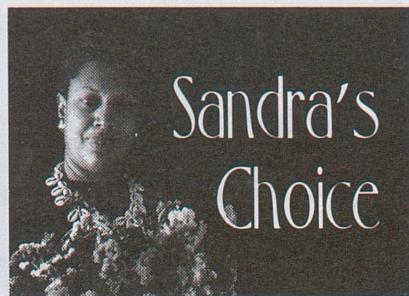




Black Literary Quarterly  
Issue 30 Vol. 8, No. 2  
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# Shooting STAR Review



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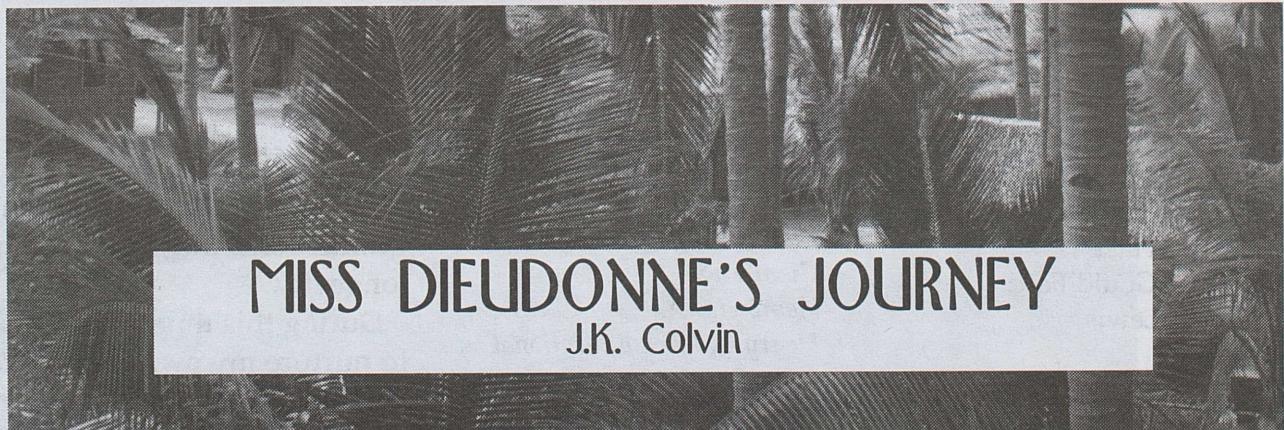
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I am new to Port-au-Prince and this job. The only decoration in my small office is a hand-me-down painting left by my predecessor. It's a florid Haitian allegory depicting Man's journey through life: from birth to death to paradise. It surges with strange animals, weird, twisted plants and symbols from Catholicism and voodoo. Like Haiti itself, it is loud, crowded, colorful and confusing. With a deeper, haunting sense of hopelessness underlying everything. I'm not sure I want to share this small office with that painting for the next two years.

Beneath the painting, as though she has fallen out of it, sits Miss Dieudonne. She is tense; she sits with her knees tightly together, her hands grasping the purse in her lap. She has come to ask me, the new Coast Guard attache', for a visa referral.

"Relax," I say. "This won't hurt."

I'm feeling slightly guilty about this visa referral interview. The Deputy Chief of Mission had warned me not to get started in the visa referral business. "Once you begin, they won't let you stop. Word will get around like magic, you'll have people calling night and day asking for a referral. Strangers will stop you on the street, in restaurants. They'll promise it's just for a visit to their broth-

er in Miami. They'll swear they'll come back to Haiti, but they're lying. Once they're out, they're gone. Life will be much easier if you simply refuse to do referrals."

I know his intentions are good; he speaks from personal experience. As the embassy's number two man he is bombarded with requests for assistance in reaching the United States. The refrain at the embassy is that all Haitians want to move to Miami. But I'm new, and I think I can be selective about whom I interview. I have no idea yet how relentless Haiti can be.

I read Miss Dieudonne's visa request package. It contains her application, her passport, a letter from her

*Continued on p.3*

Featuring Special Selections from  
**Ain't I A Woman Writers Collective**

*Let's Make A Slave* continuation

TO BE SOLD on board the Ship *Banke Island*, on tuesday the 6th of May next, at *Appleby Ferry*; a choice cargo of about 250 fine healthy NEGROES, just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast. — The utmost care has already been taken, and shall be continued, to keep them free from the least danger of being infected with the SMALL-POX, no boat having been on board, and all other communication with people from *Charles-Town* prevented. *Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.*

*N. B.* Full one half of the above Negroes have had the SMALL-POX in their own Country.

From the Schomburg Center in Black Research

from ISSUE NO. 29



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Journal Design by  
Virginia Smolar

# Publisher's Statement



#### Greetings.

After *Shooting Star Review's* one year hiatus, it's a pleasure to bring you this wonderful magazine again.

During this year off, a lot of infrastructure work has been done to strengthen the parent organization's (Shooting Star Productions, Inc.) foundations and ensure its health and longevity.

During this time, I have also taken a much-needed break to nurture my own creative talents and recover from the stresses of starting up a community-based arts organization against what I now realize were tremendous odds.

Shooting Star Productions, Inc. was founded in 1986 as a non-profit organization and has provided its artistic and cultural services since 1987. We have consistently operated on revenues of less than \$30,000 annually (our first year, we produced four outstanding issues on just \$10,000). The fact that this organization has provided such an outstanding forum for exploring the Black experience and has given a public voice to hundreds of literary and visual artists with virtually no operating monies is truly magical. But even magic has its limits. That is one of the challenges that this organization and those who want to celebrate the Black cultural experience have been addressing over the past year.

Regarding this issue's "Sandra's Choice" theme, it's been a delight to go through submissions received during Shooting Star Review's hiatus and discover these gems. I hope that you enjoy them, and those of us working to make this organization successful look forward to bringing you more of such beautiful and thought-provoking literature soon.

Founder & Artistic Director

#### Bone by Bone

We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. If they do, it is our duty, as witnesses for the future, to collect them again for the sake of our children. If necessary, bone by bone. - Alice Walker

How could we forget their voices?

Bessie and Billie belting the blues  
Zora chatting folklore

And yet we nearly forgot Zora,  
buried in an unmarked grave  
covered with weeds...

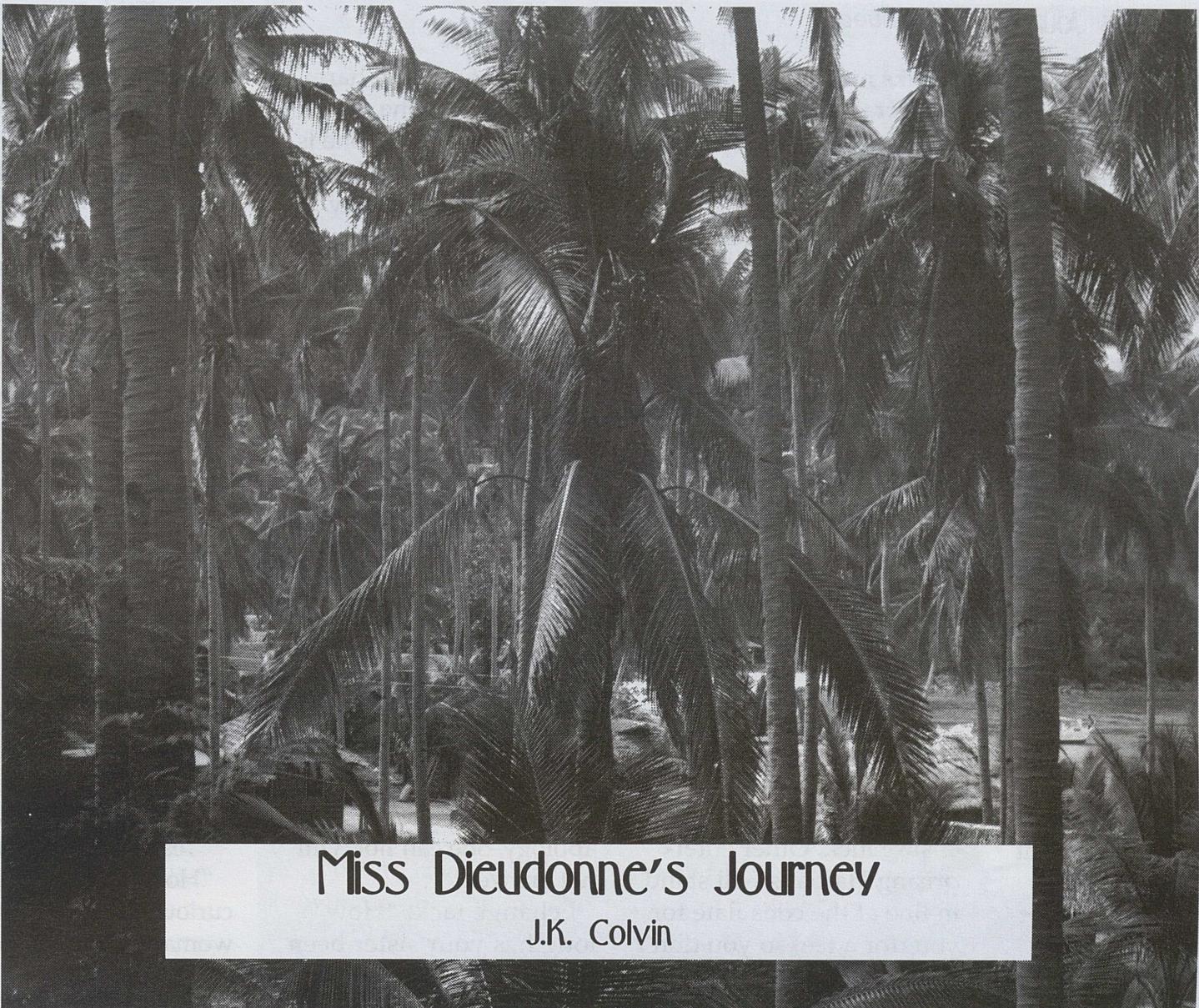
Until a Witness exhumed her memory  
and breathed life  
back into her stories,  
back into her words...

