified and exuding an air that whispered, "Money...money...money." People who were a stark contrast to the brown folk who sauntered the streets on Saturdays, released from the menial weekday jobs—or the daily quest for work—going to market or doing the weekend chores. The Jews were people who never looked right nor left, people to whom the surrounding area never seemed to exist, only their grey-stoned house of worship. I know now that we, the subhuman, the invisible, were the rock on which their affluence was built. But I didn't know it then. They were visitors from another planet, the men with their black skull-caps, the women bareheaded, disdainful queens. They were the people who had owned our neighborhood before the blacks moved in and turned the lovely homes into rooming houses.

Our grandma's house, there on the corner, was the largest and most elegant. It was the axis from which a number of lives radiated. Grandma was the head of the household, a sturdy woman in her sixties, who had rebuilt a life from the wreckage of early widowhood in a world where black women were society's doormat. Then there was Bill Lewis, Grandma's second husband, who was, to us, Grand-daddy. My parents, my brother, and I had a group of rooms on the second floor. My father, a young physician trying to build a practice, had his office there, and patients were constantly coming and going. Downstairs the copious basement was the bailiwick of various folk whose function seemed to be service to the household but to whom this house was also

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And when she left, proudly bearing her miserable little bundle, she had reached the pinnacle of her dreams: She was the mother of a white child.

Wanderers

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home. There were Paul Lawson, the painter; a gaunt, raggedy man called Crazy Bill; a young girl named Virginia, who took care of us children; and there was James. Upstairs on the third floor lived a series of roomers.

Families were close in those days. They were not only loving companions but often wellsprings of strength for each other in times of trouble. Grandma's other son, my uncle Nelson, lived up the street in the next block; his daughter Minna was my best friend. Grandma's sisters and their families also lived nearby—Aunt Mary across the street, Aunt Edith a few blocks down, Aunt Fannie around the corner. (Aunt Maggie, who lived in New York, was a little odd.) They had a brother, younger than they, who had established the insurance company that employed them all; they called him "the Boss." No day went by without some of the uncles, aunts, and cousins dropping in. So those days were filled with people—loving warm people, troubled people, mean vicious people, wise people, foolish people. They were the context of our childhood. They set the tone of our days. Our years.

Aunt Fiddie and Catty lived on the third floor. Well, actually they lived in New York with Aunt Fiddie's third husband, a person called Sonny, who my mother used to say was hardly older than Catty. But they visited often. I have no memory of their rooms upstairs. Aunt Fiddie was an animal-lover, and she kept a dreadful little dog named Trixie, who hated the entire world and was out to get it. A footfall on the stairway would elicit from Trixie a torrent of barking, and I, for one, would scurry for cover. So Catty emerged from and eventually merged again into the mysterious realm of the third floor, guarded by the three-headed Cerberus Trixie.

There was always an aura of excitement when Aunt Fiddie and Catty came to town. For me they were the glamour of the Big City, world travelers endowed with

the sophistication of faraway places. Sometimes they brought home one or two friends. There were, at different times, a tall pimply-faced girl about Catty's age and a mischievous little blond boy a year or two older than we were. They were special. They were white. Even I knew that they were white. And special.

Aunt Fiddie and Catty came for longer and longer visits, and finally they came to stay. Aunt Fiddie was again between husbands.

For Catty those years must have been unhappy. Aunt Fiddie was harsh and abrasive at best, often embroiled in shouting arguments with others in the household, especially Bill Lewis, who would be abused by nobody, and with my mother, who was highly neurotic and hated living with her in-laws. Moreoever, Aunt Fiddie's name was—for me, at least—a source of confusion: Some called her Mrs. Butler after Husband #2; some called her Mrs. Cunningham after Husband #3. (Husband #1 has been lost to history.) To Catty, #2 was her father. He had by then remarried and had other children.

There were two other children in the household. Being the youngest, I thought of them as near-adults. They were caught in a particularly vicious custom—a leftover from slavery with a most peculiar twist: the children of the poor were sometimes brought to live with the more affluent as low-paid (probably unpaid) servants. In our household, Virginia was a

high-school girl. I remember her studying out of big books with tiny print. She was smoothly tan with sparkling eyes. She was beautiful. She was warm and loving to me. James was younger, not much older than my brother and me. James was very dark with a ready smile and a loud, spontaneous, marvelous laugh. He was always there to do everybody's bidding. Nobody thought of him as beautiful, least of all James himself. But he was.

I think now that we lived on the cusp of two worlds and belonged to neither.

ONE LIFE FOR EACH OF US

*Give your children back their borrowed lives
you have lived in all these many years.*

*Let them spend their love and longings
in the market of their time.*

*Let them waste their grown-up anger
for no reason, for no rhyme.*

*Return their childhood promises;
give back their youthful dreams;
Let go the ties that bind them
now ragged at the seams.*

*A peer call in September/let them answer
to the call.*

*A love song of the highway/let them stumble
let them fall.*

*Let your warriors choose their battles;
Let your artists choose their pain;
Let your martyrs choose their meanings,
give them back their lives again.*

*Loose the bondage of your kisses
and the judgment of your eyes.*

*Free the caged bird from his longing,
give them back their borrowed lives.*

Maisha Baton
Albuquerque, NM



WE

Picaninny braids
we used to call them.
Thick, knotted diadems of ancestry
lay patiently on our necks.
We would run around
without shirts
and nobody cared.
And the sun, the sun would place
bronze brushstrokes
on our flat nipples.
Tea parties, not in Boston,
but Memphis and Charleston
were our social scene.
Stickforks and mud pies.
We knew just who to invite.
Fishnet stockin's and hair's all
pressed.
Black patient leather shoes clickin'
in the back pew of St. Paul
New Zion A.M.E. Church.
Yvette Murray

In their pathetic zeal to reach the white world, our elders scoured the black. In our house there were the light-skinned affluent and the darker-skinned poor. To the more vocal of the light-skinned, color was all-important. The infusion of the oppressor's blood endowed us with special glory. Hardly a day passed without some reference to color. White people and colored people. And always the whites were the good, the desirable, the beautiful, while black people were despicable. Aunt Fiddie pursued whiteness with particular ardor. She especially liked going downtown, where few stores allowed blacks, and none allowed us to try on clothes. In her role of Mrs. Rich White Lady, she told the sales clerks (white, of course) that she lived in the suburbs and that when she finished shopping she would take a streetcar to the end of the line, where she would be met by her "people." Once, talking with the aunts, she related with gusto an experience she had had in a downtown store, in which she was actually *trying on hats!* A black charwoman whispered to the saleslady, who confronted Aunt Fiddie. "Yes I'm colored," Aunt Fiddie responded serenely, "and I want this hat." The charwoman, Aunt Fiddie felt, was black and ugly, dumb and jealous. For the white people whose racism perpetuated a vicious system, Aunt Fiddie had no reproof.

Catty was never, I suppose, what one would call pretty. She was long and angular, with long hands and feet. Her hair was too straight for much styling except for a fringe of bangs on her forehead. She was soft-voiced and quiet, rather like Grandma herself, but with a dry

sense of humor that made her more fun than anybody. She bore Aunt Fiddie's tirades in silence, although she did engage in occasional lively arguments with Bill Lewis and James. She delighted in the numerous dogs and cats that were also part of the household.

But Catty, like the rest of us in that house, was a loner. The move from New York to Baltimore had been a cultural shock. In New York she and Aunt Fiddie had blended in with the multiracial population, where whites, blacks, and foreigners of all kinds had mingled. In Baltimore the territories of the races were strictly defined and strictly enforced. Aunt Fiddie saw to it that Catty did not mix with the people in the neighborhood. She and Catty did white things. They went out of the neighborhood for shopping and movies and God knows what else. I sensed but could not codify into words the inflated pride with which Aunt Fiddie sailed out of the house, with a dressed-up Catty in tow, heading for the streetcar downtown to those tantalizing forbidden areas.

