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Editorial

Philip Pettijohn

The first half of the 70-71 academic year is over and I think an assessment of the real accomplishments of the black "actionary and reactionary forces" on the UMass. campus is in order. An assessment that should pin-point politically, economically and socially the position of the black community of the University of Massachusetts. Our position in relation to or compared to what? — reality; the reality of it all.

The new year brought with it the housing of the "big three" under the same roof. The W.E.B. DuBois Black Studies Dept., the Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black Students and the Black Cultural Center Main Offices are all now located and operating out of Mills House.

The Black Studies Dept., in fact the whole University heartily welcomed Michael Thelwell back as the chairman of the Department. The return seemed to be a just reward for the suffering many endured during his, seemingly eternal, but brief absence. The expansion of and the solidifying of the Dept. as a university dept. is greatly appreciated and something the whole black community can be proud of. However, some of the major questions asked by the more politically and culturally orientated of us, still go unanswered. Where is the student entity of the department? An explanation or definition of the role of the white man in the

Black Studies Dept. is in order. The Black Studies Dept. is fighting a battle against the University in its attempt to admit Herbert Aptheker to the Dept. Many universities follow a "hands off" policy in regards to Aptheker because of his political affiliations. The people of the Dept. rejected a Nigerian brother's application because of, from what I understand, his concept of reality. I wonder how Mr. Austin looks at reality.

Recently the Black Studies Department was charged with being "ideologically passive"; I find myself in agreement with this charge. I don't know if it's the political strategy of the Dept. or the lack of communication that exists between the Dept. and the black student body, but the Dept. has yet to issue a statement of position on many of the important and relevant issues that have arisen so far this semester. If Brother Thelwell is unaware of the extent of his influence in the black community, please tell him to lift his head up, the black community wants to hear what he has to say. Another charge was voiced along with the one stated above. It was that the Dept. "is not addressed to the desperate need of the Black Nation for scientists", that is the Dept. is not set-up to produce engineers, doctors, nuclear physicists, or biologists. The charge is real, however, if the Black Studies Dept. can be pinned with the blame, so must all the black people in America be so blamed. The failure of the Dept. to offer such courses in the realm of science, is due to situational factors rather than the ideologies and priorities of the Dept. The situational factors are those which revolve around the fact that the white man has his foot in our ass and insists on keeping it there.

It is my belief that the Black Studies Dept. has a solid and real foundation and a core of faculty that will develop the Department into one of best of its

kind in the country. However, if the Dept. continues to ignore its relationship with the black community beyond the education level, the white community of the university will be the only group that acknowledges the relevance, the reality of the W.E.B. DuBois Black Studies Department.

The internal structure of the Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black Students has undergone radical change since the previous year. With the installation of Dr. Hodges Glenn as the director of the CCEBS Program, we have seen a transformation of the Program from a loosely structured, usually silent, somewhat inefficient entity into a highly structured, aggressive, and efficient organization. It has become a factor of university life that a segment of the community feel the Program and Dr. Glenn sacrificed too much to obtain this level of bureaucracy, aggressiveness and efficiency. The Program because of the sacrifices has taken on characteristics similar to those of a white bureaucratic institution (Whitmore). The countenance of the Program is somewhat harder and colder than it was before. Black students find this hard to deal with, that is a Program coming from a black frame of reference that dictates stringent rules and guidelines that they must function within. I find it a lot easier to deal with the bureaucracy of the CCEBS Program than with the aggressive personality of the Program. The Program and Dr. Glenn upon their move into the Cultural Center, during the summer, literally "bogarted" the black student's lounge on the second floor. Despite the objections raised from the students that were on the campus at the time Dr. Glenn had the lounge repainted, removed the furniture, and then declared it a possession of CCEBS. I don't doubt the practicality of CCEBS using a lounge as a pseudo auditorium but the transition should have been

made only after student consent. If the aggressiveness of the CCEBS Program could be directed for the black students instead of at them, the lethal gap that exists between the two entities could be narrowed considerably. The aggressiveness could be channeled into finding monies for the black students on campus who still haven't received all of their scholarship allocation. With the University being as large as it is, this wouldn't take much aggression to channel. Also, it is my feeling and that of a large number of other black students that there are too many white folks working for CCEBS; too many counselors are white and too many tutors are white. It is a gross misinterpretation of priorities on the part of the CCEBS Program and Dr. Glenn if they don't see the need of directing some of the aggression of the Program into locating and training qualified black students to fill these positions.

The importance and relevance of the CCEBS Program to the black community is immeasurable. However, the importance and relevance of the Program will never be illuminated to the ultimate degree until the people of the Program start viewing students in a different light. A light that will show the need for the Program to respect its students as much as the students must respect it.

The completeness of the powerless position that black students as a whole, hold on the UMass campus can only be traced back to the two lethal diseases that are running rampant on the epidemic level throughout the black student body. The diseases being apathy and political barbarism. Both diseases are highly contagious and can lead to mental stagnation and death. The overwhelming number of black students struck down from these cancer-like diseases is staggering.

How any black man can allow himself to become a victim of apathy;

apathetic to the reality of the unrealness of his relationship, as a black man, to himself, his woman, his society, is inconceivable. Yet black student apathy is a reality on this campus and we must deal with it. Apathy basically stems from ignorance (total lack of understanding of what's going on) therefore a long term antidote would be education, in our case a black education. Education is a long drawn out process and time seems to be the only thing black students don't have on their side. Therefore we must develop a short term way of dealing with it to go along with the long term process of education. We must take advantage of apathy; make it work for us. We must tell apathetic students what to think, what to say, and how to react, reaction is the only thing they are capable of. Inhumane? Face reality, apathetic people don't think because they are afraid to, they don't speak because they don't have anything to say, and they don't act because they're too busy reacting. If black people want to walk around like robots (gadgets) then program them; if we don't the man will.

