

AFRO-DRUMBEAT

"UNIFY US"

Vol 1 No 2

March 1972

Easter Edition



INCLUDES:

BLACK

SHORT STORIES

PROSE

AND

POETRY

Dear members,

Due to the rising printing cost and time involved in printing and mailing the Afro-Drumbeat, we would appreciate your returning the enclosed postcard stating whether or not you would like to continue receiving the Drumbeat.

Thanking you in advance for your response.

T.H.E. Purnell - Editor

Sixty-Seconds

Afro-American Club meeting - March 7, 1972

Sheryl Boone is handling all proceedings concerning the Arts Festival. She is to inform Dr. Fang of what the Club can and cannot do for her committee. We will serve as a liaison and/or referral group. We will definitely host the dance group on the night of the performance.

Norma Young is handling the speaker from Shirley Chisholm's campaign headquarters. The tentative date is March 21, 1972. This will be confirmed by March 15, 1972. If a speaker does come, we will give them a fee of \$25. The idea of the Black students meeting with the Committee of Minority Student Affairs was discussed. Lourdes will mention it at the next meeting of the Committee.

It was decided that Norma would speak to Dr. Pethrick about the resume that was sent by the Afro Club by Mr. William S. Cole concerning a teaching position. After her meeting she will send a letter to Mr. Cole.

Sheryl suggested that we send a contribution to the Angela Davis Defense Fund. A contribution of \$25.00 was voted on and Sheryl was given the money to mail.

Terry Purnell requested \$150.00 in order to continue the monthly publication of the "Drumbeat" until the end of the present academic year. This will be presented to the SGA in the near future.

Afro Week was discussed and so far things are going according to schedule. Lourdes Neely proposed an addition to the charter stating that all title holders in the Club should maintain a 2.0 cumulative average. This was unanimously approved by the members. This will go into effect for the academic year 1972-1973.

BLACK DOORWAY

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WHEN BLACK WAS BIG "an editorial"

I can recall, 'cause it wasn't so long ago, when the important thing was working for the race. Working for the people was the means for the ultimate end which was primarily to give to Black folks control of their destiny through social, economic, political control etc.

I can recall, 'cause it wasn't so long ago, that the folks, at least they said so, were ready to work on new and revolutionary methods to achieve said end. Even the idea was strong then because it was so unpredictable. It couldn't be named, framed, controlled then pigeon holed. Everybody was wondering what those niggers were gonna do next. Everybody was afraid of falling into "whitey's bag" then or so they said. The values of the "man" which were primarily economically oriented wouldn't hardly do as good examples for the future Blacks in America, or so they said.

I can recall, 'cause it wasn't so long ago, when bourgeois was a bad word and the term "Black Boojee" was almost a swear. Sick and unfortunate folks, it was said. Not all were bad though, there were a "few" good ones, but not many. The majority was just poor unfortunate souls who had the misfortune of being born with black skins and white minds.

I can recall, 'cause it wasn't so long ago, singing "Young, Gifted and Black" before it became a "pop" tune. When it was an inspiration, the Black National Anthem, so to speak. "Young, gifted and Black, now is the time to tell our young, young, gifted and Black, yours is a quest that's just begun." Just begun and just ended too, I suppose.

I can recall, 'cause it wasn't so long ago, when Black was big, but it looks like off-white this year. But I guess that's all water over the damned dam too. It became too easy to be negro and not raise any eyebrows or rock any boats, to be met with smiles and let things become nice and comfortable. Then it became more a matter of living good than survival. And this "living" to quote Van Peebles, "can lead to a death bag too." Black folks just keep looking out for "me" instead of "we" and taking pride in being "boojee" and more than California will be sinking into the sea.

HIGH PRIESTESS

by daniel G. queen

ebony woman
standing tall
proud
erect
spreading the message
to all her children

ebony woman
with a tear in her eye
sitting limp
weary
spreading the message
to ears which don't hear

WISHING FOR A BRIGHTER DAY

by daniel g. queen

the word was death
but nobody wanted to hear it
life was a struggle
but nobody wanted to live it, and
truth continued to slip through the fingers
and float through the minds
of thoughtless Negroes and Colored folks



The Black Rose

(Dedicated To Angela Davis)

A perfect black rosebud

stretched from the soil of Mother Africa

to open her blossom to the sun.

Petals blown, felled by the wind

sending seeds to root in foreign soil

new black roses.

Petals fell and died on hostile soil

seed bruised and weakened drove deep new roots

and struggled again toward the sun.

Sunward the budding flower strove

opening slowly

forming a perfect black rose.