For to Aunt Fiddie white was all. She had little other than her white skin and her imagination to make her feel like a whole human being. Neither as intelligent nor as well-educated as her brothers, nor as loveable as her now deceased sister, nor as accomplished as her mother, Aunt Fiddie clung to the one thing that the Lord had given her—white skin and hair which (if she wore a hat) would arouse no suspicions. Being selfish and domineering, she lived life according to her own rules, regardless of who was trampled. She wore Catty like a gem but her treatment of Catty was harsh and unloving.

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Wanderers

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For Catty was the *real* thing, and she, Fiddie, was a fake. In her outbursts of temper, Aunt Fiddie would shriek at Catty, who would tuck her head and shrivel under her mother's wrath.

In school Catty was forlorn and friendless. One of the cousins, who was in her class, told me recently that she held herself aloof from the other students, probably because of Aunt Fiddie's indoctrination. Certainly she was the whitest thing in the school, and maybe that made a difference. I wonder, though, whether her aloofness was mainly shyness, at least in the early grades, and a sense that she *was* different. Her classmates were the neighborhood children with whom she didn't associate. Most were brighter than she. They were a community; she was the outsider. They grew up in a tradition. They belonged.

There was no world in which *she* belonged. There was no tradition in which she was reared except the tradition of racism. She was displayed but not valued. Standing on the outside looking in, she must have had serious questions about herself, but there was nobody to provide answers. So she retreated within herself. She must have regarded her schoolmates with a devastating mixture of emotions: scorn, envy, a desire to belong, an inability to bridge the gap of skin color—all of these and more. In any case, she was a lonely and alienated child.

Deep inside, she must have known that she was not one of us, that she was white. In school she was the lone white face in the middle of brown, black, tan, and yellow. But at home, although nobody was that white and nobody's hair was that straight, she was not *terribly* different. I think now that she had within herself a strong system of denial. She would not believe what others knew. She wanted so much to belong.

I recall her high school days most vividly. Along with some of the cousins, she attended Douglass High. Never a scholar, she had to struggle to get through. She had a

flair for drawing, and I remember some cartoons that she did—stereotypes of black people in comic poses. I thought them very funny. She still had few friends outside of the family, and I don't remember any boys coming to the house to see her. For the prom she had her hair curled into a "permanent wave." The curls softened her angular features, and she looked lovely.

Graduation day ironically brought her to a new level of painful awareness. Minna told me about it. In her hurt, Catty ran to Minna's mother, who was a warm, compassionate person, and cried out her pain. Catty had had a fearsome battle with Aunt Fiddie over something or other, and Aunt Fiddie had hurled at Catty the dread knowledge that Catty had been avoiding for all of her life—that she, Catty, was not Aunt Fiddie's child, was not anybody's child, did not belong in this family or any other, that she was adopted, that she was white. All the confusion of all the years fell upon her like an avalanche, and she huddled wilted in a big chair in Minna's house, weeping as Minna's mother tried to comfort her, the white graduation dress a mockery on all her life.

Having orchestrated everything else in Catty's life, Aunt Fiddie now set about to arrange a marriage. She selected one of the Boss' sons. Now, the Boss' family was as white-struck as Aunt Fiddie. It is said that when he took his children out for a Sunday drive, a darker-skinned child would be made to sit on the floor so that she couldn't be seen. One of his children had already



After graduating from Howard, Eugenia W. Collier attended Columbia University. In the white world of graduate school in New York, she was more than ever drawn to an examination of black culture. Her master's thesis was on the poetry of Sterling Brown, and she believes that it was the creation of that thesis that opened her mind to the vitality and universal importance of black culture in America. Ms. Collier says, "I always wanted to be a writer. One of the nourishing memories of my childhood was my father's reading to us—poetry, stories, all sorts of things."

married white. So the marriage between Catty and his son was arranged. Catty had whiteness to offer; the Boss' son had money and near-whiteness. Catty's baby was born in agony. Nobody could visit her in the hospital because the baby was born as white. By the time the marriage ended, Catty was completely white, living in a white section of town, far from her Negro past.

Years melted away. We moved out of Grandma's house. Some of us grew up and others grew old. Some died. Some moved away. Aunt Fiddie had two more husbands: One died and the other just faded into the sunset. The large extended family dwindled. I saw Catty rarely, although I heard news of her now and then from Aunt Fiddie. I heard that she was working in a factory, that she and a woman whom I will call Estelle had bought a house together, that Catty's daughter had married and was living out of state. And that Catty had cancer.

When I saw her again we were both grandmothers. We were in a mortuary in a black neighborhood—at Aunt Fiddie's funeral. Catty's hair was graying, and her face reflected hard times. She was as long and lanky and as gentle as ever. She met my sons and their families for the first time, embraced my mother, and was glad to see us all. She was very much alone. Nobody of hers had come—not her daughter nor her companion Estelle. It wasn't much of a funeral; Aunt Fiddie was not a church member, and there were few left to mourn. We simply stood with bowed heads around the open coffin while the mortician muttered a prayer. I went over and stood with Catty, and we clung together.

After that, we became friends again for a little while. Aunt Fiddie had left no insurance and little money, and Catty, living frugally on a disability pension, was hard-pressed to buy Aunt Fiddie a name plate. We stood together over the anonymous grave and thought how terrible it was to be swallowed into eternity without leaving even your name to show that you existed. Catty wouldn't ask for help, but I gave her a small check I had just received for something I had written, and one or two relatives had sent money rather than flowers. Eventually we were able to select the simple name plate that now graces Aunt Fiddie's grave.

Catty and I got together several times after that. We chatted about old times and about our mutual fondness for cats. She told me that the cancer that had taken her breast was now in her spine but was in remission. Being Catty, she joked about it. But she knew what the future held for her. She knew. One day she showed me a little poem, written by an unknown author, which she had found in a newspaper and which had moved her so that she carried it in her wallet.

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow;
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain;
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft star that shines at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry—
I am not there, I did not die!*

Catty and I had little in common by this time. She had named her little black kitten Sambo and it didn't occur to her that there was anything degrading in that. And I could not relate to the photograph of the white daughter and the little blond grandchildren who had not come to Aunt Fiddie's funeral.

Deep down, in some irrational part of my Self, I had never forgiven her for being white. She had chosen the easy way. she had become part of the cruel, arrogant people whose madness had ruined the world. I had loved her, and in choosing to be white, she had rejected not only me but my entire history.

I didn't analyze my feelings then, of course. I only know that as time passed our friendship faded. Yet she needed a friend. Her relationship with Estelle was painful, and she had long since turned to gin for comfort. When she would call me, I did try to help. But I was caught in whirlwinds of my own, and it was something of a relief when she stopped calling.

I told myself often that I really must call Catty and check her out. But I never did.

Then we heard that Catty was dead. Had died weeks before. Nobody in the family had known.

Before she went into the hospital, she had bought a cemetary plot—and a name plate for her grave. She asked Estelle not to tell us. She had come into this world alone, she said, and she would go out alone.

Looking back on that strange, aberrant household which spawned us, I see how history victimized us all, even (or perhaps especially) the whites whose humanity was imprisoned by their own racist assumptions. For racism is not merely an abstract term to be bandied about by sociologists and politicians and radicals. It is a virulent force which penetrates the most intimate

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recesses of the individual self. It created—and not in our family alone—a whole class of people ashamed of their roots, people who would not be black and could not be white, people wandering lost within a wilderness of the Self, people who rejected their past and thereby rejected the very core of their being.

It was this force which propelled Aunt Fiddie into that white orphanage all those years ago and sent her forth with a white baby, a child doomed to walk the world a stranger.

There is catharsis in ritual. When Catty died there was no opportunity to clear the slate, no final clasping of hands, no cleansing funeral tears. Catty's ultimate denial was painfully eloquent.

So I write these words to affirm—to her if the dead can know—that she was loved. And if love was hammered into distorted shapes by racism, it was love nevertheless.

These words are my eulogy for my cousin.



Sister And Me

African violet
Bought and sold
Black child, black girl
Touchin' gold

Deep dark earthy
Heel so bold
Black child, black girl
Touchin' gold

Can't you feel the
marrow shout?
Bold and sassy
Let her out!

