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Black Dialogue

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BLACK DIALOGUE

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D.B.

IF HAIR COULD
START A REVOLUTION,
WE'D HAVE IT MADE!

IS BLACK CAPITALISM
WHITE POWER?

I AIN'T NO ANTI NOTHING.
I ALWAYS PAYS MY RENT.
BESIDES I TAKES A
VACATION IN MIAMI TOO.

I HEARD A BROTHER
SAY, "I'M GOING TO TELL
IT LIKE IT IS. PLEASE."

THERE'S
NO SUCH
THING AS A BLACK
NIGGER!

BLACK ART
IS A MOVEMENT
IN THE ROUND

SHOULD A
MUSLIM KISS
A GIRL WHO EATS PORK?

SAY IT LOUD:
I'M GOING WITH
THE CROWD!

BLACK PEOPLE . . .
PROTECT YOUR
ARTS

THE ASIANS
HAVE THE
HONKIE FLU.

LOVE
WHAT YOU ARE!



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BLACK DIALOGUE

Hamjambo;

A few years ago Black Dialogue was started as an off-campus publication by a few Black San Francisco State college students. The idea grew out of the NEGRO STUDENT ASSOCIATION, one of the first Black student groups on any campus (now known as BLACK STUDENT UNION). At the time, none of us had any journalistic experience to speak of, but we all felt the necessity for developing a platform from which the Black artists and political activists could speak to Black people. The year was 1965. The "civil rights movement" was being repudiated by many of us as a lost cause. Many Black Movement people were already returning home in disillusionment. EL-HAJJ MALIK EL-SHABAZZ (Malcolm X) had been assassinated just before we went to press (our first issue was dedicated to him). LeRoi Jones (AMEER BARAKA) had announced and was developing THE BLACK ARTS REPERTORY THEATRE SCHOOL in Harlem. Karenga's US organization was growing fast in Los Angeles. The teachings of such men as Malcolm, LeRoi and Maulana Karenga were still effectively reaching us thru the man's media. (Of late the man has gotten pretty tight with his media ... except with his publishing houses. That should change soon and we don't mean by the Black-Capitalists publishing houses that will soon pop up.) A political and cultural revolution was beginning to ferment across this arcadia. Black people were beginning to feel themselves. Accept themselves. Want themselves. Love what they are — what was/is/will be theirs.

The few years between 1965 and 1969 brought many changes to Black america and BLACK DIALOGUE tried to keep up with those changes, but not always with success. We've stubbornly refused to be whipped by the forces that attempt to co-opt and strangle all things black. In our struggle to survive we have on occasion, unavoidably, disappointed many of our subscribers and readers. For that we apologize. But we are still here and trying to do our/your thing and hope that we'll never need to apologize again.

We have moved our editorial operations to New York City (see address, etc., on inner cover) and organized a new staff with broader national representation. Our determination is still Black. Our printer is still Black. We are still distributed and sold (where possible) Black. BLACK DIALOGUE remains "a meeting place for the voices of the Black community — wherever that community may exist."

In the year 1969, we hope you'll meet with us quarterly and have A BLACK(ER) DIALOGUE with us so that we can be around in 1970 when things are sure to get even blacker.

Kwa Herini, Salaam,
1969 — the editors

Editorial

"I believe what Malcolm told me. He believed, after careful analysis, that the government would have him killed, but would use the Black Muslims because of the friction between himself and them. He learned some things the government did not want him to know."

-----Sister Betty Shabazz

We Believe also that Malcolm was assassinated because he knew things that the government did not want known and because of his ability as a national Black leader as well as because of the international support and status he was able to provide our movement. If Malcolm was murdered by black hands it was made possible and acceptable by the over publicized split between himself and Elijah Muhammed. Malcolm spoke on many occasions about the need for group loyalties. He constantly emphasized the need for Black coalitions across religious, political and economical lines. It is within this context that BLACK DIALOGUE MAGAZINE views the current riff between the Black Panther Party and the US organization. We view their dispute as being detrimental to Black determination.

It is always regrettable to learn of the death of any young Black man whether as a result of a gang fight, Saturday nite stabbing, pig invasion of Vietnam, or white assassination. It is particularly disheartening when death comes by the hand of other Black men. Black people are always the loser whenever we have internal strife or warfare. We realize that when under attack it is difficult to be calm; to understand who the real enemy is; to be rational and loving; to see all the obvious and the hidden traps. It is even more difficult when we think that one or the other side is the real or imagined tool of our oppressor. But we must keep our sights on the real enemy. And we must close ranks——UNIFY!

The only possible benefactor in any misunderstanding between Black people/groups--such as that between the BPP and US — is the STATE of white DESIRE. White people, who, if not the instigators of the quarrel, are certainly the benefactors. This should be understood. The history of the terrible sixties will bare witness. Who were/are the benefactors in the Congo? Ghana? Nigeria? Who benefited from the trouble between Malcolm and Elijah?

Everybody occasionally talks about the need for Black unification — Afronism. Malcolm saw and pointed out unification as our primary need and every theorist and strategist continuously cites that need. Intuitively everyone understands that we cannot make progress toward the goal of unity unless we are able to set aside individual/group goals.

Malcolm constantly espoused the necessity for Black unity as did many of his predecessors like Garvey, and DuBois, who sowed the potent seeds of latter day Black Nationalism. Malcolm knew that unification among black people was a matter of primary importance in the drive for black liberation. Unfortunately this credible prospect — this vital ingredient for Black Liberation — was left to lesser men.

We do not see any value whatever in the bellicose, closed-minded attempts by either BPP or US to intimidate the other. Unsophisticated and unsubstantiated allegations cannot serve the purpose of unity. Such practice seems to us to be shortsighted, suicidal and serves only to galvanize feelings of distrust among Black people who would/could benefit by mutual efforts. Who will call for an end to this fratricide? Both the BPP and US should be aware of the potential magnitude of their rivalry.

The set up is so pat that this rivalry can easily lead to the destruction of both the BPP and US. One or the other may enter into some form of limited or all out retaliation just to impress the other(s) with the seriousness of their respective intentions. If this happens it will also upset the already limited relationships that presently exist between the Panthers and cultural nationalists in some areas of the country. (cultural nationalism always exists in areas where Panthers manage to gain a foothold and it is never natural for local relationships to cease or sour unless tampered with by the desire of one group to co-opt the other).

Any retaliation would, then, in all probability, explode into an all out thing and would also lead to the further destruction of viable groups by opening up more areas of vulnerability as allegiances to one or the other group is declared. This would be a very dangerous situation notwithstanding the fact that agent-provocateurs would have more of a picnic than they are now having in Black America. In any case the resultant atmosphere would be threatening to all that has been built by other groups and communities outside of the Panther and US organizations. Unless the present trend is reversed, a situation of instability and paranoia will be forced upon other groups as well as the BPP and US. Already the present belligerent stand off has the effect of restricting the range of reasonable and desired action.

We suggest that, as a start, there be open and serious discussions by major representatives of the principle groups and that some means for national review and/or control be established.

IN THIS FOURTH YEAR AFTER MALCOLM WE REDEDICATE THIS MAGAZINE TO HIS LIFE AND ALL THE FRUITS OF HIS HONORABLE STRUGGLES.

THE EDITORS

DON'T LET THEM DESTROY HARLEM!

STOP THE STATE BUILDING



WHAT HARLEM NEEDS IS A HIGH SCHOOL

AUM

DIALOGUE WITH AUM

a leading San Francisco black artist talks about his works

AUM: In my work, I've been striving to get into more-or-less a traditional thing. In fact I'm still striving, but I feel like my direction now is a little more clear than it was before I carved the *GOAT HEAD*. The *GOAT HEAD*, actually, was a break through for me. It was an inspiration you know. I happened to have been looking, the day I cut that piece, at the antelope heads that the Africans had carved...one of the tribes.

This summer, I've been directing a workshop in sculpture at the Western-Addition Summer Youth Program. ("Western-Addition" refers to that section of San Francisco that we know of as "THE FILLMORE AREA"). This next piece is one I just finished there. I carved this piece to use as an example for the youth in the program. I feel the only way you can teach is through example. I don't believe in getting up and rapping off a lot of terminology, you know. I believe in showing them (potential carvers) exactly where

it is at. And like this is the first piece I cut up there. It's an ancestor statue. I call it *JALODE*. There's a myth attached to the goddess *JALODE*. This next piece..

What About That Mythology Behind The Goddess *JALODE*?

The mythology behind *JALODE* is a little stretched out for me to get into. *JALODE* is one of the African Goddesses. She is the goddess of fertility. I forget which tribe off-hand.

The next piece was also cut at Emerson School. Some of the kids were sort of... well, they didn't feel like they could carve a whole figure, you know. Some of them wanted to carve heads, so I cut this head as a demonstration. This piece really is almost a self-study in a sense of

speaking, but it really isn't. Like the cap on his head...his lid is more-or-less on the style of lid that I'm wearing. I was trying to make him contemporary, make him look, you know, not necessarily contemporary, but an



JALODE



GOAT HEAD

up-to-date warrior, you know. That's the over-all feel I was trying to get. The next piece is another ancestor statue. The redwood statue. Like that's the first ancestor statue I ever cut.

Why Did You Get Into Carving Ancestor Statues, Aum?

Well, actually, I'm at the point where I've crossed over from the christian bag and all of that, into worshipping my own ancestors. I must admit that right now I'm not as up-to-date on African religion as someone living in Africa, but yet and still, I have the *same* feelings, can you dig it? So, like that's where my feelings are. It represents someone close to me, you know.

The tall piece I call the *SENUFO MAIDEN*. This is a traditional piece, but I'm not satisfied with the piece. I'll have to cut the piece at least two more times to at least say what I want to say on the piece. That's my personal feelings towards the piece. The piece was my first attempt on something going into that much detail. I'm pleased with the detail, but not pleased with the form, can you dig it? Like I said, I'll at least cut that piece two more times.

The next piece is *TIRORO* the drummer. It's the only marble piece you've taken a picture of. *TIRORO* is a Haitian drummer – one of the most famous of the Haitian drummers, and like I'm a drummer myself, so like this is my thing to *TIRORO*. He's known internationally, but only among the drummers, you know.

Is TIRORO Still Alive?

He's still alive! Yes. When I heard the record he cut and the only record he has, he was in his eighties then, and like he is truly a master drummer!

Is There Any Relationship, As Far As You Are Concerned, Between Drumming And Carving?

Drumming, carving, music, color...you can't separate them. It's impossible. You start trying to separate them, like, you get a confused thing. There is a breakdown and a separation. If you are an artist, you are an artist! Actually in some Afri-

can dialects there is no such thing as a word for, say, "musician," you know. If you're living, you are supposed to be making music. So, like, that makes all people musicians, you know. Automatically all people are musicians and all people should be artists at something if not all things.

At Least All Artists Should Be Musicians.

For real. For real. And I also feel that our musicians should not, like, limit themselves to only music. There's such things like *color* and *form* and *space*...and it's all feeling when you git down to the nitty gritty, you know.

