



SHOOTING STAR REVIEW

*Liberating
Harvest*



© Rosalie Phillips '89



Shooting Star Review

Published quarterly by

Shooting Star Productions, Inc.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc. exists to build awareness and appreciation for the Black experience via arts and cultural activities.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc. provides its services to all racial, ethnic, religious, age and economic populations, with its most specific and immediate work geared toward African-American youth and adults.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc.'s services include:

Promoting the arts and artists (literary, visual and performing) whose work explores the Black experience; and

Generating programs consistent with the Mission Statement that develop artistic capacity and cultural breadth. These programs can include production of a literary/cultural magazine, a system of Ceremonies, Commemorations and Conferences (such as Writers Conferences, Middle Passage Commemorations, Jubilee and Kwanzaa Celebrations and Literary Readings), and other arts activities and cultural events as opportunities arise.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc.'s Mission and services are provided so that opportunities exist for greater appreciation of the Black experience through knowledge and understanding of the challenges endured and the significant contributions created by people of African descent. Shooting Star Productions seeks to generate self-understanding and a sense of pride and accomplishment in Black people of all ages and circumstances while providing information and resources that could reduce racial and ethnic intolerance and allow the creative potential of all Americans to be better realized. Further, Shooting Star Productions will expand general interest in and access to the diverse expressions of Black culture.



Photographer: Ronnie Phillips

Shooting Star Review
Issue No. 24 ★ 2

Harvesting Liberation

Issue 24 ★ Volume 6, Number 4

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A Memory So True

I will not forget the things that make me
African, to hope the beauty so sacred
and the peace so gentle,
remain in me forever.

There are hills, there are shades to stay in,
even hideaway mountain crests to watch
Our waterfall like the rhythm of
mother and child

Father, the days belong to Us
and in the family of Black
men and women the knowing is
quietly remarked in the sole thoughts
of the hardest worker,
blessed with the sweet vision
of the love our ancestors give to
him at that moment...

The man represents us all.
The peaceful and the brave,
the proudest and the most
in love, we are the People
that live in the Plane of
Dreams made Real.

Postulating future Dynasties
of the Tradition of Beauty
and excellence

I feel the Greatness in me
ache for the actual
closeness of my people now
and before.

Before is such a long time
to think and say, to try and
fit the aching hearts and confused
mind of the distance between Us,
divided
by the brutes that destroyed our
bonds.

If I were like that Pharaoh,
my people would be in control
NOW, but I am simply a young
man with that Dream, his constant
Pain.

We, the masters of joy, will
lift the dividing factor beam
from its foundation to make
a new Day of Sun,
and a new Planet will be
born, A Planet that Black
People will know only as
Peace and Love.

Rodney McNeil
Newark, NJ

Publisher's Statement

Shooting Star Review

Sandra Gould Ford
Founder & Artistic Director



This "Liberating Harvest" issue completes *Shooting Star Review*'s sixth year. In reviewing the seven years since this concept blossomed, I do find deep satisfaction that this activity survived for the artists who are published here and for the readers who have a place to find them.

When starting *Shooting Star Review*, I heard that most magazines never get past their third issue. I learned why. It's tough! Then I was warned that most of those remaining expire within three years. I learned why. *It's tough!!*

Once, while on a bicycle tour, a friend (observing that my clumsiness virtually disappeared in rough terrain) called me a Mud Horse, an affectionate (I hope) name for thoroughbreds that are mediocre in favorable conditions but excel in adversity.

I see many challenges ahead for *Shooting Star Review* and its parent organization, Shooting Star Productions, Inc. This "Liberating Harvest" issue is a good commencement ... an opportunity to assess, refine and expand the knowledge and experiences and friendships gained.

I hope the track for me and *Shooting Star* stays muddy but always with platinum and bright blue horizons, and I hope that you'll continue to be part of *Shooting Star*'s growth and evolution and that you are nourished by the conceptual buffet "Liberating Harvest" provides.



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Sandra Gould Ford, Founder and
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literature are provided by free lance
talent.

IMPORTANT

Include a cover letter and place
artist's name with address and
phone on every page. All text
must be complete and typed
(double space) on one side of
plain, white, 8.5"x11" paper.
Clear photocopies and computer
printouts OK. Reprints and
multiple submissions accepted.

**Return envelopes with proper
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FICTION: Up to 2,500 words.

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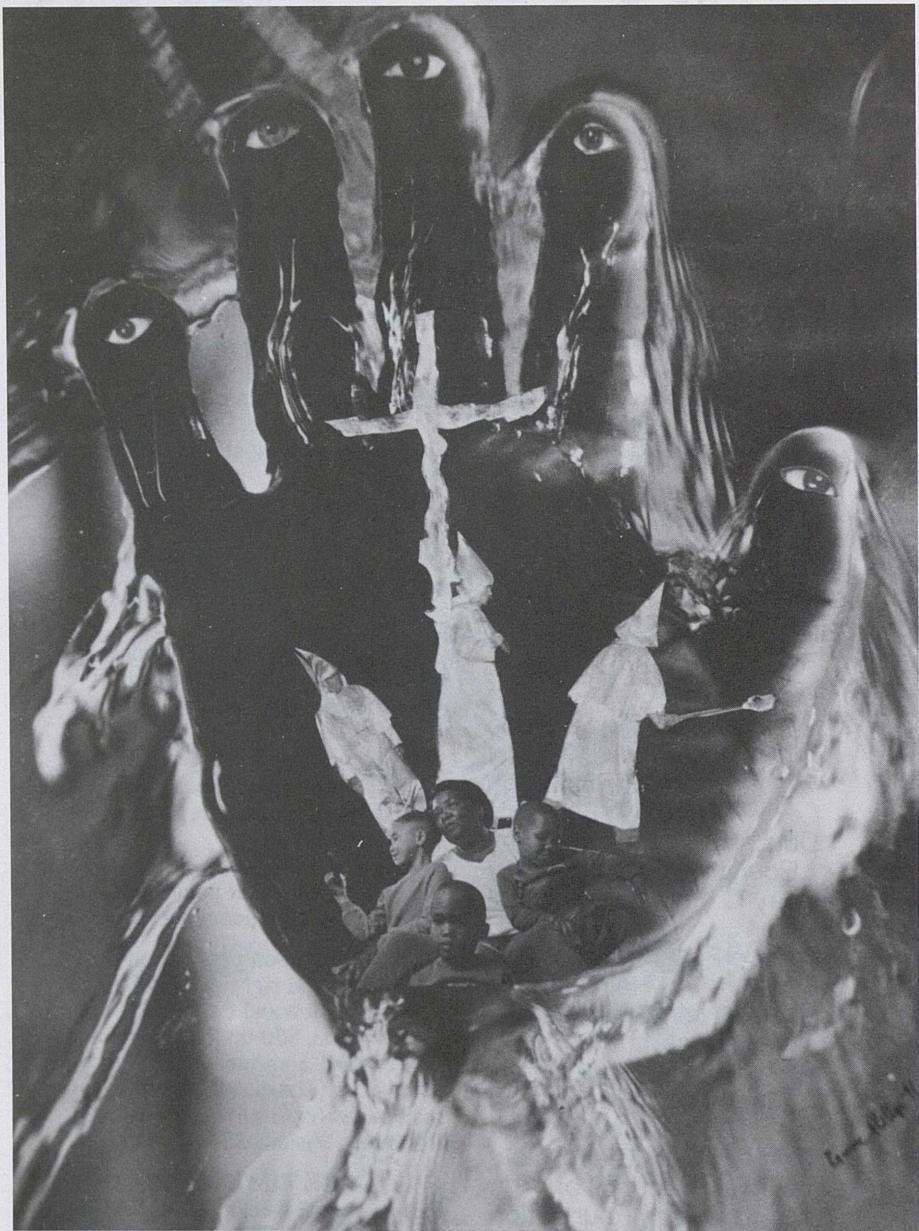
ESSAYS: Up to 2,500 words.

