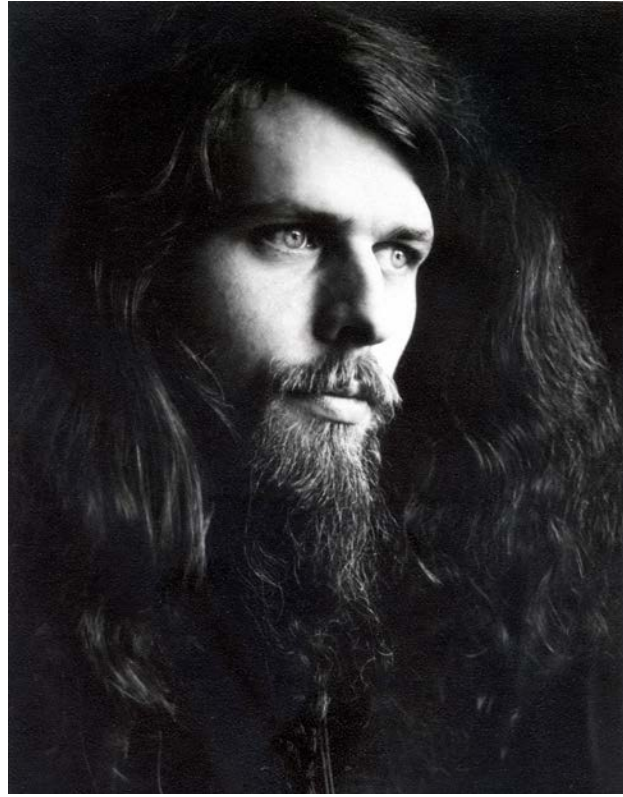




# Jacob Holdt

A 50 year journey into the....

## ROOTS OF OPPRESSION



“Not since the publication of Jacob Riis’ book of social criticism, *How the Other Half Lives*, has there been as powerful a record of American living as *American Pictures*. Its presentation at the Cannes Film Festival created a sensation.”

*The San Francisco Film Festival*

“One of the best interpretations of the black and white psychology - particularly of Southerners - that I have ever encountered.”

*James Baldwin*

*Important!!!*

*Different text will come here written by my publisher of Roots of oppression*

**Example of inside flap text...**

Jacob Holdt grew up only 15 miles from Jacob Riis’ hometown in Denmark. Like Riis, whose arrival in America preceded Holdt’s almost to the date by a century, he spent his first six years as a tramp. Yet the similarity between the two goes beyond the circumstances of their birth, upbringing, and travels. Their photography and compassionate, rather unsophisticated writing is also similar. Both urge social reform, insisting that “the other half of American society is everyone’s responsibility.

*Roots of Oppression*, however, is also an investigation of the racism Holdt perceives growing in himself as he gradually loses his outsider status and integrates in his new society and internalizes also its more unfortunate values. Although a penniless vagabond he understands that his white privilege gives him responsibility.

He insists that his pictures must be seen as a description not of those in a black underclass crushed by the effects of such racism, but of a white social disease so disturbing that it is easier for most to focus (photographically or otherwise) on the symptoms rather than the cause. In its unusual exposure of that disease, *Roots of Oppression* has an urgent message for all whites.

“I saw your slide show in a university in Washington DC in the 1980s and it made an indelible impression on me. When I talked about doing an exhibition with the Louisiana museum in Denmark, they sent the Louisiana Channel to videotape me in my studio in LA. And they brought me your book *American Pictures* as a gift and asked if I happened to know it. And I just started laughing, because I have several copies of it – I buy extra copies for friends every time I see it in a book store. The main thing that I was struck by from the first time I saw the book was that I just had never seen images that I felt were as accurate in their renderings of the South that I knew.”

*Arthur Jafa*



**A 50 year journey into the...**

**ROOTS OF OPPRESSION**

**Jacob Holdt**

# A LESSON ON OPPRESSION

*50 years of black/white oppression in America as experienced and photographed by a white traveler*

*hopefully with some insights and inspiration for liberation fighters worldwide*

Roots of oppression  
Picture layout and design by Jacob Holdt based on module  
designed by Kitte Fennestad for the original book “American  
Pictures” published by Per Kofod.

Updated text 2021  
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Space for publisher’s text

A book is rarely the work of one person, and a photo and travel book certainly becomes a very collaborative effort. I have in this book decided not to mention or changed all but a few of the real names. This saddens me since all but a few exploitative street photos are the result not only of people’s hospitality, but usually of their strong cooperation, interaction and trust in me - as well as their later approval. Among the people who helped make the book I would especially like to thank those who gave me encouragement and financial donations during my first penniless vagabond years: Alice Turak (\$10), John Ray (\$20), Susan Kennedy (\$30), Cary Ridders (\$50), Allan Tunick (15 rolls of film). A very special thanks to Eveleen Henry and Marly Sockol for storing my slides and to Tommy Howard for lending me his old Buick with several tanks of gas to get around on the backroads in NC where I couldn’t hitchhike.

Thanks since to Dick Boggle for donating his car, enabling me to bring the slideshow to most of the people in the book upon my first return to the US. For criticism and feedback over many years, through which many of the ideas in the book grew, I am deeply indebted to Tony Harris, who for 30 years was my partner in racism workshops in hundreds of American and European schools. And to the thousands of students in my workshops, who opened up their hearts and taught me about a much deeper racism and the pain behind it than I could originally see and photograph as a naive and superficial vagabond. And to the blacks who - although my slideshow was often too painful for themselves to see in their mostly white university settings - nevertheless insisted that the whites “see and understand our pain” and again and again brought me back to their campuses for that reason.

More to come....

**With love Jacob Holdt**  
**The Ubuntu House**  
**Copenhagen, Denmark**  
**www.american-pictures.com**

## **PART ONE - PAGE 6:**

***“Roots of oppression”***  
***The basic and historical patterns of oppression***

## **INTERMEDIUM - PAGE 200:**

***“Understanding the roots of white hatred”***  
***Studying the oppression in childhood of people in hategroups***  
***and serial killers of blacks***

## **PART TWO - PAGE 240:**

***“The ghetto in our minds”***  
***Understanding how we who want to do good end up oppressing***  
***blacks in America and minorities in other countries***

## **AFTERWORD - PAGE 456:**

***My thoughts on healing***

***Find links on each page to videos with the transcribed songs, interviews***  
***and updated stories of the included people in the book. [Or see an overview here.](#)***

## Point of departure

*Before we start our journey trying to understand and act on the dark forces dividing us, let us not forget the enlightened human creeds uniting us.*

'The rebel: There is not anywhere in the world a poor creature who's been lynched or tortured in whom I am not murdered and humiliated...

*...Aime Cesaire: "Les Armes Miraculeuses"*

We are asked to love or to hate such and such a country and such and such a people. But some of us feel too strongly our common humanity to make such a choice.

*...Albert Camus*

We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.

*...Martin Luther King*

Hate the sin, love the sinner.

*... Mahatma Gandhi*

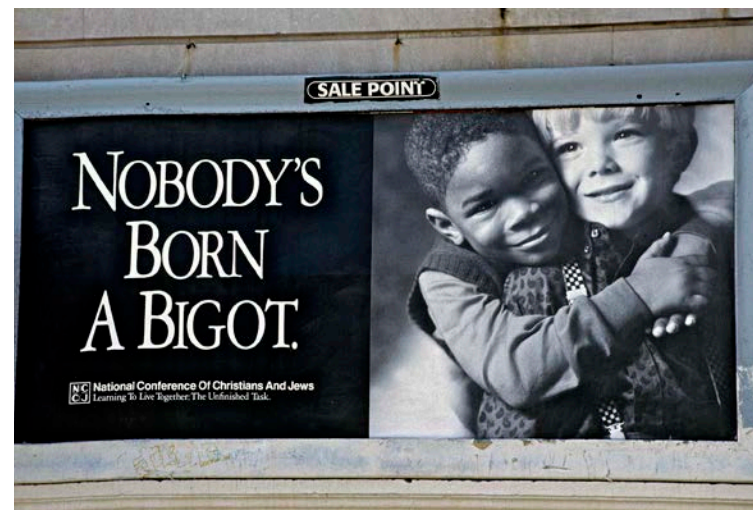
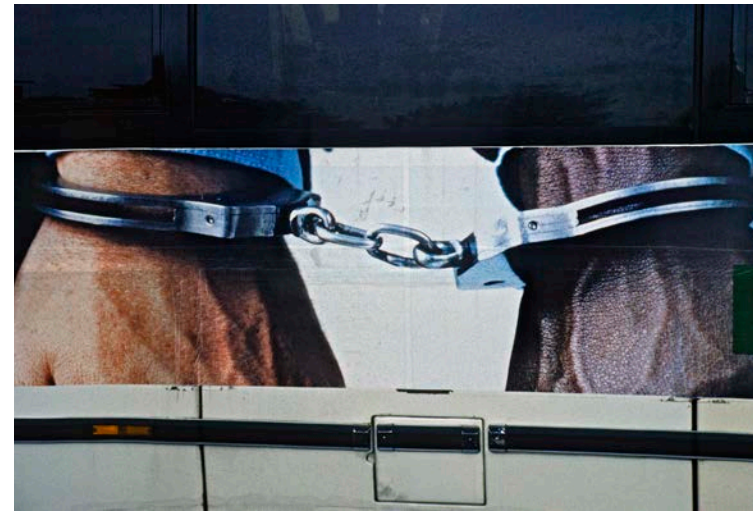
Beyond the questions of right and wrong there is a field.

I will meet you there.

*....Rumi*

In Africa there is a concept known as 'ubuntu' - the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others.

*.....Nelson Mandela*



## Ubuntu

*"A person is a person through other people" - the affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an "other" in his or her uniqueness and difference. Can we integrate this old "African Dream" - "we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am" - with the idea of "the American Dream"?"*

**"IMPORTANT!** The photos in this book are not portraying blacks and black culture nor whites and white culture since they are disproportionately from the black underclass and the white upper-class. They are allegorical visual statements used in a parable on oppression. And it is not a book about the historical oppression of blacks, but "history seen in the present" as I experienced it during my 50 years in America; patterns parallel to those I saw in my antiracism work in the Third World and in Denmark, where I in old age therefore created the dialog center The Ubuntu House. All oppressions have victims, but usually people have lived in them for so long that they individually do not tend to see themselves as victims, but as strong and resilient people - even though all statistics show that as a group they are victimized and held back by invisible (unphotographable) forces."

*Jacob Holdt, The Ubuntu House, Copenhagen, Denmark*



*Patron of the Ubuntu House, Zindzi Mandela, daughter of Winnie and Nelson Mandela*



*Centered around Zindzi Mandela in our Ubuntu House we are celebrating the humanity we share across all artificial ethnic, religious, sexual and national borders*



1995 - Queens, NY



1995 - Queens, NY

## Foreword to Roots of Oppression

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”*

*Charles Dickens: A tale of two cities*

These famous words describe exceptionally well my feelings when in 1970 I tried to bridge two societies—my own Danish with my new American—as well as my unwelcome new identity as “white,” with a separate parallel in “black” society. Hope and light seemed to envelope everyone a few years after the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement, which brought with it the promise of a better and racially integrated future soon to arrive. Just as darkness and despair seemed to envelope everyone trying to stop the murder of millions of Vietnamese. The magnitude of the slaughter made me and millions of young people all over the world quite anti-American, and I had no interest in staying in the US when I hitchhiked from Canada on my way to Latin America. During my first days in the country, I was held up at gunpoint by angry blacks, yet I was also invited to live as the only white in

Angela Davis’ Che Lumumba Club and taken into groups like the Black Panthers as well as being embraced by white antiwar groups. In this blinding twilight between darkness and light, I soon lost my original orientation as I traveled through this (North) American society struggling to find its own new identity. I fell completely in love with the youth in their search for truth—and thus with America. I had no idea at the time that this love would continue, as would my work with youth, for the rest of my life. I wrote endless diaries and letters to my parents about the people who invited me into their lives, and to my good fortune they sent me a cheap half-frame camera “so you can send some pictures home about your experiences.” I had never done photography before, but I found it a much faster way to remember people and events (than with words) and after almost six years returned home with 15,000 pictures.

For a long time, I used the camera as my photographic diary, but after I overcame my initial fear of ghetto neighborhoods, which got me mugged again and again, it was as if I was taken by the hand and dragged into a world I hadn’t known existed. In my Danish school years, we had heard about Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, but it hadn’t changed our prevalent

## Where did all the anger come from?

*...so what’s in store?  
i’m talking about race war!  
“Get yourself together”  
“Open your eyes, get wise”  
Race war...people getting killed in the streets  
blood on your feet  
the ends don’t meet,  
and who’re they going to blame it on, me?*

## Where did WE go wrong?

*Try the media, try the PD, try your TV,  
anybody but yourself.  
But once the bullets starts flying  
people starts dying  
its all because of lying  
history books they teach hate  
I did have no escape from the racist faith  
it’s like South Africa, we’ll start killing  
race war, race war, race war, race war, race war...*



1973 - Denmark, SC



1973 - Washington, DC



1975 - San Quentin, California



1987 - Before the show in Boston College



Often students only needed such advertising when I returned to campuses

worldwide view of America as being basically a white country. Apparently, most Americans also preferred to see it that way, and since most of the drivers who picked me up were white, I quickly found myself in the role of messenger between two totally separate and unequal societies. In my own naïvete, I didn't see this as (the result of) racism but was incredulous that whites could allow blacks to live in such horrible conditions—often right next door—without doing anything about it. Worse, they didn't even “see” it, or they justified it because they didn't see blacks as fellow human beings. The same whites would do anything for me as a foreigner, and since I in return saw them as decent loving people, I didn't consider them real racists and hardly ever used the word racism—a word I associated with the Civil Rights Movement ten years earlier and applied to the Ku Klux Klan. No, I felt that all these loving whites were just badly informed and could easily be changed, such as when I took them with me to visit my black friends on the other side of the tracks. In this way my educational project started. I took more and more photos and put them in little books with fitting Bible and Shakespeare quotes to show to my drivers and hosts on the highway. I also did it for selfish reasons since they were often so moved they gave me a couple of dollars or a lunch bag “to support your project, for these pictures need to be seen by all Americans.” The more I could move them, the more time I would save by not having to hitchhike twice weekly to the big cities and lie in blood banks for four hours at a time to sell my plasma for \$5 or \$6—enough for two rolls of film. This was my only income since arriving in America with only \$40, a sum that lasted for five