Political barbarism or political inexperience is the primary force that is keeping thinking brothers and sisters from establishing a real black student front on campus. The only way we can cure this political inexperience is by experiencing or practicing politics; true knowledge comes only from practice. Black vanity, black paranoia, and black distrust make it almost impossible for black students to practice politics. Too proud to make a mistake, too afraid to take on responsibility, not enough trust in oneself to trust anyone else, all these make it unfeasible for a black student to practice politics. Vanity, paranoia, and distrust can only be dealt with on an individual level, brothers and sisters, I suggest we start dealing with them before they deal the final blow on us.

Hillbillies, Harlemites & Peacenicks in Vietnam

By Doug Ruhe

Doug Ruhe is presently a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts School of Education.

Classified as a Conscientious Objector, Ruhe served in Vietnam as a medic. The following article, which was written while the author was still stationed in Southeast Asia, is excerpted from a larger essay in which Ruhe describes his experiences in Vietnam.

Vietnam is like a great Rorschach test exploring the attitudes and beliefs harbored by average Americans; it evokes the aggregate of values and notions which they have absorbed from our culture and schools.

Because the arriving GI has been offered almost no explanation whatever of the causes, history, peoples, strategies, economics and politics of war, he confronts a vast and confusing array of experiences that are extremely foreign to him. The hords of small Vietnamese peoples who surround him when he takes time off in town, sing-song crazily in languages he finds completely unintelligible. To function and communicate with them, he must choose an understanding of who he is in relation to them and what is his mission.

The prospect of investigation into the several cultures is inviting. He senses hostility and resentment in the people and derision in their laughter. Few, if any, Americans that he meets have knowledge of the languages, while a general suspicion prevails that all the indigenous folk either are VC or give allegiance to the VC. The

enemy can't be distinguished from the people; so, subtly, the people become the enemy. And these suspicions are nurtured by the realization that the only Vietnamese people who seem eager to consort with them are brazen hustlers, pimps, whores, and shifty-eyed thieves. A pageant of avarice unfolds in that segment of Vietnamese society open to them. (One gets the impression that Vietnam has been converted into a garrish bazaar-bordello to accommodate the material and physical lusts of the GI's.)

Admittedly this presents a formidable barrier to ordinary human conversation and friendship. Cash communication is hard to penetrate, but it is the rare GI who even makes an attempt to investigate.

For most of the Americans I have met, the easiest and most natural alternative to search out is to reach into the fagbag of racist and chauvinistic cliches they have acquired in American society. Knowing who the Vietnamese are, and one's own position, one then is reduced to the process of selecting appropriate formulas from the American Way of Life.

Poor Asian countries, for example, populated with "backward", Oriental, "uneducated" people, some of whom are "communists", are something we (GI's) have heard about from our teachers in school, our families and friends, ever since we were young children. The exalted status America allegedly holds, compared with such nations and peoples, or any nation or people for that matter, is reflex knowledge. We've been told it a thousand times: America is the greatest nation that ever was; our people are the most educated, sanitary, rich, free, honest, etc.

Among my fellow GI's, genocide is far and away the most popular solution to the Vietnamese Question. It is embodied in a variety of similarly inspired "plans", from

the invasion of the North with two million troops, to saturated bombing of all populated areas where the enemy might be. The jargon has it that we should “quit messing around” and comfortably unleash a technological scourge. Negotiated settlement, until very recently, was scorned by most as an abdication to the hippie-commie coalition in the states, or as surrender to the “little man”, “Charlie”. More dearly felt than these reasons is the craving for revenge.

Thirty-five thousand Americans* have died here and someone should pay drastically for it. (No one I have questioned has any idea how many Vietnamese soldiers have died, since the army apparently finds these statistics lacking in significance. Presumably, the estimated 500,000 lives lost by the VC and the NVA during the war, and the devastation wrought on the North by three years of bombing, are not sacrifice enough).

A college-educated acquaintance told me one day at noon chow:

‘What we ought to do is pull our troops out of Vietnam and when they’re on the boats in the South China Sea, nuke the hell out of the gooks. Then there’d be peace and we could all go home.’

The person who uttered this remark is not an embittered eccentric hater or a paranoid mad-dog. On the contrary he has a gleaming smile, and is articulate and commercially handsome. The words, though said in a pleasant conversational manner, were expressed with complete seriousness as well.

Asked about the justice of slaughtering benign civilians, many of whom may be either a-political or anti-communist, the speaker’s voice hardens; he grimaces in mock pain. He is talking, he now knows, to one of those “unrealistic” humanitarian peacenik types. “Fuck ’em. This is war!” he sneers.

The advocacy of genocide here, as a victory climax to the war suggests a whole complex of assumptions and beliefs: the base themes of our society. Indeed, the soldiers here are echoing a sentiment I heard in the states many times before leaving. There it was bad manners. Here, they let it all hang out.

Racism is the word “gook”, an ubiquitous epithet among GI’s. “Gook” thinking is one, if not the primary factor in the genocide equation; it converts human beings to things which are strange and repellent. So pervasive is this thesis, that I have continually heard the epithet used by Black, Puerto Rican and Mexican GI’s, as well as their more predictable white comrades. Watching a Black soldier swaggering among the Vietnamese, imperiously cursing, having his shoes shined by jostling urchins or buying their awe and companionship with a roll of military dollars, at first seems grotesque, but upon reflection, shouldn’t be considered.