I'm too hot to
feel such cold
Black child, black girl
Touchin' gold

I'm too silk
American,
I'm too velvet
African

I'm too born in God
I'm told.
Black child, black girl
Touchin' gold

By Valerie R. Bowe
Atwater, CA



Photo © 1988 By Deborah Dember

DIR ECTIONS

DIR

*I heard a black child crying
on the street last night.*

Hush, now.

Look, hopefully toward the horizon.

*A distant light shines
prism-like through your tears.*

*Reach inside and find the
strength of the pharaohs.*

Find the river Niger.

*It leads to glory. It is a sign of
your direction home.*

*There is the dust of ages
in your soul and the fire of the
pangs of birthing a people.*

Pull the fire out.

*Set it blazing before you.
Cast it ahead of you*

And never ever look back.

There stop your sobbing.

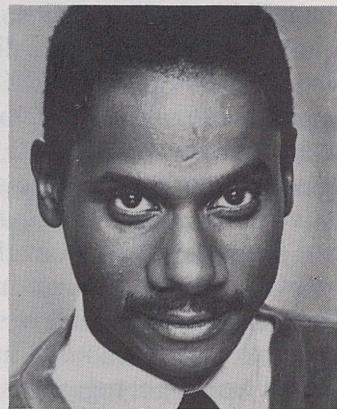
Put on your shoes.

We're burning daylight.

Lamont Arnold
Pittsburgh, PA

Lamont Arnold writes plays, prose and poetry. He is a Theatre Arts and Communications graduate of the California University of Pennsylvania.

In addition to working in almost every major theatre company (12) in Pittsburgh, Lamont is co-founder and chief writer for the Lemming Project, an improvisational comedy group.

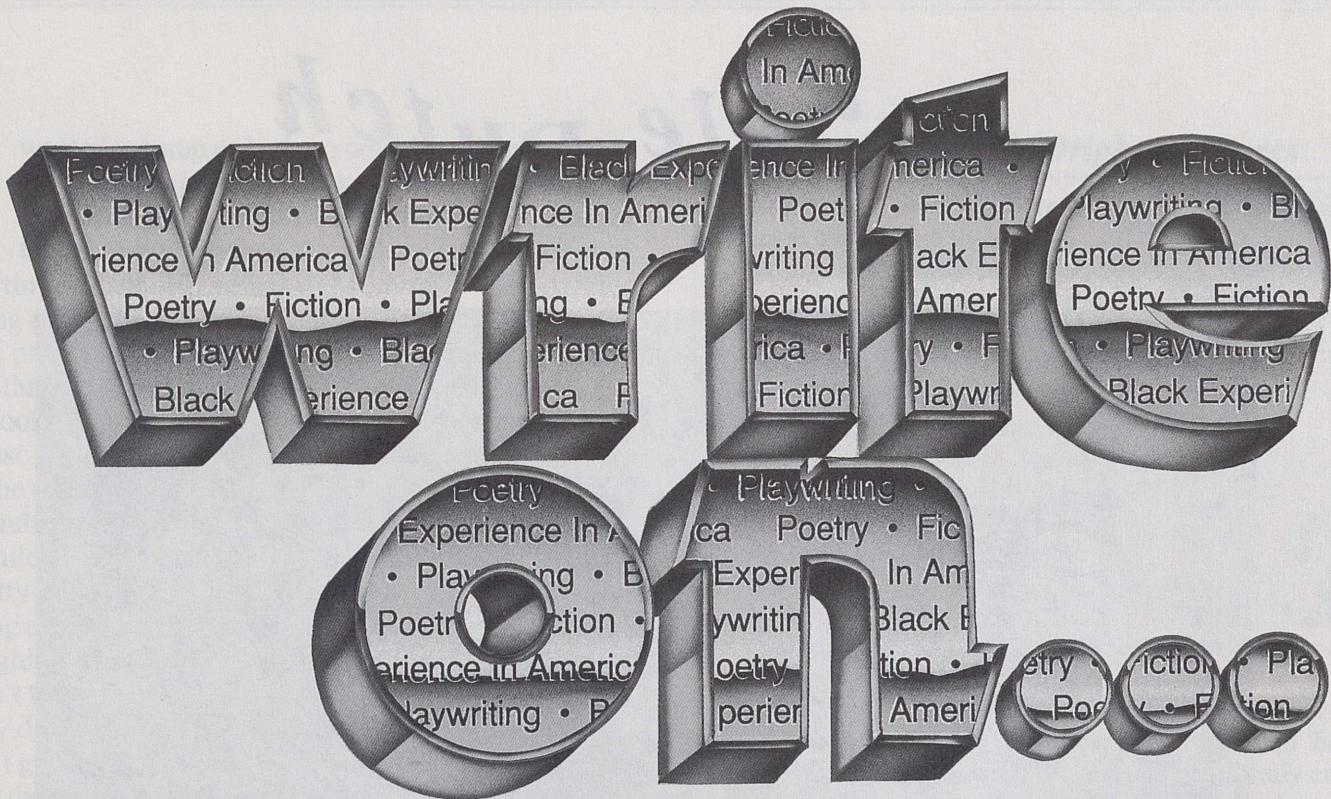


★————★

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Announcing the 1989 McDonald's® Literary Achievement Awards Competition

For the past 11 years, McDonald's has recognized and honored the literary excellence of those who write about the black experience in America. McDonald's is pleased to continue this tradition.

Developing writers have a chance to compete for awards named in honor of three of the country's most esteemed writers—the Nikki Giovanni award for poetry, the Maya Angelou award for fiction and the Charles Fuller award for playwriting.

\$2,000 Prize

The winner in each category will receive an honorarium of \$2,000, a trip to New York to participate in a literary forum and a celebrity reading of his/her work performed by the Negro Ensemble Company.

Eligibility Requirements

You must be 18 years or older to enter.

Fiction:

Submit up to 50 pages of a long work or

two short works which total no more than 50 pages, along with a biographical statement and a list of any and all publications in which your work has appeared.

Poetry:

Poem(s) shall not be more than 15 pages and should be accompanied by a biographical statement and a list of any and all publications in which your work has appeared. Up to five poems per person may be submitted.

Playwriting:

Submit one copy at least 20 pages in length, accompanied by a biographical statement and a list of all production locations.

Submissions must be typewritten and double spaced on 8½" x 11" paper. All entries must be original works.

Deadline for entries is midnight, June 1, 1989. Include your name, address and phone number with your entry, and mail to:

The Negro Ensemble Company
McDonald's Literary Achievement Awards
P.O. Box 778
Times Square Station
New York, NY 10108

Entries will be judged by a panel of literary experts selected by The Negro Ensemble Company.

One winner in each category will be selected. McDonald's will notify finalists in writing by July 15 and winners by August 15. Due to the volume of entries, materials will not be returned.

The McDonald's Literary Achievement Awards are presented in association with The Negro Ensemble Company.



Double Dutch



Photo by Saihou Njie

*All the girls in France do the oochie coochie dance
and the way they shake is enough to kill a snake
head and shoulders baby one, two, and three
head and shoulders baby one, two, and three
head and shoulders, head and shoulders, head and shoulders baby
one, two, and three
knee and ankle baby one, two, and three...*



I wanted to jump so bad, go outside and jump in that rope, jump up and down, kick my legs all around, but I couldn't. I couldn't do nothing until I cleared the table and washed the dishes, and Daddy was starting to rant. He yelled to Mommy, "Hey darkie, bring me another waffle in here." He sprawled his legs out, put his hands behind his head, and grinned, showing that big liar's gap in the middle of his mouth. Then he looked over at me and said, "We's the children of the house niggers," and bugged his eyes, and punched me in the arm laughing, his yellow cheeks filling with red. I kinda gave a half smile, but the humor got lost after awhile. Now, I just thought his friends must dog him pretty bad on Saturday night, cause he said the same thing every Sunday morning. I think he noticed I wasn't laughing cause he got serious and said, "I know you don't think them darkies you play with like you, cause they don't. No matter which way you turn, somebody ain't gonna like you. The blackies hate your yellow ass, and the whiteys hate your black ass." Then he yelled to Mommy, "Ain't that right blackie?" Mommy didn't say nothing, she don't ever say nothing.