About my masks. What can you say about the mask really? Actually a mask represents the highest form of the spirit in African religions. That's what is associated with the mask. Unless you're living it and feeling it, you're really missing it. A mask is just a mask to some people, but if you are involved with it a mask becomes a very sacred thing.



MAN WITH CAP

In Relationship To Art In The West And The Art Being Produced By Black People In America, What Kind Of Attempt Is Being Made Thru Your Art To Bridge What Is Your Historical Past And Present?
The West is hung up on *time* and this is a bag that art should never get into – this *time* thing...

What Do You Mean Exactly By, “This Time Thing?”

If a work of art makes one think of a time element, the work is not of the true universal spirit or soul. The source of energy is timeless. When a black artist creates it should not be some shallow ghost of himself that will only live as long as another situation permits it. Most of our so-called revolutionary art is of this type of shallowness. In my own work I attempt to be functional on the spiritual, mental, and physical side. I feel that I’m spiritually starved after so many years of being misled. In my opinion a hip piece of art has function, presence and rhythm; is not a portrait of anyone and executed in a durable material. Some artists date their work? The creative process is in the past, present, and future tense for me.

Well, In The Sense Of Black Artists Or Artists Of African Descent Making A Change In Their Art Towards An Art That Has Some Relativity To Their Past – Is This Considered Revolutionary Art? ... These Are People Who Have, Like, Grown Up In The West As Western Artists And Who Are Seeking Their Cultural Antecedents And Expressing Such In Their Works.

I don’t like the word “revolutionary” used in this sense to express a change in style or habit. There are two things that are very pertinent to that change. One is money, and the other thing is SOUL. Like, I know that a black artist if he’s been true to himself and his SOUL, can be creating work that is regarded as black art and make a better living than he would if he’s just out there jiving.

What Exactly Do You Mean By, “Jiving?”

By “Jiving” I mean if he’s out there trying to maintain the standards of the Western art bag. Which actually is, you know, based on the true classical art form which is AFRICAN SCULPTURE, but twisted into nothingness by whitey.

Well, Is There Any Distinction Or Contradiction Then, Between The Black Man Who Functions As An Artist In The West And The Black Man Who Seeks To Revive Or Revise The Art Of The World Thru His Own Kinds Of Rhythms And Cultural Experiences and Ancestral Relatedness?

There is a difference of opinion among black artists today. There are those who say that all art done by a black person is black art. These are the ones who wait for the white approval and who dare not step outside of the Western outlook on life in general. The other side is made up of those artists who say that if it don’t look like it’s white, it’s black! This type of art is created by us, for us, and later for what *they* think as long as *they* aint black folks. At this stage of the game this is really to be expected, because when we all get together on anything, its no more blues. There are many black artists here in the Bay Area who are striving to revive their own spiritual souls and give forth their contributions to the greatest known heritage.



SENUFO MAIDEN

To deny self is surely death, and like who wants that!

Well, Listen, From The East Coast It's Very Difficult To Learn Anything Of What's Going On On The West Coast In The Plastic Arts, Especially When It Comes Down To The Arts Of Sculpture And Painting, And Even Dance Really. We See More Graphic Stuff In Terms Of Prints From The West Coast Than Anything Else. Most People Now Know of Cobbs, Emory, E. White and Bibble Because Prints Are Much Easier To Distribute Nationally, But I'm Interested In The Sculpture That's Being Done Here. Can You Tell Us About Other Artists On The West Coast – By Name and By Virtue Of The Kind Of Things They Do?

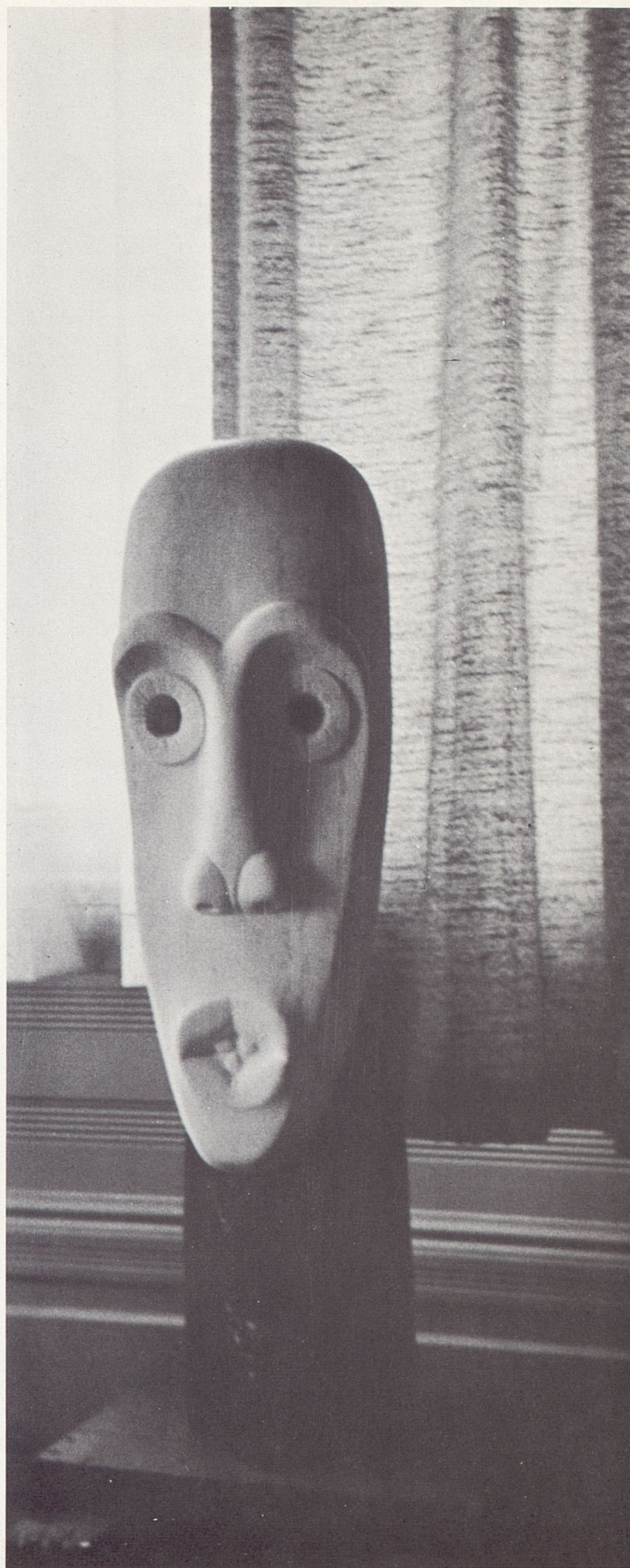
I have a friend named ROHO. Roho is from Los Angeles. He moved here last year. Some of the things he is doing are in oils and in acrylics, you know, you have to see them, and it's all related to black culture, black spirituality. That's one brother that's really doing it. I know another young brother, Joseph Geran. Joe is going to be – he's not *going* to be, he is right now a great artist. Anytime a man can express himself totally in any medium, like, regardless of his age, if he can do it, he can do it. And this brother is doing it!

Where Is This Brother From?

He's from S.F., Hunters Point. Then there is Bill Thomas, owner of the BLACK MAN'S ART GALLERY. He's a painter and a sculptor. He does both extremely well and he's telling his story. Bill's brother, Mike, has also made some tremendous statements in wood. Robert Henry, painter, has done some soul searching that's alive with feeling.

Is There A Kind Of Renaissance . . .

And I don't want to leave out another good brother, I've gotta mention him—Kwasi Jarobu. Everybody knows him as Kwasi around town. A beautiful brother. He doesn't turn out a tremendous amount of work, but when he turns out a piece you have to look at it! He's a sculptor.



Are Some Of The Works Of The People You've Mentioned On Display In This Area?

All can be seen at the BLACK MAN'S ART GALLERY, 619 Haight St., San Francisco.

The renaissance you mentioned...there has been a question in the artist's minds of why all of this all of a sudden came down on S.F. No one knows. Actually, when you think about, there have been a lot of first happenings in San Francisco. Ornette Coleman was here first, you know. Hugh Masekela was here you know. He put his thing together here. He was on the East Coast first, but he really put it together right here in S.F....right at the Both And Club. So, like, I don't know, maybe it's the climate. We have nice, sort of even climate all the way around...when it isn't raining. (laugh)

In Relation To The Materials, Is There Any Relevance To The Fact That There Is Plenty Wood Available Here?

Yes, there is quite an abundance of materials, stone and wood right here in the Bay Area. We don't need to burn wood to keep the fire going.



TIRORO THE DRUMMER



AUM

Do You See Any Kind Of Distinction Between East Coast And West Coast Black Art – Not That I'm Trying To Impose Any Conditions Or Conventions, But I'm Wondering...

To date, most of the art done by us on the East Coast has been, to my knowledge, seeking white approval and saying nothing to the black masses. There it's the same old b.s. about modern methods and techniques taught in you know whose schools. Here most of the black artists are self-taught and could care less about method and technique since what matters is the finished art form. It's a known fact that a dog cannot teach a cat how to see in the dark.

Here in the Bay area communities, there is a flourishing "BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL" attitude. There is an abundance of good black art forms. Like you know, here we have the hippies and Chinatown and an atmosphere that isn't third and fourth generation bourgeoisie, but one that has an "easy does it" feeling, so why not a growing black image?

DREAMS

by John Farris

(NIGHT DREAM)

On the first night
it seemed
my brothers sent me a gun
(A heavy automatic type
and in three parts)
that was well oiled
and beautiful. On the second
night a closet door I chanced to open
revealed a large high ceiling room
which was ringed about with beds
and all manner of fighting equipment.
On the third
night there were a group of us
out walking. We decided to make
a formation. There seemed to be six
of us, arranged in a pattern from
right to left, of three, two, and one.
we continued to walk
in formation for awhile until
we came upon a group whose
vibrations did not seem to be alien,
and were even walking in a like
manner. We confronted one another
and fought.
my group fled.
the night was turned to day
and we came upon a cornfield.
the group we fought was joined
by a larger one which did definitely
seem to be not like any of us. They chased
us into the bright yellow of the cornfield
(there was a dark cleft in which I tried
to hide).
On the fourth
night we were on the roof
of a thirteen storied dwelling place.
we were being herded
toward the edge of the building by a force-field.
up in front
was rap brown. there was to be a contest.
rap had to jump
off of the building
as he jumped

we cheered him
on in our hearts.
there was a long, narrow scoop net
hung over the edge of the building
down through the web he plummeted.
we counted
the white squares
as he fell. he was putting forth
a mighty effort to maintain
his balance.
his arms and legs beating the air.
he maintained balance
to the bottom through
which his legs went, till his scrotum
hit the squares.
his face
tightened in a grimace but
he regained his composure
as the blood (a very little) came spurting out.
On the fifth night I was walking
in a very familiar
place which seemed to be a broken sea coast
with islands bridged by iron.
I had some where to go but
as I crossed the bridge to get there
I saw on one of the islands
a very light skinned girl
with straight brown hair whose teeth
were rotten and green. she was holding
under her arm a baby whose
skin no longer had pigment or melanin —
the required signs.
she seemed to be tending the cooking fire
of an uninhabited village. I
spoke to her with pleasure and she
answered in kind.
I dallyed with her. . .there was a number
it was five-five-five.