So we can always remember

Deborah A. Dessso  
Washington, D.C.



Courtesy Manchester Craftsman's Guild



Courtesy Manchester Craftsman's Guild

## Miss Dieudonne's Journey

J.K. Colvin

*Continued from p. 1*

employer, her bank book, and an itinerary of her intended trip to Miami. She will visit her sister. She will stay two weeks and return on American Flight 602.

I wonder how her sister got to Miami.

Miss Dieudonne' sits quietly across the desk from me. I can feel her nervousness. She clutches the purse in her lap, her fingers knotting and unknotting. She is attractive and well-dressed. Mid-twenties at the most. Not a peasant, but definitely not an elite, either. A member of the small, shrinking, Haitian middle class. I know she is wearing her best clothes, the clothes she wears to church on Sunday, to funerals, to weddings...to special occasions. She forces a smile at me and I smile back. What is she thinking?

I am regretting getting into this; the DCM was right. It seemed so reasonable a few days ago when I agreed to the interview. I had just completed a long distance call from my home to the Command Duty

Officer at the Coast Guard offices in Miami. Before I could hang up, an anxious feminine voice came on the line, "Commander Colvin?" "Yes," I answered, puzzled at who it could be, and how she knew my name. "My name is Marie Dieudonne', and I need to talk to you." She explained that she was a long distance operator for TeleHaiti, the phone company, and she wanted to speak to me in private about something important. She said she couldn't discuss it over the phone because the phone system in Haiti was not secure.

Swayed by her nerve, I agreed to meet her in a few days. "Come to the embassy, you can speak freely there." She thanked me quickly and the line went dead.

The next day I described this conversation to the DCM. "She wants a visa referral," he predicts, and then gives me his lecture on visa referrals.

"What if she has information on drug smugglers? She's a long distance opera-

tor, maybe she's heard something I should know." I knew I sounded defensive, hopeful.

"She wants a referral. That's all they ever want." He sounded tired.

Later, I asked Sergeant Wilson how she knew my name. SGT. Wilson has been in Haiti for seven years. He knows all there is to know about Haiti. "Half of Port-au-Prince knew your name the morning after you arrived. The other half knew it by sunset. They know who you are, what you are, where you live, what kind of car you drive, your' wife's name, your favorite restaurants, whether you have a mistress—everything. You're an American and you work at the embassy. You fascinate them, terrify them, entertain them. You're an Earthling living among Martians."

I look away from Miss Dieudonne' to the window; all I see is green and blue. Blue sky, blue water, green trees along the beach. The embassy sits with its back

turned to the real Port-au-Prince. Its glazed eyes gaze serenely west: to ocean, sky, golden sunsets. Go far enough west, and a little north, and you'll reach America. Six hundred infinite miles. Looking out my window it's easy to forget I'm in the capital of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. If my office were on the east side of the embassy, I would see the real Haiti: the blue and green overcome and smothered by mountains of garbage, open sewers, beggars, cripples, starving children. And I would hear the noise, the incessant, desperate din of Haiti. I'm glad my office faces west.

I look back to Miss Dieudonne. "Are you married?"

"No," she answers, shrinking a little, shifting in her chair. She knows I'm trying to discover if she has "ties" to Haiti: a spouse, a job, a home, a car, children—these are ties. Some indication she'll return if she gets a visa.

"Do you have children?"

She blushes and looks away, embarrassed by the question. "No," she says softly. I, too, am embarrassed by the question. If she were a white American woman would I have asked it? Wouldn't I assume that a young, unmarried white woman was childless? But I'm in Haiti, playing by Haitian rules. Sex, race, skin color...reality, all have different definitions here.

"Your work for TeleHaiti must be very interesting, talking to all those different countries. Do you enjoy it?"

She smiles a genuine smile this time; she is proud of her job. "Yes, I love speaking to the other international operators. They sound so close, so friendly. We are like friends. I want to visit them all."

But first you have to get out of Haiti.

Her application says she makes nearly 750 gourdes a month (the equivalent of \$150), she is in the top five of Haitian salaries. I try to calculate how many paychecks she saved for the round-trip airfare to Miami. There are no super-savers for Haitians.

I examine her bank book. Are there enough savings to bring her back to Port-au-Prince? If she doesn't return, the money will be forfeited to the Haitian government. Haitian currency, the gourde, has no value outside of Haiti and cannot be transferred to American banks. Are there any recent, unusually large deposits to her account? Some visa applicants go to money lenders to "rent" several thousand gourdes just prior to applying for a visa. Once they have obtained the visa (or, more often, failed to obtain the visa), they withdraw the money and return it, plus interest, to the lender. I see nothing like that in Miss Dieudonne's account. She has the equivalent of about \$1800 in savings, 9000 gourdes. Would I abandon \$1800 to escape Haiti? I've been here only a few weeks, and already I know the answer.

I compliment her on her excellent English, and she

thanks me, once again embarrassed. She knows that Haitians who speak English are considered a bad risk for a visa.

She still seems too nervous. Am I that frightening?

I try to imagine what she's gone through to get as far as my office. To a Haitian, obtaining an American visa is like waging a war. It requires planning, prayer, dauntless persistence and the advice of experts. Entrepreneurs offer classes (for a fee) on how to fill out the visa application, what to say to the consular officer, how to dress for an interview, how to obtain a referral from the embassy, and what sacrifices should be made to what gods to ensure luck. Other enterprising Haitians will stand in line at the consulate for you (for a fee) so you don't have to wait there the three to four hours it takes to work your way to the front of the line. And finally, there are the "counselors" who will help you decide (for a fee) which day would be the best to go to the consulate: "Go on Monday, because the young officers have had a weekend to rest and make love. They will be in a good mood. Don't go on Friday, they will be tired of seeing so many peasants, and they will be anxious to home and begin their weekend."

I know Miss Dieudonne' has gone through all of this before approaching me for a referral. I wonder how much she has spent so far. \$200? \$500?

"Tell me about you sister. Where does she live in Miami?"

Her smile goes away. "She lives in Little Haiti. I don't know where exactly."

Her memory has been affected by years of horror stories about Immigration agents hunting down illegal Haitians and shipping them back to Haiti.

Would I tell INS? It's a dilemma I want to avoid.

"Does she have a job?" I ask, trying to sound interested, harmless.

She hesitates, gathering

words that will not harm her sister. "Yes she works for a Cuban family. She is a maid. She takes the bus to Miami Beach everyday. She is saving to buy a car soon. Already she has a color TV and refrigerator." She finishes proudly, her eyes bright. Her sister is a success story.

"How did she get to Miami?" I ask. The Big Question. Was she one of the few successful "boat people?" Did she somehow obtain a visa? Or did she go through the Dominican Republic, take a boat across the Mona Pass to Puerto Rico, hitchhike to San Juan International and buy a ticket to Miami?

She shakes her head, an apology. She can not, will not answer.

I change tack. "How long has your sister been in Miami?"

"Two years," she tells me I assume from her hesitancy that her sister must have been one of the "boat people." The people the Coast Guard sent me to Haiti to "welcome back." The part of my job I like the least.

I give up on her sister. I think about the visa referral process. How stupid it is, how deceptive to the Haitians. I look at the two referral forms: an "A" referral and a "B" referral, identical except for an innocuous wording difference halfway down the form. Miss Dieudonne' doesn't know this. She thinks there is only one type of form. Her goal is to get a referral from the Coast Guard attache; She thinks a referral from me will get her a visa. She doesn't know that if I give a "B" referral, it's a "no visa" signal to the consular officer.

She doesn't know it means I want her to feel obliged to me, but I don't want to risk giving her a visa. She doesn't know that only an "A" referral will get her a visa. She doesn't know she doesn't meet the profile for an "A" referral. She doesn't know I won't risk having my first "A" referral fail to return. There's something dishonest about this, I real-

ize. Haitians are simple, trusting people. Especially when it comes to Americans. I'm exploiting that.

So as I hesitate over the two forms, Miss Dieudonne' is not wondering which I will fill out, she thinks there is only one. She fears that I may not give her a referral at all. She thinks I am about to say "No."