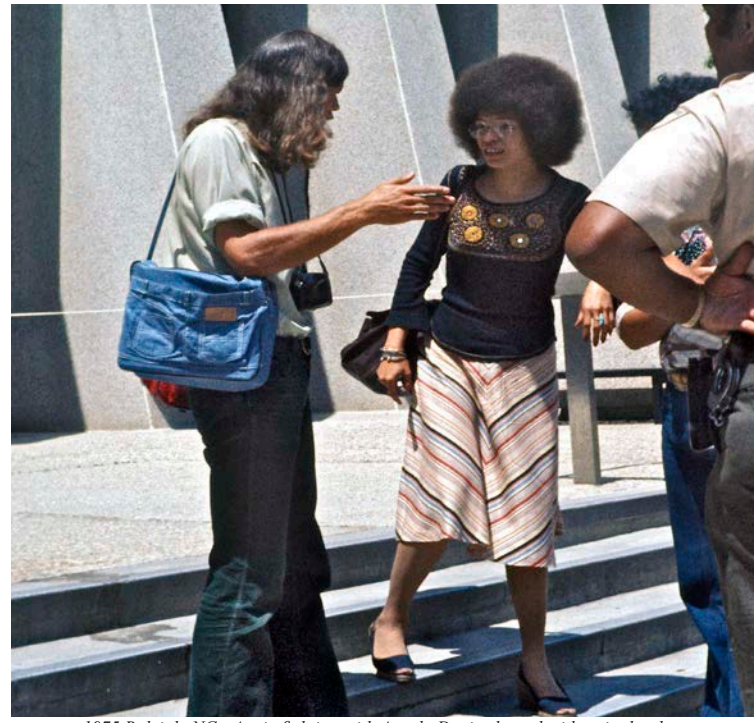
years due to the incredible hospitality of Americans. After about three years, I started feeling that I was working on some project to educate white Americans—one by one. The turning point came on March 8, 1974, when a woman took me to see a slideshow about coal miners at Santa Fe College, FL. There were pictures, narration, and music, and although it was very primitive, it was extremely powerful, working by quickly changing images so that it almost seemed cinematic. And it used two screens, which I immediately could see would be an effective way to convey my own shock of experiencing the gap between white and black America. Often, teachers had picked me up and invited me to speak to their classes in colleges. How much more effective would my message be if I could convert my small picture books into slideshows presented for whole classes at a time? I must confess that at that time I hadn't in my wildest fantasy imagined that I would only a few years later end up presenting them for up to 2000 students at a time in American universities. Nonetheless, from now on I was aware that I was working on a slideshow. This was only a year before I had to flee America—a year during which I was stuck in a marriage in San Francisco. I spent a lot of that time unproductively, writing numerous applications to get funds to buy better camera equipment—“If only I could get a real Nikon!”—but in vain. Not even when blacks were on the foundation boards. One difficulty I had in those years, when everybody felt that “the race problem had been solved” and things were moving forward, was that many successful blacks felt uncomfortable with my images—both out

of shame that their own brothers still lived in these conditions and even more from the fear that the images would negatively stereotype blacks in the white mind. My own feeling was that those stereotypes were already so deep that whites needed to be informed about their own responsibility for disproportionately forcing blacks into poverty and crime. Even though I didn't use the word “racism” as often as “the system of our daily oppressive thinking” (my term for “systemic racism,” before the phrase was coined, which made us responsible, not “the system”), I felt that my pictures clearly showed the human devastation racism had created all around us. The many moral questions about what happens to your own white mind when for several years you move around primarily in the devastation of the black underclass, without much interaction with better-off blacks, will also be discussed in this book. One result was that in the last year I felt I couldn't finish my project without going to countries like Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil, with their different forms of slavery, if I genuinely and objectively wanted to see, understand, and describe the difference between “true blackness” and “the result of oppression.” For in that sense, all of us living in a society with systemic racism are prisoners in Plato's cave. That, however, would have been an endless academic project well out of reach for a high school dropout like me. So I don't claim with this book to be more than a “street-wise” caveman in my attempt to give voice to those equally lost “street-wise” people in the ghetto who would always say, “Hey, man, this is nothing but slavery.” Can there, I ask in a book experienced from a frog's-eye view, be any truth in

such statements in a so-called “free society”? As I mentioned, that same society wouldn't give me foundation support for my project. In the end I had to return to Denmark but not until after almost being assassinated and living in constant fear that the FBI was about to confiscate my photos. I was very disillusioned when I moved back into my childhood home, a village rectory. My father, a pastor, lent me money for three slide projectors and in less than two months I made a slideshow to present in his local church. In that rural area, I had no access to a library to do research, and Google hadn't yet been invented. It was as though five years of pent-up social anger just poured out of me. I thought I could always do the research when I went back to America with “the show” (a slideshow accompanied by taped music), but rumors about it spread so fast that it was soon being presented all over Europe by black American volunteers, often with thousands lining up to see it (although I still had no time to fact check it, the blacks verified it all). In less than a year, it was made into a bestselling book, and we set up a foundation to give all profits from the show and book to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. However, only a month after publication, I found out from the KGB that the Soviet Union intended to use it worldwide against President Carter's human rights policies, pointing at its pictures to (wrongly) claim that human rights were just as bad in America as in communist Russia. Since I was a great fan of Carter—the first American president not to overthrow democratically elected governments all over the Third World—I decided to sue to stop sales of my book



1991 - Even my 10th show here in Stanford U. was packed in the biggest auditorium



1975 Raleigh, NC - Again fighting with Angela Davis about the ideas in the show



1987 - Talking with James Baldwin all night after he saw the 5-hour show

all over the world. After which I moved back to America with my slideshow, where I felt it belonged. Here it also became an instant success, and for the next 30 years, I was on stage in a new college almost every night on my tours—often standing room only. Also, here I experienced darkness and light at the same time. I was locked up in dark auditoriums five hours a night, changing slide trays every five minutes. After 7000 shows, I ended up having spent 35,000 hours of my life in darkness. What a waste of life if it had not been for the light—or mutual enlightenment—I experienced the next day in my racism workshops. These were attended by “shell-shocked” students now committed to eradicating their own racism and by blacks who understood how internalizing racism had clipped their wings. Here I learned more about the cost of racism on whites than I ever did during my five years of vagabonding through its black destruction. Yet I and Tony Harris, my black assistant, with his deep psychological insight and his ability to draw on his own ghetto experiences, hardly ever talked about racism. For it took hours and often whole days to help the students become aware of and heal the injuries they’d individually suffered in their upbringing—even the most successful and on the surface “privileged” Ivy League students. Usually there was a lot of discharging or crying in the room as they all gradually realized how their pain was shared and how they were in this boat together — black and white. Afterwards, they often started weekly “American Pictures unlearning racism” dialogue/healing groups on campus after Tony and I left—and within a year brought the show back to campus to help shock more students into similar unlearning groups. We

received many letters from them about how it had gradually “cleared their minds” and “raised their intelligence.” As a result, they were more “present” in class and got higher grades in school. It was living testimony to how racism and the other oppressions hurt our thinking, intelligence, and well-being. Fighting racism, we insisted, was in our own self-interest. Yet we weren’t so naïve as to think we could end their racism. We only tried to make them committed anti-racist racists, anti-sexist sexists, etc. Aware of how they’d always be victims of society’s systemic racism but committed to working on its effect on themselves in solidarity with those whom racism was crushing—especially when they got into positions of power enabling them to help change systemic racism. I often got invitations to join them 15-20 years later, when their groups met again to evaluate how the show had changed their lives now that they had positions in government and big business. Much of what they taught me I am trying to convey in this difficult book. Yes, “difficult” for most. For anybody who knows a little about campus life in America knows how short the attention span of students is. When speakers come to campus, students often start walking out after half an hour if they don’t think they can use the lecture to get higher grades. If they had known how long my lectures were, they would never have shown up for them. Let alone if they’d known they were about racism! So we always had to trick them into coming, and once they were there—as they told us—they struggled with their guilt about papers they absolutely had to write the same night. Yet they usually stayed for the full five hours. And even skipped all the classes the next morning to

go to our racism workshops instead. How did I achieve that and have packed houses—even in Harvard, where, on my first visit, they told me that that same week they had three world-famous statesmen speaking (who’d drawn only 20 or so students)? Barack and Michelle Obama’s “Harvard Black Law Student Ass” brought me back 18 times over the years—to “standing room only” crowds. It was the same story in the other Ivy League schools. As I understood it, from reading their many papers and letters about the experience, it was because I (unintentionally) had oppressed them. They went through systematic oppression—or rather “reverse oppression.” Let me explain. Almost everywhere, I saw the students in the same way they saw themselves: as basically good, well-intentioned, caring people who really wanted to do good for blacks, the poor, and society. They didn’t see themselves as racist and often rationalized it away: “I’m a good Christian, so I can’t be racist,” etc. They felt they were doing right, but over the hours of the show, I gradually broke down their defenses and showed them step by step how they were doing wrong, how everything they did was oppressing blacks. During intermission (after the first two hours), many would still have their defenses intact and in their hearts blame others (e.g., people in the South) for being the real racists. Or a few, such as a hospital administrator in Philadelphia would attack me, the messenger. But after five hours, all their escape routes had been blocked, all their defenses broken down, and I saw them night after night walk out crying, heads bowed in guilt. Some, like the hospital administrator, asked, “How can I put money into your project so it can be spread all over America?”

When teachers asked the white students to put words to their emotions, I was astonished to find that they chose almost verbatim the same ones that blacks listed when asked to put words to what they suffer from daily because of our racist thinking, which constantly tells them they’re doing wrong and blames them for everything, leaving them with almost no escape, no light at the end of the tunnel. When you yourself feel you are doing right, but from birth are endlessly bombarded with messages that you’re wrong, you certainly don’t end up with very constructive feelings. This is what effective oppression is all about, and the white students suddenly experienced it in themselves, which was so shocking that the next day they skipped classes to try to heal their racism—a change I believe couldn’t have been achieved in a two-hour academic lecture (without pictures and music) even by the best of my main competitors on the lecture circuit, such as Angela Davis or Coretta and Yolanda King. For this reason, some universities, such as conservative Dartmouth, even forced all their freshman students to go through my “reverse oppression” program before starting classes. I should point out that I had a long-standing conflict with Angela Davis after an interview with her about black self-hate in my first show. Even after a personal presentation in her own home, she never agreed with me and refused to finance the show every time her students in UCSC brought me back. Luckily, I had the support and endorsement from most other leading black spokespeople, such as James Baldwin. People in France and Amherst were always trying to bring us together. Finally, he drove two hours in a terrible snowstorm to see the show, after which we talked the whole night.



1991 NYC - Between campus lectures I spent the nights with the homeless

He felt it was the closest thing he'd ever experienced to describing his own view of white racism, but he was already sick and, sadly, died only a couple of months later from stomach cancer. In the end, Yolanda King was my strongest competitor during Black History Month, but somehow we joined forces and put together a show for president Clinton at the Kennedy Performing Arts Center in tribute to Martin Luther King. I also presented it at the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. Afterward, the family wanted to show it there permanently, "for it shows better than anything what Martin fought against, which today's black youth doesn't know much about."

And so I continued for 30 years until we got the first black president elected, after which I retired in the belief that things were moving in the right direction. Well, again I was a bit naïve, and the rest is history ....

Racism exploded in Europe and in my own country, Denmark, where I now felt it was my duty to be the same kind of messenger in a divided society. I watched in horror at how Trump was inspired by the way racist European politicians won elections by using divisive, hate-filled rhetoric. After many years of American politicians speaking politically correctly and only using coded racism, this now happened in America too. When as a result we started seeing overt hate and racism exploding in America—the Klan groups I'd worked with now came out in the open, and the racism of the police allowed them to openly justify the killing of blacks—I felt it was difficult for me to sit as a passive witness. And when I saw the rise of the biggest movement against racism



1985 - I present my show outdoor to support the Divestment boycott of Columbia Univ.

I had experienced in all my years in America, I wanted somehow to support it. Especially when I saw how many of the idealistic young participants did not understand how the anger driving the Black Lives Matter movement had much deeper roots than today's visually recorded murders of black men. How could I help visualize for them all the oppression which led up to it effectively? Lots of good books are now published about it – not least by blacks – but hardly any with pictures showing it all as effectively as today's videos. And then came the idea to try to make a book like my old effective slideshow bombarding the reader with images showing the roots of all the oppression I myself personally have witnessed. Let me see if I can oppress my readers raising all the same defenses and emotions in you – on paper – as I could with my audiences in dark rooms. I will even include musical links to the songs along the way. Perhaps it will take longer than 5 hours of internal struggle to read it as a book, but in the end you can also here check and see if your reactions to my reverse oppression is the same as it was for 30 years for "the best and the brightest" of the students. Let's go to the start of my "show":

This is a pictorial lesson on oppression and the damage it does to us. Most important is the adult oppression of children. Everywhere in the world children are hurt very early by the irrational behavior of adults. This causes severe patterns of distress resulting in hurtful behavior. Later in life we re-enact these distress patterns on our own children or on each other e.g. in sexist, racist, nationalist, totalitarian, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, homophobic, age, handicap, or class oppression.



1978 - With my co-worker Tony Harris in Oslo Concert House

In most of us these patterns have become so chronic that we become defensive when challenged and end up blaming the victims. We dare not face the fact that in such systems we are both victims and oppressors. There are few places in the world where the main ingredients of oppression are as blatant as in the relationship between blacks and whites in the USA. From this tragedy I feel we can all learn something about ourselves. While going through this book, it is important to understand the damage we go through in a segregated society. Black or white, we are born naturally open and curious with no inborn racial biases. Then things go wrong. We hear things like "Niggers are dirty, stupid and lazy. They belong on the bottom." For the loving and affectionate child this is irrational, confusing and hurtful. While we are hurting our mind no longer thinks rationally and a rigid scar is created on our thinking. After years of such hurtful messages, we end up accepting and internalizing these limited definitions of ourselves and our society.