Conversational voice preferred.
Bibliographies accepted but no
footnoting.

POETRY: Maximum 70 lines per
poem. Up to six poems per
quarter. One poem per page.

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Poetry: \$10. Reprints are a third of
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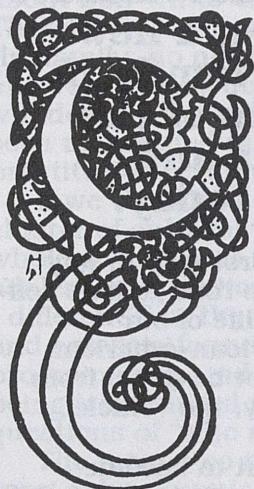
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Photograph by Ronnie Phillips

The Role of the **Family** *in the Spread of* **Afrocentrism**

M. D. Myles
Warrensville Heights, OH



he emphasis on Afrocentrism being espoused today by African-American scholars and educators stresses the urgent need to rectify the damage done by centuries of negative myths and stereotypes about black people created and perpetuated by

Europeans. This emphasis is an attempt to relieve some of the debilitating effects that result when a race of people is robbed of its identity and cultural foundation as was done during the African Holocaust. These effects still plague African-American society today, and black ➤

society world wide, in the form of institutionalized white racism. The problems in the African-American community today, such as drop-out rates, drugs, and gang violence, are but symptoms rooted in the same racism that today denies African-Americans the opportunities to express the full range of their talents in business, science, government and technology. Therefore, to disseminate this Afrocentric perspective, a new focus must be made in the family if we are to reverse the effects of the centuries of negative myths and stereotypes that plague us today.

This focus on the family must be the first step in any move toward self-sufficiency and down the road to true self-determination over our own lives and the life of our community. The process of passing on African-American history, cultural beliefs and practices must be done, from generation to generation, within the family, the vehicle through which culture is transmitted.

However, today, many women still want to become mothers. But, they do not want to assume the traditional in-home functions of motherhood. And, in many cases, this is not even a viable alternative. Nevertheless, our children cannot simply be left to grow up in the streets unsupervised or in the care of others who have no vested interest in the content of their character. It is not the day-care workers job to raise children, but to take care of them. It is not the responsibility of school teachers to raise children, but to educate them. And it is certainly not the function of the police to supervise children, but to arrest and incarcerate those whose parents have failed to raise them properly.

Consequently, despite the push toward liberating women from the responsibilities of motherhood and

regardless of economic constraints that might make assuming those responsibilities a nonviable alternative, African-American parents cannot afford the luxury of abandoning the parental responsibilities of transmitting their own cultural beliefs, values, and history. They cannot afford that luxury for the simple reason that European-American cultural beliefs and values are being transmitted through the mass media to their children. And what is being transmitted there is not an accurate nor an adequate portrayal of African-American culture and history. What is being transmitted there are negative myths and stereotypes.

Thus, African-American families cannot afford to slip into the latch-key kid or the TV-for-babysitter syndromes when television is promoting a Eurocentric point of view complete with all of the negative myths and stereotypes about non-white society in America and around the world. Therefore, if African-American parents, or other elders in the family, do not transmit the culturally specific beliefs and values they hold dear on to our children, our children will develop the warped sense of self and group identity seen manifested in our communities in the form of prostitution, drug use, and gang violence.

If we ourselves do not transmit a moral and meaningful cluster of cultural values and beliefs to our children, then whole generations could find the answers to the typical adolescent questions of "who am I?" and feelings of "why am I different?" in the gangs, drug users, prostitutes, burglars and convicts found on the evening news, in prime-time programming, and at the local cinema. are the answers being transmitted through the mass media to our children's questions of "who am I?"

The reason so many of our teens identify so readily with gang subculture is because it is better than no group identity or culture at all and preferable to the negative one they see in the media. Therefore, we as parents and elders must give them a more positive image of themselves, their history and their culture. And, in embarking on this Afrocentrism, we must focus on the family for the transmittal of the truth about the role of Africans in world and national history.

Whoever fulfills the function, parents, grandparents, uncles, or aunts, the primary role of the care-giver must extend beyond simply feeding and clothing the children. While we fight to have African-American contributions to American and world history taught in the schools, there ➤

is nothing stopping us from teaching it in the home while we fight to eradicate stereotypes about ourselves and our history and culture from the mass media.

Less will be accomplished by establishing separate public schools for our young boys and girls than by establishing our own community centers where we send our children after school and on weekends to learn what they are not taught in public schools. Not only our history and culture must be taught at these centers but, also, our wants and needs and how we ourselves can and must meet them.

An Afrocentric education must include a knowledge and understanding of how Europe underdeveloped Africa as well as an understanding of the nature and workings of racism and prejudice. Young people entering the world beyond their family and community can hardly be expected to deal with a problem they have not even been taught to expect nor given the self and group respect and pride to deal with.

We cannot expect European-American policy makers and media moguls to send out the message to their children that their fathers, mothers, heroes, and historical figures are racists or that the system they have built is geared to favor them to the exclusion of others. Nor can we afford to sit and wait for our centuries-old complaints to be satisfactorily handled for us by the same group that instituted the racism that is the root cause of our complaints. It is easier, less painful, and more profitable for them to create and perpetuate myths and stereotypes to

explain why other groups do not excel at the same rate or ratio as their own. But it is wrong for us to let our children accept those explanations.

Nevertheless, that is what we have allowed to happen. And this has created a phenomenon akin to the self-fulfilling prophecy where we ourselves say, for example, that unemployment is rampant in our community because "black people are lazy" rather than saying that it is because racism excludes us from many aspects of the job market. From this one example of the workings of racism we can see the root of several other problems. For example, if there are no jobs waiting for African-American youths out of high school or college, then that knowledge can lead to a sense of frustration that causes the high drop-out rate in our community. This in turn leads to the stereotype that "black people are less intelligent than whites." Also European-Americans will point to those high drop-out rates -- that lack of education -- as their reason for not employing more African-Americans in their corporations. It is a clever, and in many ways, calculated, vicious and cruel cycle perpetuated, in part, by the failure of African-American parents and other elders to develop a strong sense of self and community pride and identity.

Less will be accomplished by establishing separate public schools for our young boys and girls than by establishing our own community centers where we send our children after school and on weekends to learn what they are not taught in public schools. Not only our history and culture must be taught at these centers but, also, our wants and needs and how we ourselves can and must meet them. Not the classroom but the living room must become the first center of learning for our next generation. The socialization process cannot be left to school teachers. By the time the child reaches first grade he or she must have already received from his elders a strong sense of identity with and pride in his or her race as well a sense of non-egotistical pride in themselves and their community. And this socialization process must continue into early adulthood.

Also, we must return to the extended family structure we inherited from Africa. There, not only the parents, but the entire community realized that it was a matter of community survival to see to it that the next generation was properly reared. Thus, moral, family, and community values such as honesty, justice, harmony, unity and respect

for others no greater than that for self was the very fiber of African society. And the key ingredient for maintaining this society was the proper rearing of the children, the passing on to the next generation those values which could be summed up under the heading of common sense, common courtesy and common decency. These three, when coupled with pride in one's self and community, will end many of the symptoms of racism oppressing our people.

This focus on the family must be the first step in any move toward self-sufficiency and down the road to true self-determination over our own lives and the life of our community. The process of passing on African-American history, cultural beliefs and practices must be done, from generation to generation, within the family, the vehicle through which culture is transmitted.

Simply put, a young lady with pride in herself and in possession of common decency will not turn to prostitution. A young man with pride in his community and in possession of common sense will not push drugs into his community nor his veins. And youths with pride in themselves and their community and a sense of common courtesy will not commit crimes of violence against each other or against their neighbors.