Our culture is saturated with racist thinking and many ghetto dwellers, as the objects of most of it are tyrannized by its logic. Nonetheless it is bizarre to listen (as I several times have) while a Black or Mexican-American holds forth on the alleged attributes held to be proof of “gook” inferiority, poverty, stupidity, laziness, immorality, lack of education and cleanliness, etc. I always have the weird sensation that I am talking to a Mississippi redneck in blackface. “Probably in America they’d call the Vietnamese ‘niggers’,” is my stock retort. Yet, in fairness, it must be added that whites most frequently manifest the super-race style and that many GI’s from the minority peoples of America, especially Black people, are acutely aware of the irony of an “anti-gook” campaign, and disturbed by the ugly currents of racism in the military.

My first sultry day in Vietnam was spent at the Cam Ranh Bay Reception station working on a detail. I was surprised at the large numbers of Vietnamese people in the compound, who could be seen everywhere doing the dirty-work for the Americans; dishwashing, feces burning, sand bag filling, sweeping, laundering, shoe shining, etc. The older people, I reflected had probably done exactly the same tasks for the French Colonial Army fifteen years prior. And, I later learned, these drudges are to be found in large numbers on every base and installation.

More interesting than the Vietnamese presence itself, however, was the response of the GI’s to them. Fellows just arrived on the plane with me, began addressing the Vietnamese in the peremptory tones of plantation overseers. There was no period of adjustment. Arkansas hillbillies and Harlemites fell into the master role as easily as the middle class GI’s. The office to which I was assigned a painting chore was duted and swept by a withered and watchful old lady in a beaten conical straw hat and black rayon britches. Everyone in the office (NCO’s, officers, enlisted men) spoke to her playfully in the most vulgar and abusive manner imaginable, as though she were a prostitute. When she seemed uncomprehending or doubtful of their humor, they resorted to lewd gestures. One of the men on the job with me joined freely in the conversation that centered on the “use” of “gook” women.

The racism that dominates the GI consciousness not only blocks his power to witness and comprehend the way the Vietnamese people think and exist, it also corrupts his heart; he cannot feel what his brothers feel, does not care about the injustices done them, and cannot see with his own eyes. He imagines himself a member of the master race, product of the greatest, cleanest nation, and bearer of the “American Way of Life”. His experiences seem to confirm all his stock preconceptions and malignant ideas, while the fear of death compounds the irrational process and brutalizes his entire psyche.

(*Ed. note – the figure is now well up to over 40,000)

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*Li'l black boy
Want to see something?
Come.
Let's see Death.
He is part of us.
You only five
Too bad,
Death wants you to see Him
So come on now.*

By William Smith

There was commotion; a loud boom, then high pitched yells and screams. Some lady, whose name escapes my memory, came stumbling up to our gate. The squat, heavily perspiring woman yelled into our doorway, "Miss Katie! Dey shootin' in Thirty!"

Things from that point happened so fast, my memory only recalls my standing at our gate craning my neck to see through the openings between the houses across the street. This row of irregularly spaced shack-houses formed the boundary of "Dirty Thirty". Thirty dilapidated houses wedged together on a triangular strip of land dissected by two rutted streets.

People scampered back and forth through the narrow openings between the houses. The air was filled with cries of "Lo'd have mercy". "Oh God!", "Look out", and "Da nigga's gone crazy". I remember one distinct scream above the general pandamonium. It sounded more distant, but distinct in that it was continuous. There was what seemed a moment of silence. The scream came again. This time louder; the voice of a woman screaming damnation.

BLAMM! "A gun!" I thought.

Silence.

I sprang quickly through our gate and across the street where I stood half crouched beside a fire hydrant. Nervously I glanced about, trying to see what was happening in "Thirty" while at the same time on the lookout for my Momma. She had given the firm command for me not to leave the front yard. Curiosity was greater than command. I darted from the fire hydrant to the back steps of Mrs. Willie Belle's house. A human knot, pushing and shoving, was ringed around the front of Miss Eva's house. My jumbled thoughts as to what was on the other side of the crowd were interrupted by the wail of sirens.

The '49 Ford leaned heavily onto the narrow, gutted street. Its siren screeching and red lights flashing. Out jumped three policemen, guns drawn.

"Alright, you'en git 'way from here", they ordered.

A short fat "po-lece" grabbed a tall, skinny black man by the shirt collar and crushed a pistol against the man's head. The skinny man cupped his hands to his face and blindly pushed his way through the thinning crowd.

And then I saw it.

15

Propped against the steps of Miss Eva's porch was her brother, Mister Buddy. I caught only a glimpse of him but I vividly recall his head hanging limply to one side. There was blood dripping from Mister Buddy's body. The sight of the dark red flesh caused my stomach to quiver. I wanted my Momma. Frantically I scrambled from the steps and dashed through a hedgerow, crossed the street, and bounded up the steps to our house.

I was in the house only minutes before Momma came. We went into the kitchen and sat at the table. For a long time she just sat there, her eyes fixed on nothing in particular. Looking at the one-handed clock above the icebox, and then turning to me, she said in a very soft voice, "It's past eight o'clock, so you better git ready for bed."

I asked her if I could leave the door to the bedroom open because I was afraid that Mister Buddy's body would come and get me. She reached for my hand and gently led me to the bedroom and whispered, "Child, that poor man's in heaven somewhere; he can't bother you. Don't bother yourself 'bout Mister Buddy."

She then gave me her favorite smile and added, "Anyway, if you say your prayers, the Lord will send a special angel to watch over you."

Cupping the back of my head in one hand and opening the bedroom door with the other she directed me into the dim room. I wanted to ask if I could leave the light on but knew it would be in vain. Momma had said many times before, "You don't need no light when you sleepin'."

I lay in bed hoping I would go to sleep before Mister Buddy came in to get me. Then I remembered I had not said my prayers. It was too late to say them now I thought. If I got out of the bed Mister Buddy might be under the bed waiting to grab me. Then it occurred to me that if I didn't say my prayers, God might *SEND* Mister Buddy to get me.