As seen through the eyes of a foreigner I hope it will be easier to see how such racial attitudes cripple our character, whatever our color. Though there is plenty of racism in Europe, I was fortunate to have my childhood in Denmark during years when I was not severely hurt by social insecurity and racist conditioning. I was also fortunate that the first people I stayed with in America were not white. Most European visitors stay first with white Americans, who warn them, "Don't walk three blocks this way or two blocks that way," and immediately frighten them into accepting white fear and rigid segregation. My experience was just the opposite. The first American home to take me in was a black home on the

south side of Chicago. With all their love, warmth, and openness, I immediately felt at home and saw whites only as cold distant faces on TV or in hostile suburbia. Later, traveling into the white world, I was no longer as vulnerable to its racist patterns of guilt and fear. I hitch hiked 118,000 miles and stayed in over 400 homes in 48 states. I had arrived with only \$40. Twice a week I sold my blood plasma to earn the money I needed for film. Traveling in such a deeply divided society inevitably was a violent experience: 4 times I was attacked by robbers with pistols, 2 times I managed to avoid cuts from men with knives, 2 times frightened police drew guns on me, 1 time I was surrounded by 10-15 blacks in a dark alley and almost killed. 1 time I was ambushed by the Ku Klux Klan, several times I had bullets flying around me in shootouts, 2 times I was arrested by the FBI, and 4 times by the Secret Service. I lived with 3 murderers and countless criminals.....

...but I have never met a bad American!  
That I survived I owe to my stubborn belief in these words by Jose Marti:

***You must have faith in the best in people and distrust the worst. If not, the worst will prevail.***

I hope you will share my love for this country while you read the book.... ..and afterward will work together black and white to undo the hurt we do to each other and thus heal the division and violence we inflict on our society. To begin our painful journey toward that goal, let us take a boat trip together....





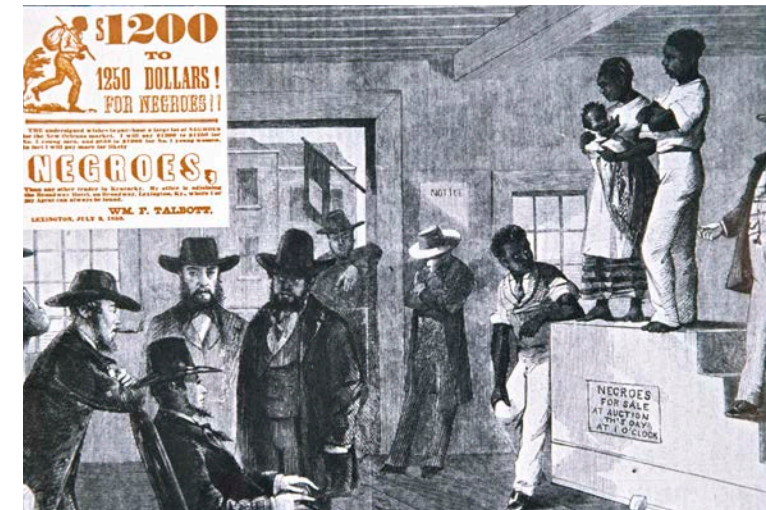
1974 - Bartow, FL. Charles Smith's hands

*Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy!  
As far as your eye can see,  
men, women, and baby slaves  
coming to the land of Liberty,  
where life's design is already made.  
So young and so strong  
they're just waiting to be saved...*

*Lord, I'm so tired  
and I know you're tired too,  
look over the horizon,  
see the sun  
shining down on you...*

*Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy!  
Can't you feel the motion of the ocean,  
can't you feel the cold wind blowing by?  
There's so many fish in the sea,  
we're just, we're just, we're just  
riding on the waves...  
the waves... the waves...*

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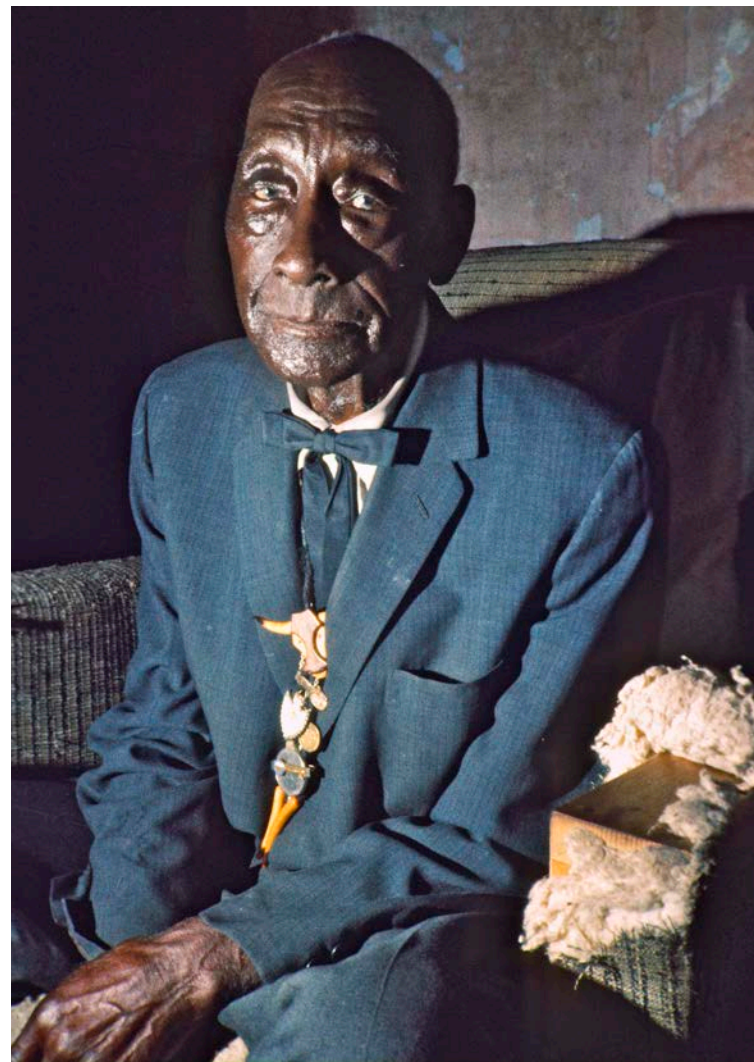
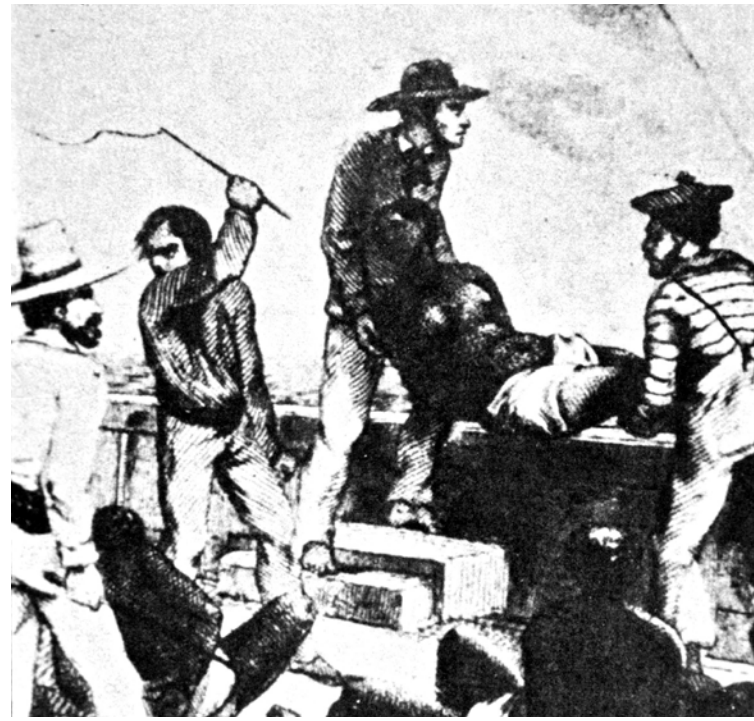


I'd thought that slavery was far back in history, but in Florida I met Charles Smith, who claimed to be 134 years old and to clearly remember being enslaved in Africa.

- I come to the United States, when I was only twelve years old.  
- Were you sold as a slave to the U.S.A.?  
- Yeah, wait let me tell you now. They brought me from Africa... That was in slavery time. I had never seen a white person in Africa. Well, I asked my mama, could I go down to the boat and see the white man. She said yeah, and I ain't seen mama since. Grown people carried the children on hoard to see the "sugar trees" down in the hatch-holes. We felt the boat was moving, but thought it was the wind. He never did bring us back. We never saw the sugar trees. The colored wanted to throw me off. I remember it as if it was yesterday. Legree, the captain on the boat, didn't want me thrown off. We got into this country, and were sold in New Orleans. Put up on a block and bid off. The highest bidder won...

A black social worker who'd picked me up and seen my pictures while I was vagabonding in Florida had told me about Charles Smith and brought me to his little house. Both he and other blacks in the area told me that Charles Smith is different from other blacks and in fact looks down on them. Smith had been too young to understand why the older Africans would throw him overboard, which according to historians was quite common in order to save the children from slavery. When he was bought by a Texas farmer in 1854, he was already too old to be brought up as a slave and suffering the inner scarring slaves do when they are forced to be submissive to avoid cruel punishment or death at the least sign of resistance.

Although Charles Smith has probably adopted and retold his father's story as his own, it's poignant description of the fate of millions of other captured Africans. I discovered that this survival behavior still plagues black Americans, and it struck me that if slavery has left such deep psychic scars true freedom has not yet been achieved. Many of the things I remembered from the newspapers in my school days I now, in my journey, saw in a new light. I remembered how in the '60s the United States finally became a democracy in which all its citizens had the right to vote and so was surprised to hear that Louisiana, for example, has more than 257,000 illiterate citizens. Is it not the duty of a democracy to educate its citizens?



1974 - Bartow, Florida



1974 - Bartow, Florida

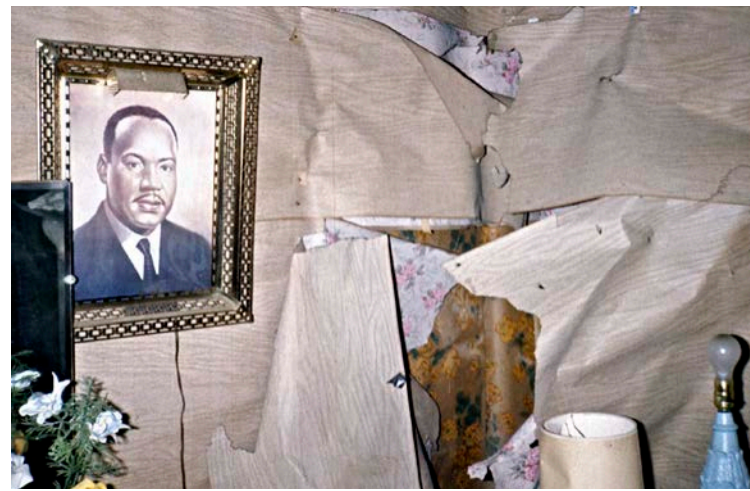


Historical photo of police dogs against blacks in Birmingham, AL

Martin Luther King, and the Civil rights Movement he came to symbolize, changed the most overt and primitive forms of discrimination. But the most significant part of his dream went to the grave with him:

*“I have a dream, that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream, that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged on the color of their skin, but on the content of their character. I have a dream, that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain made low...”*

Martin Luther King’s beautiful dreams are shared by me and most other whites. In my journey, however, I soon learned, and it was reinforced with the election of Trump, that the only one that came true may be that African Americans are no longer judged on their skin color but on their character. The sad thing is that the character traits blacks developed after centuries of oppression don’t live up to the norms of whites, whose character traits and economic “hills” are shaped by being oppressors. Seeing how much African-American character traits differ from those of both whites and black immigrants helped me understand the enormous subjugation of the mind that slavery and our continued exclusion are causing. Thus, in the optimism of the Civil Rights Struggle, I never dreamed that one of Martin Luther King’s “four little children” would one day become not only my competitor as a Black History Month speaker, but at the same time an ally in the fight against continued oppression. Or that one day I was to be invited to show my slideshow permanently on top of Martin Luther King’s grave, while his daughter Yolanda herself presented it to President Clinton and worked with me to “Stop the Violence.” To ostracize and marginalize other people is to commit violence against their humanity. That our language of violence today is not only understood but also spoken by those who have had to hear it for centuries should come as no surprise.