Finally, the means for resolving the problems facing the African-American community are not unattainable. It will require the active participation of the African-American press and religious institutions of every faith and

denomination in our community to disseminate to the parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts the message that the move is under way. And, that its success will mean an end to the symptoms stemming from racism that makes our senior citizens, wives and daughters afraid to walk down the street; our young children have nightmares to the sound of gun shots outside their window; and our men die daily from senseless violence. If we are to become truly self-sufficient, we must educate our children, patronize our own businesses, control our own finances, and police and govern our own communities. And the place to start on the road to self-determination is in the living room of our own homes.



Pathways to Liberty

Peg Byers
Pleasant Hills, Pa



Most people believe they know the definition of the word "liberty." In fact, it has many meanings. One for each of us. And, depending upon individual evolutionary paths, the significance of liberty may alter as we grow into new "awarenesses."

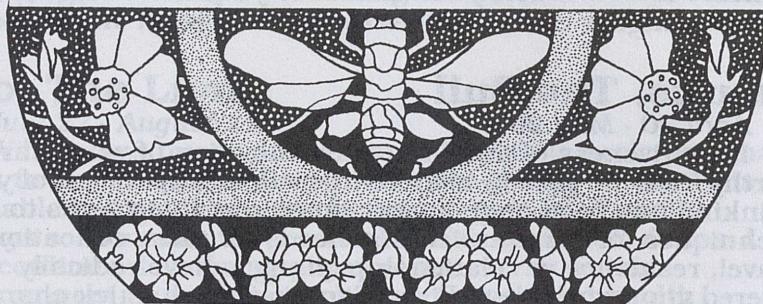
Collectively, humans may value freedoms of speech, assembly, religion and pursuit of personal goals. Individually, however, we display vastly different value systems. While one pursues wealth as a means to financial freedom, another finds the "custodial care" of money or property a terrible bondage. One person views marriage as prison while another may only feel truly free within a committed relationship. Further, work done today providing fulfillment, can tomorrow become intolerable as one seeks greater challenge having grown beyond previous

Cancer, The Crab

June 21 - July 23

Humble, temperate, gentle, Cancer is a water sign. It is ruled by the planet Jupiter. Its symbol is the crab. In traditional astrology, Cancer is associated with the element of Water. It is also known as the "water-bearer".

1993



limits. Relationships once reflective of true self, could restrict new horizons for one or both partners in time. Shadings of liberty vary as we do.

Liberation within the birth chart is viewed at two levels. One area of the chart describes the mode of liberation as a personal value. Another involves forever changing issues of liberation within our lives. Planetary movement shows where and how we each need to release ourselves from old structures no longer needed.

Where do you need to release yourself from bondage? Find your Sun Sign to learn your liberating values and issues to be faced as we progress through this year. If you know your Rising Sign, read that section as well. ➤

Aries, The Ram

March 20 - April 19

Willingness to work hard allows practical and factual Aries to attract opportunities to achieve material well-being as a pathway to freedom. Despite your fiery pioneering spirit, your responsible nature in career matters now conflicts with needs to begin anew. Authorities may seem repressive until later in 1993. New opportunities may radically challenge the status quo, but your creativity seeks better outlets. Yours is a quest for constant improvement of status in life. What appears to be chaos actually represents a future filled with all you wish. Free yourself of anger to accept a higher career consciousness.

Taurus, The Bull

April 20 - May 20

Inventiveness of mind in communication of values are earthy Taurus' gifts to achieve liberation. Expansion of your thinking has been ongoing for some time. Insights as to new techniques for communicating, needs for more education, travel, residence or relationship changes have radically altered your worldview. Fixed Taurus abhors quick change. However, this year more than most other signs your path to freedom lies in the simple acceptance of these original views. Change is not causing you pain, but rather your stubborn resistance to it. Liberty comes through reliance upon your higher mind to guide you.

Gemini, The Twins

May 21 - June 20

Emotional healing and nurturing ability promise freedom to Gemini. Financial instability closely tied to emotional health stress that you redefine personal and jointly held values. What appears to be severe loss on one level may actually be the freedom never dreamed possible. Generosity is its own reward, but discrimination regarding to whom you give is needed now. The universe assures improvement of status by year-end. However, discarding worry and burdensome partnerships are crucial to realization of this potential. Liberation means not only nurturing others, but yourself as well.

Cancer, The Crab

June 21 - July 21

Dynamic expression of will and authority hold Cancer's path to liberty. Extreme tension and confusion in relationships give testimony to restiveness in you as well as partners. However, feeling as deeply intense as your own does not give way easily to breaking ties that bind. Caution is urged at holding on too tightly now. Greater life and fulfillment in close associations is promised if you can "let go" of old modes of relating. Disruption brings peace in its wake when you allow the liberation of self to be reflected through relationships. By freeing others, you free yourself to receive the recognition you crave.

Leo, The Lion.

July 22 - August 21

Willingness to serve as a team member is Leo's personal path to liberty within. Being of service caring for others is laudable but not when one forgets to care for oneself. Always responsible for personal health and work duties, Leo will continue developing physical sensitivity to the environment and needs to alter diet, work and health routines. Ignoring the need for change due to fear creates greater tension. Improving health regiments increases energy to pursue greater work challenges. Freedom for Leo during this year lies in improving efficiency in daily life and in learning new, healthier routines.

Virgo, The Virgin

August 22 - September 22

Balancing resources with partners, refinement and love of beauty are liberating themes for Virgo. Opportunities for original modes of creative self expression have appeared in your life for some time now. Children demand more attention. New forms of relationships and ways to discover identity continue to manifest. Excitement of the innovative approach characterize the balance of the year. Although adaptable Virgo tends to be restricted in areas of creativity, all this has changed. Awake! Create! Experiment! The path of liberation holds love and new horizons for you just ahead. ➡

Libra, The Scales

September 23 - October 22

Transformation of resources and regeneration giving birth to genuine power provide liberty for Libra. Upheaval within the rootedness of your life causes deep insecurity and confusion. Many will change residency by year's end. While much of what you have considered unchanging and basic to life will alter drastically; welcome these changes. Domination even by sentiment and family is domination nonetheless. When you can again "put down roots," you will be upon more solid ground. Life's basics will be sweeter when representing your own liberated choices rather than others' projections for you.

Scorpio, The Eagle

October 23 - November 21

Generosity and spiritual protection are the liberating gifts of Scorpio. Old modes of thinking and communicating are passing quickly away. As you tap the deepening well of mental creativity, it seems that everyone around you is changing. Nothing seems reliable. Acceptance of the rapid movement in the environment as reflective of your own highly sensitized mind, you will find greater technical skill and mental capacity are yours. Enjoy the fundamental changes occurring within you which will continue with even greater speed now in 1993. Freedom comes assuredly through the clarity of a liberated mind.

Sagittarius, The Centaur

November 22 - December 21

Frugality and ambition characterize Sagittarius' quest for liberation. Seldom have you experienced such upheaval in personal values, finance and other areas you considered impenetrable to change. What is truly being altered is your relationship to values as they manifest through possessions. Are YOU equal to your property? That which limits or encumbers must be released to make way for new "things" more reflective of your changing needs. Altering means of livelihood may become essential to survival. Know that nature abhors a vacuum. Be free of the old to allow the fresh to enter.

Capricorn, The Sea Goat

December 22 - January 19

Ability to innovatively function for the good of the group is Capricorn's particular path to liberty. More than any other sign, you are experiencing a redefining of liberty for self versus demands placed upon you by the outside world. Old patterns in many areas will be forcibly broken down. Tension and confusion reign during this process, but personal freedom to live as one most desires is the prize. Before one can lead others effectively, one must learn to lead alone when no one follows. Welcoming the liberating perception and awareness will enable you to enjoy greater peace in time. Permit your new image to shine.