I eased the covers back, so Mister Buddy would not suspect that I was getting out of bed. On the count of three I decided, I would jump out of bed and say my prayers quickly and hop back in bed before Mister Buddy could grab me. About the time it would take me to get back in bed I figured God would have received the prayer and sent a special angel down to guard me from Mister Buddy.

As I began to count to three for about the tenth time, I heard someone coming into our house.

"Come on in Miss Willie Mae!" said Momma.

"I jus stopped by fo ah lil spell, Katie. I'm ah gitting ole now and can't sit 'n talk long like I use ta. Lordy! It sho wuz ah shame what happened to Buddy and Eva."

After convincing myself that Mister Buddy could only get me if I got off the bed itself, I crawled to the other end of the bed, hopefully to hear what happened to him in the first place. "How did he git dead?" I wondered. "How did anybody git dead?"

"Lo'd, Katie, I knowed sumthin' wuz gonna happen. Buddy and Pig Meat been ah fussin' 'bout dat fence fo da longest!"

"Yeah, well you know Buddy thought he owned that shack he stayed in anyway. I reckon 'cause he'd been staying there for nearly ten years."

"Shit! ('Scuse me Lo'd) He jus may's well afta ten yea's o rentin'. But you'll nevah ketch me ah fussing ova dat dump I lives in 'n I been thar might neah twenty yea's."

"You know, Miss Willie Mae, I just can't believe it. Eva and Buddy both dead. Lo'd, Pig Meat must've been out of his mind."

"Naw, he ain't. Dat nigga got good sense. He don' it 'cause he knowed he git 'way wit' it."

"He ain't gonna git away with this. He'll do some time for killing them folks."

"You thank so, child?"

"Shucks! Eva and Buddy never bothered anybody. Sure, they are gonna send him up for some long time."

"Ummm no 'bout dat. Look what evahbody thought 'bout Luthar Johnson stabbin' dat Green child 'n den shootin' her brother dead. Shucks, dat nigga won't on the chain gang ah good yea' fo dey let 'im out in da street again. 'N what 'bout ole Charlie Croft when he killed Mammie Louise. Dat nigga ain't don no time to dis day. An' Pig Meat shot dat po Sly bo las' summah 'n dent do but tutty days on da chain gang."

"Yeah, well you know as good as I do they ain't gonna give no time to anybody for doing anything to a nigga."

"Kattie child, dats da sho 'nough truth! Why you see da ole po-lece ah hitten' Slim McNeil side da head for nuthin'? An' den turned rat 'round 'n grinned in dat fool, Pig Meat's face, talking' 'bout "Look like you n' done killed yo self ah coupla niggahs, huh boy?"

"Wuzn't that something? Umph, umph, umph Poor Eva and Buddy, both dead."

"Yeah, dey bof died fo dey knowed good what hit 'em."

The Role of a Black Playwright in the Twentieth Century

By Danny Scarborough

During my short career as a playwright, I am beginning to discover that I am primarily concerned with creating some type of legitimate reaction between a Black character and the Black audience. Needless to say, I have been told that a playwright should address himself to a "university" . . . for that is what I am about. I try to communicate the language of my people. Unlike some modern Black playwrights who have been seduced into a mystical bag or hate whitey bag, I am interested in writing plays which, for the most part, stay within the realm of reality. This reality, because of the history of Black people in the United States, can, and on some occasions, should be one that can handle a Black/White encounter from a Historical or aesthetic perspective without becoming obsessed with "up against the wall . . . honkie." To paraphrase a passage from Ed Bullin's *New Plays From the Black Theatre*, I am not trying to create a higher form of white art in Black face. I am desparately trying to work towards a form of liberation theatre that will encompass both the soul and spirit of the various Black experiences.

As an elaboration on this point, I should mention Lonne Elder's *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*; during Mr. Elder's visit to Amherst, Mass. to view the Black Repertory Theatre's production of his play, he talked with members of the cast, crew, and the director from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. He emphasized the fact that the white man had become so unimportant to *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* until the characters referred to him as Mr. You Know Who. Yet, without exaggerating the reality of his Harlem setting, without polluting the stage

with an overabundance of mis-placed profanity, and without sacrificing the "Blackness" of his characters, Mr. Elder managed to capture the tragedy of the oppressor oppressing the oppressed. The audience, for the most part, knew why Mr. Russell Parker was engaged in a continuing battle for his manhood, they could understand Adele Parker's "going to meet the man" from nine to five, they could understand Blue Haven's desire to use people before they used him, and finally, they could sympathize with Theopolis Parker's refusal to "go downtown" to push a cart. Close reading of Mr. Elder's play reveals that "up against the wall, honkie" could very well be one of the themes of the play. Yet, his handling of Mr. You Know Who is that of an ever present shadow that can and will be dealt with. As an artist, Mr. Elder does not perpetrate a social lie. Instead, he validates the Black aesthetic.

In exchanging manuscripts with other young Black playwrights, who, like myself, are waiting for an opportunity to share their ideas through the printed medium, I have found that some of us are trying to make use of the immediate past in an attempt to mold the future of the Black theatre. To paraphrase a speech by Raymond Watson in a different context, Black playwrights have endured the scorn of white critics . . .but continued to produce. They have been told that their plays were not aesthetically functional . . .but continued to produce. Now, we've got a good thing going . . .Black dramatists are addressing themselves to the people for the liberation of the people. If some white critics find the dramas of Black playwrights are aesthetically weak — that is the problem of the white critic,

let him deal with it. We know what we are about.

As a Black playwright, I am inclined to believe that there are those of us who have come into our own — those of us who are coming into our own — and those of us who have always been. As Gravedigger said to Coffinhead in *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, "That's Black enough for me."