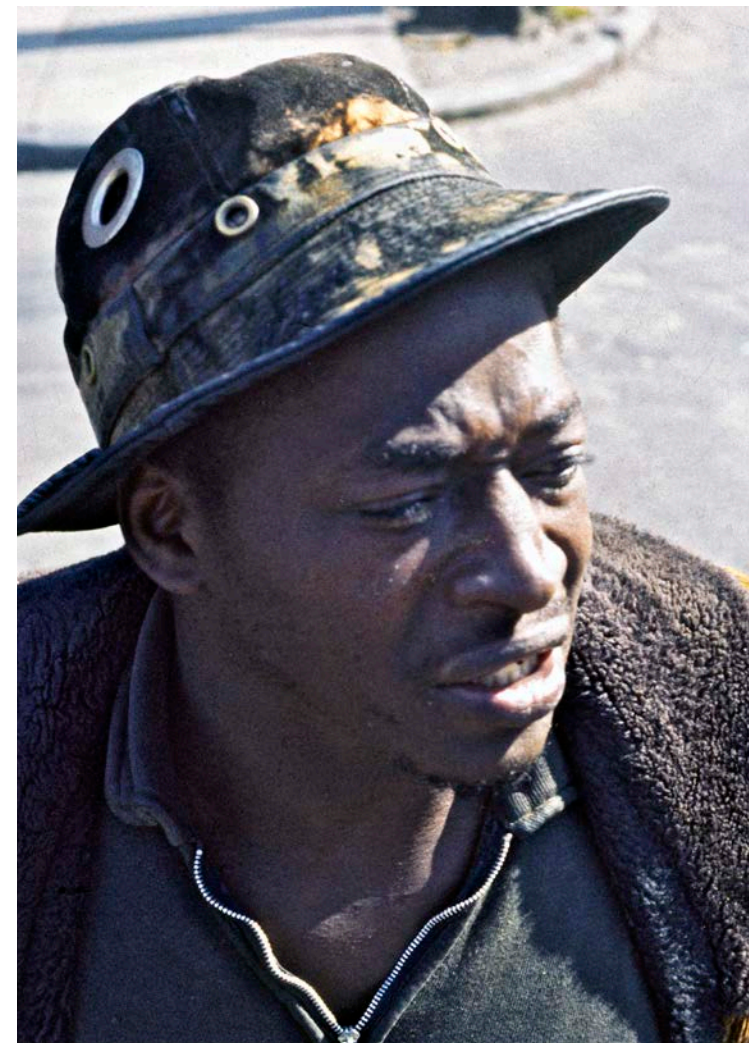
1975 - Tuskegee, AL



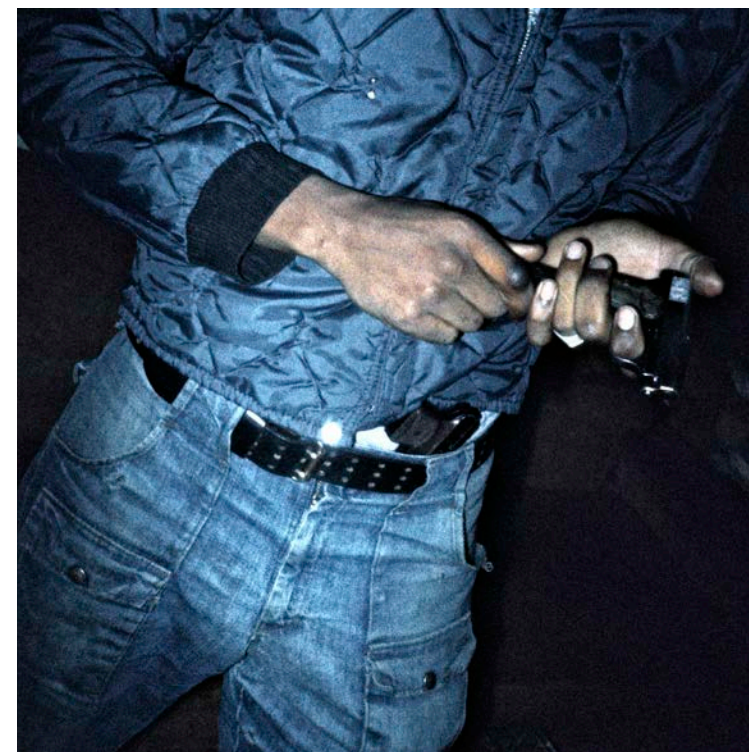
1975 - Beaumont, Texas



1975 - Texas



1973 - Norfolk, VA



1972 - New York



1987 - Harlem, NY

But when, like me, you come from Europe and have, for instance, never seen a pistol, you receive a shock you’ll never forget the first time you hear the tone of this language. After only a few days in this new country, I was held up by gunmen—a character type I’d never met. Similarly, the fear I felt was a fear I’d never experienced before: the fear of another human being.

My journey afterward became to a large degree a journey into this human being. And the more I came to understand and like this human being, the more I began to see how I myself could have caused this anger in an oppressive system which from day one had forced me and other immigrants onto the side of the oppressor whether, as a Danish tourist, I’d wanted it or not. Could I, through my behavior, even be the cause of this anger? Could I ever myself end up harboring such anger?

From the day I experienced that violent American reality, I began to understand the extent to which fear and anger characterize the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

## James 5: 1-6

(or Amos 5:11, Ecclesiastes 5:8-13, Matthew 19:16-24)

In New Orleans I lived with a black murderer named Nell. Like the other murderers I have known or stayed with, he was quite an ordinary person who had only become a murderer by accident or rather because of his social background. Naturally, it took some time before he told me about his past, as he had escaped from a prison in Nevada and was a wanted man; but like other criminals, he had a need to share what was weighing on him with another human being whom he could trust. No one can live alone with such a heavy burden. We lived with some other people out in the eastern part of New Orleans, and Nell tried, as much as circumstances would allow, to lead a normal, respectable life. Since he knew he would be sent back to a life sentence in prison if he got involved in anything, he tried as much as possible to stay away from crime and made a living primarily as a blood donor. I did not think his chances of remaining free for the rest of his life were very great, but I tried hard to make his breathing-space of freedom as happy and encouraging for him as possible. I felt that he had already been punished enough before committing any crime by the poverty and humiliation society had subjected him to in his childhood.

It was when I expressed this opinion during one of our nightly conversations that he confided in me about his crime, and afterward we were bound even closer to each other through this secret confidence. We often took walks or went to the blood bank together. Mostly we could survive by selling blood plasma twice a week, as the blood banks in New Orleans at that time were the highest paying in the U.S.: \$6.10 a visit. Only rarely was I forced to steal cheese and other small items from supermarkets to get full. I did not want Nell to do it, as he could end up getting a life sentence for it, while I with my white privilege knew that I would be able to talk my way out of such an embarrassing situation with the employees if I got caught. Nell was always pursued by his fate in this way. But never did it strike me so forcefully as on the evening I last saw him.

We had made the stupid mistake of walking down the street together in the black neighborhood where we lived, and thereby attracted the attention of the police. It is a mortal sin for a white man and a black man to walk together in a black neighborhood, as they are immediately suspected of being dope dealers. But being deep in conversation when we swung into the neighborhood, we forgot to part. It was not long before a patrol car pulled up alongside us in one of the dimly lit streets in the east ghetto. The

cops were the nice jovial type who really only wanted to scare us, and therefore said that we could go free if we just handed over our marijuana cigarettes to them. I have seen the police use this method so many times in black neighborhoods, since they don't have to report the confiscated grass but can smoke it themselves. I did not carry anything myself, but knew that Nell had one or two joints, like most others. But suddenly Nell was seized by his fate's paranoia - the paranoia and distrust of his fellow man almost every one of his social background has - and he refused to hand over the joints. For my own part I would not have hesitated a moment. I had complete confidence in the cops. Nell's distrust of the cops made him jam up like a lock and act irrationally. The police are trained to observe that kind of reaction in criminals and they immediately got out of the car to search him. They only found two small joints and his knife, but since he did not have any I.D. they took him to the station for fingerprinting. I knew right off that I would never see Nell again. He had been tripped up by the paranoia and sense of guilt common to all poor blacks, regardless of whether they have committed a crime or not. It was the same paranoia which had originally made him a murderer.

After Nell had gone from "this world," New Orleans suddenly seemed like a ghost town and I could no longer bear to stay in the same house. I wanted to leave the city, so I tried hitch-hiking in the direction of Baton Rouge. New Orleans is one of the hardest places in America to get a ride, and I waited on the Interstate with my sign for hours, hoping to get picked up before the police came. All of a sudden, the only Rolls Royce I've ever gotten a lift with stopped in the middle of the three-lane highway to pick me up. It was right in the middle of rush hour and we immediately created a big traffic jam of honking cars. Just as I had gotten into the car, the police came wailing up behind us to give us a ticket for having stopped illegally. The man who had picked me up said he would take care of it, went back to the cops and without a word gave them his card. When the police saw his name, they became all smiles and friendliness and followed him back to his Rolls Royce, clapping him on the shoulder while assuring him that it was only a trifle and that we shouldn't worry about it anymore. I naturally wondered who this guy could be who got off so lightly without even a ticket. He told me that his name was Wayne A. Karmgard, and that he had picked me up because I was standing with my sign, "Touring USA from Denmark." He had never picked up a hitchhiker before, but he suddenly thought it might be fun since he



1974 - Palm Beach, FL

himself was of Danish descent. Normally this information makes me clam up instantly and get out of the car as fast as possible. I have long ago lost any desire to be with Danish-Americans, who all too often give me only one feeling: a sense of shame at being a Dane. To Danes visiting America I give this advice: if you want to get a good impression of the country, stay away from this population group, which often represents one of the most racist and reactionary white groups in the United States. 80 percent of them vote Republican I have heard. All they can talk about is how wonderful it is to be rid of the high taxes back in Denmark. They are fleeing from any human responsibility in order to have their taxes lowered. I have met Danish-Americans who were "red-hot" Social Democrats back home in Denmark, but who in just 5 years had been transformed into the darkest reactionaries. Danish-Americans stand in glaring contrast to American Jews, who are the only white group with whom I feel a strong harmony. This group has a very deep understanding of the conditions of the blacks and of the social mechanisms that in the same way made them Europe's "negroes" for so many centuries.

Well, all the same, I could not say no to a Danish-American in a Rolls Royce. I started entertaining him right away with travel stories so that he would invite me home. I especially emphasized my experiences with Rockefeller and Kennedy, since all little millionaires look up to the big millionaires. I knew he would ask me home feeling that this brought him a little closer to the Rockefellers. It worked, and I ended up heading back toward New Orleans. He owned the city's finest and most expensive hotel,

right in the heart of the French Quarter. Everyone in town knew him, and later I was told that he owned a large part of the French Quarter and was a housing speculator (slumlord). A fabulous suite in his hotel, "Maison de Ville", was put at my disposal and I was told to just ring the bell whenever I wanted anything. Black waiters in freshly pressed uniforms served everything to me on silver trays, with excessive servility. I sat out in the garden of the hotel and let a black waiter bring me one thing after another in an attempt to get him to open up, but it was impossible. He probably felt his whole existence threatened when I addressed him as a normal human being. I sat pondering how strange it was that at this moment Nell was being "served" by white prison guards in hell, while I was being served by black waiters in heaven. It was as if everything in our lives had, in a natural way, brought us each to his own place, and our short friendship had only been a glimpse of utopia. But it struck me that Nell, as a black, had actually come further, for wasn't he more free than this broken servant who was only able to hold his head up by learning to enjoy his own oppression here in this rich Dane's sadomasochistic universe? Wasn't Karmgard a powerful oppressor while at the same time seemingly a tender, quiet and unhappy human being who had learned to exploit to the utmost the mechanisms given him in this society? Furthermore, people said he was the richest homosexual in town, which meant he himself was part of an oppressed minority group. Was it not the same insecurity as the vulnerable minority that had driven him into this unfortunate position as had driven many Jews in Europe into similar economic security through the ages?



1973 - New Orleans

The security in these surroundings was nauseating. I felt restless and lonesome. It was a favorite hotel of the richest and most glamorous film stars, but there was no human contact. Should I go out in the street and find a poor person with whom to share my luxurious suite and a bottle of wine? No, one should not buy friendship with wealth, I thought. Not even borrowed wealth. I only stayed there one night, a terribly lonely night. For years I had shared homes and beds with people, and it came as a shock to suddenly be lying there all alone. After my silver-tray breakfast the next day, I rushed headlong back to freedom, determined to find some people to live with. On Bourbon Street two young girls came running up to me to get my autograph. Being tourists, they had gone into the famous hotel out of curiosity and had seen me sitting there at breakfast under the palm trees and therefore assumed I was a movie star. For a moment I felt tempted to play "movie star" and maybe get to stay with them, but then chose to tell the truth. Then they lost all interest in me, and I realized that I was back down to earth again. Due to the many tourists, it is impossible for a vagabond to find a place to stay in New Orleans.



1973 - Natchez, MS - My servant Earline Gaynes - and later lifelong friend

Towards evening I was very hungry and recalled Bonnie's Grill on Decatur Street, which Nell had once shown me. Bonnie was an enormously fat white woman who ran a dingy little coffee bar. Bonnie was the type who could only speak to people in coarse, bad-tempered words and was always bawling them out, but the more harshly she talked to people, the more she loved them. She could easily have made good money from the cafe, but instead she was always broke because the place was frequented by the poorest street-people, and Bonnie gave free meals all day long to people who had no money. Bonnie remembered me all right, and knew I had no money, so right away she shoved a big bowl of grits in front of me, and later hamburgers and other goodies. She stood there in all her immensity with her hands on her hips and watched me without a word, but I knew she liked me because I had known Nell.

Without mentioning Nell, she said after a long silence: "You can come and live with me now." So, I moved into Bonnie's tacky and cluttered apartment. There were lice and fleas and several inches of dust everywhere.



1973 - Natchez, MS

What happened in the next few days was peculiar, for although we could barely communicate with each other and did not have a sexual relationship we quickly became closer than I have been to any other person on my journey. When we realized that we were probably the only ones Nell had confided his past to, we became inseparably bound to one another. Living with Bonnie was like living on a volcano of human warmth. She is the only one I know of who is still running the "under-ground railroad". To live with her was to be woken up almost every night by some black man on the run from the law. Here they all found a place of refuge. Bonnie loved black men, especially those who in one way or another had revolted against the master-slave relationship. She had always been that way. Earlier, she had lived in Jacksonville, Florida, but had been beaten up and driven out of town by the whites. She had gone to New Orleans, which is considered a freer Southern town. Actually, her own two children were neglected and needed clothes, healthy food, and vitamins; but on the other hand they had, through their mother's actions, been brought up not to hate, and were far healthier in their own way than most white children. Throughout their childhood they had seen murderers, thieves,



1973 - New Orleans

rapiists, junkies, and other felons take the place of their father in their mother's bed, but they had experienced them all as human beings because they saw them through the eyes of their mother. Bonnie refused to accept and see only their oppressed identities and through this deeper faith in human beings, actually created human beings. For these children terms such as "murderer" and "nigger" had no meaning, since in Bonnie's home the men all behaved as their "Daddy," and this was how the children saw them. There was always rejoicing when a "Daddy" got out of prison. Bonnie sighed a bit because they would never see Nell again, but she was already prepared to take in a new Nell. Bonnie and I developed a quiet understanding and affection for each other which over the years grew into such a strong love-relationship that time and again I returned to New Orleans to live with her. Bonnie does not know if she is Jewish or Danish or Irish or Polish. She is just American, she says.

*Excerpts of original letters in my early primitive style*



1974 - rural Elizabethtown NC



1973 - Allendale County, SC

On my way to Florida in the winter, I discovered where this fear and hostility, which blossomed into my terrifying encounter in the Northern streets, had its roots. Few blacks today pick cotton, but meeting those still trapped behind the cotton curtain, in the midst of the affluent society of the 1970s, seemed so surreal that I immediately felt thrown back in history—smothered by the cotton whose white tyranny once shrouded all black life in the South. When I worked in the cotton fields, I discovered the reality was quite different from the one suggested in the historical photos and caricatures I recalled of smiling, almost childishly happy cotton pickers. The smiles in this picture were in fact the only ones I saw on the cotton plantations—when one of the pickers couldn't figure out how my camera worked.