"My sister flew to Miami on American," she says suddenly. I am surprised. Why tell me now?

"Did she have a visa?" I ask. If one sister failed to return, would the other? Perhaps live in Little Haiti, work as a maid for a Cuban family? Buy a color TV and a refrigerator?

"Yes," she whispers.

"How did she get it?" I ask, curious how a young Haitian woman beat the system.

"The Coast Guard attache' gave her a referral," she answers.

My predecessor. The DCM had told me about my predecessor. He'd "gone native," abused the referral system, abused his position. "Took advantage of his office. He was not a gentleman," said the DCM. The supreme condemnation.

But why give what could only have been a "A" referral to someone who probably had no intention of returning to Haiti? Was it frustration with the system? Perhaps he wanted her to escape the poverty, corruption, and disease that plague Haiti. I sympathize with him, but if I use his logic, there will be six million Haitians in Miami and Haiti will be a ghost town. I tell myself there has to be a limit, we've got to draw the line somewhere. Someone has to be able to say, "No," and make it stick.

I look down at the two forms. I will fill out the "B" referral form. She will thank me, not knowing I have sentenced her to more years in hell.

I look up at Miss Dieudonne'. Her purse is on the floor and she is undoing her blouse. She glances at me and then looks down, but continues

to unbutton her blouse. Astonished, I tell her to stop. "What are you doing?" I'm stunned.

Her fingers pause at the last button. Still looking at the floor, she answers, "My sister said to make love to the Coast Guard attache'. He will give you a referral."

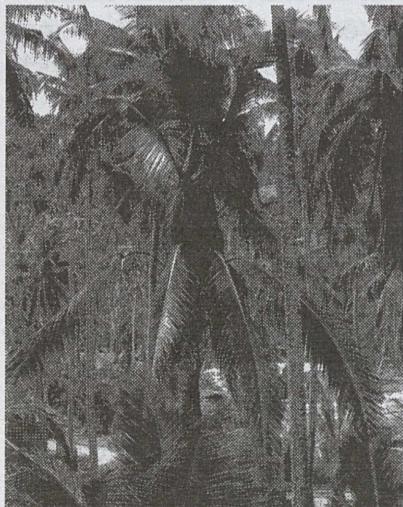
Now I understand why my predecessor gave an "A" referral. Now I understand the DCM's, "He was no gentleman."

Did they do it in the office? On the floor? On the desk? I look at the desk, as though I might find traces of their lovemaking. I almost laugh. It's too bizarre. Too sad.

"Please, Miss Dieudonne', you must button your blouse." I have trouble speaking. I fill out an "A" referral, and hand it to her. She takes it with disbelief on her face. She thanks me over and over, god-blesses me in French and Creole. She is ecstatic. "It's a dream," she says.

The following Monday Miss Dieudonne' goes to the consulate with her "A" referral. The consular officer looks at her suspiciously, but grants her a two-week visa anyway. the next day Miss Dieudonne' flies to Miami.

She does not come back. Some weeks late I am sitting in my office, looking at the painting. I find that if I look at it long enough, I can see the figures move, I can hear their cries. I see Miss Dieudonne' in the painting; she has completed her journey. She has reached paradise. But below her and behind her is a clutching, clawing mass who have not...who will not. It is their cries I hear. I decide I will keep the painting, leave it for my predecessor.



## A DIVA FOR THE BLUE NOTE

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF PHYLLIS HYMAN

Contains samples of "Waiting On You" by En Vogue  
and "This Time (I'll Be Sweeter)" by Angela Bofill

Ricardo Cortez Cruz

Carbondale, IL

Dear Apollo:

You know I love you, don't you? I stayed locked-up in my New York City apartment and didn't go to the Theatre because, suddenly, I felt my voice slipping away (this was so wild). Honestly, while I listened to "Love Is A Battlefield" by Pat Benatar, I was cracking. I became increasingly more scared that no one would hear me, especially you, Apollo. I've always been a vocal woman, trippin' on the slightest thing, all of the people who have ever known me doin' he-say-she-say that I was all mouth.

You remember our first time together, Old Friend? After some jazz, I came into your house like a freak show and turned the motherfucker out, doing "Riding The Tiger." Yes, you are definitely right — even then, that was me, Phyllis Hyman broke down. But in my opinion, I was straight with you: "I'm high, man," I remember saying throughout that spectacle, sipping ginger wine after the romance stuff. Even then, you were able to ignore me, Apollo.

After that special occasion, that unfaithful night when you made me feel like I was a soloist on Amateur Night, whenever I would perform for you (and, believe me, it was many times), you would continue to begin our evening together by just sitting there, unemotional, like you never caught the vibe. I would try to get close to you, you smoking while you heated up inside me crying and crooning like I was deeply, deeply dick-whipped. And suddenly you would erupt, violently shaking me, waving your fire at me, until you saw that I had become pale, my skin seriously ashy. "What you won't do for love!" you would scream. "Ain't you had enough love?!"

Whenever I couldn't tell whether or not you really wanted me, I did screaming at the moon.

Now I must admit that in the past, if a response from you troubled me, I explored exotic drinks for no-good reason. You actually enjoyed watching me drink up mountains, you once whispered in front of my face, mocking me, then having the nerve to chant, like my groupie, your clenched fist crushing even the glass of grappa that I was generous enough to pay for. Oh yes, I heard all that.

Although I thank God for all of my special gifts, He never allowed me to choose a man: I can't stand living all alone. The reality of this is ultimately what caused me to crap out.

Though I know I have family and friends too numerous to mention, let me finally tell you that, before I chose to stay home, I called up Patti, who said she was watching Rocky on TV, and told her my problem. "Girlfriend, somebody loves you, baby," was her only response. "Betcha bye golly wow," I said. I hung up before she could say goodbye.

Then, affected by serious hypertension and finally trying to find some rest, I fixed a small cup of decaffeinated coffee and used several tablespoons of sugar (again, too many to count). And as I thought of you, I curled up to that good book *Coffee Makes You Black*.

I almost forgot to tell you. I bumped into your girl Madonna at a New York City nightclub. she says she plans on singing "Can't We Learn To Love One Another" when she hits 125th Street next month.



"Too bad you won't be there to see it," she said to me.

Well Apollo all I can say to you now is that It's not like it's up to me to say whether or not WE'll see each other again (like Mingus, I would call you an inconsiderate audience) but if we do this time I'll be sweeter I won't mess around I won't let you down have faith in me have faith! this time, I'll be sweeter our love will run deeper ...

\* *Phyllis Hyman overdosed on sleeping pills and died at the age of 45 in her New York City apartment, the same night she was scheduled to appear at the Apollo Theatre, notorious for its oftentimes cruel behavior and cold shoulder. According to police, Phyllis left an apparent suicide note.*

*For jazz artists, the Blue Note started happening circa 1958. With yards of graffiti along the New York City walks and walls still saying "BIRD LIVES," Charlie Parker, who eventually suffered a nervous breakdown while doing "Lover Man," was one of those legendary night-club greats responsible for making the Blue Note popular.*



# Press 'N Curl

Clara C Earthly  
New Orleans, LA

When my mama died, I hadn't had a kit in my hair in over a year. You see, New Orleans is decidedly more, well...casual than Philadelphia. My unprocessed hair barely rated a second glance in the French Quarter, but in North Philly it created a shock wave that was felt all the way to City Hall. My sisters, Andrea and Angelia (I'm Antoinette; my parents were going to work their way through the alphabet, picked a bunch of "A" names and never got off of them) took one look at the knotty across the street to Miss Verdeen.

Now Miss Verdeen had a beauty shop on the corner for about as far back as I could remember. It was a neighborhood fixture, like the lone oak tree stretching its stunted limbs in the middle of the block, like Mr. Jenkins sitting on his stoop with the same can of beer, like the stop sign that faced the wrong way on the one way street. I'd never been one of the regulars at Miss Verdeen's, although my mama had gone every Saturday for a roller set. Her hair had needed no reformation, only a good set to keep it neatly waving to her shoulders. Of course, once she took ill, she stopped her weekly visits and instead wore her hair in two thinning braids that trailed weakly over her shoulders.

Angelia still lived on the block and I knew that she sent her oldest girl over to Miss Verdeen every week. Angelia never was one to fool with anybody's hair. When we were little, her Barbie dolls had dreadlocks. She hates to use hot curlers, hates sleeping in rollers even more. Every few months she takes herself downtown to a fancy salon with an African sounding name and gets herself a Jerri-curl. Sometimes if her money is short she'll let it go an extra month or so. But if her hair starts looking really rugged

she just pulls on a "Fifi" (as she refers to her wigs) and goes on about her business.

Now if this had been a normal visit and Angie had tried to send me to the

was how the custom started.

I knew all of the women perched around the salon in various degrees of dyeing and frying. I'd known most of them for so long that I

ably wouldn't bother come to the funeral.)

The others crowded around patting me, offering appropriate words of sympathy as I fought back tears for the hundredth time that day. The crowd parted and Miss Verdeen came up and placed a strong hand on my head.