Now I really wanted to jump. I could feel the heat coming through the windows, but that rope smacking the ground was sounding better all the time, and if I stayed any longer I'd have to hear the rest. I already knew it. I knew it like I know my prayer. "You better do good in school," he'd say. "Better do better than those white kids. You be number one, have them running to you asking questions." He'd start raising his voice, his face getting red. You'd think he was preaching. It didn't bother me too much. It only bothered me when he'd say, "If any of those darkies out there touch you, you hit them hard enough to draw blood. And you better not cry, you cry out there you'll get another whipping in here." Those darkies he kept talking about were my friends, and there wasn't no reason for me to be out there fighting them. It started to make me mad, what he was saying. So I picked up the dishes, threw them in the kitchen sink, and ran outside before I could hear any of it.

Everybody was outside, I mean everybody. The boys were running up and down Ranstead playing touch football, dodging between parked cars. Kids running in and out of the fire plug, water trickling down their bodies and off their heads, chasing each other. I thought summer must be the best time of the year. We took over the streets for almost three months. Everyday and all night we just played, and I got to jump rope. Nobody jumped

The Arts Building Brighter Futures

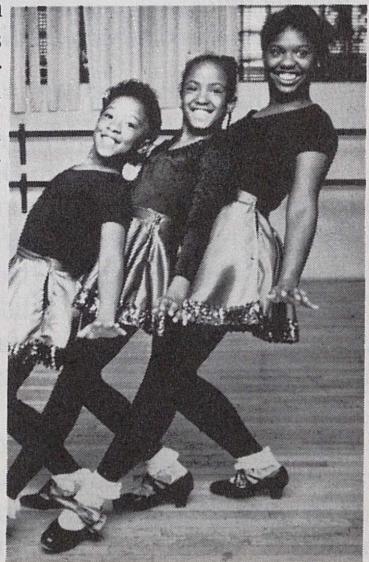
Katherine Dunham was born in Chicago and moved to Joliet, Illinois when she was seven. A strong urge to dance led her to return to Chicago where she worked as a librarian and studied dance with Ludmilla Speranzeva and Vera Mirova. She received her bachelor's degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Chicago, a subject she chose because of its penetration into the lives of people the world over and which later would prove so valuable in her construction of a technique and dance theatre based on Primitive Rhythms.



When Miss Katherine Dunham retired from 'active' entertaining in the early 1960s, she continued her humanitarian work in two of the most economically and culturally distressed places in the Western Hemisphere—Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, and East St. Louis, Illinois. High on her list of priorities, was the concept of "Socialization-Through-The-Arts." This is where those with few opportunities to better themselves are given many through exposure to the visual and performing arts.

Today, the Katherine Dunham Museum Children's Workshop—with Mr. Darryl Braddix as director/instructor, and Ms. Lee Nolting as instructor/ballet mistress—continues to support upward of 35 children ages 4-16. Miss Dunham's goals with the children continue to be to: provide them with training in Dunham Technique, Ballet, the various art forms; and once their bodies are physically trained, encourage them to broaden their horizons and help them better understand themselves by learning more about other people in other cultures.

Institute for Intercultural Communications
1005 Pennsylvania Ave.
Box 566
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62201



double dutch at my school, only thing those white kids knew how to do was play tag, so I never got a chance to jump. When I came home from school I had to study: "I was gonna be number one." But when I heard that rope cutting the air and smacking the ground, it was like my feet started to move. I could see Muhammad Ali

jumping really quick, his feet barely touching the ground, whip, whip, I could hear it; I could feel it.

"Hey Jaquie," they yelled at me as I crossed the street. All the girls were in front of Denise's house playing rope. I liked Denise a lot, but sometimes I think she thinks I'm a little strange. Like last week I asked her to come see this Black ballet group with me and my Mom. I loved it cause they never do things like that at school. I mean they'll get tickets to see the local group, maybe, but never to see an all Black group. Denise had never seen anything like it before, and she hated it. She kept asking, "Why they tip-toen all around? They sneakin away from something or what? What kinda music is this, it ain't got no beat to it. Look at them men in tight clothes, must be faggots," then she looked at me and said, "You like this mess, don't you," and shook her head, and rolled her eyes. And I did like it. I liked it just cause it was Black.

"Hi, can I play?"

"Yeah, get Reba's ends." I couldn't jump so well, but I could turn, and say the rhymes.

*jack be nimble
jack be quick
jack jump over the candlestick
footsie one
hopsie two
how many limberocks can you do*

I was having fun, but then Denise's sister Tracie said something really stupid, I almost dropped my ends. She said I looked like some white girl on TV. I mean if she was gonna get mixed up, she could have said I looked like Cicely Tyson, or Lena Horne. But I didn't say nothing, I just kept turning the rope, until Denise said, "Yeah!" like she had some new discovery or something.

"I do not," I said.

"I doo no-o-o-t," Denise said putting her hands on her hips. "You need to start goin to school with us, goin to school with them white girls, can't even talk." I just looked at her, I didn't say anything but she was really

*Jack be nimble
Jack be quick
Jack jump over
the candlestick.
footsie one
footsie two
how many limberocks
can you do*

making me mad. We were supposed to be buddies, always runnin to the market for our Moms, and going downtown to the movies. I didn't understand her. Tracie took my ends and I jumped into the rope. I was doing pretty good, even made it around to my turnsies, but when I went to hop I stepped right on the rope.

"Can't even hop," Denise said. "That's the easiest one, all you gotta do is pick one foot up and keep jumpin like you been."

"Girl shut up," I said and grabbed the ends from her, about to smile it off, but then she pushed me. She put both hands on my chest and shoved, and spit the words "Damn light-bright-bitch," in my face. "Damn near white light-bright bitch." So I hit her. I didn't think about it, just drew my fist back and punched her in the mouth. By the time the boys gathered around, we were all over the sidewalk throwing hits. Then things were getting smaller, and the kids around us started shouting, "Get her! Get her!" But it was too muffled to know who was shouting for who, cause everybody was shouting, until one voice could be heard and for some reason, it was clear in all that heat, and between all the smacks, and shoves, and punches. "They had their time, it's our time now!" Maybe it was clear only to me, and maybe it had always been clear to them and it made me fight harder. I wanted to hurt her. I forgot that we were friends, she probably was never my friend anyway; she was just a darkie.

KID

*snooty nose
dirty, bare feet,
nappy headed, hungry,
mean smellin'
deathly lookin' eyes,
knowin' all.
funky, sho' nuf'
funky
black
kid.
love.*

*Glen M. Rinehart
Oshkosh, Wis.*

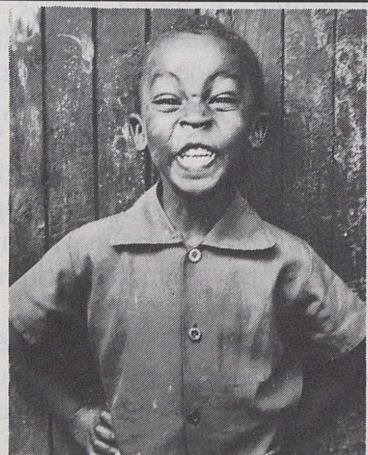


Photo © by Lonnie Graham

The Arts Building Brighter Futures



"Strive for excellence. Stick to it. Hold on as tight as you can to your dreams. Reach for the highest star. Work to your highest potential. There is nothing you can't do and nothing in the world to stop you once you get going." These are the words of a young member of The Boys CHOIR OF HARLEM.

"Jaquie! Jaquie!" It was my Mom's voice.
"Little yellow Jaquie got a brown Momma," I heard somebody whisper as the crowd backed up. Denise and I sort of slowed down, and I looked up across the street and saw my Mommy standing in the doorway.

"Break it up," she yelled. We stopped and I walked across the street, my back to them. I followed her in the house to the kitchen. She sat down. "Prophecy answered," she said, shifting her eyes upstairs where Daddy must have been sleeping. I sat down and she reached over and smoothed my eyebrows, and drew her thumb under my eyes where tears had fallen slowly.

"Did you get her good," she said. I sort of nodded my head.