Earlier, I stated that I was concerned with heritage and culture of the people. In my play *We Shall Overcome: Or Else, . . .* and if you are wondering "or else what" you will need to be around to find out . . . the basic setting is that of a custom from my community concerning the Wake. On this occasion, the body of the "loved one" is brought home to "lie in state." During the Wake, we learn how good the man was, how natural he looks, and how well he was put away. Perhaps I should note here that the Wake provides an opportunity for a cross-section of the Black community to meet. The local wino comes by to pay his respects. The flower girls and the pall bearers will come by for two reasons: to sympathize with the family and to make sure that all of the pall bearers have either black or blue suits for the funeral and all of the flower girls have either white or black dresses. At this same Wake, we meet the signifier, whom I will discuss later, the local minister, the local Prophet, elders, deacons, teachers, workers from the cotton mill, farmers, just plain folk and . . . the under taker. As an example, let me introduce you to some of the people who attend the Wake in *We Shall Overcome: Or Else*.

First of all, there is David, who in speaking to Bernard, says the following:

David: You know, Bro., some of his words should have been immortalized. Some institute should have collected his papers. Why somebody should have committed his last words to paper.

Bernard replies:

Bernard: Toilet tissue, may be?

That bit of Black culture which comes across in the above is known as ranking or signifying terms for dissecting a man's skin from his body without touching him.

The next person to appear at the Wake is Wilbert, a one time rocking chair advocate of all out revolution who has reached that stage in life where he is tired of talking.

Wilbert: Peace Brothers! I bring you greetings from the Mother Land. I bring you hope from Africa.

Bernard, an advocate of streetology here in the United States, replies by saying:

Bernard: Did you bring any food, Wilbert? Did you bring anything to eat?

Wilbert: Ease up, Bernie. I just thought I'd drop by to pay my respects to my man there; I hear he talked himself into a stupor.

Later on in the play, we meet Larry, a would be militant, who during one scene between Bernard and himself, describes how he is doing all he ever intends to do to help the Movement by staying out of the way and sitting on his natural ass.

Larry: Look, Bernard, Don't preach to me. I've served my time on the street. Man . . . how do some folks say it . . . I've paid my dues.

Bernard: . . . It's always I, Larry. Why don't you ever think in terms of We? We the people, We the United Black

front. We the Black community . . . We . . .

And Larry interrupts and says

Larry: We some shit. I am only Black-assed Larry! One man, Bro. I speak for me.

Wilbert: Well you're doing a piss poor job of that.

Later on, the audience is given the opportunity to see what I refer to as the "Essential" Larry.

Larry: Don't you see my side, Wilbert?

I've got to give more to the Movement than another dead body. I'm so out of it, man. There are times when I don't know if I'm going, coming, or hanging on. If I could straddle this sick society and ride it with one foot in the right spur and one foot in the left . . . I would. But I can't straddle it in these days and times. To hear you people talk, it's either Black or something else. There's nothing in between. Man, I marched and studied and just like the Bro there, I've talked. And when things started closing in on me I prayed. Yeah me . . . Larry in the eagle's pit . . . praying But he never answered, Bernard. He never even answered.

During the course of the play, we meet one really jive time Bro., Oleg. . . . It's Oleg's basic philosophy that an international sex orgy would solve everything.

After meeting Nita, Charles, and Jay, the audience is given the chance to watch such historical figures as Eldridge Cleaver, James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, and W.E.B. DuBois substantiate Bernard's claim that the Brotherhood of other people is about as close to religion as a man should ever desire to be.

During one scene from *We Shall Overcome: Or Else*, Bernard internally disembodies the Statue of Liberty.

Bernard: You know, Larry, everytime I look at the Statue of Liberty, I have this inner urge to snatch it off its pedestal. I have this urge to put it on solid ground so that it can see the poor, hungry, and tired people of this world. If it would lower that God Damn light . . . it might be able to see those masses of Black people raising hell to get some freedom. How Black are you now, Larry? How Black are you going to get?

One of the most "cutting" moments in the play occurs when Wilbert tells Larry the following:

Wilbert: Things aren't the way they used to be are they, Larry. Some of the gray folks are using you. The colored folks don't like you. You aren't Negro enough for the Negroes and (laughing) no other race of people will claim you. Blessed are those who go around in eternal circles, for they shall be called wheels. Amen.

Towards the end of the play, when Nita, a Sister who has her program pretty much together, tells Larry,

Nita: Look, Larry, somebody's got to do something. We need Ministers of Blackness

Larry replies

Larry: Sorry, Nita. My field is not theology.

One of the play's inspirational moments occurs when Bernard tells Larry, Bernard: We're going to get it together, Larry. We're going to be like Panthers lurking through an infested jungle . . . waiting for the kill. And

man, either we shall overcome
.....or else.

It seems as though it takes me forever to write a play. I am constantly re-writing and thinking about those sources which provide material. My Baptist church is one source. I guess the plot of a play centered around the church would – in part – involve the attitude of the church towards a girl who is about to have an illegitimate child. You see – at one time – a girl who was about to have a child out of wedlock at Friendship Chapel Baptist Church would not only be dismissed from the church during a “conference meeting” but her name would be removed from the Church register. The irony of this particular situation is – just when the girl really needs the church, she receives a scarlet letter. The rest of the plot would involve the series of changes the congregation goes through when one of its members objects to the procedure.

Another source of material is my home town, Wake Forest, North Carolina. The town itself is divided by a railroad track. I can vividly remember the local movie house being integrated one day, and going up in smoke the next. I can remember the day a shot gun blast interrupted my family’s rendition of “O Come All Ye Faithful.” I can remember my Grandmother telling the “man” that she was Mrs. Hall and not Ant Ella. I can remember an incident between an Aunt and a salesman. My Aunt was trying to get my Grandfather to a hospital. See if you can envision the scene. The ambulance is parked in front of the house. The undertaker is wheeling my Grandfather out of the house. The salesman – who must have been desperate

for a client – asked my aunt if he could interest her in some siding for the house. You should have seen the expression when she said, “Hell n’ all, I don’t want no damn siding. This man is sick and you talking about siding. Ain’t got no damn side meat, . . . and you talking about siding for a house. Damn the house, Damn you, and Damn the siding.”