Aquarius, The Waterbearer

January 20 - February 19

Generosity and willingness to sacrifice for the less fortunate represent Aquarius' liberating values. Freeing the "hidden self" is the best way to describe what is happening to you. Sudden, unexpected events representing residue from past actions cause tension, mystery and stress. Anything hidden from self or others will be discovered in what appears to be "fated" occurrences or confrontations. Truly this is a time when the unconscious actively works to free itself regardless of consequences to the conscious mind. Liberation begins with knowing the inner self. Tune in.

Pisces, The Fishes

February 20 - March 20

Initiation of new projects and high energy are Pisces' pathways to liberty. Revolution of goals and hopes for the future characterize the recent past and present. New groups of friends to challenge old plans and shake up old ideas about expectations continue to energize you. Of all the signs, Pisces may enjoy the most pleasant excitement during this period. Should groups of friends pressure you in any way, however, they should expect rebellion. Pisces is learning to stand up for truth, for self. Liberated consciousness ushers in new people to heighten your perception and fuel plans for the future. Dare to try the untried.



Lessons

for Marti J. at age 12

Today,
twenty (20) years ago
I am fourteen (14) and hiding behind a tree
no turning sideways
or holding in my stomach
or folding my shoulders into my chest

just a simple standing
and I am hidden with my slim shadow
pinned black to the belly of a tree
in high-noon submission

and my idle time is punch the Devil's timeclock

On either side of me
the McPherson boys the Miller boys
the Muse boys the Caldwell boys
and those other boys who are without brothers
those single boys
who seek their acceptance
amongst this gang of would-be-marauders

We are the boys of Morrell Avenue
and summer has brought us the drive-by assault of
"Saviour, Saviour. Why don't you hear my humble cry ..."

from the couch-sized speaker
strapped to the floating roof of a cloud white station
wagon

and our young, un-Christian hands burn with the fullness
of railroad rocks
ache in their fullness to see
if the 8-track tape will skip
if the young Minister will swerve into curse words
if the big, gray, pointed stones will
break the music
will crack the windows
will stop this weekday revival of children

who have hungered for these hot summer days
when parents have gone to blue collar jobs
in the whitest of uniforms and starched, name-tag shirts

will stop this muffled diatribe of the lives
we are trying to desparately to grow into....

We want to be counted first among the sinners
with our barely forgiveable faults
listed and given Christian titles so as to protect
the sanctity of our family names

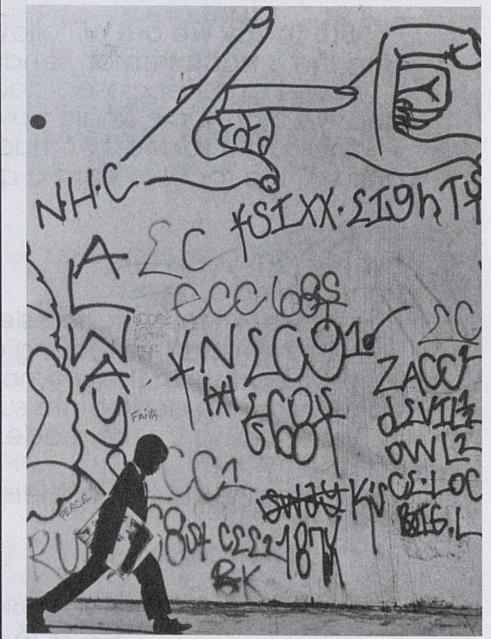
Fornicators
is the one we're all shooting for this summer
but first
there is the matter of chasing away this Sunday school reminder
of lessons that rebuke a knowing sinner.

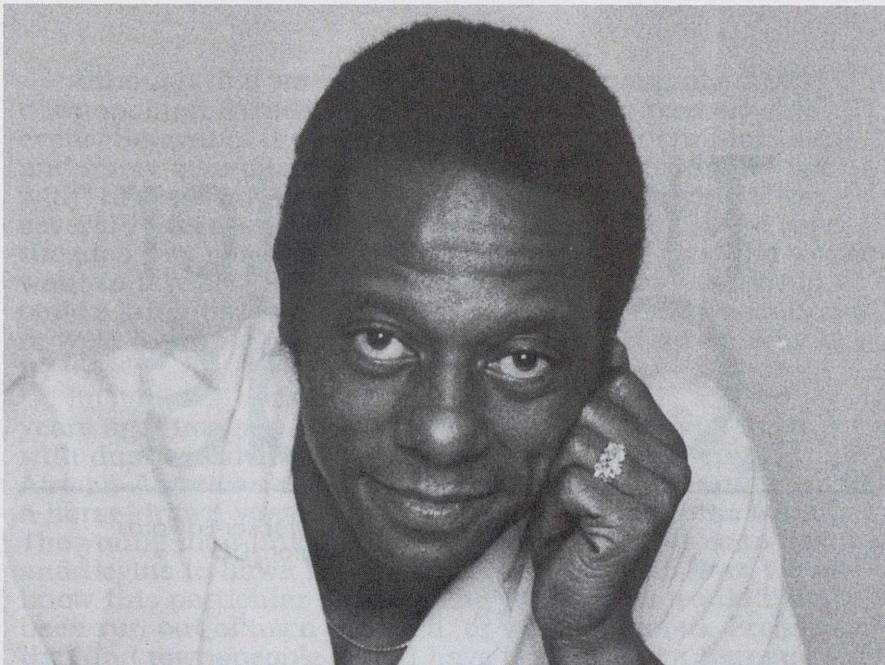
First,
we must snap this weekday pulpit imitation
before these girls listen for the guilt and
close their open-legged desire to know the warmth
of this summer day temptation.
First,
there is the aim...

But today we are all followers
and the 8-track sermon sends the young girls
to yet another closed-door protection
and we blame the single boys
for such a sad test of machismo
and sail the rocks toward a quiet, dry-hot sky.

Today,
twenty (20) years later
from behind a desk
and these white, starched sleeves
with my daughter young and home alone
I am caught in the memory of floating sermons
cajoling young desires into submission
and hoping for the leadership
and
I'm hoping for the leadership
of
the single boys

Jas. Mardis
Dallas, TX





Ronnie Phillips

Ronnie Phillips' outstanding photography has graced four of *Shooting Star Review's* covers. It's a honor to now introduce this innovative and insightful artist. Phillips, originally from Los Angeles, is a freelance photographer who has published with *TV Guide*, *Essence Magazine*, Polygram, Warner Brothers, CBS and MCA, Motown, United Artists and A&M Records, *Black Enterprise*, ABC, CBS and NBC TV, Johnson Publications and many more. Exhibitions of his work include *The Cosby Show*, *The Amen Show*, *Heat of the Night*, *Different World*, *Martin*, California Museum of Science and Industry, National Black Art Festival in Atlanta, Shadyside Arts Festival in Pittsburgh, Potomac River Festival, Detroit's African World Art Festival and more. His crisp, distinctive work captures the essence of the African-American experience. He recently won 1st Place in Photography in the Atlanta Life Insurance Company's prestigious National Art Competition. The winning work, "Final Call," is featured on the facing page. Phillip's work is also in the art collections of Cicely Tyson, Andrew Young, Dionne Warwick, Glynn Turman, Malcolm-Jamal Warner and Bill Cosby. For more information about this outstanding talent, contact:

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The Water Gods

Stanley Stocker-Edwards
Washington, DC



n clear nights like this, I imagine a time when the gods that light the night sky gave up the business of guiding the affairs of women and men and retired to form the constellations. In leaving us to govern the Earth, I imagine that they must have been somewhat doubtful of our ability to properly manage the place. My actions from earlier today make me wonder just how well we've managed the store: I bought a bottle of water.

Although this was a big deal to me, among my rather cosmopolitan friends it was a particularly unremarkable event. Several of them have been buying the stuff for years and many questioned my sophistication for failing to "get with" the bottled water thing. I had avoided buying it for several reasons, not the least of which was the sense that the idea was simply ridiculous -- like buying air. Who would want to buy air and why? It's like trying to buy the joy in a child's laughter, or the warmth of a grandmother's embrace, or well, like buying water. It's everywhere. It's free. Why buy it?