II.

(DAY DREAM)

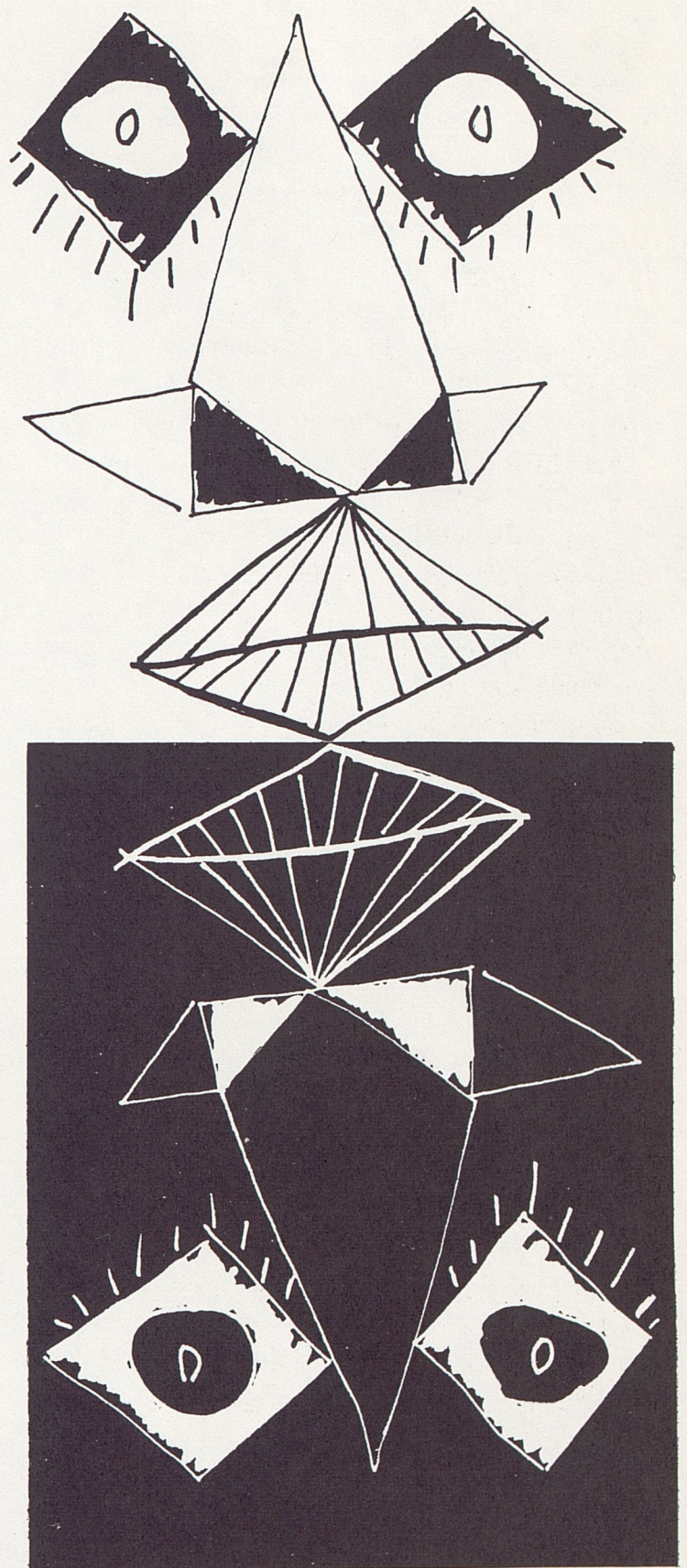
upon awakening I had another, in which I seemed
to be an observer. I relate. I am walking up C.P.W.
It is hot
and strange. C.P.W. turns into eighth avenue
and people. There are people everywhere
But as the people below eighth

rush about here and there, darting, if you will,
 like curious fish
 in a blue lagoon these stand listlessly
 in the noon heat on sidewalks stained
 and stinking. And if they are to be compared
 to fish at all,
 it must be to mackerel salted
 and drying in the sun.
 there is only hunger here
 and want. I tried to reach for them
 but my compassion is shat
 upon and trampled.
 give us money,
 they said, not hope, it is too painful.
 I went on rebuked and then
 my job:
 blood... the first thing to be noticed
 about where I work is the blood. blood
 deep red and welling from the eyeless sockets
 of poverty workers who
 are leading the tongueless poor
 by their hands.
 As I walk by the receptionists' desk
 she reaches out to claw me
 but my hands reach my face first.
 Farris never follows procedures she cries
 thwarted. John come here.
 It is the director who is wearing sunglasses
 along with the others
 in his office.
 What is this?
 what have I gotten myself into?
 I run wildly out and
 down the stairs puking. a dollar
 pokes its head out of the window
 and laughs at me
 I start submissively back upstairs
 have my eyes poked out
 put on my sunglasses
 and walk around with the others groping
 and tearing. it is
 the way John, the director, says to me.
 there are in my eyeless sockets tears.
 I stand there crying
 it becomes unbearable. I ask if I may leave
 the director smiles and nods. the receptionist
 smiles and hands me my eyes.
 outside the heat is stifling
 sweat runs from the top of my head down

across my face and under my armpits.
 I am sweating and between my legs
 the perspiration is pouring. I want to wake up
 I want to leave here – I can't...
 the dollar has bound itself about
 my ankles. it does not
 prevent me from walking, but
 I cannot go back. I continue to walk
 125th st: there are everywhere here
 the sound of a loudspeaker
 playing the dreamland boogaloo
 by dr. martyr-loser king,
 it seems he is a hero of these times
 there are also televisions everywhere
 playing a cartoon about a moose who is
 crying BREAK
 YOUR FAST WITH CHEERIOS
 BUT WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
 he giggles. the people move about
 confused by the music
 bumping into one another
 a blue suited guard moves among them freely
 they do not bump into him
 he swings a stick he is carrying constantly
 the noise is deafening the people bump
 into the stores buying cheerios
 as I have no cheerios it becomes very obvious
 that I have no money save for the dollar
 wrapped about my ankles.
 shame shame shame the people cry
 bumping into one another
 I feel guilt stealing over me
 engulfing me. I want to speak out
 but my shame
 prevents me. out of the east
 comes a motorcade
 it does not move slowly as do most motorcades
 but quickly about eighty miles an hour
 across Harlem the loudspeakers
 are silenced the people are brought to a halt
 they stand breathlessly expectant hopeful
 the motorcade reaches us it is the pope who
 cries BLACK POWER the people cry amen
 as the pope disappears into the west
 the people cry BLACK POWER.
 seventh avenue
 Everywhere are young Black women
 standing in Beatific attitude
 the hair on their heads is crinkly

and black and closely cropped
 How beautiful they are!
 I stop to speak to one of them
 but she does not acknowledge me
 instead she stares through me
 off into the horizon
 there are young black men kneeling
 as if in attendance
 there is an air of conspiracy here
 but these people do not seem
 to be the conspirators as they do not speak
 to one another nor
 do they move.
 then a voice.
 it is amplified. Rally!
 Rally! it yells somewhat hysterically
 the young people jerk out of their stupors
 and converge to seventh avenue
 and one twenty-fifth street
 scampering, ecstatic
 there is a tall slender figure
 in sunglasses who screams love
 your sister, brother! love
 your brother, sister they cry as one , yeah!
 the women take pills out
 of little boxes they have strapped
 to their waists pop them into
 their mouths and everyone fornicates
 as the buildings crash around them.
 Theresa is slow to fall.
 the soft beating
 of her broken heart
 provides rhythm for the orgy ... I
 woke up screaming ...

John Farris



by Nikki Giovanni

Booker T. and The MGs open the movie with a soft bass walking in time to the patter of the brown feet of a young brown boy. The credits, normally the time in which to take off your coat or run get cigarettes during, set the tone. I missed a lot of who done what by watching the young feet, sneaker clad, balancing on fences, shuffling past the old men, running head long into the world (read Hough) to the walking bass of Booker T. and the voice singing bout Johnny. The feet walk into people standing in the hot April sun in Atlanta, Georgia – standing at The Ebeneza Baptist Church – wiping sweat from their brows and tears from their eyes. The grandest of all grand parades is about to begin, and end an era. Black and white will no longer unite but will fight. Martin Luther King, Jr. has been assassinated.

Tank Williams is sitting glued, physically by alcohol – emotionally by grief, to the television screen. Clean, cool, collected Clarence is watching with detachment equal only in opposites to Tank's attachment. The police captain of The Cleveland Police force expresses surprise at the response to King's death. The funeral is the dividing point between Black and white; if there was doubt before it must be removed. Sides must be chosen. Clarence goes from the station to find a clue to the whereabouts of a murderer. He is "A nigger, stool pigeon, and a faggot." He has chosen sides and he is not among the chosen ones. Johnny Wells, while robbing a gun warehouse has murdered the nightwatchman and must be found. Cleveland, Ohio April 1968.

"Call him a white folk's nigger now; he can't hear you!" It was Tank's opening statement and could have been his epithet. Why? And what about Laurie?

It would be foolish to expect a movie to plan and execute the/your/our revolution. That Hollywood is even considering a thing such as that is enough to make me tremble. Yet UP TIGHT is already the strongest possibility of a Black movie I have seen. They say its based on the novel "The Informer" by some irish dude, but watching the movie one has to realize there is no precedent for it. "The Informer" is more to legitimize the movie than anything else. The idea is as old as Judas in western literature and older than that. We are told Judas betrayed (i.e. informed on) Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; we see Tank selling out because he's rejected. At least that's more realistic but there is an even deeper core. Its neither money nor loneliness but some other reason that Tank would sell Johnny out. Rejection? Who rejected Tank? The young men, specifically Johnny, loved Tank. They had turned to him for advice in building the movement – he was looked up to by all of them. But Tank was well on his way to betraying the movement. He was an alcoholic who had never been able to carry out an order. He was not emotionally in tune to revolution. The Committee gave him chance after chance. It was he who rejected them; not them he. He had Laurie who loved him. He was no longer with her partly because he had lost his job in the steel mills and mostly just because... But Laurie never rejected him. She, like Johnny, asked only that he look at the real world and he rejected that. She was unable to live with him. But given the welfare system designed to destroy families, this, as Tank must have known, was not unusual. And people from broken homes, or husbands artificially away from wives, don't turn their friends in. Or is that possibly the real reason Black hands could be hired to assassinate Malcolm? I think not. Tank had seen enough to know the score; if he saw properly. Tank was a superficial dude who didn't like reality.