Those of you who are familiar with the late Langston Hughes, know that he was in direct contact with the people. He frequented the bars, the church, the night clubs, and the local hang outs. Langston knew where the material was and he employed it in his plays. *Tambourines to Glory*, *Soul Gone Home*, *Simply Heavenly* and *Mulatto* are examples.

Language is an important factor in the drama of a Black playwright. If a Black experience, as depicted by a Black playwright, is to have any nuance of reality, it should concern itself with both the dialect and “in” sayings of that particular segment of the Black populace recreated on stage. Needless to say, you would not expect a southern Black from Tippy Toes, North Carolina to talk like a northern Black from Brooklyn. Whereas the greeting may be “What’s happening baby,” in Brooklyn, it’s “How y’all doing” in Tippy Toes, North Carolina.

I was once asked if the training of a Black playwright was unique. By virtue of the Black playwright’s background, the training is unique. But beyond this, there are some other factors to consider. Perhaps some of the best advice given to me by a prominent Black playwright was to read everything within my reach.


This gives a playwright an opportunity to find out what works and what does not work. At the same time, it does not interfere with his desire to experiment.

I can conclude by saying that if there is to be a dramatic epic in this century, it will come from the Black Theatre . . . all of the essentials for such an epic are to be found in the experiences of Black America.



Book Review by Cal B. Whitworth

The Street — Anne Petry



Once again we are confronted with a description of Harlem, our stereotype ghetto. Countless attempts have been made to describe Harlem to those who were fortunate enough not to be there when it was in its prime (as it still is). Its tales have been recounted in autobiographies. After you have read "The Street" you will find that there is still more to learn about the hardships of life in Harlem.

Society has conditioned us into believing that the only hardships existing in the ghetto have been put forth by "the Man". However, Ann Petry colours the obstacles which black people have invented for themselves. "The Street" is a bold, outspoken novel which depicts the intensity of a young black woman "too good-looking to be decent" who is trying to hurdle these obstacles.

Lutie Johnson was "a soul on ice in a brutal ghetto." She was a divorcee trying to make it out of the slums. Her husband couldn't hang it. He couldn't hang being supported by his wife, especially when his wife was away working for white folks. He know the insults she had to suffer, but he could do nothing about it. So rather than face up to it, he packed and left.

Lutie took her son Bub to live with her father, but Lil (her fathers' girlfriend) proved a bad influence on Bub. Consequently Lutie searches for an apartment, but finds trouble instead. . An old super who gives her, a fast-moving musician who tries to use her, and a white man who owns the casino and would also like to own her.

When Lutie rejects all three of them she literally brings the curtain down on her life. The super makes an all-out attempt to get even by cajoling Bub into stealing letters from mailboxes with the misconception that he is aiding the police. When Bub is caught by the police (with the aid of super) Lutie has to produce \$200. dollars to pay his lawyers.

In desperation Lutie asks the musician to loan her money. As is true to life he promises to loan her the money if she'll spend the night with him. Lutie turns to leave, anger surging through her, and as he attempts to force himself on her she defends herself with an iron candlestick on the mantelpiece. He was dead.

Lutie decides to leave town. Leaving Bub behind she takes a train for Chicago. Bub will probably go to a reform school anyway, she thinks to herself. What possible chance could he have with a murderer for a mother?

He would understand.

He would remember that she loved him; at least she hoped.

*Will the god of war crush the flowers this year with his iron feet?
Will two opposing forces come to a peaceful valley to meet?
Will a nation die from defeat?
Will evolution be neat, and with people take a seat?
Will the god of war eat?
Will the god of war sleep?
Will the god of war keep?
Will the god of war heat?
Wills, minds, bodies, souls, spirits of Pete.*
Will the god of war burn the wheat?
Will the god of war spoil the meat?
Will the god of war give all humanity a treat, and destroy us all with his heavy feet?
Will the god of war enslave the world with a fleet?
Will the god of war leave just a little land to start over on such as Crete?
Will the god of war march upon the earth, if he was wearing klets on his heavy iron feet?
Will the god of war make all mankind retreat?
Will repeat?
Will the god of war crush the flowers this year with his iron feet?*

***(Soldiers)**

**by Erick Walker,
Street Academy System of
Springfield, Incorporated**

— *estrangement* —

*keep the nigger down,
downtown, uptown,
off the streets, in the house
in the closet, but keep him . . .*

estranged

*to others, to self
make him certain of his uncertainties,
and keep the nigger down,
in his place . . .*

estranged

*from a heritage of the past,
from his world of the present,
from the hope of a future
and his estrangement will continue
to continue . . .*

to keep the nigger down.

John E. Davis

Sound Review by Bruce Harris

Miles Davis / *Bitches Brew*
Columbia

Personnel: Miles Davis, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, soprano sax; Lenny White, drums; Bennie Maupin, bass clarinet; Chick Corea, electric piano; Jim Riley, percussion; Jack DeJohnete, drums; Harvey Brooks, fender bass; Charles Alias, drums; Dave Holland, bass; John McLaughlin, electric guitar; Joe Zawinul, electric piano; Larry Young, electric piano.

Songs: Pharaoh's Dance, Bitches Brew, Spanish Key, John McLaughlin, Miles Runs the Voodoo Down, Sanctuary.