Imagine for a moment a time perhaps one hundred years ago. Imagine a small town in America's past lined with dusty roads and peopled by hard-working, rugged African-American men and women. In rides a young man in a horse-drawn wagon eager to make his way in the world. The young man unloads his wagon, mounts his soap box, and begins to hawk his precious wares: water! Now, we all know this particular enterprising young man would have been run out of town on a rail, or worse, ignored. Perhaps, the kind townspeople would have taken pity on him and set him up in a home for the meager of mind.

But it's not one hundred years ago and the idea of buying water has become commonplace. Today we buy water from enterprising young men and corporations that make millions hawking water bottled in places with exotic sounding names like Evian and Vergeze. (Tales of clear running mountain springs notwithstanding, I've always had the sneaking suspicion that there's some French guy named Jacques somewhere filling bottles with his garden hose.)

Why do we buy water? Because our common water is just that: common. It's dirty. It's filthy. It tastes bad. And despite protestations to the contrary, it's too often bad for us.

And the strange and wonderful thing about our water is that not a bit of it is new. Since before the first human emerged from the bosom of Africa not a single drop of new water has been added to the Earth's supply. Not a single drop. We drink the same water that the lumbering Brontosaurus drank during the Jurassic Period, that Shaka the Zulu used to toast his victorious warriors, that the Pharoahs drank while overseeing the building of their eternal tombs, and that sweetly quenched Harriet Tubman's thirst after the long trek north on her perilous Railroad. ➤

And now it's for sale.

But who drinks bottled water? Generally, the cosmopolitan types hip to the compromised nature of our liquid gold, and those unwilling to wait until we undo the harm done to our precious waters. Who cannot buy it? Who cannot afford to plunk down money for water, not with names that bespeak America like Potomac, Schuylkill or Shenandoah, but names like Perrier and Evian? Those who must invest their money in simpler things like food, clothing and shelter.

With the Industrial Revolution, our society chose to value most the progress that has made ours the most advanced, powerful nation of men and women on the planet.

And we have begun to buy our water.

Of course, not all of us buy it. Maybe not even most of us. I suspect that African Americans buy it less frequently than other Americans. I also suspect that those who do get a disproportionately large share of the "bad" water get the least of the fruits that our industrialized society has to offer, namely African-Americans and other people of color and the poor.

So, what's next? Bottled air delivered directly to our doorsteps? Is this the price of modern civilization? In 10 years, will I be able to buy air at the corner store? Will I need to? (If so, I'll probably suspect that some enterprising young man or woman will get it from the tire pump at the local service station.) Still, that's years away, if ever. And for now I can enjoy serene, moonlit nights like this one when the stars shimmy and dance, and I sip sparkling water with just a twist of lemon.

If you listen very, very closely, you can just hear the sound of the gods laughing.



Aside from black having the definition of being the "opposite of white," which means from the start makes it clear that there is a distance of contrast between the two, black is also the color of death, of bad luck, of evil and harmfulness, whereas white is the color of life, well-being, and good fortune.

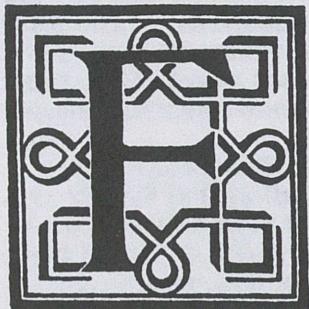
I Ha'nt

It was a full moon
when Grandma sorted
geodes in the field
placed them around
a birch tree statue
of skinned knobs,
seared grooves.
She keened and swayed
over drinking gourd, key
cowrie shell and spearmint,
brailled semiprecious gems
for hints of shadowed air
pressing out from her
like calloused thumbs.
Her menses had long
seeped into earth but
I felt the power there
looked toward the space
where her house once stood
then knelt to dig
dig for the bones of her.

Terri L. Jewell
Lansing, MI

What is B.L.A.C.K.?

Robert Jones
Oxford, WI



or centuries now, according to American English, which is a derivative of European culture, the word *black* has been instilled in the minds of African Americans as being synonymous with negative ideas and concepts -- with evil. In contrast, white has been perpetuated as being synonymous with positive ideas and concepts -- with good. The very dictionary from which we as African Americans are taught the meanings of English words informs, quite blatantly, in fact, that *black* is nothing nice!

Aside from **black** having the definition of being the "opposite of white," which right from the start makes it clear that there is no chance of compatibility between the two, **black** is also defined as: soiled or dirty; evil, wicked and harmful; disgraceful; full of sorrow or suffering; as well as, dismal and gloomy. And, as if that were not enough in itself, **black** is also considered, disastrous! When a person is sullen or angry, he or she is said to have a **black** look. And when he or she is said to be without hope, it is called, having a **black** future.

These are the definitions of the word **black** that have been passed down through generation after generation of conditioning by Europeans to African descendants -- definitions that have served as invisible shackles in freedom as much as the visible chains did adequately serve in slavery. So who can blame a race of people for despising their own and striking out against their own and exploiting their own and not wanting to stick together as a single unit, when they have been literally brainwashed, both consciously and unconsciously into believing that being **Black** is living death? Or who can blame us for wanting to denounce our **Black** heritage and world to assimilate into the white mainstream, adopting their attitudes, values and pursuits at the expense of our own sisters and brothers?

But it really does not have to be this way. For we as African Americans have the power within ourselves to change the negative attitudes about ourselves given to us by European influence. Our true pride and dignity exists in our being **Black** and knowing what the **true** definition of **Black** is.

As African descendants here in America, our ideal of what it means to be **Black** can come from each individual letter in the word **black** itself.

What is **B.L.A.C.K., black**? To begin with: **Black** is **Beautiful**. Regardless of whether male or female, the particular hue of the complexion, the distinctive arrangement of features, the specific height or weight, or any other distinguishing characteristic visible to the naked eye. **Black** is **Legacy** -- the legacy of descending from the greatest race of people to ever walk the face of the Earth! For we are the direct descendants from the bloodline of God's original creation; evidence which is strongly supported by both archaeology and the science of genetics today. **Black** is **Achievement**. Even in the midst of ➤

exploitation, discrimination and political inequality, we as African Americans have continuously excelled in the sporting arenas of football, basketball, baseball, boxing, and track & field; in the fine arts of dance, theater, art and literature; in the music of blues, jazz, gospel, R & B, pop and rap; in the science of medicine and technology; in the industries of innovative inventions and concepts; and, of course, in agriculture, business, education, human rights, politics, exploration, religion, law, entertainment, the military, and the media. **Black** is also **Creativity**. For without our unique talent and capacity for creativity, there would have been no significant Black achievement to acknowledge in the first place! And each successive generation exhibits that much more creativity as a whole than the preceding generation. Last, but certainly not least, **Black** is **Kindred**. For we are all individual members of the greater African family worldwide. We are all sisters and brothers, from the darkest complexion of black to the lightest complexion of black -- regardless of our lifestyle, education, occupation, financial status, or attitude. And as members one and all of the same racial family, we as Blacks owe it to ourselves to **unify, maintain that unity, and guard ourselves and one another against being contaminated by ideals which are designed to, and would serve to, sow discord among us**. In essence, it comes down to: United we stand, divided we fall. There is no in between. We as African Americans have no reason to despise our **Blackness** in any way at all. For in spite of the negative connotations concerning the word, **black**, which European-American culture would have us believe and teach our children, we know the whole truth indeed! **Black**, in and of itself, is not bad, evil, corrupt, dismal, or hopeless. In a people, **Black is Beautiful, Black is Legacy, Black is Achievement, Black is Creativity, Black is Kindred**. So as Blacks, African Americans, we need not be confused in thinking when asked, "Will the real B.L.A.C.K. please stand up."

We are already standing!!!