"Hmm. That's good. Well we all go through it in one form or another." I looked at her and wondered what she meant, how did she go through it,, my "brown momma?"

"When I was a kid all the light brights called me 'little black sambo' or 'raisin head' but it didn't keep me from loving your father. Those kids were raised like that, just like Denise and all those kids out there with her. When your Daddy calls me names he don't mean nothing, just teasing."

"So, you're just laughing at how silly it all is," I said.

"Yeah, that and realizing that it will always be there. He doesn't say it for my benefit, cause I don't get much fun out of it. It's so you hear it."

"We're all the same," I said sliding in the chair next to my Mommy.

"That's right. We're all the same, and we got enough troubles not to try to separate ourselves." I put my head on her shoulder.

"I love my brown momma,"—and my yellow ass, I thought.



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OREO COOKIES

By Shirley Hailstock

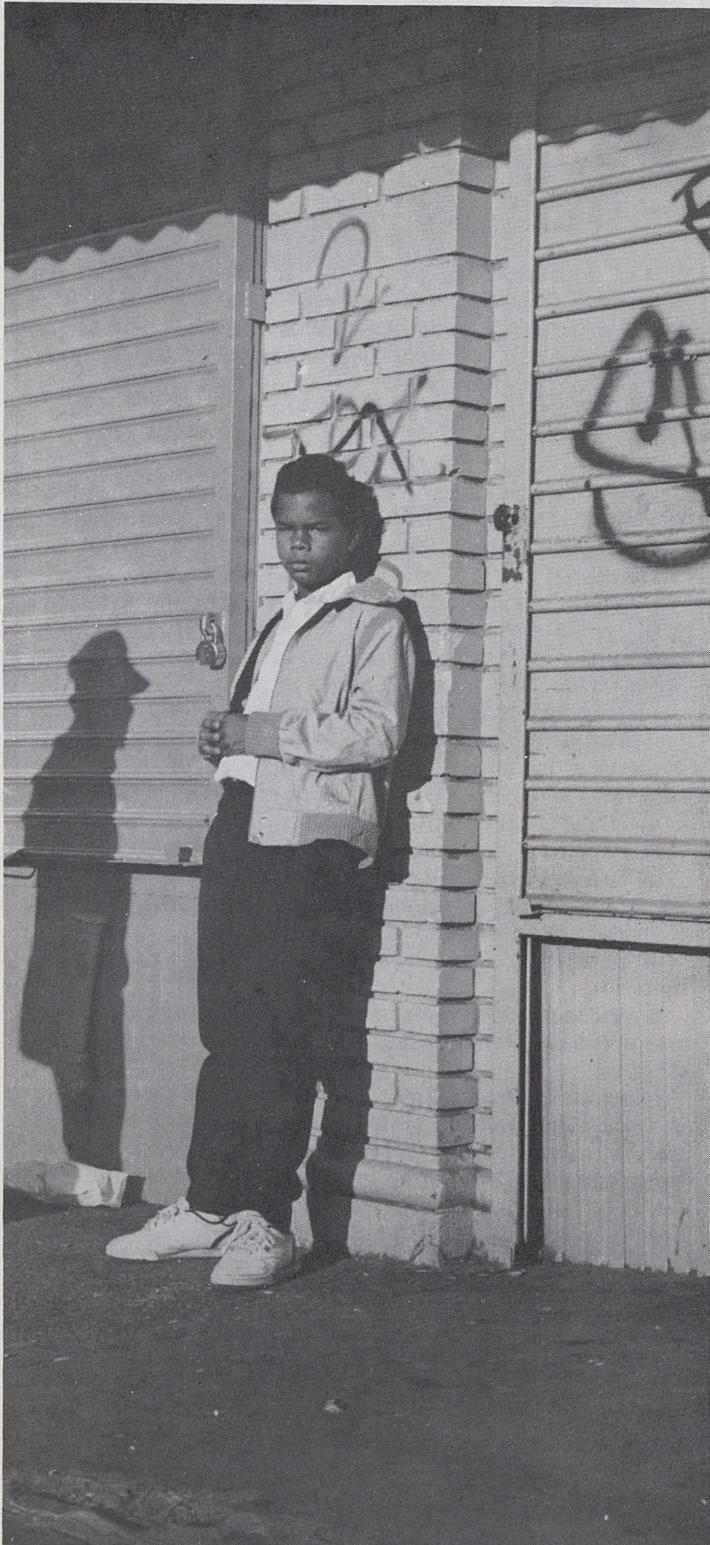


Photo © by Richard Eddy

Julia sat in her living room plodding through test papers. She shook her head at the grades, a frown creasing her brow. With the final paper joining the pile at her feet, she ran her hand through her hair, hair like white people her mother used to say. Her head ached.

Briefly she wondered if it had been the right decision to leave Rutgers University to teach history at Trenton High.

She sat blinking at the stack of papers. Why, she wondered. Why won't they learn? Her former students had come from better backgrounds, not having to worry about money, food or being warm in the night. Her new students had to deal with child abuse, rape, parents who didn't want them or weren't there.

She thought of her parents. They were both doctors and she had been loved, protected, encouraged to pursue her dreams. Her world had been almost problem free. How could she possibly relate to people who were so far from her realm of experience?

In Julia's high school, she was one of the few black students. She paid attention in class, wanted to learn.

Was this class what she wanted when she resigned her tenured position? She'd begun to feel she was existing, not living. The students she taught had become plastic molds in her eyes. She wanted to do something that made a difference. And maybe somehow she could help her son. But she had not been prepared for people reeking of cigarettes and bad body odor.

"Don't worry, by Christmas half of them will have dropped out," Mr. Kelly from the next room told her.

Since then she'd lost two students—one male to drugs and one female to attaining her sixteenth birthday.

Thomas Wright was the male casualty. He'd worn a black leather jacket with 'Hawk' stitched over the left breast pocket. His eyes were always blank, like Derrick's when he was high. Derrick, with his warm charm and chocolate-smooth skin, whose touch was enough to melt away her reason. Hawk had similar qualities. His words came out slowly, as if they had to travel miles to reach his throat. He liked calling her *baby* or *sister*.

On a cold October night, police found his partially nude body face down in newspaper and stagnant water. His only identification was a scrape of worn paper with her phone number on it.

She could still remember the bones in his face covered only by a thin layer of flesh and the grey color of death tainting his hair and shoulders. A boy disguised in a man's body.

George McWilliams sprawled over his seat. Julia moved through the aisles passing back papers. She dropped one on George's desk. He glanced at it then moved his stare back to the windows. She knew he only came to class because it was warmer than the icy alleys outside.

George had succeeded Hawk, and it was amazing

how much he reminded her of Derrick. He had the same stubbornness and, like Derrick, he used drugs. When Derrick reached out for help, she didn't see it and he died. She refused to let that happen to George.

After dropping the last paper, Julia turned to the noisy class. "George," she called above the confusion.

He ignored her, but the room became quiet.

"George," she spoke in a lower voice. "I'd like to see you after class."

"Lady, I give you 40 minutes of my precious time everyday," he shifted away from the window, his voice gruff. "Anything more you don't get."

"I don't want any lip from you," she spoke through clenched teeth. "I said see me after class."

She knew this was a game. After the last two months of bantering back and forth she was getting good at it.

"Now let's go over the test." Julia turned her attention to the French Revolution. George kicked one leg into the aisle and propped the other on the seat in front of him, resuming his stare.

When the bell rang, Julia's mouth was dry from yelling. She'd been unable to speak over 36 people carrying on different conversations. She moved to the seat in front of George. "What do you see when you look out there?" She indicated the windows.

George sat up, his brown eyes looking into hers. "None of your damn business."

"I know about dreams, George..."

"You don't know nothing." He brought his fist down on the desk. She jumped. "You stand up there like some beauty queen, talking about guillotines, aristocrats, but you don't know shit about living here. What we care about French people? We niggas, and we gonna live and die niggas right here in Trenton, and no Oreo cookie like you is gonna make a bit of difference."

"What?" She gasped, surprised.

"You heard what I said!"

She'd been wrong in thinking that she was dealing with an overgrown kid. Oreo implied a lie. And he knew!