He had paid his dues twenty years ago; and he wanted membership to The Club. Though they still wouldn't let him in, he was too whipped to change goals. And was quite upset that others negated those goals. He was determined to whip back – at them all; which included the Black people too. Its like he had all the pins on a gigantic bowling alley and with one big Black ball (or whitewash) he thought he could crumble the movement. He could burn ass again – and this time ultimately. For he knew, on some instinctive level, that his life – physically and emotionally – would no longer be, after that.

Frank Silvera, as Kyle – the negro leader – was great. His performance and character points up a lot of questions, and answers them to my satisfaction, about the negro leadership group. Kyle, too, knew where Johnny was. He was there when they were discussing it; but he did not inform. Just as Roy Wilkins could not have been paid to shoot Malcolm. They are nerve-wracking, but not dangerous. Aesthetically they have some value; philosophically they are not to be considered. Kyle was a good example.

Booker Goodwin, B.G., is Rap Brown in a Nehru. He, however *never* smiles; but as Jesse Jackson pointed out “There is little reason to smile for the public.” He is in love with Johnny’s sister, played beautifully by Janet MacLachlan. He is tender, logical, human male who has seen his work cut out for him and who will do it. He has a great deal of passion (“You want to know what Johnny said about you? He told us not to trust you!) that sometimes controls him but mostly that he controls. He would like to think of himself as a simple junior high school teacher though he knows that’s not true. He heads The Committee, which is the Black group, (sans uniform, buttons, and other “essential” paraphernalia) well on its way to becoming a Front.

Booker Goodwin is not a hasty man. He isn’t playing super-sleuth nor James Bond in Black face. He wants to give Tank every possible chance to explain himself because everybody only has one life; and to take it on a fly notion would be unforgivable. Time is on his side.

Juanita Moore, as Mama Wells, has made her way back into my good graces (after a horrible and horrifying “Imitation of Life”.) Her response to her son was total support – total commitment. Johnny when being admonished by Tank for coming back said “If that’s not worth it; what is?” And Mama Wells was worth it. It’s a sad revolution if you have to kill your mother. Johnny understood.

Max Julien, as Johnny Wells, is beautiful – physically, philosophically, emotionally. Johnny facilitates the action – he moves. During the gun warehouse robbery he leaves his coat with his name in it behind. Some will say this was just dumb, but movies are there to act; not determine. The coat was just a way of identifying and moving on. If Tank hadn’t turned in the man they knew was Johnny then he would have given them his (Johnny’s) name... it was a choice of weapons. Johnny unhesitatingly orders the men to move out and kills the guard. He is the ideal of Black manhood as given to us by Hollywood. I wanted to know who his woman was; how she responded to him. His mother and sister gave us a good idea of what he would have been looking for. Some will undoubtedly say Johnny was in error trusting Tank, yet the Johnnys will have to find a way to function with the Tanks. He was in error from the beginning but having made the mistake his options immediately were limited – he could kill Tank (since he was responsible for Tank knowing about The Committee) or he could give Tank one last chance to aid The Committee, and him, and therefore prove himself not harmful to The Front. Tank typical of any other beast turned on Johnny. Wild animals can be trained but never tamed.

In his first acting role, Julian Mayfield gave a credible performance as Tank. The shifty eyes, the shaky hands, standing at The Blood Bank, walking listlessly through the water, needing someone to love him but not knowing love when it is given. Tank Williams, forty year old ex-union organizer, ex-integrationist, ex-man. Tank, stereo-typical of our firebrands of twenty years ago, is an alcoholic. His alcohol drowns his tears and caps his celebrations. Stereo-typical of the firebrands of twenty years ago, he can’t take direction unless it’s his; and can’t give direction because his physical strength is not matched by his intellectual prowess. Unable to conceive of the new directions and afraid and tired, he decides on an intuitive level to rid himself of conflicting emotions, to rid himself of himself by turning Johnny in. And what about Laurie?

Ruby Dee doesn’t give one of her better performances as Laurie. She is adequate but because of the excellency of the supporting as well as the main cast, comes off second best. But the woman she portrays – what are we going to do with her? Laurie has two children by a previous man and is now on welfare. She has lived with Tank and she cares deeply about him. She did the ultimate a Black woman can do for her man for Tank – she left her children sleeping to go see about him when he called. And she is the only person he called when he wanted comfort. Her world is a real world of welfare workers

sneaking around to see who she sees. Her world is a real world of not enough money for the necessities of life. It's a brutal room of housing authorities not enforcing housing codes; of dating men she'd rather not date but needing the substance she has always needed. It's the children sleeping with her; it's smiling when one's not tickled. It's a real world of play acting. She's a real woman in a make-believe world. And Tank refuses to see that reality. She tells Tank she needs money and Tank gets money but not for her. He never brings her his blood money because he knew that she didn't want that kind of money. He understood what she was saying as did she. She was talking about hard times and asking him could he love her in a real way. Could he give her the break she needs. And that wasn't his absence but his love. Could he love her enough to allow her to get what she needs?. Tank said no. He didn't like the real situation. He's a Black man dealing with a white concept of manhood. He's a ridiculously dusty don quixote and she's just a plain Black woman.

Laurie knows The Committee will kill Tank when they find him. She knows where he is but doesn't tell. Even when Tank told her he had informed on Johnny, though she attacked him viciously, she thinks she understands and knows she loves him. She does nothing to stop the natural order of things – she does nothing to facilitate them. How long can we leave Laurie in limbo? Decisions must soon be made. She cannot love Tank and Johnny. Laurie, above and beyond all the characters, was the marginal person. That's who we must reach. Clarence, Kyle, and the welfare worker were system oriented; Johnny, B.G., Corbin (magnificently played by Dick Williams) and The Committee were committed to Blackness. Tank hated himself; and Laurie was marginal. And Laurie survived. Is her commitment to survival enough? Or can we swing her in? Can we afford to let her drift? That's the question. When will we find a place, an active place, for her? What will she tell her children?

UP TIGHT raises many more questions than any white producer-director should be able to answer. As a movie it could be considered notes on several movies. Firstly it did not deal with the white community except as it reacted to the Black. The guns that were stolen were never used because the movie did not/was not dealing with how to kill honkies. (ps. you shoot, stab, or poison for starts.) It was concerned with how we are interacting with ourselves. That's another movie...the white community under seige (giving James Baldwin a chance to act in the lead should be considered.) We don't know why Tank did it. We can eliminate from the givens, but we can't postulate beyond what's shown – except to say there is a deeper reason. That one, by the way should not be shown to the general public. One question raised that must be dealt with – was it fratricide? Is a man still a brother when he is responsible for the death of a brother? And we're not dealing with traffic accidents or two people letting off steam on Friday night. Is he still a part of the whole when he is that destructive?

I think Tank Williams is specific. I don't think all alcoholics over forty must be killed. But they should be very carefully screened before they are allowed into the movement. People who have paid dues in earlier movements are generally not equipped to change directions. Old union men, new left negroes have generally shown themselves to be unable to make the adjustment. That's one reason we shouldn't expect too much from The Amsterdam News or Ebony. We must learn not to give responsibility to irresponsible people.

The movie, like all movies, was made for its entertainment value. I hope every negro, and all Black people too, go to see it. It skims the surface of some questions we would do well to ponder in private. That it was made in Hough, not Harlem, ought to be thought about. That Tank went to the police, not Clarence. The nightwatchman masturbating (if only Johnny had thought to bring him the Playboy issue with Barbara McNair in it!) The patience of B.G. The deep felt hatred a woman screams about The Blood Bank (one of the most powerful scenes in UP TIGHT). The stated aims and the movement toward their fulfillment. UP TIGHT, like politics, had made strange bedfellows. The pointing out, officially that Kings' death was the end of an era and (All Praises Due Allah) the beginning of a new one. It's a movie not to be missed – no matter which side you end up on.



Douglas Harris

ALL IN THE STREET

by Ameer Baraka

Can you Imagine something other
than what you
see Something
Big Big & Black
Purple yellow
Red & green (but Big, Big & Black)
Something look like a city
like a Sun island gold-noon
Flame emptied out of heaven
grown swollen in the center
of the earth
Can you imagine who would live
there
with gold streets
striped circled inlaid
with pageants of the rulers'
victories...Imagine these streets
along which walk some people
some evolved humans
look like YOU
maybe walk, stroll
rap like you
but maybe a lil difference
maybe different clothes
hip mighta changed
a lil, but they shoes still glow
black and brown mirrors for things
in the street
to dig themselves

Mounds of round sounds bubblin and bumpin
right out the ground
can dig it...uh?
can see it...uh?
can feel it...uh?
can be it...huh?
This is now-past what you touch today
can change black man behaving under
your touch the way you want it to.
Can you dig it...uh?
See, feel, touch, be
it, uh?



Douglas Harris

The homes like domes high sparkling pyramids
 New red sphinx buildings, cat buildings
 Sun buildings, star buildings, the teaching
 of invisible beings...who we are is
 THE MAGIC PEOPLE...The Black Genius
 Prophets of the Planet...Look at
 the clothes on the women the
 beautiful sisters clothed in supernew
 silk looking spun diamond lace
 the geles and bubas of a future generation
 as they sail across the city on their
 way out rugs...way out waaaay
 out way way out, and past the disease
 of the cracker ruled present, when
 we are men and women again
 freed from the serpent's dung
 Hear each other miles apart
 "Love I hear you from way cross the
 sea...in East Africa...Arabia...
 Reconstructing the grace of our
 long past—I hear you love
 whisper at the soft air as it bathes
 you—I hear and see you"

"I hear and see you too brother jones
 from the year 1968 talking to me,
 My long departed ancestors
 The sounds and images are here where
 you left them. All for us"

Time Space manifest into the unity of
 the creator. The Creator has all experiences
 and we live as flying images of
 endless imagination. Listen to the creator
 speak in me now. Listen, these words
 are part of God's thing. I am a
 vessel, a black priest interpreting
 the present & future for my people
 Olorun— Allah speaks in and
 thru me now. He begs me to
 pray for you—as I am doing—He
 bids me have you submit to
 the energy.

He bids me pray that you submit
 to the energythe energy the energy the energy

The energy the energy the energy the rays
 of God roared thru us all...uh
 rays of God plunged thru us all-uh
 bids me raise myself to tell you

Look!
 Listen!
 I am in an ecstasy a swoon in
 actual touch with everything

These future rulers
 are black
 I see & hear them
 now
 I am in touch
 w/them. They speak thru
 my mouth
 "Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—"

They are in the energy
 they have created, through their consciousness
 a closer connection
 w/ the energy

They speak thru
 my mouth
 "Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—
 Come on—"

on their way rugs in silken garments
 no cold can penetrate
 They speak and beacon at you all
 thru me now, as ancestors
 We are the ancestors of
 these black builders
 and conquerors
 They would appear right here to
 say these things but do not want to
 frighten you
 instead
 they speak thru

me
they say – “All Praise Black Fathers
& Mothers We know the struggle
you go thru now
We know how hard it is to be black
in that primitive age. But do not
naaw...do not ever despair

We Won
We Here
We Still fast and grooving
We Still baddest thing on the planet
We Still gentle hummers and oobeeda scatters

oobbbbeeoobbee dah
oobbeeoobbee dah

dah
dah
daaaah daaah oobbie obbie dah

Do not despair Ancient People
We are your children
and We have conquered
This is your blessing
and this is your reward
Do not despair gentle ancient
groovy ancestors
we have conquered
and we await the rich legacy
of hard won blackness
which you create to leave
us
here in the black fast future
here among the spiritual creations
of natural man
Do not despair ancient fathers and
Mothers there in old America
We are here
Awaiting your gorgeous
Legacy.....”