"You come to get your hair done," she remarked in her raspy voice. I nodded. She stroked my hair roughly and asked suspiciously, "What kind of chemical you got in here, girl?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! How long has it been since your last relaxer?"

"I cut it all off about three years ago and just let it grow out," I replied calmly.

Miss Verdeen shook her head in disbelief, then sighed. "Well, if you were looking to get a curl today, it's going to take a while. A relaxer would be quicker."

"No," I spoke up quickly. "I just want a press and curl."

The room went silent when I said the words. Press 'n curl. In the days before Ultra Sheen, a press and curl was the only way to get your hair sleek and smoothly styled. The only problem with a press and curl was that it was a temporary solution. Women would come to the beauty salon every week and leave guarding their peanut curls under rain bonnets. Rain, sweat, high humidity - any of these things could wreck a hairdo.

Mothers still press their little girls hair to make it easier to braid, and give them candy curls for special occasions. Old women who think that chemicals seep into your brain still totter off for their weekly hair appointments. But women my age never get their hair pressed.

*Continued on p. 14*

Courtesy Manchester Craftsmen's Guild



beauty parlor, we'd have fought. But I was still numb from the shock, so I went docilely across the street, clutching a twenty in my fist.

The door to the stop opened to the whine of blow dryers and women. It was part of the strange etiquette of Miss Verdeen's that a customer had to complain about the service before she was allowed to leave. Complaints could come at any time during the process and ranged from "This stuff is burning my head" to "I asked for a trim not a scalping!" Now mind you, if the ladies were really dissatisfied with the service they got at Miss Verdeen's they'd have never darkened her door again. But the custom had started back when Miss Verdeen had first opened up shop. No one wanted to go there because she was supposedly a widow woman, more likely divorced or worse. But she was good, she was in the neighborhood and she was cheap. So they went to her, sat under dryers and swapped gossip and put out mild complaints to avoid giving a tip. Not that anyone remembered that

didn't remember meeting them, they'd just always been there, like my family. There was Miss Claudia, whose daughter Dena had been my best friend two decades ago. And Miss Evelyn, who'd never had children of her own but was always baking cookies and making candy. Miz Lovinggood, who had been my kindergarten teacher and was the only one of the group to insist upon the use of her surname at all times, threw off her shampoo cap when she saw me.

"Antoinette!" she cried as she leapt up from the chair. Miz Lovinggood was also the only woman in the shop wearing a dress, a sedate navy blue chemise that somehow looked right with the yellow and green curlers clustered at the front of her head. She enfolded me in a swath of navy linen and Youth Dew perfume. "oh you poor dear! So you made it home all right. We weren't sure you were going to make it" (Translation: An ungrateful child who would move thirteen hundred miles away leaving her two married sisters to care for her mother when she had neither chick nor child prob-

# MUHAMMAD MFTAH AL-FITURI

## THE ARAB-AFRICAN POET OF AFRICAN RENEWAL

Habeeb Salloum

Don Mills, Ontario, Canada

"**L**ow can a white man enslave my land?

How could he enslave my yesterday and tomorrow?

I am black and Africa is for me, not the intruding foreigner."

So wrote the poet, Muhammad Al-Fituri in his book, *The Songs of Africa*, published in 1956, urging his fellow Africans to rise from their sleep and defend their homeland. Like many of the new educated Africans of this century, in his poetry, he calls on his brethren to awake and throw the chain of colonialism and be proud of their continent.

Al-Fituri, in verse, tries to arouse his people from their slumber in the same fashion as the Africans who work in the political field, striving to free their fellow-men not only from the shackles of Western oppression, but also from archaic traditions. However, unlike the majority of intellectuals in Africa, his words are carried not in European language, but in Arabic - considered by a good number of scholars as an indigenous African tongue.

Many in the West are familiar with books and articles written by Africans who employ English, French, Portuguese or Spanish in their writings, but there are very few who have ever heard of the innumerable Africans who use Arabic to express their feelings. Yet, Arabic was for centuries the written idiom in which the majority of educated Africans communicated and wrote their literature. Unlike the European languages, Arabic is not the vernacular of masters from another continent, but a tongue of Africa itself.

In fact, Arabic is one of the important languages which binds a good number of Africans together. About half of the Africans today are Muslims and almost all of them are familiar with the language of Koran. A good number of these would like to see Arabic as the Language of Africa.

Even some who have no connection with Islam, like the first leader of Congo, Patrice Lumumba - murdered by Western-paid mercenaries - have called for Arabic to become the vernacular of the continent.

Hence, it is important that the outside world should be familiar with the works of African intellectuals, like

Awake from your black dreams

or in an even stronger tone with these words:

Africa!  
Africa, a land asleep!  
Oh! My nation. Oh!  
Land of my fathers.  
I am calling you.  
Do you not hear the

And from the moaning of our mouths they have shaped their glory.  
We have returned from the wars, to the fields, the factories.  
So that we could plough, seed, harvest and gather,  
So that we could build for others, cook but starve of hunger.



From the Schomburg Center in Black Research

Al-Fituri, who use Arabic to express their ideas and emotions.

A true example of most of the Africans living in West and Central Africa, Al-Futuri carries the blood of the Arab north and non-Arab south. His father was from the region of the Upper Bahr al-Ghazel in southern Sudan while his mother was an Egyptian.

Growing up in Egypt, he came to feel that Black African was his real home - not the African of Alexandria, where he spent youth. In this northern Egyptian city which counted among its inhabitants a good many who were Europeans, he felt that he was a stranger.

The feeling that Black Africa, his land, must be unshackled and free is a cry which runs continent to the reader when he writes:

Africa!  
Africa awake!

peoples' cry of bitterness?  
I am calling you,  
I am calling my blood  
in you.  
I am calling my nation  
who is naked.

Seemingly, he answers his own cry of bitterness:

Yes! Our turn has arrived.  
Africa!  
Our turn has arrived.

In his verse, Al-Fituri reflects on the colonial history of Africa. He talks of how war after, the Europeans took Africans to fight their conflicts - struggle to free the African people, but battles to enrich their colonial masters. These few lines gives his and the majority of Africans' true feelings about these wars:

'We have returned, yes we have returned from the war victories,  
On our necks they have placed the laurels of victory,

Yet, in spite of all the suffering imposed by the European imperial powers on the Africans, he still had faith in humankind. Calling on all people in the world to understand the feeling of the oppressed Africans, he asks:

Oh my brother! In the East, in every dwelling,  
Oh my brother! In the world, in every nation,  
I am asking you,  
Do you know me?

These are but a few of the Africans' cries of anguish in Muhammad Al-Fituri's poetry. He wanted the sufferings of his people to end and their lives improved. Throughout his verses, he calls for a free, enlightened and proud Africa. Like a good number of Africans who write and express their feeling in Arabic, he inspires his countrymen to build a new African world.



## Rainbow Woman

She stands on top of a mountain  
admiring herself on a piece of ice  
swirling her multi-colored dress  
She steps back from the edge,  
runs,  
and leaps into the sky.

She dances,  
twirls,  
somersaults through the air.  
The wind envelops her  
Blowing colors everywhere  
Creating arcs of red,  
yellow,  
orange,  
green,  
blue  
and violet  
that stretch across the  
sky  
Marking her own path.

Tracey Cooper



Courtesy Manchester Craftsmen's Guild

## SERENITY

I look at the sky  
The clouds are moving  
Smooth, clear, tranquil  
Your movements are like  
clouds  
Quiet, peaceful, ever moving

Float on me forever

Serenity

You

Judy Jones  
Brooklyn, NY

## Left

All the people in her  
house  
are already dead  
their smiles fixed  
their faces frozen  
their bodies entombed  
forever  
in golden rectangles,  
bronze ovals  
and silver squares,  
reposing silently  
on intricately embroi-  
dered.  
lace doilies  
The air musty,  
thick  
with mildew,  
with death,  
with dying

She lies frail  
on a bed  
of faded forget-me-nots  
not forgetting  
only remembering  
how she once danced,  
once laughed  
once cried a tear  
for the ones she lost  
for all the people  
in her house  
the already dead  
with smiles too fixed  
faces too frozen  
to cry a tear  
for her

Carol Dixon  
Brooklyn, NY

## Ain't I A Woman Writer's Collective

Founded in 1984, by Denise Bell, Hattie Gossett and Regina Williams, the Ain't I A Woman Writers Collective is a Non-competitive support group for women writers of color. The Collective's name, suggested by Carla Grant, embodies the womanist spirit of Sojourner Truth. Organized as a remedy to underdeveloped female voices in women's works due to criticism received in male dominated workshops, the group offers an opportunity to develop stronger female images for publication and performance in a mutually supportive atmosphere.