"What's wrong, Ms. Ryan?" George's voice brought her back to the classroom. "Did you think coming down here to mingle with some *real blacks* would make you one of us?" He sneered. "Didn't you think we'd see through your act?"

"It's not an act," she snapped, standing up and going to the windows. "All I want to do is help."

"Help!" Toppling the chair as his body left it, George stood up, and spit on the floor.

Julia looked away.

"Just who the hell do you think you are, lady?"

"George, listen to me..."

**"...and no Oreo cookie
like you is gonna
make a bit of difference."**

"I been listening to you." He took a step toward her. "And you ain't said shit."

"You sit here day after day trying to escape outside this window. Do you think there have never been any windows in my life? I had dreams, many never came true...."

"But many more did," he cut in. "And what am I, another dream?" He stepped toward her. She backed against the window. She could smell the smoke on his breath, feel his heat.

"You act like your little heart is bleeding white blood," he sneered.

"I don't want your blood, lady."

"What is it you want then?" Julia looked at the darkening sky then back at him. "What dream do you

have out there?" She pushed him back, too scared to remain pinned against the window. "What about you, George? Were you born a drug user?"

His hands clenched. For a moment, Julia thought he was going to hit her. "Be careful, babe, you walking on graves now."

Julia refused to be pushed off. This time, she wouldn't repeat the mistake she'd made with Derrick.

"Alright, let's talk about graves. How soon do you think it will be before I'm standing at yours? Another Black child given to cocaine?"

"What's it to you?"

"I want to stop..."

He laughed, the sound bouncing between wall and windows. "Can't you get it through your head? I don't want your help. You ain't no fucking psychiatrist."

"And you're no loser." She paused. "It's what everybody says. 'Don't worry about him. He's a loser. By Christmas, he'll be sixteen and gone. And we'll be well rid of him.'"

She felt him tense. The crust he'd wrapped himself in had a small chip, and she had her finger in it.

"I know what I need and none of it includes a meddling bitch who needs a lay."

"But it does include your friends." She spit the word. "How long do you think it'll be before they see through you?" She spread her arms encompassing the room. "They ain't dumb."

"Just what is it you want?"

"I want you to stop trying to escape and do something about changing your life."

"I'm not trying to escape from anything."

"Don't lie to yourself," she screamed, her head throbbing.

"It's no lie, Lady. What I want I'm going to get and I won't need your help." His mouth twisted.

"No?" She sighed, putting a hand to her head. "You don't need anybody's help. You think life is going to stop because you're a *big man*. Well you're not a big man, George. You're

Continued on page 38

Continued from page 37

a little man, and drugs will only make you smaller."

"What you know about drugs?" His smile made her angry.

"I know what drugs can do. I've seen how they take and take until nothing's left. And some night the police will call after they've found your body in some slimy gutter, with an empty vial or a dirty needle as your only friends."

"That ain't gonna happen to me!"

"It wasn't gonna happen to Hawk either." She mimicked. "Where were his friends when he died? And all those friends you've got. How long do you think they're going to remember you? Somebody else will take your place like you took Hawk's. Is that the future you're dreaming of when you look out that window?"

The room was quiet, too quiet. Words were all about them, dry and cracked like her mouth.

Julia sat down rubbing her head. "Go home George. I'll see you tomorrow."

She turned her attention to the windows. She watched the pinkish glow of traffic on one of the main streets several blocks away. Julia didn't hear George leave, but she was sure he was gone. Her head fell. She cried.

When Julia looked up again, she jumped as she stood up, seeing the image of herself and George in the glass.

"What's in it for you?"

"I'm offering you life, George, not a drug. You're facing death and you're scared, like any human being would be."

"I ain't scared of nothing and nobody."

"Yes you are. You're afraid of losing respect." She stopped. "You want to be accepted, and right now you are. There's no doubt you're a leader, but unless you decide to fight for something better, you're going to follow the path that lets you 'live and die in Trenton.'"

"Pretty words, babe. But you ain't answered my question.



What's in it for you?"

"I get acceptance, satisfaction, nothing more."

"And that's all?"

"That's all."

He closed the distance between them. She squared her shoulders.

"You're lying. You're hiding something. What is it?"

"I have nothing to hide. I'm a teacher. I want to help my students..."

"Dammit get off the soap box."

For a moment Julia looked at him. Then, dropping her shoulders, Julia lowered herself into a seat.

"I want to help my son." She spoke quietly. "He could be you or someone like you. For all I know, he could have been Hawk." She looked at her hands a moment, then at George. The cold, unblinking eyes were gone. All that was left was the turning point of a boy on his way to manhood.

"I didn't know you had children." He finally said.

"Only one," she said. "I was sixteen. We lived in an all white neighborhood. Everything about us was white. The hospital where my parents worked. My friends. Everything. The only black I ever went out with was a tall, very black boy named Derrick. We were both Oreo cookies. My parents didn't accept him."

"Why not?" he asked. "If you were both alike."

"Derrick did drugs. I couldn't see what he was fighting. It was only after he died I knew it was his life-style he was trying to kill."

"He died from drugs." It was a statement. Somehow his entire demeanor had changed.

"Like Hawk, he died of an overdose. But I think his was intentional. After he died, I found I was pregnant. My parents forced me to have the baby adopted. I never even saw him."

Finally George asked, "Have you tried to find him?"

Julia shook her head. "I don't expect to ever find him."



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SHOOTING STAR BOOK STORES

Continued from page 38

He'd be about your age. I only know he was adopted by a family in Trenton."

"How do you expect to help if you can't find him?"

"Through you, George." She saw his eyes roll to the ceiling but continued. "You and others like you. Who knows, maybe he'll come through one of my classes."

"Look, don't make me your crusade. I already told you I don't need your help."

She put her hands up to stop him. "You said I was an Oreo cookie, and you're right. I am. It's how I was raised, but I'm trying to overcome the handicap of my birth. You have a sixteen year lead on me to change yours, and I'm offering a helping hand."

For a long moment, they looked at each other. Softly, Julia said, "Accept it, George."



Shirley T. Hailstock writes short stories, poems, and romance novels. She has had poems published in *Mind in Motion*, *Parnassus Literary Journal*, *Rainbow Ministries*, *New Voices*, and *Eve's Legacy*. She and her two children live in Trenton, N.J.

★————★

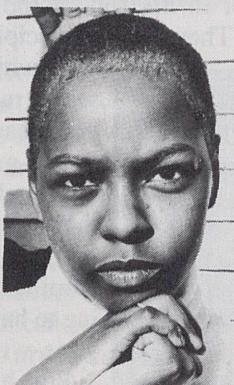
sett'in things aright

*It is not
in ma heart
to be mean
to ya chile
it is love that's a call'n me
to set dis matter right*

*I knows ya's
all growed up now—
aneed'n to do more things
you want to see life
pass dis here ole town
you growed up now
and right pretty
We ain't gonna stop you from aleav'in
jest from leav'in wrong*

*Gon in thar girl
set things a right
with your Mamma
she growed ya to here wid love
and the Grace of God
You be turn'in to her many times
while your away and miss her
with a burn'in heart*

*Gon in thar girl
set things aright with your Mamma
you got time Chile
'fo de train toots.*



Jaleelah Karriem
East Orange, NJ

Photo by Lonnie Graham

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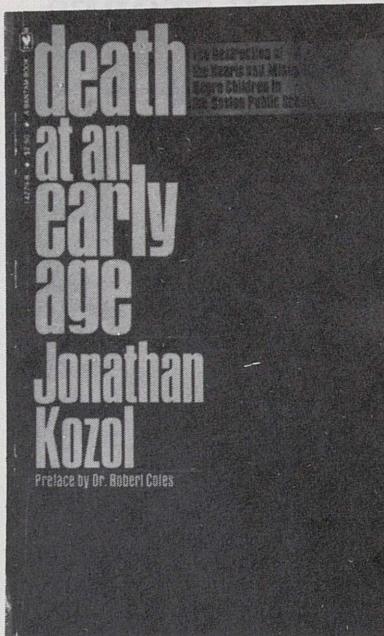
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death at an early age

by Jonathan
Kozol

Book Review By
Mike Whitely

In the summer of 1964, Jonathan Kozol, a young white man, was tutoring children at a church community center, in Boston's mostly black Roxbury neighborhood. That fall he entered the Boston Public School system as a novice teacher; but before the school year was up he would find himself fired for breaking the rules, and for admitting to himself what others in the school system secretly knew, but could never admit: that for most black children, school life meant, "Death at an Early Age."