T.H.E. Purnell


SIMPLE UNDERSTANDING
(for dorothy)

by daniel G. queen

with those sharp
piercing eyes
you ask for warmth
plead for tenderness
beg for love
and see your answer
in my SMILE

Immaculate Conception

T.H.E. Purnell



The recumbent madonna
stretched her ebony arms to
welcome her lover the sun
proudly enveloping him
draining his essence
producing for the
world
it's people

An Easter SURPRISE

T.H.E. Purnell

The black flock converged on the newly built church for the first time Easter morning. Neatly attired souls strove for the positions of prominence that their elegant dress deserved. The young studs, Beau Brummels all, stood in crowds of their peers in the newly seeded church yard. Like servants behind their master's back, they spoke irreverently, whispering bawdy jokes as they eyed and teased the young girls outside the church door. Mothers kept sharp eyes on their growing offspring. Hours of sewing and fitting of dresses and pressing and curling of hair wouldn't be spoiled by some foolish action at this stage of the game. Little black Shirley Temples in white, pink and light blue dresses stood close by their mother's skirts, mischievously eyeing the taunting boys, hoping that something would draw mother away so that they could reply to the abusive boys. They had to content themselves with sticking out their tongues.

Easter always brings out the folks and God took care this Sunday to see that there was good weather. It was only fitting that the parade of reverents was not rained on, as they settled before their father's house.

Now after twelve years of scrimping, saving, socials and rummage sales, the new church was finally completed. Many of the elders indulged themselves in the thought that their work was finally completed and that they could die today with no qualms and if God saw fit to take their souls during this Easter service, so much the better, then their names would also be certain of immortality.

It was almost eleven o'clock when the deacons allowed the faithful to file into the hallowed sanctuary. The rear seats filled quickly and the front pews were filled begrudgingly by the tardy boys who in their desire to be the last ones to enter, overlooked the consequences of doing so.

The admiring eyes of the seated congregation followed along the red carpeted aisles of the carved and polished pews leading to the glittering altar. Youngsters looked to see if God or angels were hiding in the vaulted expanse of ceiling, watching everything that was going on. The adults knew that God was there.

The sun shone through the six stained-glass windows on the east side radiating the yellow haloes and ivoryskins of Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip and Bartholomew. On the opposite wall, Matthew, Thomas, Mark Simon, Luke and Judas Iscariot awaited their hours in the sun when the day wore on. Instead of searching eyes looking into the souls of the congregation, the eyes of the twelve were directed toward the thirteenth stained-glass window over the altar.

The younger children seeing the thirteenth window, didn't notice the difference, blinded by the ignorance of youth. For this their parents were grateful. Those who did look to their parents for understanding, didn't receive satisfaction nor explanation. For their parents didn't understand either and had partly consoled themselves with the knowledge that the children were as perplexed as they. They entertained thoughts of mistakes in way of explanation.

Stanley Farmer's unemployable odd man . d, sober perhaps for the first time since his visit last Easter had only come to "set a good example for the children. He scratched his processed head and said a loud "damn", which was permissible due to the circumstances and hardly noticed among the murmers that exuded from the mystified crowd.

One elderly matron prayed to God that she not be held responsible for having anything to do with this irreverent display. "Blasphemy," whispered her troubled husband to himself as he wrung his gnarled hands in his lap.

Old, loquacious Frank Brown kept pointing at the window, telling everybody within hearing distance that he knew it all along. But everybody was used to hearing Frank reveal his wisdom afterwards that he received only a few courteous nods.

The plump Miss Bessie in a wide yellow Easter bonnet and matching yellow dress wondered who had made the mistake with Judas' window, giggled at the thought that someone was embarrassed now and would eventually be in trouble.

Some of the older souls rested their heads in their hands, covering their eyes with their fingers like the old Indians who would stick their fingers in their ears to block the teachings of the early missionaries.

Hardly anyone noticed the pretty Molly Bradford who proudly sashayed in, late, to be sure of getting everyone's attention with her stylish outfit. Tight fitting red dress and jacket with black shoes, pocketbook and parasol. When she didn't draw the green stares from the women nor the hungry stares from their husbands that she felt she deserved, she glumly took a seat in the first row. She didn't even notice the window almost directly in front of her so busy was she trying to draw attention. Slowly crossing her legs, she thought impishly of resurrecting the young Reverend Coleman this morning.

The deacons were wondering how much money would be in the collection.

Everyone nervously awaited the arrival of the minister. Certainly he could, someone had to, explain this desecration of the most holy. For over the candle-lined altar was a stain glass window picturing a black sheep in the arms of a golden haloed Black man. Below the glass portrait were golden letters which read: "Jesus Christ, Lamb of God."