The Wandering Omen



Lela Branch
Warner Springs, CA



saw two women one day, walking along the highway. We lived in rural Mississippi then. The year was 1940, and I was eight years old. It was not unusual to see Gypsy women, but these were black, like us.

The women turned off the highway and onto the dirt road that ran past our house, and I watched them come up the muddy path until they came to the woodpile where mama was picking up stove wood. They spoke politely, and asked if they might come in just long enough to cook the wild greens they had gathered along the road.

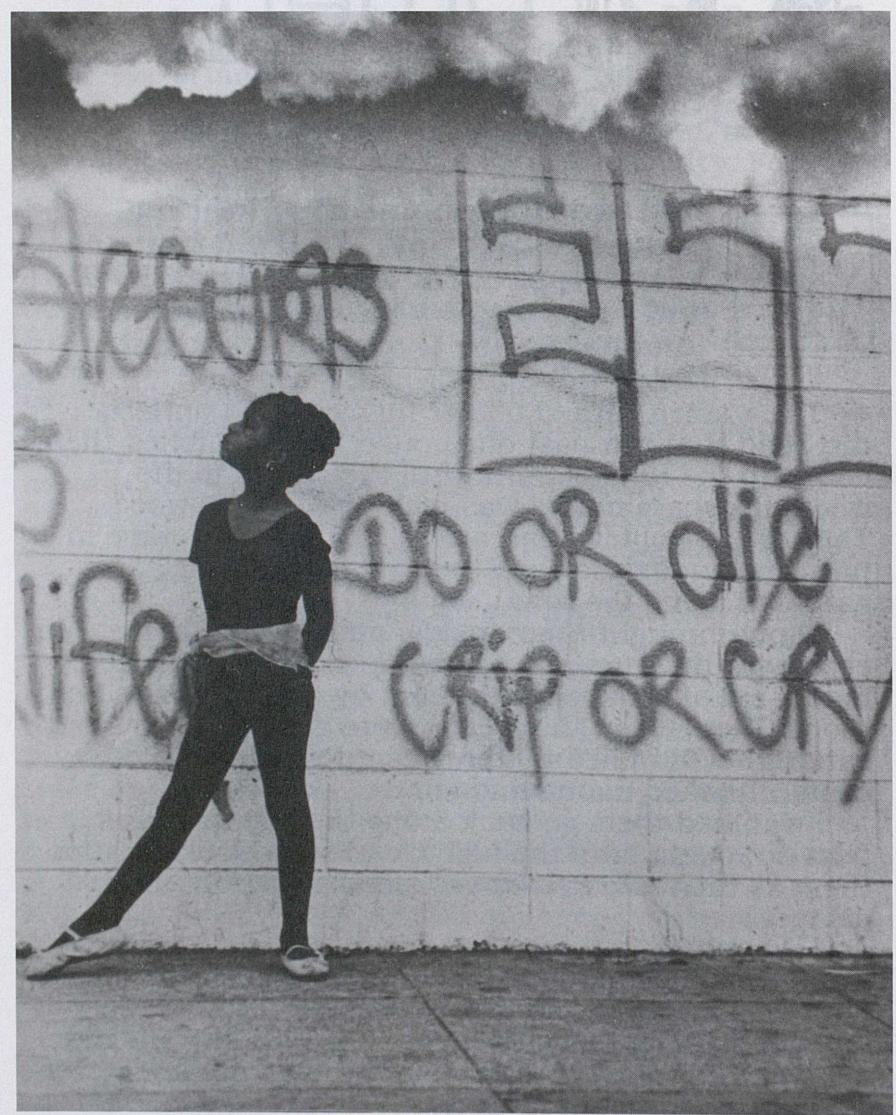
Mama brought them inside, and gave them meat to cook with their greens; and while their meal cooked, mama sat and talked with them by the fire in the front room. Then, when the greens were done and they had eaten, they bundled themselves into their tattered coats, thanked mama and left.

I watched them go back along the dirt road and turn out again onto the highway. I stood looking after them as their two figures got smaller, and finally disappeared.

I thought something was not quite right about two black women walking alone on the road way out there, but I was afraid to ask mama about it. I guess she, too, felt something was wrong, so very wrong she did not want me to know about such things; for she never said one word about it. Ever.



Shooting Star Review
Issue No. 24 ★ 34



Carla

Rae S. Whatley
Pittsburgh, PA



et me tell you 'bout my granddaughter, Carla. 'Course I'm gonna say she de most beautiful grandchild ever made 'cause she mine. But it's true, too. My baby Carla is an artiste. She

live in New York now, but she come to visit me twice a year, reg'lar as Christmas. She said she had to go to New York so she could learn how to draw right, but my baby ain't never had no trouble drawin' far's I could see. She usta set around when she was jes a lil' thing and draw Jessie, an' anything else she could get to set still long enough. Jessie was our ole mule and she was right stubborn 'bout profilin' fuh Carla. She wouldn't budge 'til Carla had set down her pencil ➤

**and run and showed her the picture.
"See Jessie," Carla would say. "See
how beautiful I drawed you!" Then
Jessie would shake her head up 'n'
down and smile. 'Course mules cain't
smile, but they always did in Carla's
pictures.**

I'll never fuhget the time Carla come runn' to me in the kitchen the summer 'fore her fifth birthday. I had just set the bread to risin' when she come runnin' in holdin' up one uh her drawin's to show me. She'd done drawed me in muh stocking cap and muh cornrows asleep on de back porch. Now ifin it had been anyone else, I woulda had a fit, but since it was my baby, I just said how honored I was and how good she'd drawed me. I took it an' hung it in muh bedroom, cause I wouldn't a wanted strangers tuh see it. It was a right good likeness, too. I still got it as a mattuh fact.

Anyways, my baby Carla come home fuh my birthday dis past summer, and she always bring me somethin' nice cause she know I love that finery, rich city stuff like dey got der. Once she brought me perfum' from Paris. She had a show der once you know, and I heard that de king and queen came tuh see it, too. So like I was tellin' you, dis past summer she brought somethin' again and I was expecting sum lil' Eyetalian somethin' cause she had just been there, but she had a big flat package all wrapped up in pretty bows and stuff, so I figured it must be mine. First I thought it might be a mirruh, one o' them big fancy things with the golden frames, you know, like what them foreign movie stars and royalty got. Then I thought, my baby done painted me a picture, an' I started to get real excited. I wanted to open it right then, but she said I had to wait, 'cause she wanted the timin' to be right. Now I don't know nothin' 'bout no timin', but I listen to my baby, 'cause I know she mus' know what she be talkin' bout.

All through supper my eyes kept lookin' at that package, and Carla kept smilin' and tellin' me 'bout Italy. After I had done made her eat twice -- I cook all her fav'rites when she come 'cause she look like she don't half eat -- she made me set wit mah feets up and she did de dishes and talked to me 'bout when she was little. She said I was de only one what

told her to go 'head and be an artist if dat's what she wanted to be. Everybody else was tellin' her to get married and have some babies, but I wanted her to get outta here and go to all dem foreign places I cain't pronounce, 'cause das what I woulda done ifin I hadn't had her momma.

I had 'bout dozed off when she come to me on de porch and put de package in muh hands. It was real heavy, and I was so excited I was 'fraid I might drop it, so she held it whiles I tore off de paper. I was just like a child rippin' dat paper off.

I stared at dis young woman wit cornrows an' stocking cap lyin' sleep on a half-made bed, tryin' to figuh out why my baby givin' me dis. Den I started bawlin' just like a baby, and woulda dropped de picture ifin Carla hadn't a been holdin' it. I couldn't speak I was bawlin' sa hard, and pretty soon Carla was bawlin' too. "Don't you like it, Nana?", she asked me. All I could do was grab dat baby in muh arms and squeeze her 'til she almost faint. "I likes it," I said. "I likes it fine." And I took it and had her hang it fuh me just din. I had her hang it in de livin' room so's when anybody come callin' dey can see it from de door.