Miles' newest album proves once again the creativity that is Miles Davis. The group included on this album is much larger than those with which Miles usually plays, but true to Miles, the larger group maintains the unity of his previous small groups, and the music is complex without confusion. One again is forced to ask himself if Miles' brain will ever run out of new ideas.

The only trumpet on the album is played by Miles, and he leads the album as always. His solos are the most sensitive yet, often played in a style of intermittent, irregular bursts of music (especially in "Spanish Key").

"Pharaoh's Dance" starts off with the two electric pianos which produce an intricate pattern of interwoven notes, plus fast drumming. Then, the drumming stops for a short moment, leaving only the pianos to intertwine their notes. Miles comes in smooth and strong, backed up by McLaughlin's excellent guitar. Then the song picks

up its tempo, and Miles bursts in off and on with sound. The drumming drives the music on and on to a high intensity, becoming almost frantic until the soothing end.

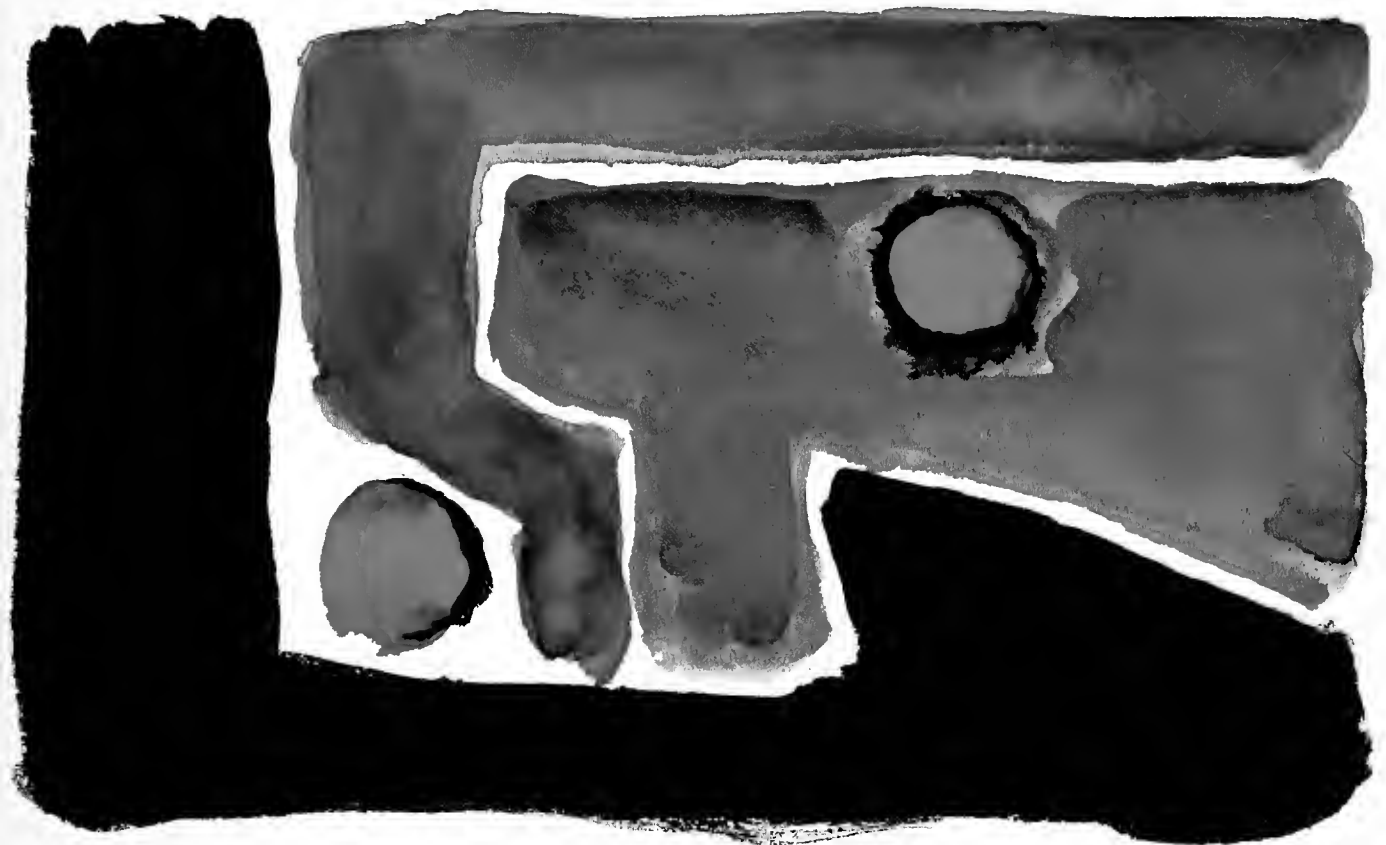


In "Miles Runs the Voodoo Down", after a rhythm build-up on the drums, Miles enters with a slow trumpet that hits even the highest notes without any screech, and fluctuates in volume with ease.

"Sanctuary" is calm as Miles starts off with a slow melody in which the notes are often held for a long time. Then an irregular drumming, starting in the background and pushing its way to the front, slowly builds the piece to a short, frantic climax after which the slow tempo takes over again.

One would almost think that Miles will be hard put to beat this album.

But we have thought that in the past, too . . .





La Raza: CHICANO

Poems

thoughts

feelings

by

Ricardo
Sánchez
4/28/70



La promesa de un mundo mejor
atrae gentes de sabiduría
a ayudarlo en su nacimiento.

Faith in a new world
Brings wise men far
To usher in the new birth.



4/27/70

the sound of fury and impatience marked the day . . .

The shout went up, spiralled, swirled, and reaffirmed that a new cadre was born. CHICANO POWER and BROTHER LOVE! Yale University resounded with Mexican-American sense of being. It was April 24th and 25th, 1970, and the circumstances were the founding of a Northeast Chicano Alliance.