A MESSAGE FOR MARIA

Desiring to love you forever,
A wish I will honor to
the grave.

time passes, things change
i no longer love you

T.H.E. Purnell

WELCOME HOME

by daniel G. queen

There were tears in the eyes of the two soldiers as they sat at the small table drinking beer with pictures of their loved ones in front of them. Edward was a happily married man whose wife appeared to be the essence of warmth and sweetness. If you can tell that much from a picture. Williard was on the verge of getting married to the finest woman he had ever known. At least that's what he told everyone. But tonight the two were thousands of miles from their loved ones crying, or so it appeared, into their pitchers of beer and a large cheese pizza. It had been at least nine months since they had seen their women and the strain of being away coupled with the dull social life at Fort Leverett was overcoming them. They had tried to forget their situations by reading at the library, playing basketball, listening to records, smoking dope and snorting cocaine. None of that had seemed to work and now they were into beer and booze. The table was in the rear of the club near the juke box which was playing old and new sentimental songs of love. The NCO Club was a favorite hangout on the post but today was payday and most of the troops were out buying love and good times. If anything in the little town of Greenville could be called good.

Life in the Army could have been good, Williard thought, if he and Carol could only be together. The work wasn't bad and the food could be good at times. You didn't have to buy a lot of clothing or pay rent or worry about being layed off and you always had the opportunity to earn raises according to your ability. But missing Carol more than outweighed any of the advantages of being a serviceman. And to think that he had more than a year to serve on his two year hitch. That was almost imaginable, 447 days. He was going home to see her in three weeks but twenty days just don't make up for nine months of loneliness. Or the seemingly endless months that they would be seperated once he returned from the leave. Life in the service had been rough over the first nine months and only thoughts of Carol pulled him through. He wasn't used to taking orders and held a dim view of performing tasks that he considered unnecessary. Viet Nam wasn't his war and there was no way that he was going anywhere to fight anybody without a reason. But I'll put up with this shit, he mused, if it'll help me get back to Carol faster. She made all of the unpleasant experiences easier to bear.

"Last call," the fat sergeant yelled from behind the bar. His thoughts interrupted, Williard gulped down his beer and said, "Shit, now we gotta go back to the damn barracks and listen to that bullshit hillbilly music on the radios. Tonight I'm gonna play my box and them damn okies better shut their mouths." "Let's raise," Ed interrupted, "I wanna hear some jams in the barracks before the hillbillies and hippies come back from town. This place is closing anyway and the damn beer just makes me want to piss all night." "What we need," Williard said, "is a little snort and a couple of fat joints to tighten us up."

The two Black G.I.'s folded the pictures into their wallets, straightened their uniforms and put on their caps as they headed for the door. It was about a mile from the club to the barracks of the 565th Construction Engineer Company. The three story building which resembled a new ghetto project was relatively empty since most of the soldiers would be staying in town or returning very late. The 565th was comprised mainly of white soldiers from the mid and far west regions of the country. The post itself was located on the West Coast and as far as Williard and Edward were concerned it was no place for Blacks from big cities like Boston and Chicago. All of the radio stations filled the air waves with country and western music and an occasional tune by the Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Sly or James Brown. There must have been at least twenty radios in the second floor bay at the end of the corridor and they all seemed to find different hillbilly stations. They usually drowned out Williard's stereo. But tonight he would have a chance to listen to some good "soul music" and dared any of "those dumb farmers" to complain, as they usually did, or drown out the sweet sounds of the Dells, Delfonics, Impressions or Carla Thomas.

It was eating at Williard's insides to spend so much time thinking about a and longing for his woman but he sort of reveled in the agony. Anyway, he was in love and that's what life was all about, he thought.

Williard climbed into the bottom bunk and turned the record player on. Edward, on top, leaned over the edge and passed him the leaded match cover filled with cocaine. He took several snorts of the chalk white powder and passed it back up in time to receive a half-smoked reefer. They exchanged the cooke and smoke for little over an hour and nodded off with the sound of Carla Thomas softly singing, "Let It Be Me."

The next three weeks went by as usual with Williard working on filing procedures in the training room and Edward cutting brush in the woods where a simulated Viet Nam village would be erected for training purposes. With every day Williard marked a notch on his calendar to remind himself of the number of days he had remaining in the service. There was a red circle around the 15th of March and a long red line that extended April seventh. These were the days that he would be home with Carol. Beautiful days during which their love would once again flourish. Visions of her beautiful 36-25-36 Black frame sent chills up his spine and brought that devilish smile to his face. In just two days he would be back home and in bed with her and the pain of being away so long would be eased. For the first four days, he thought with a smile, we ain't gonna do nuthin but lay. Might make a few phone calls to some of the guys and Uncle Harry and Aunt May. But the rest of the folks are gonna have to wait until the kid takes care of some overdue business. Shit, nine months is a long damn time.