While the title of Kozol's short, true-life account is shocking, the subtitle is chilling in its directness; "The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools." In his book, Kozol not only chronicles the disturbing events that led to that conclusion, but also offers his insights into how children become the victims of the very people entrusted to nurture and protect them.

Jonathan Kozol began his teaching career in a program designed to preserve the racial status quo, by upgrading the education in Boston's segregated schools. He recounts the shock of being sent into an overcrowded ghetto school with no training in education and no experience as a teacher. He was immediately disheartened by the conditions in the school, and being a habitual note taker, began to record his experiences.

He writes of an early impression of the school: "It was not a school. And it was not a center for disturbed children. And it wasn't an institution dedicated to salvage. It was a place where the school system kept its unteachables out of

sight and turned them into untouchables."

In the following chapters, Kozol details his conversion from optimistic novice teacher, to guilty co-participant, and finally to defiant rebel. He details how crowded and dangerous the building was, and how old and outdated the books were; either not mentioning Negroes, or using the crudest of stereotypes. He taught his fourth-grade class in a corner of the auditorium, where falling windows once missed the front row of desks by two inches. His lessons couldn't be heard over the noise of three other competing classes.

Early in the book, Kozol introduces us to Stephen, an 8-year-old student. "Stephen is tiny, desperate, unwell," Kozol writes. "Sometimes he talks to himself. He moves his mouth as if he were talking. At other times he laughs out loud in class for no apparent reason. He is also an indescribably mild and unmalicious child." Kozol goes on to describe Stephen as living in a poor foster home, where he's no longer wanted and sometimes badly beaten. It was Stephen's treatment at the hands of the teachers and administrators that Kozol found most outrageous.

Corporal punishment was permitted in the Boston schools. Teachers and administrators were allowed to take a student in private and whip his hands with a small bamboo whip called a rattan. He says, while teachers admitted that Stephen was "not in his right mind," they beat him repeatedly anyway. They called it discipline, but Kozol saw something else, which he identified as "a deeply seated racial hate." He writes, "When you hear of a 60-pound mentally ill fourth-grader being guarded by two men and whipped by a third for acts that are manifestly crazy...then it seems to me that anyone, including the administrator of such a system, is going to have to admit that something has gone wrong."

For his part, Kozol tried several times to bring some sense of reality to his class. It was 1965, and the country was in the grip of a civil-rights revolution, but most teachers never mentioned it. He brought in a book called "Mary Jane," about the first Negro girl to go to an all-white Southern

school. The book proved so popular that he bought several copies, because even the so-called slow readers wanted to read it. The reading teacher demanded he stop using the book. He tried being helpful to his students in, and out of school, only to be warned by the principal to keep his distance. He even joined another teacher at an unauthorized community meeting with concerned parents to explain the problems to them.

Finally, the end came in the spring. Giving up on the

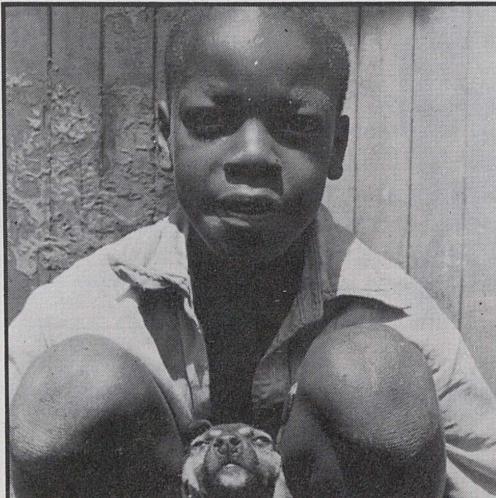


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irrelevant reading materials, Kozol began reading his class the poetry of Langston Hughes. He gave his class copies of a Hughes' poem called, "The Ballad of the Landlord," in which a Negro renter ends up in jail for refusing to pay rent to a landlord who won't make repairs. The father of one of the white students, (a Boston police officer), came to the principal in a rage. The principal acted quickly, and eight days before the end of the term, Jonathan Kozol was fired.

Not letting it stop there, Kozol called contacts in CORE and other community groups, who arranged a news conference the next day. School officials were forced to hastily put out disclaimers and attacked Kozols' charges. But the times had caught up with the Boston school system.

The state Department of Education was issuing a report that said "separate but equal" was a lie and made recommendations for closing some of the worst schools, (Kozols' former school included), and recommended school busing to achieve racial integration. Kozol was banned from teaching in Boston, but he found work in Newton and returned to live in the Roxbury community where he once taught.

Officially, Kozol was fired for using unauthorized class materials and because of a parental complaint about a poem. Both are true, and both are official causes to fire a provisional teacher. But his real crime, he believes, was his simple compassion for his students that threatened the safe wall of denial that allowed everyone to avoid the truth. He quotes this response to the controversy from an older teacher at another school, "If this young man is right—if the educational

scholars are right... if Martin Luther King is right... then we are not merely in some error, which may perhaps have to be somehow corrected, but rather—our entire view of the world has just been shattered and our entire lives may have been a waste."

"Death at an Early Age" was a bestseller when originally published in 1967, and Jonathan Kozol went on to become one of the leading voices of social conscience in education, writing other books on the subject. You might wonder whether the 22 years since then, have left this book outdated. I don't believe so. I'm sure the buildings, books, and practices have changed in schools in Boston, and across the country. But consider Boston, which exploded over the mandatory school busing order 21 years ago, just voted to end that policy and return to the "neighborhood schools" policy.

In telling his story, Kozol has written a classic exposé. And in exposing the darkside, he grapples with what may be the most dangerous power of the human mind: the ability to deny reality and to create a lie to take its place. How else can human beings justify enslaving one another and say it was for the others' good? How else can we explain how seemingly normal people can prey on children and not see the wrong of it? In his book, "Death at an Early Age," Jonathan Kozol captured the beast on paper, and that image hasn't faded over time.



What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge, not knowledge in pursuit of the child.
—George Bernard Shaw

accomplishments. "She can ask the school to send home the reading book...so that she can test him informally simply by asking the child to read. If the child is missing three or four words, then the child does not have a sight vocabulary sufficient to get him through that reading program.

"She can check his comprehension," Dr. Venson adds, "by asking him the basic fact questions (i.e., who, how, why, when, where and what happened?),'" that test a "child's ability to recall."

If the child gets a C on the report card; yet misses three or four lesson words, Dr. Venson says the parent, "must question why because the child cannot perform." At this point, Dr. Venson wants parents to realize that the C grade, "is indicative of grading throughout the building."

The parent has a right to know how the teacher plans to remedy the child's shortcomings because, in this example, Dr. Venson says, "Here is a kid whose growth [rate of progress] and pacing [intervals of progress] is okay, but he is not mastering (the material)."

Legal Rights:

"Everybody gets nervous about (parents coming to school)," Dr. Venson says. "The teachers get nervous

The Children Also Tigers*

*The rising and setting suns—
I ride this high place, the white
hill in brightest day and hide
dark shapes in the light.
But always is the shadow near,
the black shadow with glowing eyes,
trailing the edge of fire
and the red, red pit.*

*Sounds of jubilance drown behind,
grind silent in the night.
Tiger's blood-shadow—a child's
cracked mirror dims the light,
its voice the haunt of death
whispering, whispering in the night.*

*Reference to Thomas Wolfe's
"The Child by Tiger."

Charles Corry
Plano, Texas

because they think they will be interrupted. The principal gets nervous because he does not know what the parent is up to... everybody gets nervous. But, in spite of their nervousness, "Dr. Venson adds smiling good-naturedly, the parent, "has the right to visit the classroom.