Sometimes when people sees it, dey thinks I'm crazy, having a picture like dat in mah livin' room. First time Minnie saw it she wanted to know who dat woman was lyin' like dat for a picture. When I told her it was me, and dat muh baby Carla painted it uh me when I was 'sleep, she laugh 'cause she know I be talkin' bout dem women what come to town lookin' rough. But den she look at it agin, and laughin' she said I ain't never look so good.



I'll Be Home For Kwanzaa

Robin Lynch
Lansing, Michigan



ary's daughter Laura has come home for Thanksgiving. She announces while passing the sweet potato casserole (her favorite) that she is not to be called by her slave name any longer.

"Please call me Nzingha from now on," she says in an imperial tone.

Her father, Jim, drops the forkful of turkey he is holding and lets his mouth drop open, empty like a baby bird.

Her sister LaDonna, 16 and three years Laura's junior, reroutes the casserole and ignores the entire conversation, as she is prone to do.

"Excuse me," Mary says from the kitchen door, her green dishtowel sitting upon her shoulder like a parrot. "Your slave name? You, my sweet child, were named for Laura Johnson who walked 10 miles a day for a year during the Montgomery bus boycott. Slave name. I hardly think so." She tosses her head in dismissal and returns to the cooling pies.

"Well, not literally, of course." Laura sighs, sending a tiny gust of air over her dinner roll.

"Where the hell did you come up with a crazy name like that?" demands her father.

"It's from a book. *The Temple of My Familiar* by Alice Walker. She's an amazing African-American feminist. I bought copies for both Mama and LaDonna."

LaDonna rolls her eyes and excuses herself to go and wait by the phone in case it should ring for her, as it often does.

"Well," Jim asks his daughter, "Why doesn't she have some unpronounceable African sounding name, then, this Walker woman?"

"Oh, God." Laura (Nzingha) sighs again and makes a little growl of disgust as she pushes the turkey around on her plate. (She has also stopped eating meat.)

"It would be easier on me if you just took care of it the way Malcolm did and used a big X." Jim grew up in Lansing, a few blocks from the birthplace of Malcolm X and speaks of him with easy familiarity.

"Oh, is that what that means?" LaDonna has returned for her pie and looks down at the giant X on her sweatshirt.

It's Jim's turn to sigh, although lately he would prefer LaDonna's ignorance to Laura's superiority. He blames it on the University of Michigan. He often tells Mary it's only a few miles from Ypsilanti, but Ann Arbor is another planet entirely.

Mary says it's not Ann Arbor, it's the world. It's being 19 and female and suddenly aware of your body and what color it is. Over the past six months, Laura has made her crazy. Ever since she stopped listening to Mary's Wilson Pickett records and switched over to Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

"Mama, I am an African-American woman!" she exclaimed at one point.

"Honey, are you no darker today than you were yesterday," Mary said in exasperation. "And in case you haven't noticed, I am not exactly Doris Day."

Mary grew up in Memphis, where her mother was a seamstress. One generation away from domestic service, she raised Mary alone.

It amuses Mary in a way to see Laura get so fired up. Her own consciousness was raised much earlier. She had come home from her first day of school carrying her ➤

little plaid satchel with the new pencils and tablet. And a note from her teacher.

"It would be easier on me if you just took care of it the way Malcolm did and used a big X." Jim grew up in Lansing, a few blocks from the birthplace of Malcolm X and speaks of him with easy familiarity.

"Oh, is that what that means?" LaDonna has returned for her pie and looks down at the giant X on her sweatshirt.

The children had been coloring pictures, and Mary was deliberating over the crayons scattered across her desk. "What's this?" she had asked, holding up a pale peach crayon.

"Why, that's flesh color," the teacher said kindly. "It's the color of skin."

Mary looked at her strangely. "Well, it's not the color of my skin." She picked up a burnt sienna crayon and went on about her business.

It is an attitude she has held most of her life. It was validated when she met Jim at a civil rights rally in Memphis. She followed him to Michigan where he took a job at a Ford plant.

They have made their home in Ypsilanti, or Ypsitucky as it's called because of the multitudes of families who make their way up Route 23 from the south in search of jobs.

They have lived a peaceful existence for many years, their heads neither buried in the sand nor floating in the clouds. Still, when she listens to her daughter, Mary wonders if she has somehow become disconnected, desensitized to the world around her. Her children came to

her later in life. Once she looked upon this as a blessing, but now she wonders if the fires that burned within her died out too soon. Her passion is only a memory written on her older daughter's beautiful face.

Dinner is over and the good china put away. It's time for Laura to return to the apartment she shares with two other girls in Ann Arbor.

"I want to talk to you about Kwanzaa," she says. She is shrugging into her coat.

Mary is in the kitchen packing up leftovers as if Laura is about to embark on some long, uncertain journey instead of the seven-mile trip across town. Jim has wandered in during half-time and is picking pecans out of the leftover casserole. Mary automatically slaps his hand.

"Kwanzaa?" she says.

"Remember? I told you about that. Didn't you read the book?"

"Now what?" asks Jim.

Laura wearily explains the celebration of Kwanzaa. How, as African-Americans, the entire family should be involved in the seven-day holiday, lighting one candle every day as they discuss their strengths as a people.

"Sounds Jewish to me," says her father.

"It's nothing like Hanukkah at all."

"What about Christmas?" asks Mary as she begins to slice off breast of turkey whether Laura wants it or not.

"I don't celebrate Christmas anymore."

"Why no Christmas?" Mary looks confused. She tries to think of replacements for all her favorite holiday songs. "I'll Be Home for Kwanzaa" just doesn't sound right.

"Well, Kwanzaa doesn't preclude Christmas," Laura admits. "It begins the day after, actually. It's just that I don't happen to believe in Christmas anymore. It's a meaningless commercial ritual to me. The perpetuation of a religion that's as patriarchal as it is empty."

"We do not hold with blasphemy in this house," warns Jim.

"I believe in the Goddess now."

"Lord have mercy," Jim mumbles, as his wife glares at him as if to say, "Do something. She's your daughter."

"You can do as you like, Laura Rose, but in this house we celebrate Christmas. This is not Africa, this is America and I am still your father."

Laura's eyes flash like onyx. "Nzingha. And you're not my father. You're my uncle. My Uncle Tom." ➡

Before she can stop herself, Mary feels her palm make stinging contact with the velvet of Laura's cheek. The three of them stand silent, breathless in the kitchen that still smells of spices and warm bread.

"I have to go," Laura says shortly.

"Wait!"

She turns and looks at her parents. "No, we are not in Africa, but if we were, I could tell you something. A proverb. No matter how full the river, it still wants to grow. You think about that."

Mary looks at her daughter with a mixture of sadness and dismay. She feels like that woman in the movie, *Imitation of Life*. The woman's daughter had been ashamed of her mother because she was dark skinned. Now Mary is afraid her daughter is ashamed of her because she isn't Black enough.

It is early December now and the sidewalks are icy outside the cafe where Mary is to meet Laura. She decides to go in alone--it's too cold outside to wait.

She cuts a path through the students and scans the selection on the blackboard. She quickly orders the first thing on the menu, a raspberry mocha, whatever that is, because she can tell that those behind her are getting tired of waiting for her to find what she really wants: a small decaf. The girl in the mauve Mohawk hands back her change carefully as if she is dealing in foreign currency.

Mary takes the overflowing mug and makes her way to a table topped with a tiny circle of polished oak. At the next table a young man struggles with two little girls. At one time, Laura and LaDonna were those ages, she thinks. They have enormous glasses overflowing with whipped cream, some sort of exotic hot chocolate, she decides and sugary squares of pastries. Mary shakes her head. The things men feed to children when left unattended.

Laura comes rushing in, breathless, her wool coat over one arm and a tall clear mug in the other. "Espresso," she explains. It is the color of her skin. She cocks her head to one side and golden fish dangle from her ears, sparkling with her movements. "About Thanksgiving," she begins. They have not seen each other since the holiday.