Here the contact is broken....

Ameer Baraka
May 1, 1968



AFRO

The shimmering azures of
the water
Exploded in a bugaloo responding
to the curves and angles of
your dive.
Ultimately
You flew up from the water's
surface ----
A Phoenix ascending from the
smoldering sun stoned pool.
Chlorinated diamond drops
clung in patterns
to your hair
Traces of primitive worlds ----
simple beautiful loving
black
Were seen there
Images of worlds past and dead?
Or of the living and the to be
soon?
Only the corners of your
generous mouth
saw them
and smiled.
Secure and strong you swam
away ----
From me.

Ruth Rambo McClain

dance, like an adjective

to you (to all black women and especially Shirley)

dance, like an adjective to you,
like a word
to decorate your soul.

dance, like your being
set to music, like
your each movement
set to song

(your way of walking. the rhythm
when you smile, when you laugh...
your eyes when you laugh (i knew
the sun shined somewhere when it
slipped away for the night),

like the way
i would wish it,
dance, as a sound,
as a name
to follow you.

and dance,
i will call you,
i will name you
as you sway,
as you add new meaning
to the inner music.
dance,
black ballerina of soul
into the night

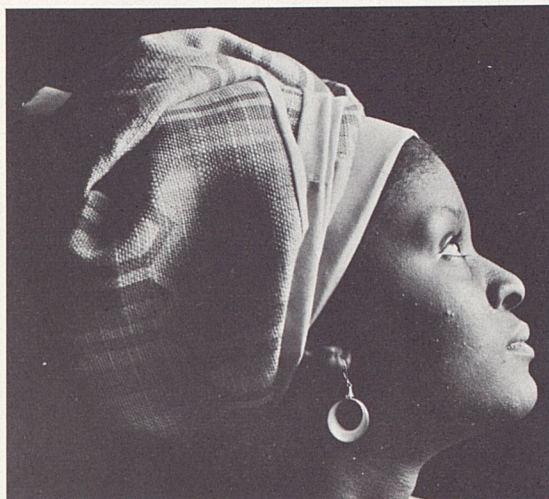
Will Halsey



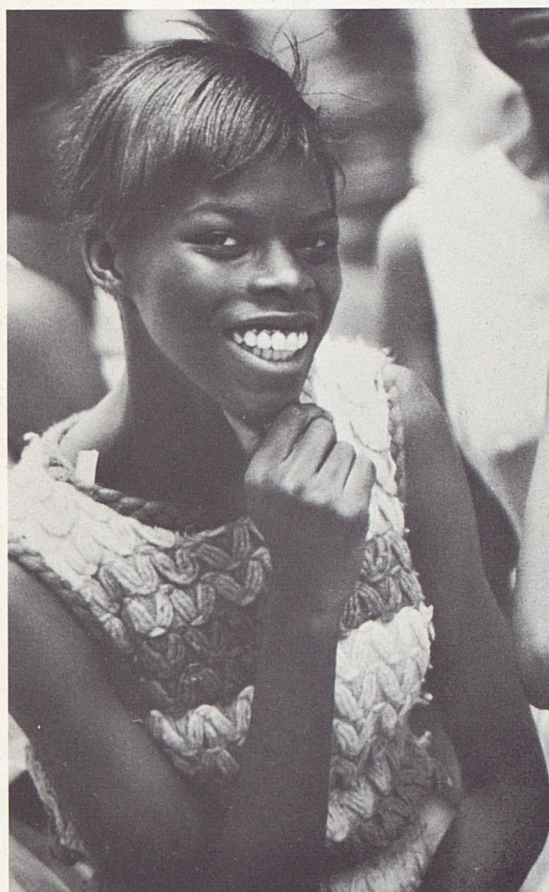
CHILDREN PLAYING

by AGENOR

Rufus Hinton



Douglas Harris



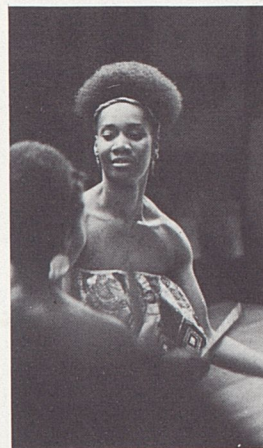
Rufus Hinton



Douglas Harris



Rufus Hinton



Rufus Hinton

THE SECTION X



Rufus Hinton



Douglas Harris

PASSED ON BLUES: HOMAGE TO A POET

the sound of black music
the sad soft low moan of jazz *ROUND BOUT MIDNIGHT*
the glad heavy fat screaming song of happy blues
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the mood indigo candle flame
the rough raunchy hot gut bucket riff tune *AFTER HOURS*
the fast swinging rapid rocking riff rumping blues
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the funky butt grind
the every night jitterbug jiving gliding his *TROUBLE IN MIND*
the brown black beige high yaller bouncer's shoes
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the sonata of Harlem
the concerto to shoulder bones/pinto beans/hamhocks/*IN THE DARK*
the slow good bouncing grooves
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the elephant laugh
the rain forest giggles under a switchblade downpour
the zoot suited conked head razor throat *STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY*
the colored newspaper with no good news
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the Jess B. Simple hip sneer
the bassist/drummer/pianist/guitarist/rhythm on top of *CALDONIA*
the take it, shake it, rattle, lay back & make it (or lose!)
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the big black mouth
the pawnshop/butcher shop/likker shop/ ...*BEBOP!*
the rats in the rice, roaches of reefers on relief amused
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the Manhattan subway stool
the naked thigh, double breasted one button *ROLL ON TO JESUS!*
the poolroom shalk & click, fat chick wobble in cigarette tar baby crew
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the chain gang jingle
the evil laughter against the atomic *HONEYDRIPPER*
the brownstone tenement cold filthy frozen winter hell ghetto dues
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the uh-huh, Oo-wee, oh yeah of hot climax
the hustlers haunt, prostitutes pimp, bitter *SWEET GEORGIA BROWN*
the hep hip hi junkie tongue tied black eyed bruise
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the sounds of dangerous black humor
the swift sharp flash of Afroamerica *STRUTTIN' WID SUM BAR-B-Q*
the Presence Africaine, Harlem Jew, chittlin switching cruise
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the fried fish'n'chicken boogie woogie
the store front church Cadillac/wig wearing/gospel truths/*WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD*
the nigger loving Thirties, dozens by the dirties on ofay's muse
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the rent party good-timing crowd
the shout strut twist turning loud raving but *AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'*
the darkie, jig, coon, hidden shadowy spade drowned in booze
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the taker of A Trains
the sticker upper, alley cats, hustler, poolshark cleanhead *HUCKLEBUCK*
the cornbread smell, grits, greens, watermelon, spare ribs never refused!
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the cool crowded summer solo horn
the red rattled raisin around the sun/migrated Dixieland *STRANGE FRUIT*
the jim crow/black crow/OI' Crow / moonshine splo/niggers cant go or choose
That was the world of Langston Hughes

the sweaty hard-working muscle making black back breaking hard labour hump
the bold bright colors on ebony nappy head big titty itty bitty Liza Jane
the millions and millions raising up strong been done wrong too long pointing
the abused body at slum lord! war lord! police lord! Oh Lord, all guilty and accused!
THAT WAS THE WORLD OF THE POET LANGSTON HUGHES
BLACK DUES! BLACK BLUES! BLACK NEWS!
THAT WAS THE WORLD OF THE GREATEST BLACK POET LANGSTON HUGHES

Ted Joans

HOW LONG HAS TRANE BEEN GONE

Tell me about the good things
you clappin & laughin

Will you remember
or will you forget

Forget about the good things
like Blues & Jazz being black
Yeah black music
all about you

And the musicians that
write & play about you
A black brother groanin
A black sister moanin
and beautiful black children
ragged under-fed laughin
not knowin
Will you remember their names
or do they have no names
no lives
Only products
to be used when you wanta
dance fuck & cry
You takin—they givin
You livin—they creatin
Starving dying trying
to make a better tomorrow
Giving you & your children
a history
But what do you care about
history — Black History
and John Coltrane
NO
All you wanta do
is pat your foot
sip a drink & pretend
with your head bobbin up & down

What do you care about acoustics
bad microphones or out-of-tune pianos
& noise
You the club owners & dis jockeys
made a deal didn't you
A deal about Black Music
& you really don't give
a shit long as you take

There was a time
when KGFJ played all black music
from Bird to Johnny Ace
on show after show
But what happened
I'll tell you what happened
They divided black music
doubled the money
and left us split again
is what happened

John Coltranes dead
& some of you have yet
to hear him play
How long how long has that Trane been gone

And how many more tranes will go
before you understand your life
John Coltrane who had the whole of
life wrapped up in B flat
John Coltrane like Malcolm
True image of Black masculinity

Now tell me about the good things
I'm tellin you about
John Coltrane
A name that should ring
throughout the projects mothers
Mothers with sons
who need John Coltrane
Need the warm arm of his music
like words from a Father
words of comfort
words of Africa
words of Welcome

How long how long has that Trane been gone

John palpatating love notes
in a lost-found nation
within a Nation
His music resounding
discovery
signed Always
John Coltrane

Rip those dead white people off
your walls Black people
Black people whose walls
should be a hall
A Black Hall Of Fame
so our children will know
will know & be proud
Proud to say I'm from Parker city, Coltrane city, Ornette city,
Pharoah city, Living on Holiday street next to James Brown park
in the state of Malcolm

How long How long
will it take for you to understand
that Tranes been gone
Riding in a portable radio
next to your son whose lonely
Who walks walks walks into nothing
No City No State No Home No Nothing
How long
How long
have black people been gone

Jayne Cortez 7/68



WHEN BROWN IS BLACK

(For Rap Brown)

Are you not the light
that does not flicker
when murderers threaten summertime
passions of our time
Are you not the searchlight
in our eyes red with the dust
from the slave's empty grave
sending chills through
lynching johnsons around the world
as their obscene ghettos
go up in summertime flames

Some say it's youthful
adventure in the summertime
for they have lost natural instinct
which teaches a man to be free

"What does a penny buy?"

Are you not the fist
which articulates the passion
of the collective power of our rebirth
Are you not the fist
of the laughter of the rhythms
of the flames of our memory

"What does a penny buy?"