"She does not have a right to interrupt the classroom. She does not have a right to a conference (unless an appointment was made), but she can go there as an observer."

School staffs are not always eager to open their files to parents. Still, Dr. Venson says, "Under the Freedom of Information Act, [parents] have the right to examine all records pertaining to their kids. That goes all the way from grade sheet...to the permanent report card...That goes for all kinds of anecdotal notes that teachers put in records."

Why bother? Because, Dr. Venson says, "Those records go on to the next teacher, the next classroom, the next school. It's good for a parent to periodically check that."

In addition, "A child cannot be placed in a special program without the written permission of the parent," says Dr. Venson. "Before a parent signs the child into the program, she should know:

"Where he is now in terms of skills;

"Where he is going to be as a result of the program that they will map out for him; and

"When she can expect some concrete results."

Dr. Venson feels a parent should, "put a time frame on," special education. He also says, "If a parent does not want her child in a special program, she can also sign a withdrawal form. Very few parents realize that you can withdraw your child from the special education-program and the regular classroom teacher should be capable of moving the child along.





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hug and
walk I
see he will be a
proud
Black Man.
He hates to
lose what is his.
Watching him
play and
fight and
give I
see
that he hates
to lose what is
his/
so...
I will teach
Malcolm and
Garvey
Hamer and King
Salassie and Isis
sunlight and pain
truth and love
for I know
as I notice
as I learn
as he shows me
he hates
to lose
what is his.

J.E.M. Jones
Hollis, NY



I am a widow of a man and married to life. God gives talents and we are obliged—by privilege and responsibility—to use them to the Glory of the Lord. I want to be on my own bookshelf and all ways be caught—doing the good work—while living here and now in the ‘nitty-gritty.’

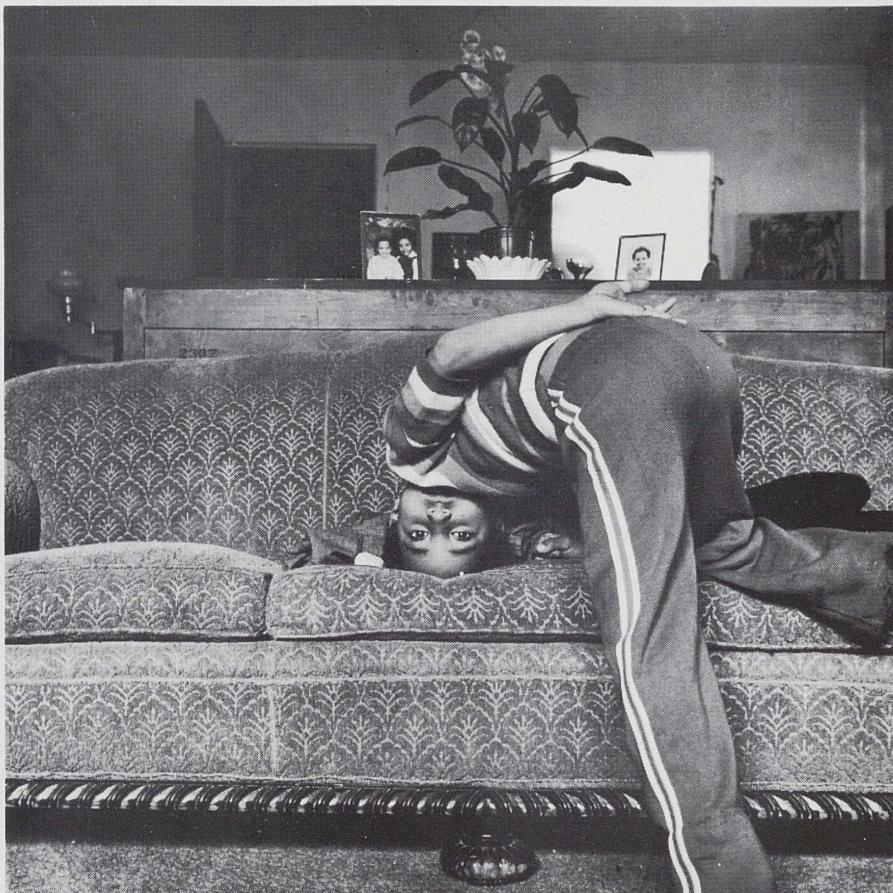
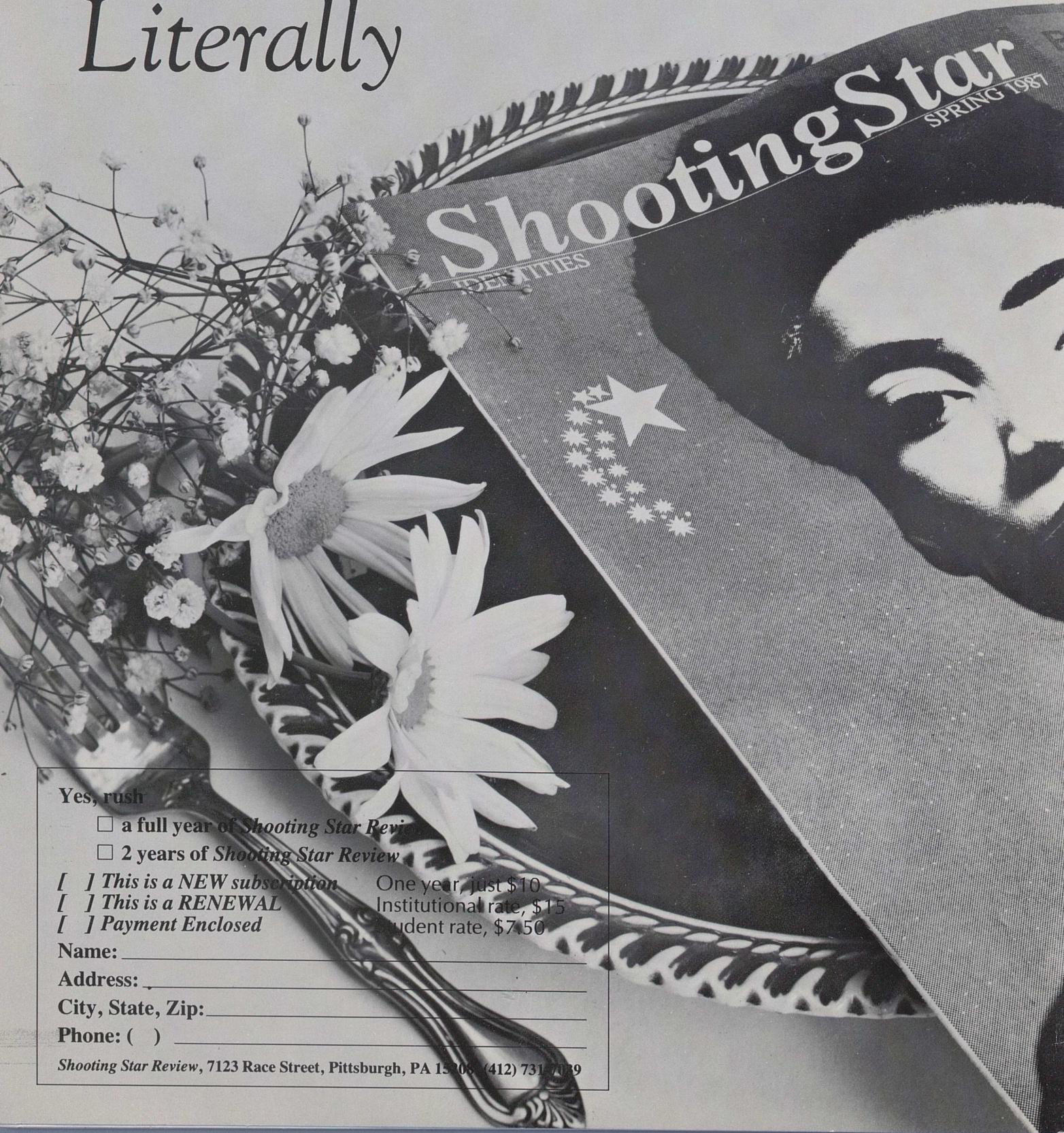


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