Pictured here, the members of the collective are as follows: (left to right) poet and performance artist Judy Jones, has been published in *African Voices* and her book of poetry, *Pieces of Me*, was published in 1993: novelist, short story writer, poet, editor and teacher Carol Dixon is currently at work on a novel, *Rituals*. Her works have appeared in many publications and she has been interviewed on several TV shows: Collective Director, playwright, poet and short story writer Denise Bell has received acclaim from the *Village Voice* for her plays, *Once and Again*. She is currently at work on a play entitled, *Winston*: poet and youngest member Tracey Cooper was first published in *Waterways* at the age of seven: Carla Grant is currently at work on a collection of short stories. She has been published in *African Voices*: (front) poet and short story writer Regina Williams has been published in several anthologies including *New City Voices* and *Drum*: (not shown) essayist and newest member Toni Ham a recipient of the James Keenan Speech Award, served as a researcher for the *Village Voice*.

## IN DUE TIME

Regina E. Williams  
South Ozone Park, NY

Elaina could not fathom why the memory of him would come to her now. It was well over a year since the surgery and having to make so many major decisions about her life. Why hadn't she thought of him when the doctor had suggested that the next step was a biopsy. Or when the surgeon had made it clear that if she wanted to live surgery was the only expedient choice.

During the dreaded chemotherapy would have been a logical time to have conjured up the dirty-faced urchin. In the same way that the chemicals had burned through her body rendering her weak, and sometimes violently ill, so too the recollection of his intensely clear, focused eyes and arrogant knowing shrug of the shoulder.

"Littleman and I have a lot in common," thought Elaina, "we are survivors." She had survived learning



Courtesy Manchester Craftsman's Guild

to live with pain - the dull throb at the back of her underarm or the elongated ripple of pain that went through her right side whenever she tried to raise her right arm; the taut pain her neck and left shoulder from trying to change her handiness from right to left. Elaina grew used to pain, it became her reminder that she was alive.

But it was only now that she thought of him. Now

that she had been given a miracle drug - a drug to be taken for five years - a drug that intensified her menopausal hot flashes and sent hammering pains to her chest. The miracle drug that made her rush to Urgent Care sure she was having a heart attack. The doctor had said that in six months or so that horrid side effects would subside.

Elaina fingered the bottle of pills in her hand and thought of how she had encountered the little boy. She had been walking with Hilma, her best friend, deep in conversation, when out of the corner of her eye she saw the bus bearing down on the two young boys.

"Get back!" Elaina shouted as the package in her hand was tossed aside. The taller of the two boys ducked out of the reach of the bus and scampered to the other side of the street. The other Elaina snatched from in front of the swerving bus. A female passenger's face and hands pressed against the window of the bus, the sound issuing from her mouth blending with the screech of the brakes. The bus driver

slumped forward. Passengers were flung forward, then back. On the curb Hilma's hands covered her chest as if her arms could protect her. Elaina's body shook, but her face was a stern, set mask. The adrenalin pumping through her would not allow her to turn the boy loose. She shook him hard. "Don't you know you could've been killed?"

The little man face was like rubber, stretching into open hostility as he wiggled free from her grip. As he sprinted out of her reach, he spit back over his shoulder, "So what if I die?"

"Yes, we will all die in due time, but we surely don't have to push it," thought Elaina, as she rolled the tiny white pills around in her hand, "you are an ugly experiment using my body as your lab." With a focused, two-point toss Elaina pitched the \$90.00 a month miracle drug into the trash. "Yes Littleman," smiled Elaina to herself, "when we die, may it be of old age."



Ain't I A Woman Writer's Collective Membership

## poem # one

staring

cursing

at the demons of the day

She

My name is Mahogany

I know what it is like to be beautiful.

Easy it is not.

When I take my walk along the seashore -  
the seashells gather together to write my name in  
the sand.

My name is Lady

I too know what it is like to be beautiful

Easy it is not.

So classy I am that flowers bloom upon my arrival  
Throwing their loves before me wherever I go.  
I sashay into large rooms and people stop - and pay  
attention to me.

I'm Lillian

I have always been as beautiful as I am now

...and I have been beautiful for a long, long time.

Easy it is not.

When I take my walk slowly down Lenox Avenue -  
because that  
is how I make my way -  
Slowly -  
People watch me walk  
I have a vicious walk you know -  
So vicious that the Earth beneath me is pleased  
For she too is in perfect order with me.

Zora,

Zora Brown, here!

Beautiful and Present.

I have not always been beautiful as I am now -  
So beautiful I have become, I that I am unrecognizable,  
even to my self.

I have been formed shapely, lovable and baked  
brown,

I am a conversation piece.

And we are a sisterhood - a circle called connection  
Believe us or not - we have lived, and loved, and  
laughed loud!

Leaving traces of ourselves behind.

Pressing on

Making room, Giving in  
Fighting back - join us

We have much to talk about, and all the time in  
world.

We don't end

Aarian Pope  
Bronx, NY

holding bags

filled with your present  
future and past

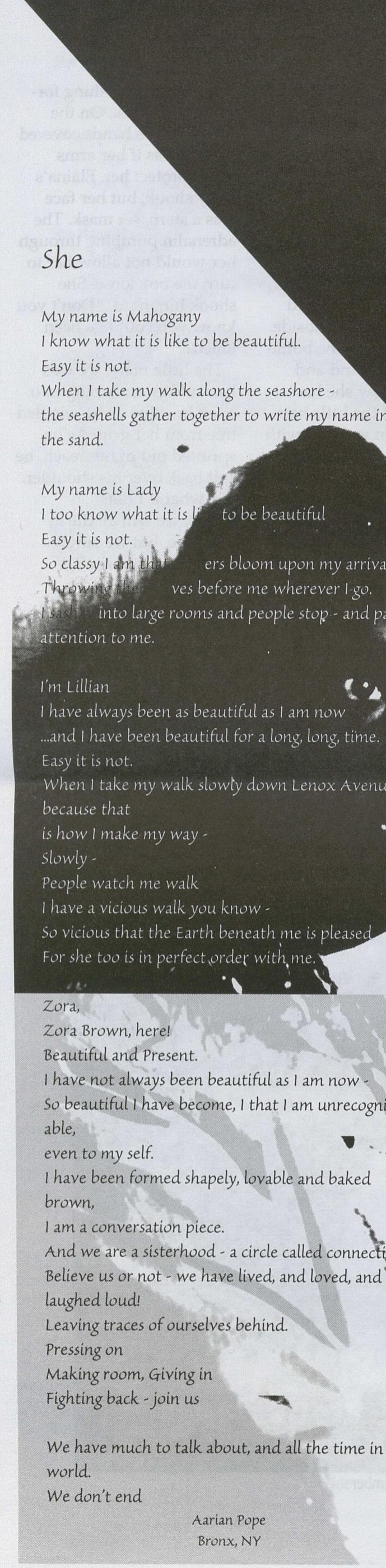
in the sun's rays of hope

in rage

praying for eternal night

by denise bell

Courtesy Manchester Craftsman's Guild



# NOMMO

Carla Grant

There is power in the word, they say; life sustaining power. And so, conversely, in silence there's death, right? Sounds right to me, so I claim that as my personal axiom. Mine. In silence there's death. Not gonna get caught again without the words. Not gonna force my eyes down and away. I'm gonna look at the faces, regardless of color, and respond. No more dryness in my throat; coughing instead of speaking. No more.

I've got this thing all twisted and corroding in my mind; silence and daddy and death. When the thoughts come they get heavy like lead, they bear down, they mess with my mind.

I remember my first real job. I worked at a community college in mid-town. Registration was a hectic time, and they'd pull college aides from every department to get the work done. Jerry and I had been reassigned. We were sitting in a strange no-window office, alphabetizing student's forms; I mean for hours. The only person I knew in that dungeon-room was Jerry, and he wasn't talking much. He didn't take being reassigned too well. After lunch I started my countdown, going oblivious to the work cause come five o'clock I'd be out of there.

There were small groups of folks working and talking, talking to make the idiot work go faster. There was one man, a white man in a brown suit and brown tie, (funny I still remember what this guy had on after all these years) sitting across the room with his legs crossed, holding down most of the conversation. I gathered he was the head honcho. Was into my busy work, counting down the time when there was no mistaking what I heard; a joke on "niggers", and all this guarded laughter. Jerry and I we don't laugh. I don't see Jerry's face, cause I force my eyes away, back down at the idiot work, the \$1.85 an hour CETA work. But I know Jerry hears the word, 'cause its so loud, seems like the echo of it never subsides. We sit there and work feverishly like we're colorless, invisible. I cough, cause my throat is on fire; 'cause my words are gagging and choking me. I'm ashamed. After all, I was taught better, had proper activist training, at home, in school. When I was in college I was part of the Black Student Union, and didn't I take part in the protest to get more African American professors on campus—we closed that sucker down. And wasn't my hair "natural", chemical free, and couldn't I sprout the Nguzo Saba, even then. Uh huh, but this was a J.O.B. thing, a what would the repercussions be thing, and mostly a sure 'nuff fear thing. I had no voice.