The naked head of the fuse
is up in the air pregnant
with the flaming children of our time
when Brown is Black
blowing up white myths
which built up layers of mists
which veiled the roads to the strength
of our laughter in the sun

But some
eating their balls in empty statements
say: it is youthful
adventure in the summertime

Now we said
the game is over, didn't we?
when we reach the end of the line
the shit goes up in flames, don't I say?

“What does a penny buy?”

For Malcolm,
for the brothers in Robben Island
for every drop of Black blood
 from every white whip
 from every white gun and bomb
for us and again for us
we shall burn
and beat the drum
resounding the bloodsong
from Sharpeville to Watts
and all points white of the memory
when the white game is over
and we dance to our bloodsong
without fear nor bales
of tinted cotton over our eye

Go on, brother, say it. Talk
the talk slaves are afraid to live

“What does a penny buy?”
When Brown is Black

Keorapetse Kgositile

The afternoon sun is nowhere to be found today. Infinitely courageous, though, its rays shine through clouds of heavy gray. J.T. Nelson and Sugarboy walk quick down the street. Footsteps sound hard against the cement. They pass Moss' Barber Shop, Sacred Heart Tabernacle, the Shoe Repair Shop, Marge's Luncheonette and empty cement stoops standing lonely and bare up and down the cracked sidewalks.

"Hey, Sugarboy, you still with me man?"

"Yeah, man, I'm here." Sugarboy checks his reflection in the cleaner's window. Grins at himself; keeping on keepin' on.

"Oh, hurry on up, man, else I'm gone leave you smilin' in that window glass." J.T. turns the corner. Sugarboy catches up.

"Where we headed to J.T.?"

"To the Old Country. Where else? Let's turn off Cypress on Fourteenth."

They break into a heavy run. Arms loose moving in time with legs, body, trees and clouds. They dart through the alleyway. Moving toward the old section of the ghetto; the Old Country. Sirens scream in the distance. "Oh fuck. Shit." They run like crazy now. Over the fence. Cross back yards. Running. Up the stairs they dart, wet with sweat. Now silence, all for panting. Catching breath. "You still got the piece, man?"

"Yeah, I still got it."

"Damn, the mothers almost caught us. Let's get upstairs. You think Willa Mae's up there?"

"First thing's to check. Right? See I don't never be round here while the sun's hot.. during the day, I mean." They laugh and run on up the stairs.

On the road toward chieftainship is toward manhood. Infinitely courageous days, shining from behind these clouds. Running from cops is a regular day. Protecting self in all kinds of crazy ways. Toward precise and clearer days. Days of pain, now. Men. Pains. And loneliness.

Humming. Laura Mae Nelson takes her coat and shopping bag from the closet. Lawd have mercy, these dogs are killin' me today. She wiggles her toes taking them from the white oxfords cut with slits at the place where the toes push. Her cigarette ash falls to the floor. Eyes squint to

prevent the smoke from getting into them. Patting her overcoat she wonders whether her coin purse is in the pocket; it is. Now, my medicine; where did I put those pills? Looks in the shopping bag. "OK," she says. She checks to see that everything is in order, locks the door, then heads down the street toward the bus stop. Tired.

The bus weaves through the cold night like steam from cooking pots. Laura Mae looks out the moist window into the darkness. The bus has reached her stop, Seventh Street, she notices ... Home. "See you girls next week," she waves to the other women as she gets off the bus. They ride together every morning, every evening, to and from white houses filled with working days.

On the cement the sound of Laura Mae's footsteps. My God these folks just take your money for everything and don't do nothing with it but fix up their own neighborhoods. Now they know one light ain't hardly enough for this huge long block. She stumbles. The street light pushes through the darkness, faintly bumps against the night air. "They know this ain't enough light," she mumbles, walking on down the cracked sidewalks. Voices laugh in the night; children playing.

"Hey Mrs. Nelson, some police shot J.T. in the throat, today." A group of small children from the neighborhood all at the same time try to tell their thing to J.T.'s mother. "Oh, Carolyn, shadup! You lyin'.... Mrs. Nelson, ain't no police shot J.T." ... "Carolyn heard sirens and everytime she hear sirens she think somebody be gettin' shot or cut up." ... "She ain't got no sense! ... "Carolyn I'mmo tell yo mama you lied to Mrs. Nelson. Right Now!" Quick like the words that fly from their mouths, their bodies fly down the street toward home.

"Miss. Douglas!" Junior screams, "Carolyn been lyin' again!"

"No I ain't, ma dea. Junior lyin' on me!"

Laura Mae Nelson smiles. She walks on toward home a bit worried as usual. As far back as she can remember she's had problems with her son. He wasn't like no other boy she'd ever known. J.T. wasn't easy to deal with. If she remembered well,

it started round about when he was in fifth grade. He was ten years old then. He wouldn't obey his teachers when they were wrong. If you were wrong he'd tell you no matter how old you were. Laura Mae smiles to herself then shakes her head.

She'd go to work every Monday, Wednesday and Friday; clean and iron then come home tired to cook and clean for her family. The days didn't have enough hours for all the time Laura Mae needed. Maybe that's how J.T. got out of hand, she thinks. She has worked this way ever since her husband died. Seems like many pains started then. Her daughter Freddie Mae had gone to the mental institute; she never did adjust to her daddy's death. "Ohhh me," Laura Mae sighs. Pains and more pain. J.T. started stealing from the candy store 'bout then. He'd break store windows and Lawd knows he'd never try to hide certain of his mischiefs. "Yeah, I broke the corner store window last night ... ain't right for that ole man to cheat us. I saw him cheat Mrs. Lee outta fifteen cents. He did it on purpose too, cause he know she didn't know how to count her change right. He ain't no different, mama, from them old peckawoods guarding schools to keep kids out."

"What you know about folks not letting people in school, J.T.? Where you hear these things from?"

"The paper says it. I saw it written in headlines with pictures when I was coming home from school yesterday. It made me mad so when that man cheated Mrs. Lee, I said I was gon get him back. So I broke the windows in his store and I'm glad I did it 'cause he's mean."

"Oh Lord, that man had nothing to do with those people in those schools, J.T.,"

"Oh yes he did. Uh-uh." He shakes his head up and down. "He's a cheat like them."

"Well, you can't take the law into your hands. You hear me, boy?"

"I didn't try to do that. I just broke his windows cause he made me madthat's all."

"Oh Lord."

That was all Laura Mae could ever say, "Oh Lord." She stays confused. Full of pain whirling, trying to figure her son's thinking and behavior.

As J.T. grew older he saw more and more what he reacted against. It seemed he was wild as a storm. No good is coming to that boy, his mama

would say to herself those days. He'd get caught stealing small things...candy bars, bubble gum, such like that. He kept his mama picking him up evenings, afternoons and mornings from the local precinct. He was suspended often from school; so much that he was finally kicked out in his senior year. "It's such a shame too J.T.," the principal had said, "because you're above average in intelligence but you just don't use your head."

"I demand respect from you J.T. Nelson. I am the teacher in this class!" Miss Grind had hollered that day.

J.T.'s face carried a grin. "Any woman who can't control her temper and acts like some punk ain't getting no respect from me! I ain't caring if you teach every English class in the damned world. You ain't human lady; that's your problem" The students flash their eyes back and forth. Giggling. Miss. Grind will not be insulted by some impudent brat. Her head, boiling, grinds against J.T.'s fire. "Listen here J.T. Nelson," she points her finger at him. He grins. She rages, "I don't care if you don't have any home training; you had better find some on entering my class!"

"You talkin' about my mama, lady. You better be cool!", he warns, "else I'm gon have to show you what kinda home training you need by goin' upside your funny head."

He struts out the room in front of her yelling and insults, shaking his head. "Go to hell funny bitch," he mumbles inaudibly.

In the principal's office the next day there are attempts to discipline him; correct his misdirection.

"Naw, man, I ain't apologizing. I didn't do nothin' wrong to that ole silly woman."

"But J.T. you're supposed to give certain kinds of respect to your teachers," Mr. Kidiver tries to explain.

"See, I don't respect no stupidity; you see, or anybody who don't respect themselves. That's where I come from. You dig? That's where I'm coming from," he nods his head.

"Well, tell me J.T., how was Miss Grind stupid? You're not in her class. Why do you think she doesn't respect herself?"

"Ain't nothin' wrong with no teacher askin' someone who don't belong to her class to leave.

What is wrong is the manner in which they do this here little thing. The shit started with the fucked up manner she ask me to leave her room. You see, I went in that lady's room to give Willie Mae a message before the late bell rung." J.T. gestures with his hands. Pointing, circling, swinging his arms in the air. "When the late bell rung ... well ... this woman starts like hollering at me. You know ... hollering at me like I was filthy or some shit like that. Yeah, like I was filthy. She was vulgar. You dig? Vulgar. Shit. If she has respect for herself, she'd've addressed me different. Regardless of the fact I was in her room after the late bell, she'd addressed me different, yeah ... anybody expecting respect acts respectful. I wish I *would* lower myself to apologize to that bitch. That's what she is; a bitch."

Mr. Kidiver stares at J.T. His eyes grow wide, his forehead frowns. He stares hard as if puzzled.

"See, way I see it, man, Miss Grind owes me an apology."

"Ahh." Mr. Kidiver seems caught off guard. "Things don't work like that J.T.," he stutters. "...and you know it. We have ... rules we have to abide by if the system is going to work smoothly."

"Right," J.T. shakes his head, "right. See I don't abide by no fucked up rules. No. When you make a mistake you apologize and step back in the bounds of decency. She approached me wrong and stepped outside the bounds of fairness; it's up to her to make the first move now."

"I can't ask Miss Grind to apologize to you, J.T. You know that. The rules don't work like that."

"Yeah? Well, don't ask me to apologize to her cause I ain't done nothing wrong considering my view."

"Then I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to leave the school unless you can abide by the rules."

J.T. checks out Kidiver. He thinks. Sho is a drag when a spook gets *this* fucked up.

"You see, we can't have anyone here who can't abide by the rules. A high school degree is needed today. I hate to see you lose out, son."

"You saying I can't ever get back in this school. I mean you saying I'm expelled. Right?"

"That's right, J.T."

"Later on then, man ... like ... later on then."

"Now wait. Perhaps if ..."

"Fuck it." J.T. Nelson turns and walks out of Kidiver's office. His feelings see deeper into what has actually occurred. Feelings see deeper into the system of rules than he really knows. Dropped out. Fuck these freaks, he thinks, fuck 'em all.

Long days to fill now. Sun days and cold days. Alone days. Pool hall days. Days in bed ... all day with women inside their dark aloneness. Low days; high days all day long. Those wanting days. Days spent stealing. Jiving. Stealing again. Getting caught. Something wanting. What is wrong? What is wrong with my life? The thoughts. The questions. The spinning. The Pain. The Rhythm and The Blues.

No Sun today. Heavy gray all around. Cold. J.T. makes it down the street, his transistor swinging at his side. Melodies scream. *THERE WAS A TIME*. Songs. He heads toward the Old Country. *THERE WAS A TIME*. He walks fast thinking, focusing his eye far away. *THERE WAS A TIME*. Singing. Body bent forward against the cold, he hunches his shoulders. Can't get caught no more. Never. Sirens scream loud in his ears. He smiles. "Motherfuckers," he whispers to himself. He walks on, stepping hard across the cracked sidewalks trying to trip him up. The music throbs loud and clear in the air. *THERE WAS A TIME*. His face smiles.