2004 - rural Arkansas



1973 - Allendale County, SC



1973 - Allendale County, SC



1973 - Allendale County, SC



1975 - rural Macon County AL



1995 - rural Bullock County, AL



1975 - rural Edgecombe County, NC



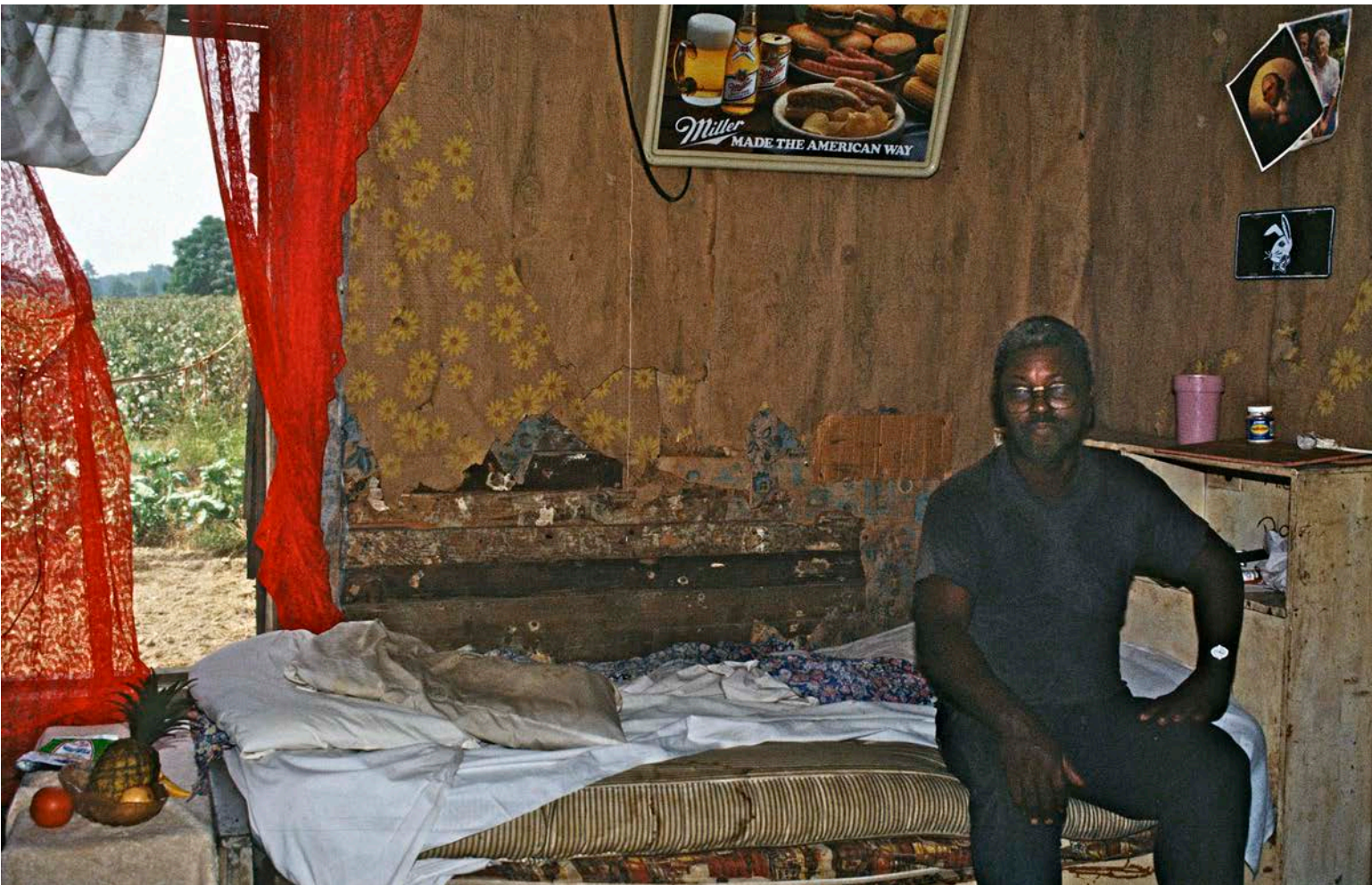
1973 - Allendale County, SC



1996 - rural Selma, AL

It took me a long time to overcome their hostility and fear of me as a white, but in the end I got to stay with Martha and Joe in return for giving them all the cotton I picked. Though I toiled from morning to night and was aching all over, I never succeeded in picking more than four dollars' worth a day. The others were more experienced and could make over six dollars a day. This was relatively the same as today, where I see Martha and many of the others working for Walmart and still unable to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. We worked on a piecework basis and were paid four cents a pound. The white landowner then resold it on the market for 72 cents a pound. I began to understand how the landlord could afford to live in a big white mansion while his black pickers lived in shacks.

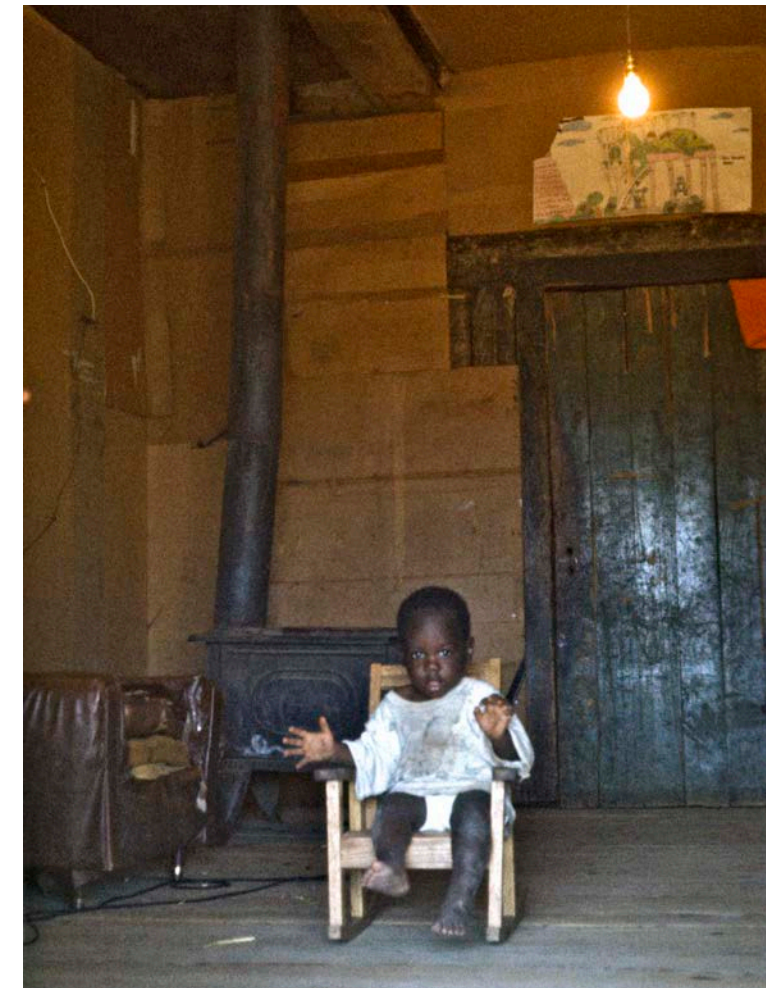
At quitting time the son of the landlord arrived to weigh the cotton and pay us on the spot. We were exhausted and there was no joy in receiving the money, which could hardly be stretched to cover kerosene for the lamp at home in the shack, which was probably no bigger or better than the ones the slaves originally lived in. How can these people be called free, when everything around them reminds them of the old master-slave relationship?



1996 - cotton picker in rural Selma, AL



1996 - rural Selma, AL

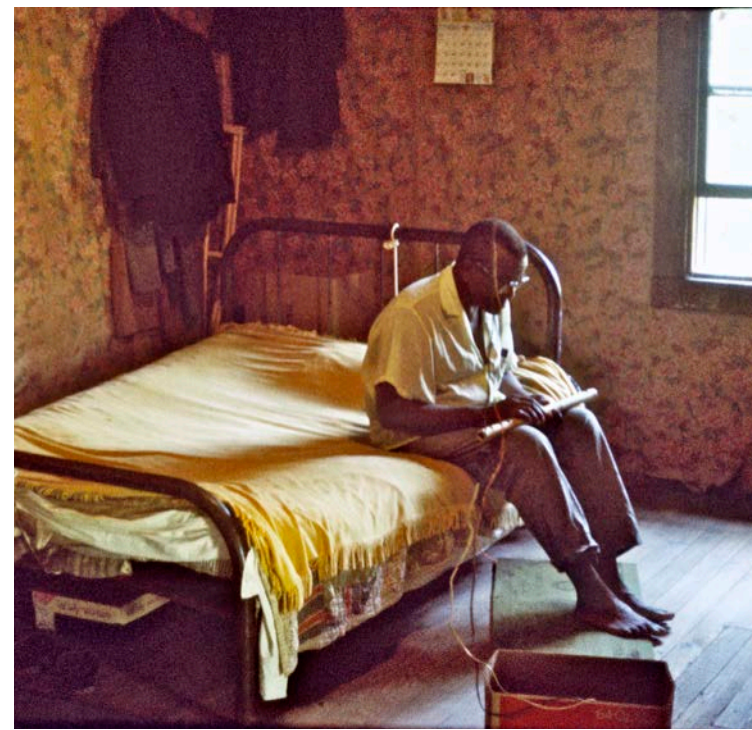


1973 - Tunica, LA





1990 - rural Burke County, GA



1978 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Apopka, FL



1995 - Notasulga, AL



1975 - rural Macon County AL



1975 - rural Edgecombe County, NC



1973 - Zebulon, NC



1974 - Washington, NC



1975 - Waynesboro GA



1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Alachua, FL



1974 - Allendale County, SC



2004 - rural Arkansas



1975 - rural Meridian, MS

*Slave driver  
The tables are turned now  
catch a fire  
you're going to get burned now.  
Every time I hear the crack of the whip  
my blood run cold  
I do remember on a slave ship  
how they brutalized my very soul.*

*Today they say  
that we are free  
only to be chained in this poverty!  
Good God  
I think it's illiteracy  
it's only a machine that makes money.*

A century earlier, whites had believed it their "natural right" to invest in human beings as private property. Hour after hour, in an updated version of this belief, well-to-do Northerners swept past us in the cotton fields in their big motorhomes on their way to sunny Florida. (Many of the northern universities where I later spoke, such as Harvard, were once financed by slavery.) Today each of their rolling homes burns up as much gas in an hour as we could buy after a whole day of picking cotton. Why are paper-shufflers in New York and Massachusetts, who already have huge homes, able to have these motorhomes while the cotton pickers don't have even a waterproof shack to live in?



1974 - Allendale County, SC



1974 - rural Bethel, NC

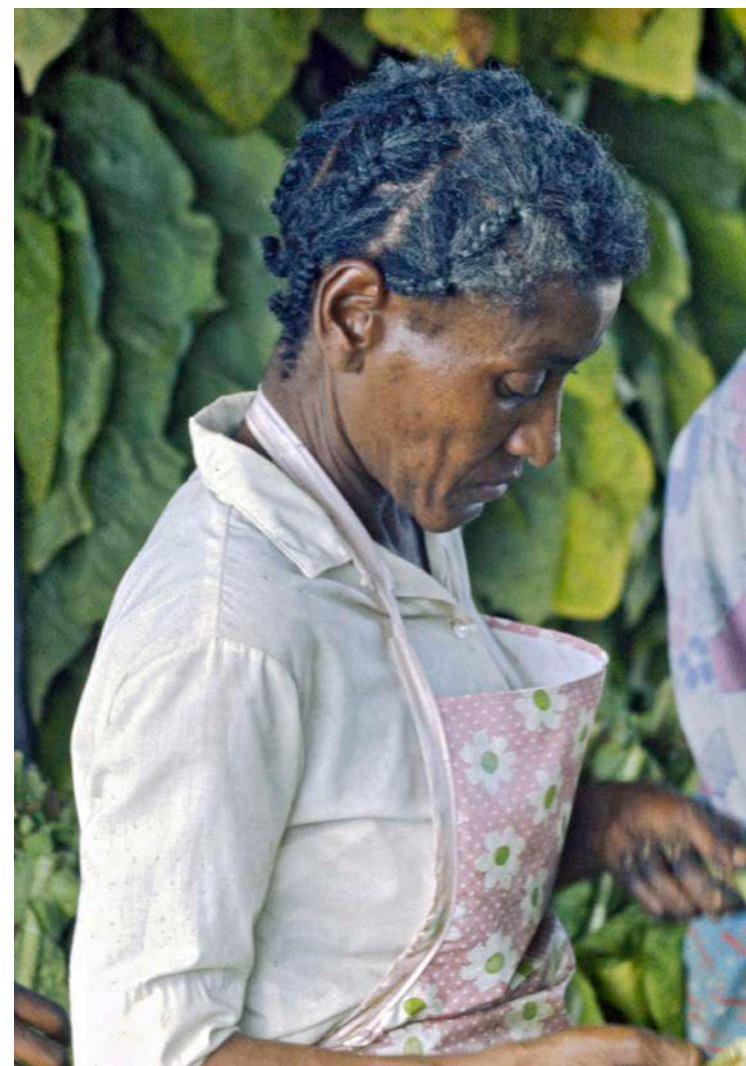
In the tobacco fields also, I saw that whites owned and directed everything, while blacks had to trail after them, both in the spring, when the tobacco was planted and unemployed women watched from their shacks, and in August, when it was picked. "It's real nigger-work," I heard whites say. "They're already black so the tar doesn't stick to them as much." By law the workers are guaranteed a minimum wage, but it's only 1/3 of Denmark's. Worse, since tobacco picking is seasonal work and there's not much work the rest of the year, it was indeed a meager income they scraped together. These people, who could've gained equality and freedom if they received just a couple of cents per packet of cigarettes sold, wore facial expressions as they worked only a slave could wear.