Daddy died that night. Daddy was a guard for Carver Federal bank over on 125th street. The guy who brought him home said he clutched at his chest around 3:00 and

never stopped. By the time we got him to the hospital it was too late. His heart stopped. I lose it and they sedate me. In between my grief weird thoughts play havoc with my mind. "In silence there is death." Why didn't I tell that white fool where to go, an what to do when he got there. Maybe just maybe, somehow out there on the far reaches of the cosmos there's this responsibility thing placed on you when you miss doing what you're supposed to do, it doesn't go away, just comes around again. I grapple with insane thoughts, and never quite let go of the notion, that the next time, if there is a next time, I'm gonna speak up loud and clear, cause in doing so, I just might save somebody's life.

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm sitting in those two seater numbers on the subway, reading my book, minding my own business when two young sisters get on the train. Youngbloods, homegirls, out there living hard and fast, bedecked in large shrimp earrings, slick two-toned hair, spandex, and talkin' loud. Talkin' the "nigger" this and the "nigger" that...Now, I'm trying to mind my own business, trying to read my book and ease into work on time and sane. But I'm wrestling with myself, forcing my eyes down into the book, down like I forced my eyes fifteen years ago in that tiny office, the day that daddy died. Anything but hear the words, but the words echo, pulsate with the power of their own. Too much history for the word to be easy and round, for it to float; it is caustic and sharp like broken bones. These young sisters are so close to me I can touch them. My

throat is killing me. I start coughing. The "n" word is so flippant and loose, so causal that I see that white man in that office sitting there in his brown suit and tie. Causal. Invisibility. My mind does this trick thing, like a broken refrain, "IN silence there's death", over and over. I close my book and touch the nearest elbow to me. When the sister turns to look at me I notice she has pretty smooth skin. There's no lecture. I simply ask her to think about her choice of words. She frowns at me. A real ugly frown, like I had seven heads or something. By this time the other sister leans over her friends' shoulder to see who's talking to her. She's very annoyed with me for interrupting their conversation. But I'm pretty composed now, and actually expect the laughter I get when I explain, "Hey, I'm just tryin' to save some lives."



Courtesy Manchester Craftsmen's Guild

# Let's Make A Slave

Part Two (Part One appeared in SSR-Vol. 8 No. 1)

The Black Arcade Library

## The Breaking Process of the African Woman

William Lynch



From the Schomburg Center in Black Research

T

hen take the female run a series of tests on her to see if she will submit to your desires willingly. Test her in every way because she is the most important factor for good economics. If she shows any sign of resistance in submitting completely to your will, do not hesitate to use the bull whip on her to extract that last bit of bitch out of her. Take care not to kill her, for, in doing so, you spoil good economics. When in complete submission, she will train her offspring in the early years to submit to labor when they become of age.

Understanding is the best thing. Therefore, we shall go deeper into this area of the subject matter concerning what we have produced here in this breaking process of the female nigger. We have reversed the relationships. In her natural uncivilized state she would have a strong dependency on the uncivilized nigger male, and she would have a limited protective tendency toward her independent male offspring and would raise the female offspring to be dependent like her. nature had provided for this type of balance. We reversed nature by burning and pulling one civilized nigger apart and bull whipping the other to the point of death---all in her presence. By her being left alone, unprotected, with the male image destroyed, the ordeal caused her to move from her psychological dependent state to a frozen independent state. In this frozen psychological state of independence she will raise her male and female offspring in reversed roles.

## Let's Make A Slave

For fear of the young male's life, she will psychologically train him to be mentally weak and dependent but physically strong. Because she has become psychologically independent, she will train her female offsprings to be psychologically independent. What have you got? You've got the nigger woman out front and the nigger man behind and scared. This is a perfect situation for sound sleep and economics.

Before the breaking process, we had to be alertly on guard at all times. Now we can sleep soundly, for, out of frozen fear, *his woman stands guard for us*. He cannot get past her early infant slave molding process *He is a good tool, now ready to be tied to the horse at a tender age*.

By the time a nigger boy reaches the age of sixteen, he is soundly broken in and ready for a long life of sound and efficient work and the reproduction of a unit of good labor force.

Continually, through the breaking of uncivilized savage niggers, by throwing the nigger female savage into a frozen psychological state of independence, by killing of the protective male image, and by creating a submissive dependent mind of the nigger male savage, we have created an orbiting cycle that turns on its own axis forever, unless a phenomenon occurs and reshifts the positions of the male and female savages. We show what we mean by example. Take the case of the two economic slave units and examine them closely.



From the Schomburg Center in Black Research

### THE NEGRO MARRIAGE UNIT:

We breed two nigger males with two nigger females. Then we take the nigger males away from them and keep them moving and working. Say the one nigger female bears a nigger female and the other bears a nigger male. Both nigger females, being without influence of the nigger male image, frozen with an independent psychology, will raise their offspring into reverse positions. The one with the female offspring will teach her to be like herself, independent and negotiable (we negotiate with her, through her, and negotiate her at will). The one with the nigger male offspring, she being frozen with a subconscious fear for his life, will raise him to be mentally dependent and weak, but physically strong---in other words, body over mind. Now, in a few years when these two offsprings become fertile for early reproduction, we will mate and breed them and continue the cycle. That is good, sound, and long range comprehensive planning.

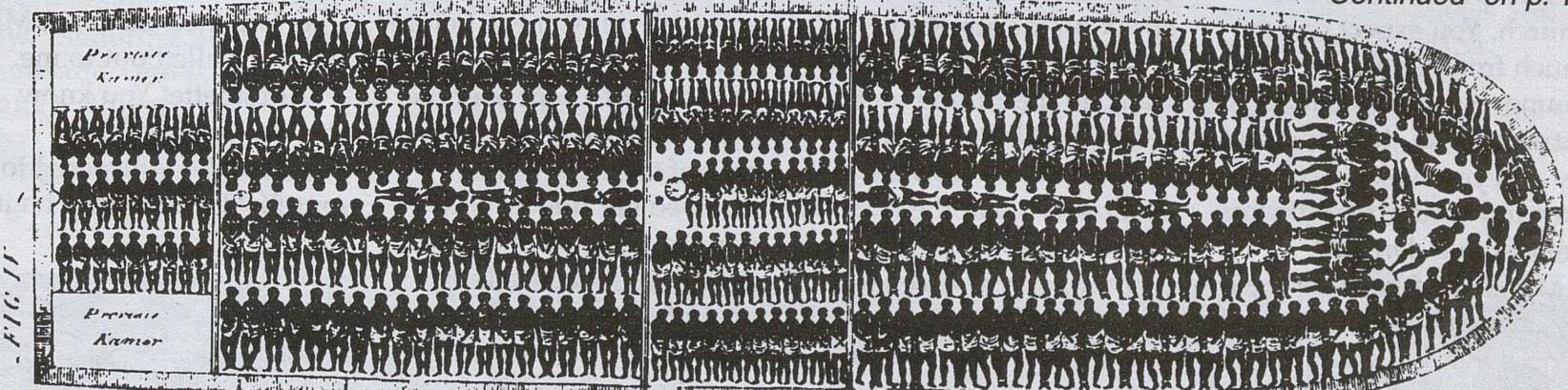
### WARNING: POSSIBLE INTERLOPING NEGATIVES

Earlier, we talked about the non-economic good of the horse and the nigger in their wild or natural state; we talked out the principle of breaking and trying them together for orderly production; furthermore, we talked about paying particular attention to the female savage and her offspring for orderly future planning; then, more recently we stated that, by reversing the positions of the male and the female savages, we had created an orbiting cycle that turns on its own axis forever, unless phenomenon occurred and reshifted the positions of the male and the female savages.

Our experts warned us about the possibility of this phenomenon occurring, for they say that the mind has a strong drive to correct and recorrect itself over a period of time if it can touch some substantial original historical base; and they advised us that the best way to deal with this phenomenon is to shave off the brute's mental history and create a multiplicity of phenomena of illusions, so that each illusion will twirl in its own orbit, something similar to floating balls in a vacuum. This creation of a multiplicity of phenomena of illusions entails the principles of cross-breeding the nigger and the horse as we stated above, the purpose of which is to create a diversified division of labor thereby creating different levels of labor and different values of illusion at each connecting level of labor, the results of which is the severance of the points of original beginnings for each sphere illusion. Since we feel that the subject matter may get more complicated as we proceed in laying down our economic plan concerning the purpose, reason, and effect of cross-breeding horses and niggers, we shall lay down the following definitional terms for future generations:

1. Orbiting cycle means a thing turning in a given path.
2. Axis means upon which or around which a body turns.
3. Phenomenon means something beyond ordinary conception and inspires awe and wonder.
4. Multiplicity means a great number.
5. Sphere means a globe.
6. Cross-breeding a horse means taking a horse and breeding it with an ass and you get a dumb backward ass long-headed mule that is not reproductive nor productive by itself.
7. Cross-breeding niggers means taking so many of good white blood and putting them into as many nigger women as possible, varying the drops by the various tones that you want, and then letting them breed with each other until the

*Continued on p. 16*



From the Schomburg Center in Black Research

## Press 'N Curl *Continued from p. 6*

"You want your hair pressed?" Miss Verdeen only barely kept the note of incredulity out of her voice. I nodded again, feeling an inexplicable swell in my throat.