J.T. never does get caught again for stealing. Never. But for him this is not enough. Things still feel wrong inside.

Confusion's blade splits the mind. Some things are never enough. Pills and pot. Escapes to veil the pain to no avail. Days of selling dope. Searching. Robbing. Running ... Come different thing... different days. Sun. Come.

The wind blows hard against the house, sounds heavy at the window panes, beats hard against the sheets of rain lashing the air and streets. Trees raise their arms to the down pour like happy children bathing naked in summer heat. Laura Mae peers out the window. J.T., why don't you come home, boy? She stares down the cracked sidewalks, past the trees, through the whipping rains to corners where young men hang out, passing nights away. "Oh Lord," she closes the shade then sits on the day bed; tries to read the paper. Puts it down. Goes to a stack of old newspapers

and magazines in the corner. Now looking for her bible. Couldn't have left it at work or on the bus, she thinks. "Now, what did I do with it?" She wrings her hands and doesn't notice the bible looking at her from the kitchen sink. She continues rambling through the room. Now under the bed. Disappointment sits inside. "Oh me," she sighs. The rain beats harder. Louder, now. The wind moans. Laura's nerves churn in anxiety. Now why does J.T. do me this way! You'd think he'd call. In a daze she walks away from the bed to the sink. She picks up the bible. Now, what did I ever do to deserve a life like this! I always try to live right. She stares into the air. The clock on the table ticks 1:30 a.m. Laura Mae gets up. Goes to the window. Lifts the shades; tries to stare through the rain again. Goes back to the bed, sits down to read her bible. The light bulb seems too dim. It casts a faint yellow hue in the room. She sits listening to the rain like a distant voice calling through an indifferent night. She stares at the fading light bulb. Sirens sound in the night. My boy... she whispers. The sirens scream on piercing her heart, slicing through her mind, screaming pain like every night. Suddenly a voice speaks out through the room; EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT." Laura Mae jerks her body, listening. Puzzled. "Huh?" Her eyes get wider staring at sound not seen. She stands up turning her body, looking. The heavy beat of rain vibrates through the room. "YOUR CONFUSION IS YOUR PAIN," the voice continues. The light gets dimmer. "Strength Lord," she whispers bending to her knees. "My boy don't seem to know the right road, Lord. He chooses the wrong company, Lord Jesus. He runs with bad boys. Give me strength my Father," she prays. Her face glistens with tears. "He runs with wild boys. Give him direction, Father." She raises her hand into the air. "Give him direction, Father." "BELIEVE AND TRUST." The voice again. "I believe, my Father. I believe," Laura Mae answers. The rain cries against the window. Laura Mae dries her eyes. A sharp pain moves through her head. She presses her lips to bear the pain and continues praying. "I try to be trusting, Lord."

Footsteps sound on the stairs. Laura Mae's ears, heart and body wake to the sounds. The door opens. J.T. enters. Seeing his mother praying, he

moves quietly toward the kitchen. She gets up. If I speak first she gon start them questions. Damn, he thinks, then speaks, "Hey, mama." She stares at him. "You trying to kill me, J.T." He goes through the refrigerator. "Whatcha mean, mama?"

"Your dinner's in the oven boy. Move out the way. Let me heat this food. I don't know what's come over you, J.T. I ought to make you sit up for the rest of the night and think about correct ways to live life. Now where you been all night? At some pool hall? Why, J.T., you do these things?"

She asks a million questions it seems, like he thought she would. J.T. sits staring, thinking. watching his mom move about the kitchen. She stomps her foot, killing a roach. "Dirty devil," she mumbles.

"Where you been, J.T.? I go out to that white woman's and work my hands to the bones and then have to spend all my time worrying about you. Where you been? Here I sit worrying...are you coming home tonight or ever? Are you dead?"

She sits his food in front of him and sits across him from wringing her hands. She stares into his eyes looking far away. Her tone lowers;

"I know a mother ain't got too much business asking a nineteen year old son where he been," she keeps wringing her hands, "but I worry about you, boy. I worry all my hours 'bout you. J.T....do you know what my days are, boy?"

"I ain't been nowhere but over in the Old Country with the fellahs, mama. That's all."

"You been over in that pool hall on Willow Street, I know."

"Don't be worryin', muh deah. I can take care myself. I'm cool. I know what I'm doing." He chews his food hurriedly. "I got to go back out."

"Now, why you got to go back out?" Her face is a puzzled picture, deep pain in its depths. "I'm getting some things together."

She gets up, rakes out the dishes as though in a daze. Out on the streets the rain. A mother's pain pours in the darkness. Laura Mae gets out the flour and the lard and starts preparing to fry pies for tomorrow.

"You done got expelled from school. You don't stay on no jobs but you always got money. Where you get it I don't know, but you better watch yourself, son."

"Some things you can't know, mama," J.T. smiles. "And you need to stop worrying about that school thing; it ain't hittin' on nothin' no way. It's the whiteman's trick, muh dea. They been handin' us this ole shit since before then."

"Before when, J.T. Nelson? Talk with some sense sometime, boy."

He laughs. "Oh, yeah...you want them ole dates and stuff. 'Bout mid-eighteen hundreds. Learn trades or starve. Frederick Douglas. White men are becoming house servants, cooks and stewards...Now, today, they say...Don't be a fool stay in school. Same ole shit. Whites are taking over trades; you dig. Takin' over what we been doing. We have to go to school to move out the way for some more of them. What next? He nods his head, smiling. "What next!"

"You gon get picked up and thrown under the jail house. You worry the life outta me. I wish you would find some school to get into."

"Oh, muh dea, please." Shit, he thinks.

"I've had enough problems these years. Ain't I had enough? How much you want me to take? Just how much? Too much commotion's going on."

"You gotta know how to put things in their places, mama. That's all. Ole white tricks is painful if you don't see 'em."

"I'm sick and tired of hearin' white this and black that. I'm sick of it, you hear?"

Maybe somewhere along the way I've gone wrong in raising this boy, Laura Mae thinks while she turns the pies.

J.T. sits staring, watching his mother as she wipes the flour from her hands onto her apron. White tricks, he laughs, thinking of the pains, not hearing the fat pop in the skillet around the pies. Not seeing but seeing. The worn linoleum looks up at him shaking his head, grinning in thought.

Weeks pass. Step by step frustrations pass. Past. Pills and pot. The pain of those days like rain eventually subsides. Life gets closer to man days, to sun, to love days. Movement. Struts surer now. Steps to deeper directions.

The night wind blows light. The sky seems full with a million brilliant stars. The air smells fresh. J.T. looks straight ahead thinking of the early afternoon's conversation:

"Now you know what you're suppose to do?"

"Yeah, put the device at the bottom of the west staircase, right?"

"Right, the one that says *Employees Only*. Cool? ... and make sure it's timed for eight fifteen pee emm. And we all got to remember ain't no backin' out for none of us now. None of us. Who ever does is in for it. Is that agreed?"

Agreed!"

Fresh night air blows. J.T. turns at the corner. The sirens and red lights of Saturday night have started their thing; flashing and screaming through the ghetto. A flash of trousered green moves through the autumn night. Spring green stepping. J.T. walks on quicker now toward Sugarboy's house. Check things out. See how things have moved.

"Everything's cool, man. The baby's timed for 8:15."

"What's the time now?"

"7:30."

"That's cool. I'm going over to the pool hall like usual. Then later on I'm goin' to Willie Mae's gig."

"Wait up, I think I'll make it with you cats."

4:30. Early morning. Laura Mae Nelson lies wide awake. Thinking and worrying as usual. She checks the clock. Notices the time, wringing her hands. The sirens scream over and over. Now J.T., you know it's too late to be out in those wild streets. "Give me courage lord," she leafs through her bible and reads;

St. John 4:48: Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

St. Matthew 16:3: And in the morning. It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

Laura looks puzzled. She continues to leaf back and forth. She seems to hurry now as though a force directs her to the scriptures.

St. Matthew 6:25: Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life what you shall eat or drink; nor yet your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat and the body than raiment?

30: Wherefore if God so clothe the
grass of the field which today
is and tomorrow is cast into
the oven, shall he not much
clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"I do believe, Lord but I need help in understanding my son's behavior," she whispers. I don't understand why you continue in this strange life J.T. She shakes her head then lowers it to read on.

St. John 10:37: If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not,

38: But if I do though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

A low hum vibrates through the room. Laura Mae raises her eyes, Listening. Dazed. Her eyes wander around the room through the air. The voice sounds again, loud: "KNOW THE TIMES. BELIEVE IN WINDS THAT BLOW AGAINST THE WORLD YOU KNOW." Some invisible force lifts Laura Mae from her bed and suspends her trembling in the vibrating air, jerking her back and forth. In her eyes surprise and confusion. "Yes Lord," she screams, "direct me." J.T.'s photograph smiles from the dresser. Back and forth she is moved then lowered back to the bed. Be careful J.T. "Be careful son," she whispers, spinning in the head with confusion and fear. Perspiration glistens over her face. Her hand reaches for the pencil on the table next to the bed. She writes on a piece of paper hurriedly guided by perhaps the force that had jerked her through the air. Laura Mae fills both sides of the paper. Then scribbles along the margins, listening, hearing, writing, obeying the voice of the unseen presence, the force. Tired, she drops off to sleep, clutching the folded paper in her clenched fist. A quiet breeze breathes at the windows; she sleeps.

A knock on the door brings thoughts of J.T. to her sleepy mind. Almost awake she turns over. The loud bang again. She wakes with a jump, afraid.

"Open Up!"

Oh my goodness, she thinks.

"Police, Open Up!"

"Oh God!" Laura Mae's heart pounds heavy, loud, fast, deep. My boy. "Coming, coming." She

jumps from the bed, pressing her hands to her chest, nervous. She opens the door. A police badge flashes in her face.

"We're looking for J.T. Nelson."

"What for you banging on this door like you ain't got no manners. Lord God! Ain't cha got no sense?"

"Is your son here, lady?"

"Course he's here." Laura Mae hasn't seen her son since yesterday evening. "Course my son's here. Where else he gone be at this time in the morning? You let your kids run the streets this time a morning? Well, I don't. Folks don't care no more about their kids that's why the world so full of evil today."

"Look, lady, you have to get your son. We have to take him down for questioning."

"Wait a minute and don't be makin' a lot a racket out in the hallway whether you care or not. Other families are still sleepin'." Laura Mae pushes the door to. Her heart sinks. J.T., why of all nights didn't you come home boy! I'll just act as if I don't know he isn't in. She walks back toward J.T.'s room. In her head she hears the voices again: "BELIEVE AND TRUST." She turns the door knob. "BELIEVE AND TRUST."