"I'm sorry I struck you," Mary says.

"You raised me to speak for myself."

"Not when it drowns out others," Mary says simply. She takes a sip of her raspberry concoction. "Too sweet," she

declares. "Did you know that during the war, when sugar was rationed, your great uncle Frank used to bring lemon drops all the way from up north down to Memphis for your grandmother? She never ate them, she just stirred them into her coffee. She would've liked this place."

"I don't really remember her."

"You never got to know her. That could be why you don't really remember your father, either."

Laura licks a speck of whipped cream daintily from her lip. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about a man who's seen more racism than you'll ever know, please God. Seen it and fought it. He was marching in Selma in 1965."

"I wasn't even a gleam in his eye," Laura says, wistful.

"That's where you're wrong. He saw you coming a long way off. You kept his hope alive."

"I guess I forget."

"We probably haven't reminded you as much as we should have. We like to think those days are gone, tend to take things for granted. It's easier that way sometimes. That doesn't make it right, I know."

"I thought of your proverb for a long time, Laura, and now I'd like to give you one. No matter how tall a tree grows, it still needs its roots."

Laura scrapes at a scar on the tabletop with her spoon.

"You can't cut out traditions like Christmas cookies. It doesn't work that way. What I mean is, don't just be proud for the sake of being proud. Look back at your own people. Cherish your own history and your own experiences." Mary takes Laura's hand.

"You've got a good heart and a fine mind. We all need to search. And it's okay to tell us where you're going, honey. Just remember where we've been."

"I get it," she says softly.

Mary smiles. "Now, having said all that, I've got a message for you from your father."

Laura looks up hesitantly.

"He said tell my baby I want her to come home for Kwanzaa. What should I tell him?"

Her daughter's smile lights up her face as the golden earrings dance. "Tell him Nzhinga--No. Tell him Laura says Merry Christmas."



CHANGING Times

William H. Foster, III
Cromwell, CT



t's a late summer afternoon, and a near-invisible, misty rain is falling. I peer for what seems like the one-hundredth time through the fogged windshield of my rental car in an attempt to find the address. I knew this neighborhood intimately once, but not so well anymore, it seems. Perhaps I passed it. I feel I must be close. Finally, I locate what I'm looking for.

I stop the car on a narrow street in an aging neighborhood of rowhouses in West Philadelphia, and gaze at the spot where now-absent numbers once proudly proclaimed "713 North Dekalb Street," my home more than 30 years ago.

Tom Wolfe is credited with having said, "You can't go home again," a sentiment I have never put much stock in.

My attitude has always been, "How foolish! I can go home anytime I please. So time has passed. Big deal. How much can it matter?"

Staring at what's left of this valuable landmark from my youth, I see I'll have to modify my brash, cavalier stance. My rose-colored images of "back then" are violently shaken by the sober realities of "here and now."

The wooden bannister "horsey" where I won many a one-man rodeo is gone. In fact, the entire porch is completely missing. The front door and windows are now barred, sealed off with sterile sheets of gray sheet metal.

Seeing the windows now, I remember when I gazed almost hypnotically for what seemed like hours at the patterns the sunlight would make coming through the front room's lace curtains. My mind reluctantly conjurs the gloom that must hang heavy in whatever is left of the front room inside this dark palace now.

The front steps, where my friends and I played "Dumb School" and other games, are cracked, stained, and choked with weeds. Yet, without concentrating too hard, I can still hear the short, brisk strokes of a broom moving along these steps on any given morning. The comforting sound of daily cleansing and community concern. It was a sound echoing from every stoop on this block.

The garden where my mother raised her prize rose bushes and a complex tangle of far too many morning glory vines is full of crumbling masonry, dirt and street litter. The wrought iron fence that surrounded her patch of well-tended earth is now in parts unknown.

The bright, attractive red brick wall that welcomed me everyday after school as I turned the corner from Fairmount Avenue, is now dull with age, marred with uneven streaks of whitewash and defiled with nonsensical graffiti.

The disgust I feel is not so much from the sadness of having waited too long to "return home." It's more from the realization that a cherished landmark, perfectly preserved in my memories, has been totally destroyed. It's hard for me to accept this destruction as unintentional or merely the natural result of time passing, yet that is exactly the case. Few things in this world, I regrettfully realize, cherished or otherwise, survive merely because you remember it one way and no other.

And yet, even with all that is missing from this place, some things have managed to survive. I have never believed in ghosts, but there can be no other precise term to



describe the near invisible spectres I see here. There's my mother standing on the non-existent front porch, one hand on her hip, the other up to her mouth, calling me in to supper. I unconsciously move forward from the curb, convinced that my dad's black on yellow '57 Ford convertible is parked on the street behind me. I see wisps of what surely must be my sister, on a dark summer night, seated in the porch swing, sneaking a smoke with her boyfriend. Yes, there's the radio propped in the window, softly playing their favorite AM station.

And all around me, there's a young boy of indeterminate age, shooting marbles, putting out trash, and sharing everyday adventures with his bestest friend, Harold.

The strength of these remembrances causes a chill to crawl down my spine. I crane my neck, rub my chin, and squint my eyes. No, they're not really here. Not any more. I shake my head, laugh a little to myself, and turn to go. I've seen enough. No, I've seen too much. I climb back into the car and prepare to return to the present.

This crumbling edifice is the place my family once called home. A place we expanded with our joy, filled with our laughter and pain and imprinted forever with important chapters of our lives. A place I have never forgotten and in some ways, have never left. The emotions and events experienced here so long ago had an intense vitality and energy that seemingly never dies. And it is a bit frightening, realizing the power that the past holds over us. Yet somehow it's a comforting anchor, as well.

I'll probably never come back here. The place I knew and grew up is not here, but safely nestled in the world of my mind's eye. There, I can easily find a street peopled with carefree brown children and concerned, familiar neighbors. A place where you can still get penny candy, the world's best hoagies and a five-cent deposit for a returned soda bottle.

Perhaps that's what Tom Wolfe was talking about. If your memories are strong enough, there's no need to go back.



What is Most Holy Distracts Us

I.

Almost late for work,
I see, on Grantham Road
where oak woods border

the Greenery's plant beds,
one green maple, struck
by lightning. One leafy

leg lies separate, resting
in the cabbages, as if
in some other world,

trees grow this way,
embracing the earth
with full green arms.

II.

This evening I am blind
to the wild blue phlox
lining the roadbeds
like an Amish baby-quilt,

and to the blackberry
blossoms rushing down
steep ditches, like
the falls on the Yellow Breeches.

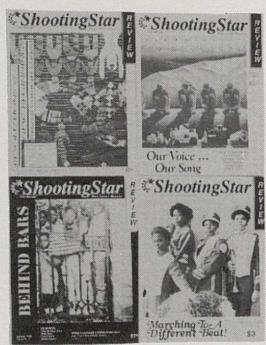
The black locust is full
in bloom, and every fencerow
is lined with thin gray men
who bear a thousand ivory chalices.

William Jolliff
Grantham, PA

Accepting Salvation

Moving inside
A powerful discontent,
Africa
Is where I want to be --
Be some Sipho or
Zulu or Salamba.
Putting on
A cotton dress
And letting
My hair down,
Moving my hips
To that African sound
Which always begins
In the loins
And spreads,
Spreads to hips --
Fingers open wide
And the black
Comes on.
Not American black --
No,
James Baldwin is dead.
It is African black
And I suck on the taste
Of a dry mouth.
Oh, the sun is hot,
So hot
You don't mind
Any longer.
And I dance
With maybe my people
And my skin,
My always worn skin
Just falls away --
Mind opens --
I choose myself,
Choose blackness.
My rebirth is better, surer
Than any hip Christian
And his Bible promised.

J.S. Bailey
Cedar Falls, IA



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