1988 - rural Bethel, NC



1974 - rural Bethel, NC



1974 - rural Bethel, NC



1974 - rural Bethel, NC



1986 - Wendell, NC



1986 - Wendell, NC

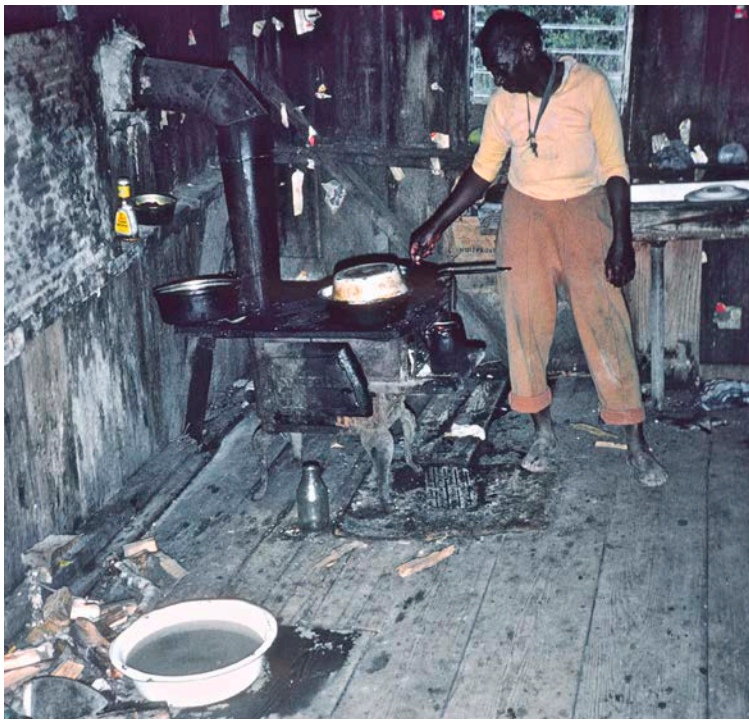
Later in the summer, the tobacco was dried and sold at auction. In few other places do we so visibly and forcibly continue to imprint the master-slave relationship on the consciousness of blacks. Wherever I go, I see white buyers from the tobacco companies who walk in front, giving quick discreet signals with pointed fingers and wagging heads, while the blacks rush behind them packing the tobacco bundles. The whites drive right into the auction hall in big flashy cars. They eat plate-size steaks for lunch at indoor tables, while the blacks have to eat their brown-bag lunches outside. Today, most blacks have abandoned the tobacco fields to underpaid, illegal immigrants from Latin America.



1974 - rural Bethel, NC



1974 - rural Bethel, NC



1975 - Bullock County, AL



1973 - Zebulon, NC



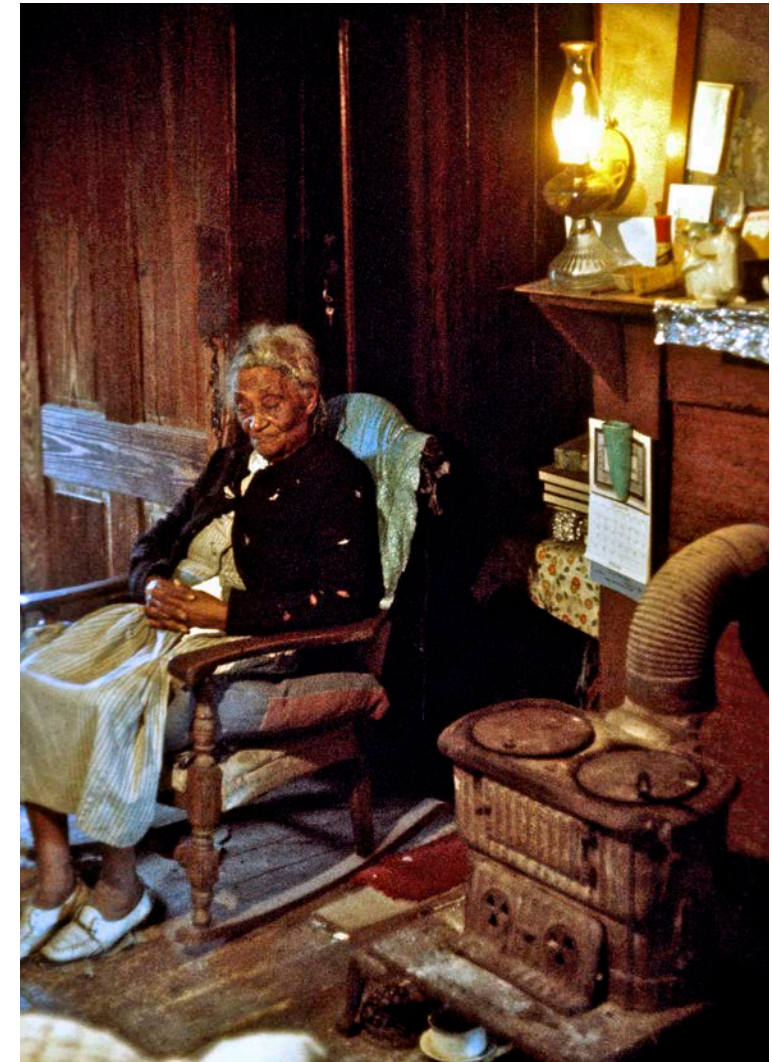
1973 - Tunica, LA



1975 - rural Meridian, MS



1975 - rural Macon County, AL



1978 - Waynesboro, GA



1975 - rural family TN



1975 - rural LA



1996 - Houma, LA



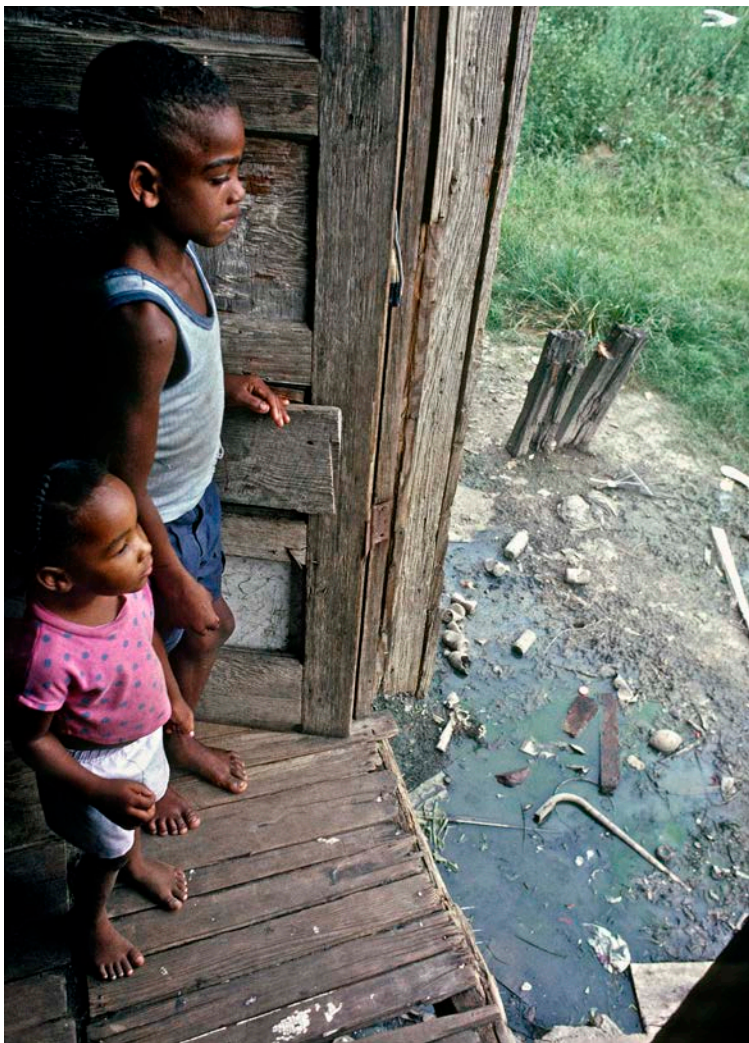
1974 - rural store LA



1973 - Labarre, LA

In winter I usually hung around in the deepest Southern states, and one year at Christmas I ended up on the sugar plantations of Louisiana. While I'd perceived slavery in North Carolina's tobacco fields primarily as a state of mind, here I was shocked to find purely feudal, serf-like conditions. Whites owned not only the plantations but also the houses in which the black workers lived. The shacks lay around his large plantation home in small clusters—exactly as in the time of slavery. Whites also owned everything else in these small villages, including the only store, known as “the company store.” Prices were 30% higher here than in stores in the bigger towns, where the workers couldn't afford to go, and where, incidentally, they often couldn't read the street signs (many were illiterate).

Their average income was below \$3,000 a year, which often had to support a family of 6–10 people. To survive, the workers therefore began to borrow from the landlord and soon fell into debt. Usually they didn't pay with cash in his stores but got more credit and were slowly pushed into economic bondage. People who don't receive wages for their work can only be called slaves. Falling into such a vicious circle, they were in fact owned by the landlord: they couldn't leave his plantation until they paid off their debt. And that could only happen by a miracle.



1996 - rural Montgomery County, AL



1996 - rural Montgomery County, AL



1996 - rural Montgomery County, AL

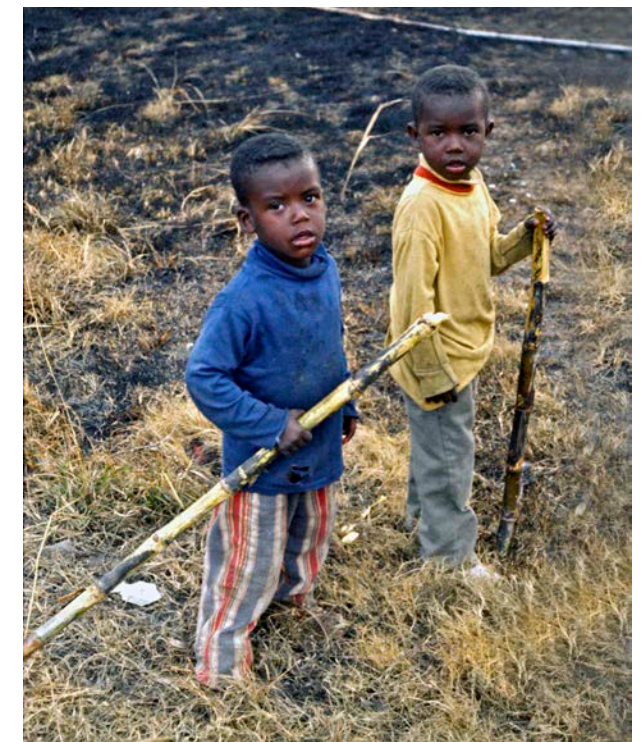


1990 - rural Burke County, GA

When I was in New Orleans in 1973, a newspaper ran articles about this feudalism just outside the city, offering sentimental accounts of children on the sugar plantations, who only got an orange once a year—for Christmas.

A tear-jerking campaign was launched to send the children Christmas presents, and dental students arranged free dental buses when it was revealed that they'd never been able to afford to go to a dentist.

I later found out that others had made efforts to organize these slave workers. A white Catholic priest tried to organize the blacks—meetings were held in secret because they were constantly shot at—but in vain. The blacks, who remembered an earlier insurrection in the 1930s in which many were killed, were afraid of losing everything. Although this probably had passed into history for the whites, I soon discovered everywhere in the black community that a slave remembers for generations.



1974 - rural Houma, LA



1973 - Tunica, LA



1975 - eastern Meridian, MS - today a shopping mall

Because of their fear of white reprisals, it was almost impossible to live with the plantation workers. When I finally managed to find a place and had gone to bed, the rumor about me had already swept through town like lightning. Suddenly the door was yanked open and George Davis, an angry neighbor, stuck the barrel of a gun in my stomach and chased me out into the winter night. Later that night, Virginia Pate, a poor widow, took pity on me and let me to share a bed with five of her children in a shack far out in the swamps. It gets cold in the morning when the stove goes out, and since the children pulled the blanket to themselves, I froze the first night.

But the next morning Virginia began repairing old quilts so I wouldn't freeze the next night. I'll never forget this widow, whom I've visited almost every year. She was willing to defy the whites even though she herself didn't dare stay under the same roof with me (she slept in her sister Eleanora's shack). I went hunting in the swamps, along with her son Morgan, for armadillos and other animals. We got drinking water from the roof gutter. George Davis was later murdered by Virginia's niece and nephew.



1973 - Tunica, LA



1973 - Natchez, MS





Giving Virginia Pate my book in 1978

I had not in my wildest fantasy imagined that my friendship with Virginia Pate would last almost 40 years until 2012 when I came to say goodbye to her shortly before her death. Countless friends including a Ku Klux Klan leader I had brought with me to see her over the years. When Danish film crews came to make movies of her, she took them around to all the places I had stayed with her and family. For through her I also became a member of her larger family of 7 sisters and 4 brothers. As with many other families in this book I made elaborate family trees to keep track of her increasing number of children, 17 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Her children Morgan, Doretha and Oliver often came on stage with me to answer questions from my audience, “how it was for them to have shared bed with a strange looking white man.”



Virginia trying to strangulate the Ku Klux Klan leader Jeff Berry in 2005



Last visit to Virginia in hospital in 2012

Her sister Beryl or “Black” amused all my friends. Although deeply religious, as a prison guard in the local Angola prison she sat in the tower 12 hours every night. “Would you shoot at your two nephews if they tried to flee?” “Of course, I will shoot anyone getting just close to the fence.” For it was her sister, Elnora’s two twins, Bertha and Bertram, who killed George Davis – who had the first night almost killed me with his shotgun in Virginia’s house. I didn’t meet Bertha shown here until 1994 when she was released, but with his 75-year sentence Bertram will never get out of Angola.

And this brings me to my point of why it is so important to bring people together. I had met them all on April 13th, 1973 when I was trying to get into the Angola prison because blacks in New Orleans had told me that once you entered there, you never got out again. I had started photographing for the Black Panthers and the year before three activist Panthers from New Orleans had been falsely accused of stabbing a white guard. Framed entirely for their Panther activism they were thrown into solitary confinement for life. In 1994 I invited Anita Roddick with me.

She had overnight become a billionaire when she took her cosmetic company, The Body Shop, on the stock market and wanted my help to invest in the black community. So, when I and Bertha told her about “The Angola Three”, she started a worldwide campaign for their release. She managed to get into the prison to visit the three “political prisoners”, where Woodfox talked about surviving through learning via the Black Panthers and reading in his cell about the history of black oppression, “When I began to understand who I was, I considered myself free.” Now Anita had the power to make a change for oppressed people – and used it to get the three Panthers released after 30-42 years in solitary confinement – the longest in American history. This is what came out of my friendship with Virginia Pate and why I love this photo Anita took of us together. The year after Anita invited me to her castle next to the Queen’s Balmoral. White privilege has many faces.