A conference had been called by MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan — Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan). Chicanos from all over the Northeast came in. Everyone was embracing. “Hola, Carnal,” we shouted to each other. “Viva la Raza,” we responded. Talk reverberated. From boycotting grapes to affirming the Alliance of the Pueblos Libres of Aztlan (separatism and a new nation in the Southwest) to supporting the Panther Party as it strives to survive.

There is a Third World! What is needed now is a party that is Third World; a party that can deal with the issues; a party that can help bring about an end to racism — for only those of us who have been hurt by the awesomely brutal horrendousness of institutional racism can know the burdens that we carry. White middle class ameriKa wants to deal only with symptoms, not gut issues. We must pave the way.

Nosotros, the Chicanos in the Northeast have established an Alliance to exchange resources and to support our brothers in the struggle. We extend our embrace as brothers to black america, indian america, asian america, puertorican america, and to oppressed america in hope and activism that we might all get together to create a new social order. Viva la Causa! Viva el mundo tercero — to the Third World and its Liberation!

Ricardo Sanchez



4/28/70

*black brother
you shout out soulness
i shout out carnalismo
and we mean
the same
thing . . .
we really aren't
so different
except in our
language patterns;
where you now rap a neo-english,
i rap calo/spanish
but our eyes know
the feelings of our beings;
my alma latina/chicana
flows madly and girds
my rhythmic sense of life
while your black soul
beatifies your being . . .
chingao, brothers,
but the business of living
is something we both do well;
our living is based on life
not dollars, cents, or marginal profit scales.
let us go forth together
in quest for a new society , . .
Ricardo Sanchez*



*It is tellingly spoken
That a slave, in idleness
Before his death,
Perched the stem of a three-leaf clover,
And in this wound placed
A fourth.
Had he time to name his own
creation's symbolism,
Might it have been,*

“Life With A Purpose?”

anonymous

*We say it loud, with Afroed heads
and claim we're proud of blackness.
We talk trim, and scream revolution,
while we shout unity with clenched fists.
then yell power, with symbols of peace?
But when it comes time to act
we speak very,
very
softly.*

John E. Davis





Margaret Toney

“How close Is home?”

*I saw a man, black and woolly being beaten in the street,
But I did nothing.*

*Another stabbed by bayonets, in the agony of defeat.
And I did nothing . .*

*A woman and child burned, the tormented father hanged.
Still, I did nothing . . .*

*I saw a boy, yet still young, go off to fight a war,
and by my doing nothing, I had wanted more.*

*My neighbors' house was bombed last night!
But I did nothing!*

*then my mother was beaten to death; she sighed before she died,
“For Christ’s sake son do something now!”*

And then I did I cried.

John E. Davis

*If
I could but
shape
fate,
there would be
a
blackman on the
moon,
hidden,
armed with the
unlimited.*

anonymous

And

*it's said
the white
undertaker
retired
after
burying five
freedom marchers
whose
mouths
did
smile in
death.*

Duane Jones

Fact or Fallacy

"Lord."

"I am coming to you from hell's fire."

"You put me here

for killing my master who killed my baby."

"I've been here for over 100 years."

"Every now and then I peek at earth."

"Things have changed."

"My people drive cars . . ."

"Wear suits on Sunday . . ."

"Live in apartments."

"Lord."

"The cars they drive are for the people in the back seat."

"They turn and stop when directed."

"The suit they wear wears only on Sunday and is the only . . ."

"The apartments cost high rents,

rats and plugged comods."

"Things have changed."

"People are the same."

"Lord."

"If you ever bring me back on earth . . ."

". . . make me a dog, or a car, or a cow."

"Something with a chance."

"If you can't do that . . . leave me here."

"I'm used to the beat now."

Amen.

*Talking to a mute
I asked her why
she allowed this to hold her back
I told her of the
opportunity in this land of the free
and I raised my hand
to cross her face
she showed me
her skin and quelled my curiosity.*

anonymous



*The sky blackened
Had God lain down,
Naked,
On the lucid boundary of heaven?
Or had he gotten up?*

*Does it really matter?
It still will rain.*

anonymous



those deprived

*the white man can no
longer impose his
tricknology on Black
people --*

*ask, who is
culturally deprived?*

*Is it the Black Brother who can
work roots;
or the "psychologist" who tells
you a homosexual has "abnormal"
tendencies.*

Who is Culturally Deprived?

*People of the Sun;
or people who have to
send their people to
the moon???*

*People who have created
spirituals, blues and jazz
tradition;
or people who have stolen,
raped and exploited
a religion, a culture
and a manhood.*

Tell Me -- Who are those culturally deprived?

John E. Davis

Black Boy Blues

*My little Black boy so sad and blue,
Come tell your mamma wut's wrong wid you.
It mus' be somepin' really bad,
'Cuz teabs like dat I nevuh had.*

*Now dry dos eyes and look at me,
'Cuz if your hurt I sho can't see.*

Wut's dat boy I beah you say?

*Now Mamma you know jes why I's sad,
It's cuz I ain't got me no dad.*

Marlene R. Andrade

Threshold of Freedom

*As I stand on the threshold of freedom,
I pause to reflect on this path.
Yes, it was inevitable: in this my
faith was unshaken. A miserable
journey, though, so much had to be
overcome. Many years gone by full
of misery, misery and tears, brought
on by the condition – the condition, of
course Black. But I'm thankful now;
the sojourn is over. The trek is over.
That trek through miles of degradation,
humiliation, servitude, filth, neglect,
poverty, and fear. Yes fear, fear
that the end never would come. But the
time is now.*

*So, as I stand on the threshold of freedom,
I feel so very free, and I'm happy Lord,
as I welcome my death.*

Marlene R. Andrade

45/00/07