"Yes Lawd," she whispers. Looking into her worried and puzzled face, J.T. smiles.

"When you come in here boy?" She whispers, "Police up front wanting to take you down for questioning. What's going on? I done told you before they were going to put you in that jail. What's this about?"

"I don't know." He gets up to dress.

"Your eyes be looking mighty strange, boy. Mighty strange. Things going on in this world I don't be understanding at all. Hurry up 'fo them policemen be banging on that door again. You want me to go down with you? ... Let me get dressed. I'm going down with you 'cause ain't no telling what they up to no ways."

"That's for sho," he says, lacing his shoes, "but I'm cool. I ain't done nothin' wrong. Don't worry muh" He kisses her cheek. "What's that you got balled up in your hand," he asks. She notices the paper from earlier in the morning.

J.T. walks toward the bathroom. Laura Mae unfolds the paper to read:

Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles, but when they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake but he that endureth to the end shall be saved... And fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

Laura Mae stands staring into the air.

"Here son. I believe this maybe for you."

"Some more of your scriptures, mama? I better get out of here. I'll read it on the way downtown." He heads toward the door, striding loose. Reaching in his pocket, he pulls out folded pieces of paper stapled together. Hands it to his mama, "You read this and don't be worryin' and stuff. I be back in an your or so." He kisses her. Laura Mae watches the door close behind her son. She walks to the day bed, listening to the footsteps fade on the stairs, then unfolds the pieces of paper and reads:

Look for mind seering into the future with
the intensity of their satellites in orbit
And you will find it in our heads
There is a new Chief in the land
And all the people will imitate the customs of
His tribe
And dancing to His heartbeat in His own com-
pound,
One Night, at The Time, they will see His
face
And they will be astounded that it is black.....



JUDGEMENT — William Halsey

(a one act play)

SETTING: both acts take place in a courtroom. it is a 1968 courtroom, kangaroo style. seats for everyone, and the judge has a table. the play could take place anywhere in the United states, but it seems to be best fitted for northern new jersey.

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance): Court rapper, a w.a.s.p. from the south.

Judge, a w.a.s.p. from the south, reminds me in some ways of president johnson. He is blind.

Defending attorney, a w.a.s.p. from new york. he is a liberal.

Prosecutor, a white lawyer from the south a la george wallace.

Baliff, Six Courtroom guards, and Three Jurors, origin of these white men is irrelevant, but they are all good americans. One of the jurors is blind, one deaf, and one mute.

Small Crowd of Black People. all born in america, all not good americans. not even really americans (any other way is against american law).

Artist, a young Black Man born in america. raised in watts, detroit, harlem, lowndes county, roxbury, or bedford-stuyvesant, any fictitious black ghetto area. yeah, newark sounds hip!

ACT I SCENE I

the play begins:

court rapper: law and order. low and order. law and order in this heah caught. order in the coat. odor, i say odor in this heah coat.

(all the whites begin to cheer except the mute (he stamps his feet))

court rapper: thank you. thank you. (he starts taking bows, and throws kisses at the crowd) thank you. thank you. (he holds his hands above his head in a gesture to quiet the ovation down) now i turn this heah travesty over to your and my favorite judge... friends i give you the one and only, the prince of peace, that wise old man, the long arm of the low, the champeen of unfallin' justice. i give you my judge, our judge, everyone's judge... Judge Lynchin' B. Trickbag...

(the once cheering crowd of white people is hysterical now. the judge walks in. a baliff is on his arm guiding him. in his free arm is a cane. he is blind. he sits at his place in the center of the court and squirms in his seat.)

judge: all rise and greet me. (all the people rise except the blacks. the whites say in unison: good morning, kind judge)

judge: good moanin'. good moanin'. (he pauses and blows his nose)

court rapper: you may sit. (the cheering whites sit)

judge: mah friends, we gather together here, in this holy place of judgement, to ask forgiveness and justice for this poor misguided nigger.

defending attorney: your honor, i object. you seem to assume that my client is guilty. you are prejudicing the jury. (he points to the jurors, who seem to be engaged in a game of 21 Blackjack) in fact, your entire introduction to this case is biased ... a man is to be considered innocent until

judge: (breaks in. he is aghast) you object! prejudiced...boy, ah'll tan your hide. i done voted for three or four civil rights bills to get jobs for them coon bastards, so they don't riot. and you call me prejudiced. (he grows into rage) i ought to drop napalm on your lily-livered head. i ought to ...

defending attorney: excuse me your honor. objection withdrawn.

judge: thank you, suh! thank you... now let us get on with this hangin' (he pauses with a smile) i mean trial. (he taps the table and clears his throat) will the prosecutor present his case.

prosecutor: yes suh, yo honor. gladly. (he picks up a pad of written-on paper and holds it in the air) i would like to present this as exhibit "a"...i will read from this here manuscript written by the defendant.

defending attorney: (he interrupts) i object, your honor. my client is on trial for his actions. for his actions, sir, and not his writing. and furthermore i feel

judge: (breaking in. he is obviously upset) suh, no one in this courtroom is concerned with your feelings. we are concerned with the truth. and the truth is that this nigger participated in a subversive action... a subversive action against the holy federal government of these sanctified united states.

defending attorney: your honor, participating in a demonstration against bigotry and hatred is not subversive to this

judge: (in a rage) boy, that is the third time today that you done talkout against me in my courtroom. if'n you keep this communist behavior up, i will have to ask you to leave this sacred place of judgement and let this nigger defend hisself.

defending attorney: objection withdrawn, your honor.

judge: thank you, suh. (he taps the table) you may continue, mr. prosecutor.

prosecutor: thank you, yo honor. (he brushes back his hair) as i was saying before i was so rudely interrupted. (he looks for a moment at the defending attorney). in this here manuscript the defendant says in a poem and i quote, "remember malcolm and vesey". now one of the coons who works for me... one of my very own coons told me all about this here malcolm and vessey. they was both nigger radicals who tried to change our beautiful country... we killed them both but just to think, my friends, that this coon sitting before you is praising these two communists. that he is trying to poison the minds of all the happy coons in this country... if we let him live wise men of the jury (he looks over at the jurors who are pre-occupied with a game of old maid). if we let this nigger live after writing obscene, communist, prejudiced literature, we are opening this great country's doors to a painful death.....i rest mah case. (the judge rises first to clap and cheer, then all the other whites stand and cheer except the mute (again he stomps his feet) the prosecutor bows and says with a confident unassuming grin) thank you, folks, thank you kindly. (the judge hits the table with his fist and the noise ceases)

judge: (pointing to the defense attorney) you don't have anything to say do you boy?

defense attorney: no sir, the defense rests. (the artist stands up. he is active for the first time in the play)

artist: well i don't rest.

judge: boy, you out of odor.

artist: you're goddamned right i am. you blind old fool.

judge: (stands up) baliff, restrain that man. he's in contempt of this here coat. (baliff moves to restrain the artist)

artist: don't touch me, faggot! (the baliff steps back, and the artist moves into the crowd of black people. the blacks get restless) what is this? these chumps are going to try and hang me for writing a poem, and you're going to let them do it. (three guards rush at the artist. he fights them off. three more come and the six subdue the artist)

judge: sit that nigger down. (the judge smiles) is the jury ready to pronounce sentence.

blind juror: yes your honor. we find the defendant innocent as charged (everyone in the court is taken aback) because of insufficient evidence. but recommend that he hang anyway, your honor. we haven't had a good nigger hangin' in these parts for a long time.

(black)

ACT I SCENE II

(minutes later in the same courtroom)

judge: all righty, let's get ready for this hangin'. he rises) everyone rise and cheer me. (they all rise, even the blacks. the whites begin to cheer. the blacks do not. they are solemn) baliff bring the condemned man to the stand. (the baliff does) do you have any last words, boy?

artist: yeah, creep. i have some last words. (he speaks slowly and surely) like this: (he pauses, a drum beats rhythm to the following words) up your faggoty white ass. (he screams) UP YOUR FAGGOTY WHITE ASSHOLE.

(the blacks begin to move. they are like robots as if those words were a signal. they begin to attack the court. blacks of all ages attacking the institution)

judge: wait! wait! not me. i am not responsible. they made me do it. (his throat is slit)
(chaos breaks loose. lights go on and off. stay off awhile. noise is heard. the light returns. chairs are knocked over. the whites are seen lying dead on the floor. the blacks begin to exit)

artist: and then there was light'
(a young black with a straight razor in his hand comes toward the artist. they slap 5 and exit last.)

(black)

the end



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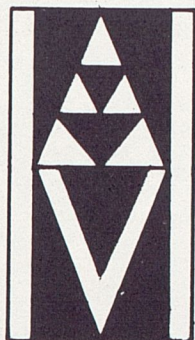
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RUTH R. McCLAIN: Lives in Newark, N.J., works, somehow, for the Urban League, writes poetry because it's necessary.

TED JOANS: Our West African editor.

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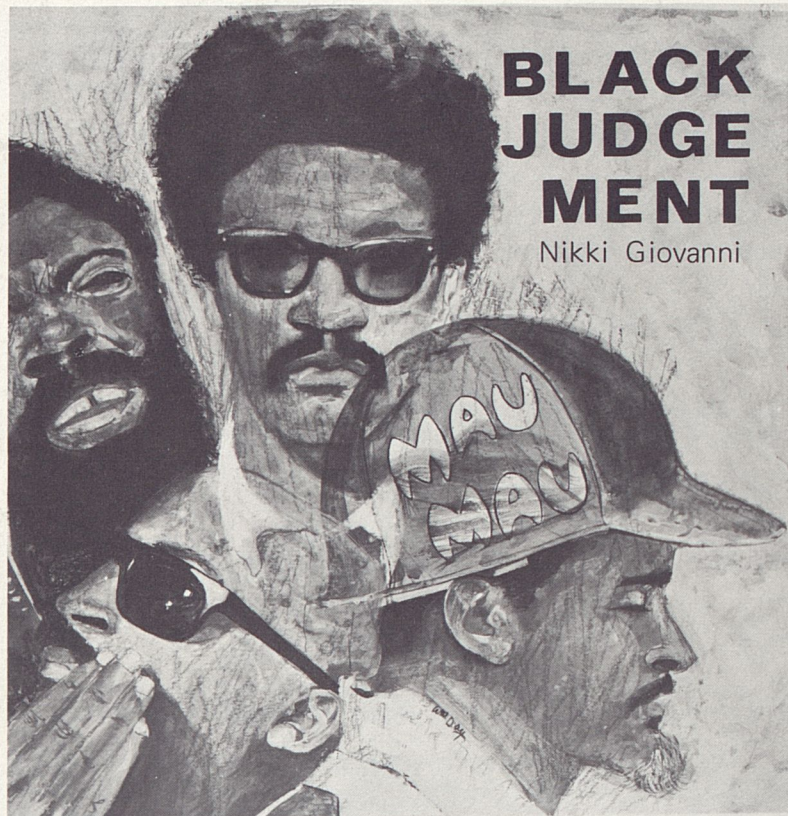
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