The plane touched down at Logan Airport and Private First Class Williard Jones was the first passenger to alight from the plane. With the long strides that once took him to victories in the 100 yard dash he paced his way into the terminal baggage counter. "Taxi, taxi," he shouted at one of the cabs driving past. In a few minutes he was in a cab on his way into the city. Carol knew he was coming home soon because they had talked on the phone last week, but she wasn't sure just when he'd be in. But he'd call and tell her. Williard didn't want any jive reception at the airport and didn't tell anyone when he'd be back in Boston.

I'll just surprise the hell out of them, he smiled. He changed out of his military uniform in the rest room of a gas station just around the corner from Carol's apartment. Nervousness began to set in as he thought about the initial confrontation between himself and the woman he loved but hadn't seen in nine months. It was a little after 2 p.m. and he wondered if she would even be home at this time of day on a Saturday. She usually spent every Saturday afternoon shopping. There was a club on the corner across the street and he decided to stop there for a few drinks to kill an hour or two before going up to the apartment.

The club was almost empty and he liked that. He just wanted a couple of drinks to compose himself. Carol would look her usual fine self and they would be in bed inside half an hour after they saw each other. He smiled with that thought and began the daydreaming which had so characterized his first nine months of military duty. He thought back to the weekend before he was inducted when he and Carol spent the entire three days making love in his brother's apartment. She cried the morning he left and had sounded as though she was crying when he called her a week later. They were planning to get married when his induction orders came and decided to carry out their plans when he was released in two years. For the three weeks before he left they were together constantly, in and out of bed. Carol was very passionate in bed and he thought about the times she would scratch his back and almost pull the hair out of his head. Later, after they showered together, she would rub his back with baby powder before fixing a snack. For a couple of hours they would watch television smoking reefer. Then it was back to making love again. Life and love with Carol was beautiful.

The bar tender asked some question and interrupted Williard's thoughts. He finished his third bourbon and coke, looked up at the clock and decided to leave. She should be home by four-thirty. The elevator still wasn't running he noticed as he made his way to the steps. She lived on the fifth floor but he was in shape, he grinned to himself, as he began trotting up the stairs with his bags. "Hey, that you Willie," a voice shot out. "Why, Lawd yes it is, How you be son? How they treatin you in the service? Look like you gainin weight?" It was Mrs. Wilkins. She lived on the third floor alone. He had grown up with her four grandsons. "How are you Mrs. Wilkins? Have you seen Carol today?" "She been gone all day. Usually goes shopping every Saturday afternoon. Bet you two will be doing some celebrating tonight." "Actually, I sort of planned to stay in tonight," he grinned. "Lawd, you young folks. Why don't you take her out some place nice tonight for a change? You got all night for that other stuff." "You know, that sounds like a real good idea," he said as he planted a kiss on her cheek.

There weren't any sounds coming from the apartment so he quietly opened the door and slipped in. "Shit," he said, "she ain't even here yet. Well that'll give me some time to make some plans for the evening." He began looking through the newspaper that he picked up after he left the bar. Then he walked into the bedroom and picked up the phone. "Hello, Anthony's Pier Four? I'd like to make reservations for two. Tonight at seven-thirty. Thank you." "Westgate Florist? I'd like a dozen red and yellow roses sent to Miss Carol Banks at 45 Westboro Gardens. Yes, I'll pay the delivery boy. Thank you." "Symphony Hall box office please. I'd like two orchestra seats for the ten o'clock Nina Simone show tonight. Jones, Williard, yes, two orchestra. Thank you."

Now that the entire evening was planned he settled back in the big black reclining chair which she bought with the money he had sent her. It was supposed to be his chair. In fact, he had probably paid for the whole apartment full of furniture with the Army checks that he sent her religiously each month to bank and buy furnishings for their home. The sound of footsteps stirred Williard from a light sleep. He made his way through the living room, past the bed room and into the bath room. Will she be surprised to see me, he smiled to himself. A tall dark man entered the apartment with the attractive smiling woman whose laughter sent chills through Williard's body. "You sure that trick is coming home this weekend?" "He told me on the phone last Sunday that he would be in some time this weekend or early next week. I guess he'll call me before he catches the plane. So just pack your clothes and stay away from here for a few weeks. After a few rounds in bed he won't be suspicious about anything. Now hurry up and get out of here before he tries to call me from Logan Airport or something with one of his stupid surprises."

The big guy never saw what hit him as he entered the bathroom to get his shaving utensils. Carol screamed, half out of shock and half out of fear, as she looked at a tearful and enraged Williard walking into the bedroom to get his bags. There was a painful look, a questioning look and a look of anger. Without saying a word he walked past the woman standing in the living room with a tear in her eye. She knew that it was all over because she knew Williard. He was like that. The door remained open for several minutes as the woman stood silently in the middle of the room. Then there was a light tapping on the door. "Flowers for Miss Carol Banks..."