"But it won't last more than a day or two in this weather," Miss Verdeen continued. Mid-July in Philadelphia, dog days best spent in fire-hydrants or fountains, rivaled even New Orleans for sheer heat and pure humidity.

"I know," I said softly. "I know."

A young girl I didn't know, she couldn't have been more than twenty, led me over to a chair and removed the pins that anchored my plaits to my scalp. She introduced herself as Crystal, then giggled like she'd told a dirty joke. She had three heavy gold hoops in each ear, she had gold decals on her long wine-colored fingernails, she even had golden ornaments dotting her hair.

Crystal broke two combs in my hair before Miss Verdeen came over and shooed her away with an efficient gesture. She ran a practiced hand over my head and muttered to herself, "You always did have a whole lot of hair on your head." She turned away to rummage in a drawer and pulled out an Ace hard rubber Afro comb, the likes of which no one had seen since 1975. As she worked the snarls out, I started to drift off like a cat under stroking hands.

I started the change of life at the age of twenty-five. My mood swings were not hormonal, but caused by the realization that I had never done things I'd dreamed of. I had never traveled except to visit family, never lived alone, never played piano outside of church. You expect so very much from life when you're young, but then life itself intrudes with duty and family and you wake up one day and realize that dreams are just that. Dreams.

My life had been defined by an area of eight square blocks that I couldn't seem to break out of.

Miss Verdeen tapped me lightly on the shoulder. I

opened my eyes and caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My hair billowed out from my head like a huge dark dandelion puff, soft enough to catch the air currents.

"I'm gonna wash your hair myself," she said softly. "Crystal never seen a natural this long before, she'd just mess it up."

The girl Crystal giggled again like a fool, then took to sweeping up hair.

As I leaned back over the shampoo bowl, I heard Miss Claudia say casually, "So, Evelyn, who was that girl I saw leaving your house yesterday afternoon? Oh, never mind, that's right, you weren't home."

The rush of water drowned out the rest of the conversation, but I knew what Miss Claudia was up to. She had a reputation for being messy. You see, her life hadn't turned out the way she'd hoped. She had the kind of brittle beauty that twenty years ago was delicate and bird-like. Now her thin bones and snapping black eyes made her resemble a chicken, a Rhode Island red scratching in the dirt. Her husband had left her years ago and now her daughter, her pride and joy, was rumored to be a crack addict, streetwalking on Arch Street. Miss Claudia got her kicks these days by pointing out the runs in other people's stockings, since she couldn't change her own.

I don't think I could have changed my life without leaving Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, I was like a pot-bound plant; my roots had no room to grow. I needed the distance and fresh soil to thrive in.

New Orleans was like a hothouse with lots of sun, high humidity and plenty of fertilizer. People still speak on the street to strangers. Artists and musicians do their thing on the sidewalk. Unfortunately, most hothouse flowers don't survive in the real world but some do. A few.

When Miss Verdeen led me over to the dryer, I noticed that Miss Evelyn's normally soft mouth was tight. Whatever Miss Claudia had said had hit a

nerve. Miss Evelyn was a quiet woman with a sweet disposition. Her desserts were legendary, even in a neighborhood filled with good cooks, but she had never learned the art of self defense. Even now, she wouldn't dream of hurting Miss Claudia's feelings. Miss Claudia and Miz Lovinggood were arguing soul singers (Sam Cooke or Jackie Wilson, who was the greatest?) as the girl Crystal continued to sweep up hair. The warm drone of the dryer put me to sleep and I dreamed.

I dreamed that my sisters and I were running, tearing down the street which somehow opened out into a grassy field. Suddenly we leapt out over the edge of a cliff and started falling...falling...when my hair puffed out, caught the wind, and I gently floated down as my sister's slick locks caused them to plummet...

I woke with a start and almost brained myself on the dryer hood as Miss Evelyn gently tapped my shoulder. I saw that Miss Claudia had gone. Miss Verdeen was busy spraying Miz Lovinggood's French roll into submission.

"Will y'all be at the house tonight?" Miss Evelyn asked softly. "I thought I'd bring a little something over."

"I nodded and she gave my shoulder a squeeze before she slipped quietly out the door.

Miz Lovinggood sniffed at her reflection in the mirror. "I don't really like the way those curls hang over my forehead," she fussed as she reached into her purse and handed Miss Verdeen a five and a ten. Miss Verdeen just nodded as she slipped the bills into her smock pocket. Miz Lovinggood came over and patted my cheek before she swept away.

Crystal was bent over the small showcase, counting cans of oil sheen as she snapped her fingers and popped her hips to the rhythm that had nothing to do with the music on the radio. The beat was pumped directly into her brain through small headphones that fit right into her ears.

Miss Verdeen motioned me into the chair and rubbed a sweet smelling pressing oil into my hair. I noticed that she still had the old fashioned iron heater on the counter. When she passed the heavy brass straightening comb through my hair, the air was filled with the unmistakable odor of sizzling grease and hair. As Miss Verdeen worked on my hair, I thought about the ways I had changed since leaving Philly. I had learned to be self-reliant. I'd gained the courage to pursue my dreams. I had traveled to distant lands, sung before appreciative crowds. I had learned to be more tolerant of other cultures and less tolerant of injustice.

My mama had understood why I had needed to leave. "Every bird's not meant to stay by the nest," she told me. But now I sensed the censure of those who had known me longest and wondered if I'd made the right choice. Maybe it would have been better to stay. For the first time since I'd left Philadelphia, I felt uncertain.

Miss Verdeen put the curlers down and turned me towards the mirror. My hair curled under in a page-boy, seeming darker and glossier than I'd remembered. What I saw reflected was more the girl that I had been than the woman that I'd become. It was more than just the hairstyle. Perhaps it was the something in the air.

"Now that looks pretty," Crystal declared, without removing her headphones. I would swear Miss Verdeen shot her a dirty look.

"That'll be fifteen, baby." I handed her the twenty dollar bill that I still held crumpled in my right hand.

"Thank you Miss Verdeen. Keep the change," I said.

As I opened the door, Miss Verdeen called out to me.

"Antoinette! You know that hairdo won't last."

"I know," I whispered to myself. "I'm counting on it."



# INFORMATION

**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 works explore 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, Inc.** 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 be better realized. Further, **Shooting Star Productions** will expand general interest in and access to the diverse expressions of Black culture.

## Shooting Star Review Artist Guidelines

*Shooting Star Review* is copyrighted and provides fine writing and art about the Black experience. This award-winning magazine publishes established writers and new talent. Work by non-Black writers on the Black experience is welcome. Sandra Gould Ford began *Shooting Star Review* in 1987 with the founding belief that art provides enduring truths and deeply meaningful, human understanding.

Rigorously juried, *Shooting Star Review's* acceptance rate is about one in twenty. All visuals, graphics, photography, short fiction, poetry and narrative essays are provided by free lance talent from all over the world. Writers with the best chance of publishing in *Shooting Star Review* demonstrate these characteristics:

- ★ Well read, especially within their art form
- ★ Active voice with minimal passive verbs and prepositions
- ★ Honest and authentic voice(s)
- ★ Succinct with inviting & compelling openings

### IMPORTANT

Include cover letter with name address and phone on every page. All text must be complete & clearly copied or printed (double space) on one side of plain, white paper. Multiple submissions OK. Return envelopes with proper postage required.

**FICTION:** Up to 3,500 words. Fiction under 1,000 words encouraged. Up to three stories per quarter.

**ESSAYS:** Up to 2,500 words. Conversational voice preferred. Bibliographies accepted but no footnoting.

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

**PAYMENT** upon publication for 1st N. Amer. serial rights and as funds permit. Fiction and Essays: \$10 to 1,000 words, \$20+ up to 3,500 words. Poetry: \$5+. Reprints are a third of standard rate. Artists also get 2 magazines (extras available at 40% discount). Visuals \$8+.

Sample copies of *Shooting Star Review* are \$3 with SASE. One-year subscription is \$10.

**INTERNATIONAL:** Subscriptions are \$23/year airmail and \$15/year surface in U.S. Dollars.

**RESPONSE TIME & RIGHTS:** Queries response in 3 weeks; 4 months on mss. Themes determine time to publication. All rights revert to author upon publication. Galleys are sent if time permits.

Send submissions to:  
7123 Race Street,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208-1424.

## Shooting Star Review Advertising

*Shooting Star Review* distributes in 30 states, Canada, Japan and Switzerland.

## Classified Text

Basic rate: \$1 per word [15 word (or \$15) minimum].

Frequency discounts for consecutive insertions:

2 runs = \$.95/word  
3 runs = \$.85/word  
4 runs = \$.75/word

**NOTE:** Classified ads must be typed. Your address = 3 words. Your phone = 1 word. Half-price ads are available for the following services for which artists and writers are not charged: Requests for artwork and/or manuscripts for publication; Opportunities for artists & writers (job listings, readings, shows, etc.);

Announcements of Fairs and Festivals. Contests which charge fees are not eligible for half-price ads.

## Classified B & W Display

Please call or write for COLOR rates.

All display ads must be camera-ready. Column-width is 2"

1" tall x 1 col. = \$37.50  
2" tall x 1 col. = \$57.00  
3" tall x 1 col. = \$75.00  
4" tall x 1 col. = \$105.00  
6" tall x 1 col. = \$125.00

1" tall x 2 col. = \$75.00  
2" tall x 2 col. = \$115.00  
3" tall x 2 col. = \$150.00  
4" tall x 2 col. = \$210.00  
6" tall x 2 col. = \$250.00

Half page = \$470.00  
Full page = \$875.00

Frequency discount for consecutive insertions:

Deduct 10% for 2 runs  
Deduct 15% for 3 runs  
Deduct 20% for 4 runs

**NOTE:** Design and content of Classified Display ads may differ with each insertion, but you must retain the same dimensions. Advertisers must contract in advance for consecutive insertions to earn frequency discount.

**All classified text and classified display ads must be PRE-PAID. Make checks or money orders (U.S. Dollars drawn on a U.S. Bank) out to: Shooting Star Review, 7123 Race Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15208. Phone (412) 0731-7464 for next deadlines.**

# Help Needed

**Shooting Star Productions, Inc.** must now begin the institution-building process so that the vision of greater appreciation of the African-American heritage and the development of ceremonies, celebrations and other cultural observances can continue becoming a treasury of opportunity for generations to come.

To do this, **Shooting Star Productions, Inc.** must

- \* retain adequately paid staff
- \* honorably compensate contributing artists
- \* acquire a permanent business location
- \* develop long-term resources

I'm excited about the program possibilities that are opening for **Shooting Star Productions, Inc.** But these opportunities require the money, the goods and services that will ensure professional growth. If there was ever a time when **Shooting Star** needed YOUR help, it is now. **Shooting Star Productions, Inc.** must raise Ten Thousand Dollars by year end to meet its payroll and to make a downpayment on a permanent office and program location. Please send what you can. Contributions are tax deductible and will be acknowledged in upcoming editions.

# Wanted: Writers Groups & Workshops

Immediately, *Shooting Star Review* seeks to promote work being produced by Black Writers Groups across this country, and this issue is a sampling of our intent. Within each issue, *Shooting Star Review* now looks forward to presenting a special section featuring writers groups that are exploring the Black experience. What we require for consideration is:

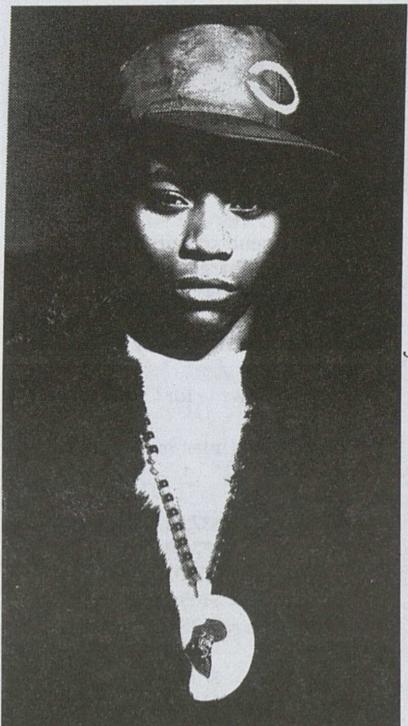
- \* History of the organization or group
- \* Biographies and photographs of the membership
- \* Carefully juried select writings from the group membership. The maximum amount of material that can be considered from each group member is one short story, one essay or three poems.

## New Submission Policy:

*Shooting Star Review* is discontinuing its theme-specific policy and will now publish the best fiction, poetry and essays that are available in each publishing period.

The patience and faith that writers have shown in *Shooting Star Review* during its hiatus is deeply appreciated. While providing great material about the Black experience to our readers, we also hope to make our artists proud of their affiliation with this publication.





Courtesy Manchester Craftsman's Guild

## THAT BOY (for Julian)

Being half black, that boy truly had rhythm  
and good looks and a way with words and women,  
Believe me, at his tender age he could  
whip you out a rhyming rap or poem —  
as quick and showy as he'd turn cartwheels  
or buck-'n-wing it high on the limestone  
parapets that hemmed our school. No one feels  
like me such pride in how once he wrote a flood  
of lyrics on any subject Miss Zisk  
our doubting English teacher had mind to ask:  
"God" (he compared Him to a Big Mac!);  
"Goodness" (he compared to steaming horse turds);  
"Beauty" (he compared to what he'd done or seen  
most keenly — lilywhite girl-limbs swimming,  
the night sky from 9,000 feet, slap shots  
on goal, trout fooled by his dancing fly, jazz).  
He never practiced, so never got his own  
trombone. But like I said, the boy had rhythm  
and could blow sweetness out of whatever  
spit-valve encrusted slider was kicking  
around the bandroom. Mr. Figgis, he said  
practice make perfect, but my boy was exceptional  
to any rule. Why, he'd even crack up  
the principal with his gab. Half the girls  
in school had crushes on him. The other  
unfortunate half had yet to meet him  
when on that clear fall night with him riding  
shotgun, and me looking rightly to dim  
my brights, Big Mac comes down sudden and flips  
my Mustang, and him too, and all that rhythm  
and goodness and beauty into nothing.

Lewis H. Miller, Jr.  
Bloomington, IN



**Shooting Star Review**  
c/o Shooting Star Productions, Inc.  
7123 Race Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

## Let's Make A Slave

*Continued from p. 13*

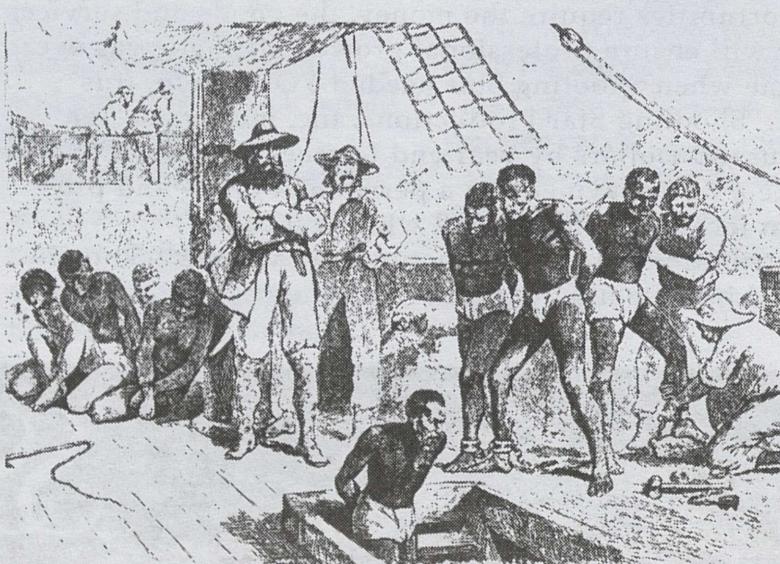
circle of colors appear as you desire. What this means is this: Put the niggers and the horse in the breeding pot, mix some asses and some good white blood and what do you get? You got a multiplicity of colors of ass backward, unusual niggers, running, tied to backward ass long-headed mules, the one productive of itself, the other sterile. (The one constant, the other dying—we keep the nigger constant for we may replace the mule for another tool) both mule and nigger tied to each other, neither knowing where the other came from and neither productive for itself, nor without each other.

### CONTROLLED LANGUAGE

Cross-breeding completed, for further severance from their original beginning, we must completely annihilate the mother tongue of both the new nigger and the new mule and institute a new language that involves the new life's work of both. You know, language is a peculiar institution. It leads to the heart of a people. The more a foreigner know about the language of another country the more he is able to move through all levels of that society. Therefore, if the foreigner is an enemy of another country, to the extent that he knows the body of the language, to that extent is the country vulnerable to attack or invasion of a foreign culture. For example, you take a slave, if you teach him all about your language, he will know all your secrets, and he is then no more a slave, for you can't fool him any longer, and being a fool is one of the basic ingredients

of and incidents to the maintenance of the slavery system.

For example if you told a slave that he must perform in getting out "our crops" and he knows the language well, he would know that "our crops" didn't mean "our" crops, and the slavery system would break down, for he would relate on the basis of what "our crops" really meant. So you have to be careful in setting up the new language for the slave would soon be in your house, talking to you as "man to man" and that is death to our economic system. In addition, the definition of words or terms are only a minute part of the process. Values are created and transported by communication through the body of the language. A total society has many interconnected value system. All these values in the society have bridges of language to connect them for orderly working in the society. But for these language bridges, these many value systems would sharply clash and cause internal strife or civil war, the degree of the conflict being determined by the magnitude of the issues or relative opposing strength in whatever form. For example, if you put a slave in a hog pen and train him to live there and incorporate in him to value it as a way of life completely, the biggest problem you would have out of him is that he would worry you about provisions to keep the hog pen clean, or the same hog pen and make a slip and incorporate something in his language whereby he comes to value a house more than he does his hog pen, you got a problem. He will soon be in your house.



From the Schomburg Center in Black Research