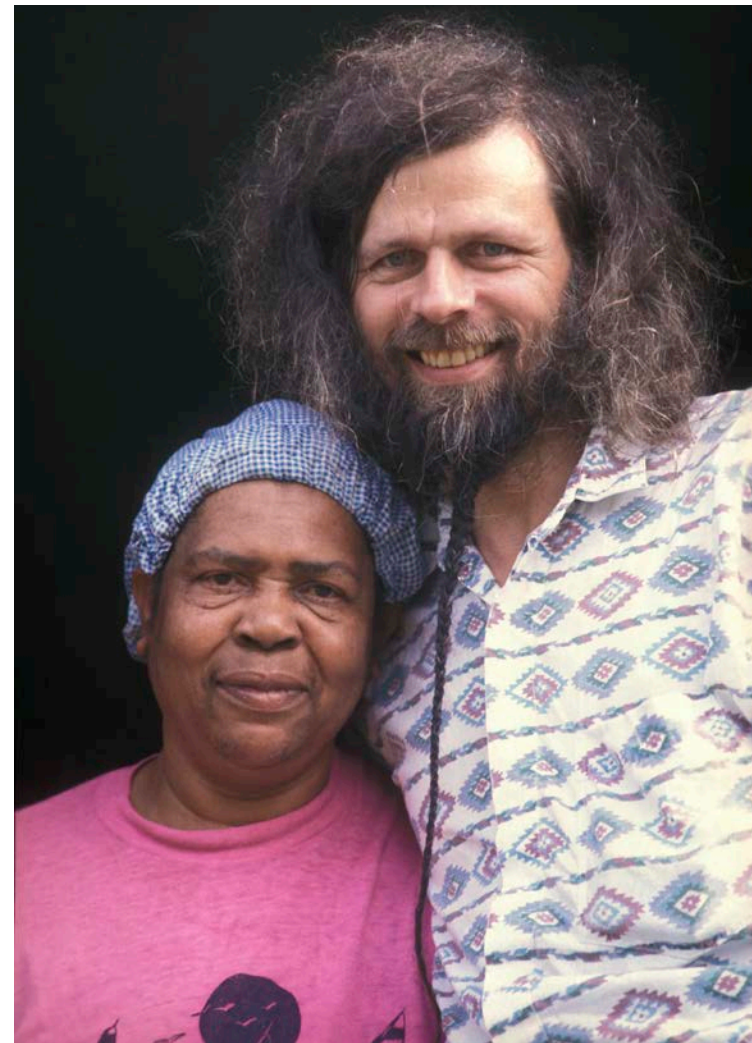
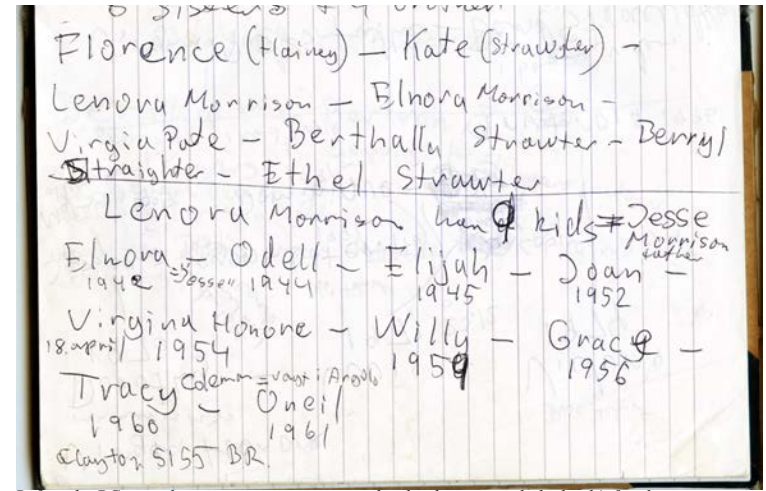


Photo of Virginia Pate and me taken by Anita Roddick in 1994



Anita Roddick in 1994 with Virginia’s niece, Virginia Honore, married to a prison guard



Before the PC genealogy programs came it was hard to keep up with the book’s families



From the struggle to free the Angola 3



Bertha in 1994 after her release writing to her twin brother in Angola



1974 - Immokalee, FL



1996 - Belle Glade, FL

In my vagabond years, 1970–76, Florida’s Attorney General charged the owners of sugar plantations with slavery. A few were imprisoned for actually chaining the workers, but a short time later such slave owners simply weren’t prosecuted. After an exhausting day’s work, the men were driven in trucks like cattle to slave camps, often enclosed by barbed wire. Just before my visit, two such trucks overturned, killing one and injuring 125 others. Instead of receiving compensation, the men were fired. Inside the camps, often with over 100 to a room, only one worker dared talk with me. We hid in a bathroom since they were fired for talking to whites. These slave camps are owned by Gulf & Western, but the real slave holders are the government and the public, who pay up to half the operating costs to avoid cheaper imported sugar.

## 4 Are Convicted of Enslaving Migrant Workers in the South

Special to The New York Times

TAMPA, Fla., Aug. 18 — A farm labor crew chief, his two sons and another man were convicted today of holding migrant workers in slavery. After a day and a half of deliberation, a Federal jury found the men guilty of forcefully keeping the workers, recruited along the East Coast in 1979 and 1980, in involuntary servitude at two Southern labor camps through threats of violence and actual beatings. Attorneys for the four defendants, Willie Warren, 49 years old, Willie Warren Jr., 26, Richard Warren, 24,

said Mr. Warren was within his rights when he sold the workers food and wine. He also said that many of workers who said they were against their will were taken by Warren to doctors and social work outside the camp.

“These are not the acts of a man trying to run a slave camp,” Mr. Warren said in his argument at the close of a 10-day trial.

Richard Simmons, 45, an unemployed cook from Atlanta, told the ju



1974 - Palm Beach County, FL



1996 - Benson, NC



1974 - Belle Glade, FL



1974 - rural Palm Beach County, FL



1974 - Belle Glade, FL



1974 - Belle Glade, FL



1974 - Palm Beach County, FL



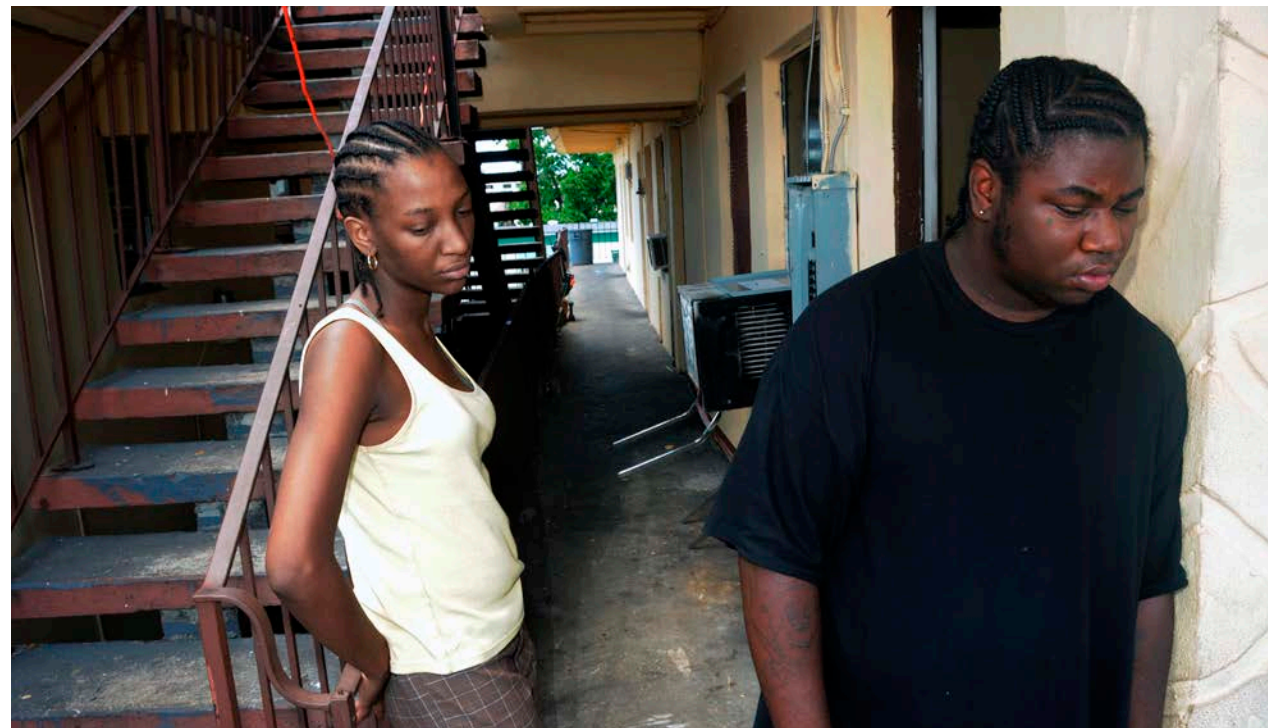
1974 - Belle Glade, FL



1974 - Hwy 29, FL



1974 - Allendale County, SC



2009 - Belle Glade, FL



1974 - rural Greenville, NC

Today, I find more and more of these slave camps and often take my shocked university students to visit them. In North Carolina, I found bars where “slave-catchers” kidnap drunk men to take to their camps. These camps separate and destroy the black family, as slavery has always done. Wives and children are not allowed in the camps. Several men I talked to had not seen their families for up to eight months. A bloodstained black hitchhiker I picked up after a lecture late one night had been so beaten up by the guards during his escape attempt that I had to treat his wounds. He told of another whose legs were crushed by the guards after an escape attempt and who now had to walk on crutches. “Welcome back to the free world,” I said. But he shook his head. He was on his way up to North Carolina’s camps, and voting with his feet was not a real choice for someone imprisoned by indifferent American voters in this gulag. Elsewhere, I saw migrant camps where whole families could live together but were so dependent on each other’s earnings that they couldn’t afford to let their children leave work to go to school. Even today much of America’s fruit is picked by children under the age of 16. It’s worth remembering when we in Europe are bombarded with cheap American fruit products that these are not only the result of wages only half as high as in Scandinavia, but also the “grapes of wrath” of farm workers, whom we have chosen not to provide with any social safety net like ours. They have no unemployment benefits, no free medical care or education, rent subsidies, child supplement, nurseries, or kindergartens. When they get sick, they starve and are evicted like Sonny, on the right, in 2009 in Belle Glade. The cheap fruit we enjoy makes us guilty of de facto slavery.



1974 - Belle Glade, FL with white landlord

### Florida migrant workers fight ‘slave labor’ in court

By Deborah Sharp  
USA TODAY 1992

IMMOKALEE, Fla. — When Benjamin Torres saw the job offer in a Houston newspaper, it proved too tempting to resist.

A company called La Pisca promised a job picking grapefruit in Florida with pay of up to \$300 a week.

All Torres had to do was sign a contract promising to repay the company for transportation costs ranging from \$125 to \$150. It was also agreed he would pay for room and board.

So Torres signed. But the 45-year-old father of eight didn’t get what he bargained for.

A Justice Department investigation and separate civil lawsuit suggest that Houston-based La Pisca forced Torres and many other migrant workers into indentured servitude — charges the company denies.



1992 - USA Today



2009 - Belle Glade, FL



1996 - Immokalee, FL



1974 - Apopka, FL

One day I saw the Coca-Cola name on the trucks that drive orange juice from the camps to the northern states and found out that Coca-Cola, under the name Minute Maid, owns quite a few of these slave camps. Coca-Cola's slave camps aren't the worst in Florida although many children suffer from deficiency diseases and anemia, which makes them exhausted and emaciated. When my book first came out, Coca-Cola sent me a letter, admitting how terrible the conditions were, but also stating they'd now embarked on reforms and offered to fly me down there so that I could testify that they'd improved conditions. I was delighted that my social critique was rewarded with a vacation in Florida. But when I came back a few years later, the only visible change was a name change on some of the chimneys.



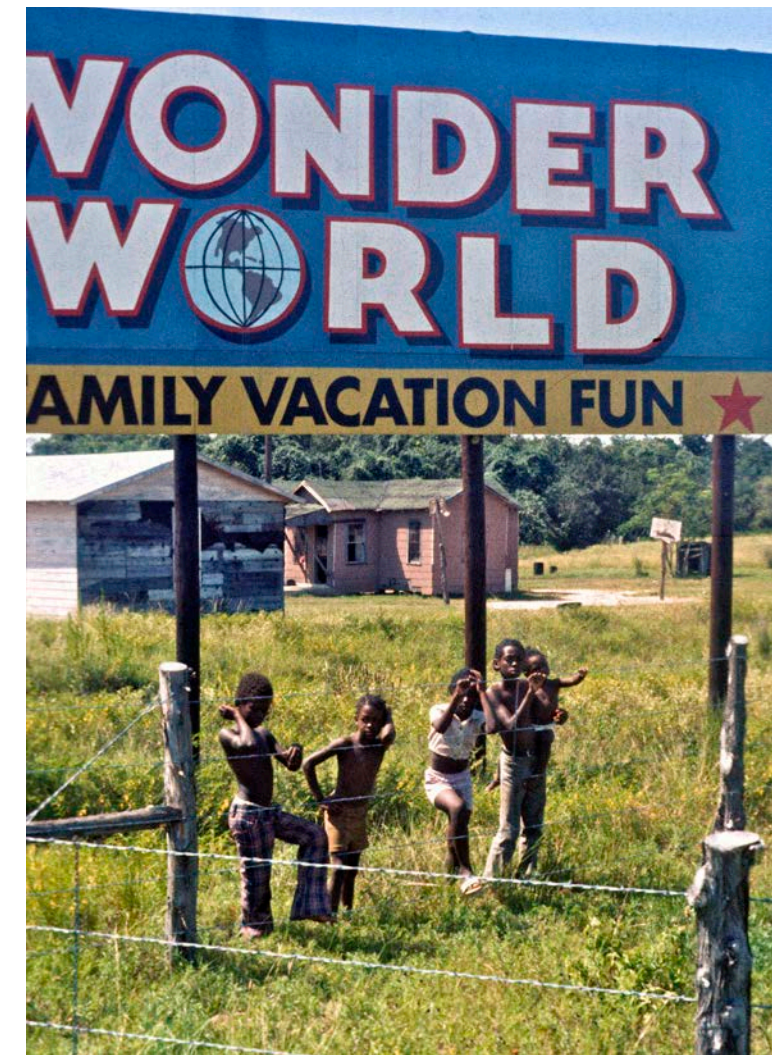
1974 - rural Homestead, FL



1974 - Hwy 29, FL



1975 - NY



1974 - rural TX



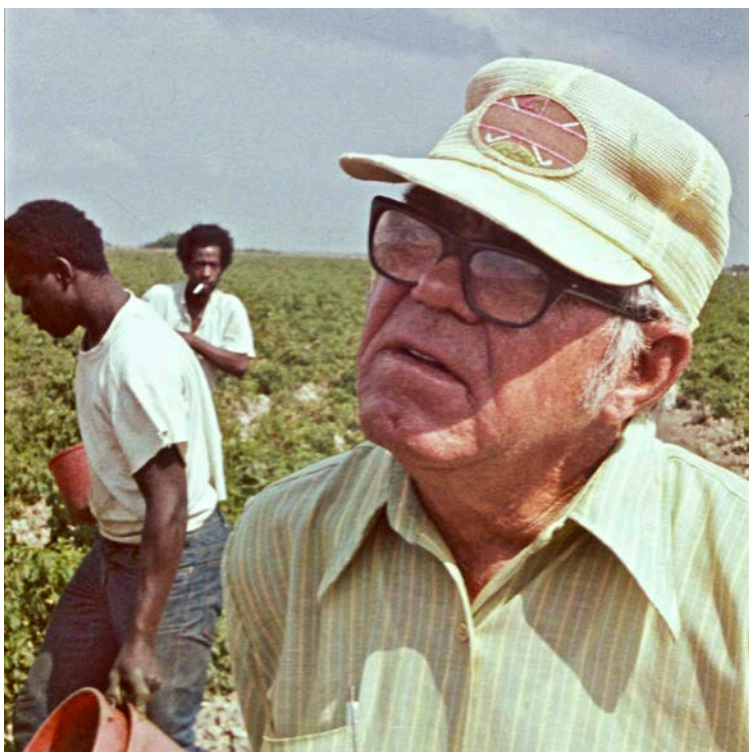
1974 - rural Homestead, FL



1994 - rural Bullock County, AL



1974 - Hwy 29, FL



1974 - Hwy 29, FL

In South Florida, I came to live with a white tomato grower who told me he earned nearly a million dollars a year on migrant workers. I got kicked out when he discovered my photographs of “niggers”:

- Now what is your main purpose? It isn't just touring. I wasn't born yesterday. I tell you the truth, you're from that civil rights stuff up North.
- No I'm just studying agriculture for a book ...
- Well, if you stay with these slummy people, that's the kind of slummy book you gonna have, ain't that right? It depends on what kind of people you talk to. You say you talk to both whites and colored.
- I trust everybody.
- You will find colored people treated better here than anywhere in the United States. They are happy.

I always tried to respect the honesty of these southern racists, so when my tape recorder later revealed that I, in the heat of the argument, had told him a (white) lie, I felt a bit depressed. I had at that time no idea that my photos would one day end up in a book.

#056

Later I got to live with some of his field workers, who were blacks and fugitive Mexicans. Their situation is depressing, to put it mildly. Many are too destroyed to talk about their situation, but this woman, who was one of the few poor whites in the fields, told me, in her little rented shack, about the conditions:

- Have you ever been on welfare or food stamps? - If I could get it I would, because I really need it. -How much does your husband make a week usually? - Not much, thirty-five or forty dollars a week, maybe. That don't hardly pay the rent and for something to eat. -And you work seven days a week? - Seven days a week for 40 dollars, yes!
- Was there times where you had nothing to eat? - There's been times where I had nothing, not even a cigarette. I've been down where I just had sugar, water and bread for three weeks. The people who ain't got it, they really suffer.
- But who would you blame for it all? - The government. It is trying to starve us out. -You don't blame any of the people around here? - No, I don't blame my people. I blame my government.

#057



1974 - Immokalee, FL

- I'm glad you don't blame the blacks or the Mexicans for it. A lot of people do, you know.
- No, this comes from the government itself. That's the reason there has been all the rioting and all this stuff... I've had my clothes and everything burned out three times.



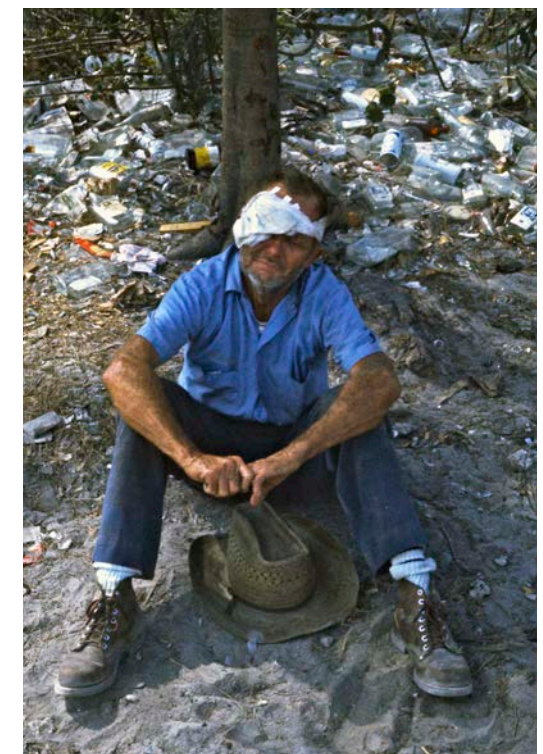
1974 - Immokalee, FL



1974 - Immokalee, FL

It was a pleasant surprise to find a poor white who didn't indirectly blame the blacks for her own misfortune since it's common among poor whites to turn them into scapegoats. In her town, Immokalee, several of the white owners of slave camps were imprisoned by Florida's attorney general.

But conditions have gotten far worse since my first visits, when armed guards fired at all intruders. When NBC arrived, the journalists were shot at and failed to film anything. Even white rednecks inclined to violence warned me not to go there and didn't dare drive me even in daylight. I ended up living there for a week with some poor migrant workers, but to this day I'm amazed I escaped with my life. Somehow I managed to make friends with one of the black guards, who gave me a little food and followed me at a distance in the streets to "protect" me. Both he and the police chief told me that 25 dead bodies had been found in the streets in the last half year in this town of only 3,000 inhabitants. Every single night I could hear gunshots.



1974 - Immokalee, FL

I saw more blood there than anywhere else in America but only dared to photograph a few things. This Mexican was stabbed while I was sitting next to him. Every morning there was a row of shabby individuals along the road who'd been knocked down and robbed of everything the night before and were now trying to hitchhike out of town. But many never got out of this slave camp. What came to interest me most was not the dead bodies but the live ones—people in whom everything was extinct. These exhausted wretches, who'd managed to survive by working hard seven days a week, had slowly succumbed and were now just lying around waiting to die. At night they slept in the streets. One of them is squeezed in between the Pepsi and the Coca-Cola machines.

Twenty-five years later, the picture hadn't changed. In 2008 the Immokalee Worker's Anti-Slavery Campaign won its lawsuit against what the US Attorney General called "outright slavery." When I drove a hitchhiker home to Immokalee in 1996, my fellow traveler, Eli Saeter, a Norwegian, wrote about the trip in her book: "Outside the house where we are now, the hiker found two people killed. One had his head shot away. The other was stabbed. I'm scared. I dare not sleep. Jacob is exhausted, has driven far too far. He sleeps like a rock."



1974 - Immokalee, FL



1974 - Immokalee, FL

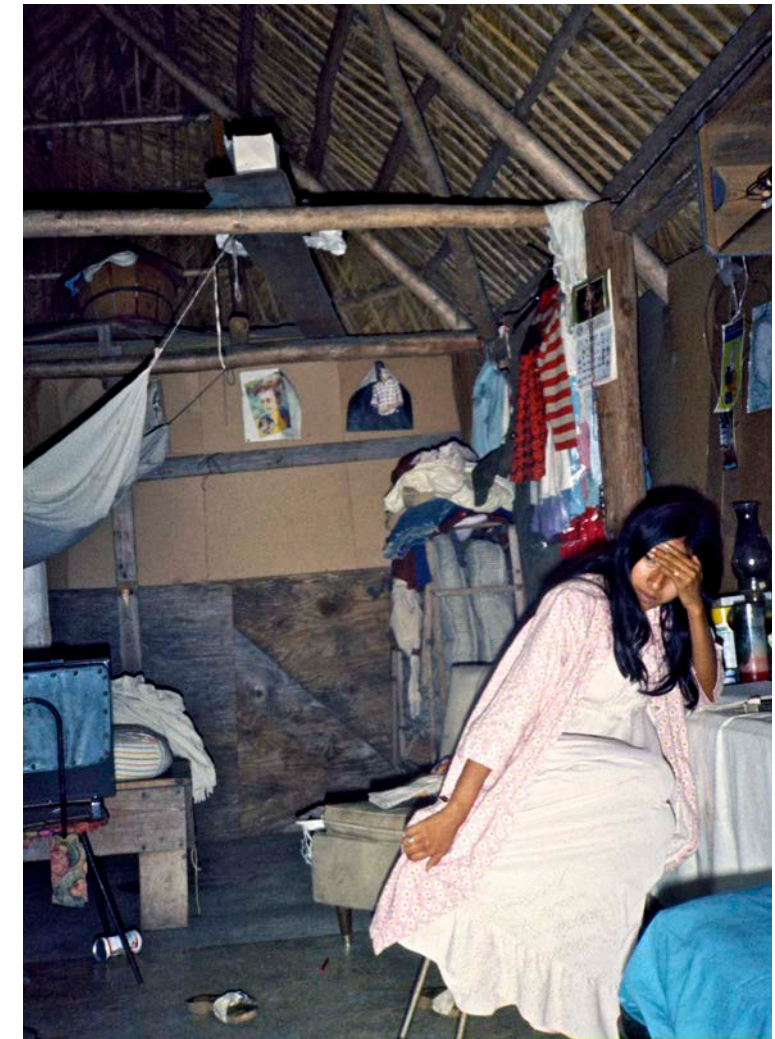


1974 - Immokalee, FL

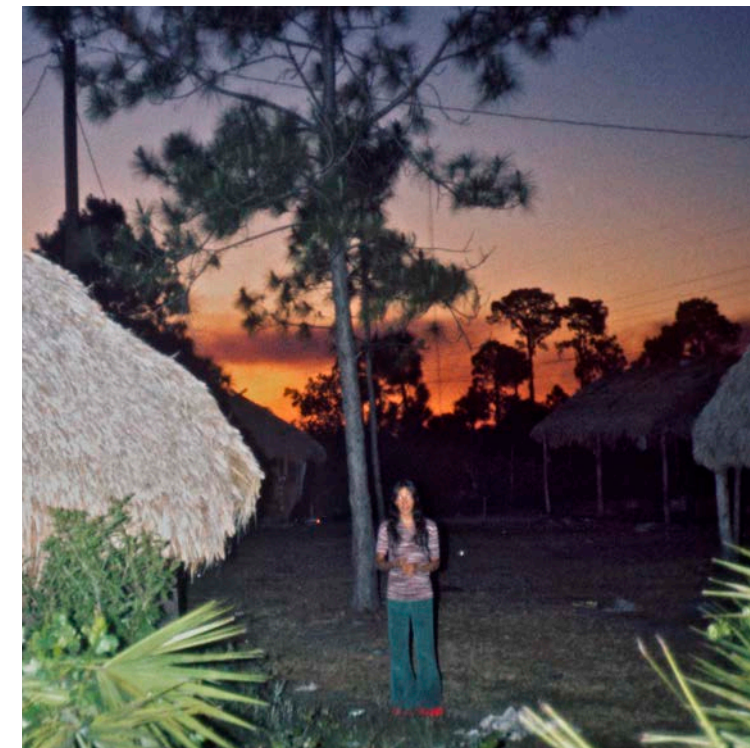
I soon received so many death threats because of my photography that I, like the runaway black slaves of long ago, found refuge with the Indians outside the city. I lived here with this Seminole woman. I found it romantic to live in a palm-leaf hut, but the romance wasn't to last only a couple of days. One night I was awoken by shouts ordering me out of the hut. I felt my last hour had come, but had no choice other than to step out into the headlights of a pickup truck from which men with guns shouted to me in Mexican accents: "You be out of town before sunrise. If not, you will never see another sunrise!"

I knew they were deadly serious, and the woman didn't dare to harbor me any longer, so I slipped out of town like a shadow, grateful that the Seminoles had given me shelter as they once had done for blacks.

That I had indeed lived outside the law I saw years later when I returned and found that the Seminoles had set up the United States' first Native American casino, laying the groundwork for a multibillion-dollar industry to replace alligator wrestling and their previous types of gambling. Yet I wouldn't be surprised if whites long ago took it over in the same way they took over so many black businesses.



1974 - Immokalee Reservation, FL

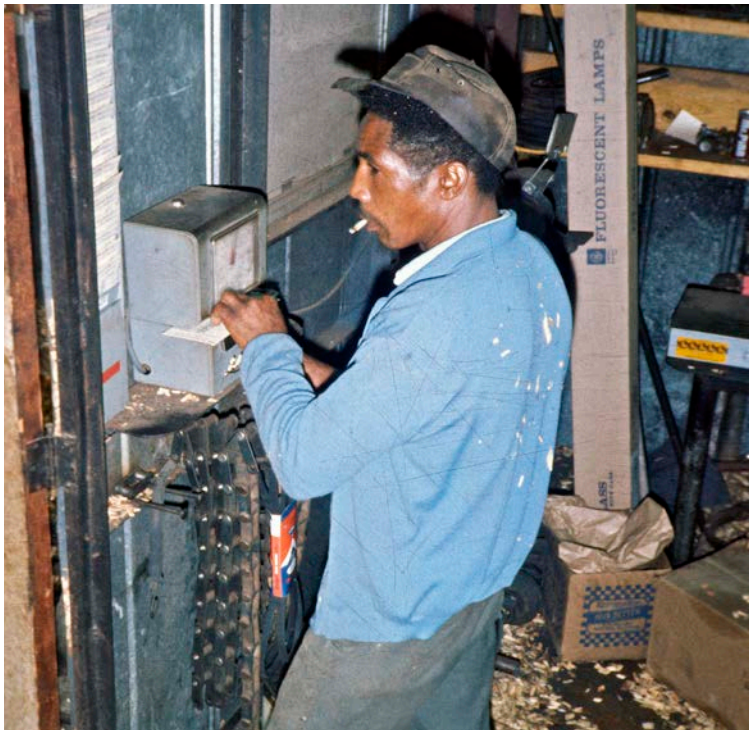


1974 - Immokalee Reservation, FL



1974 - Immokalee Reservation, FL

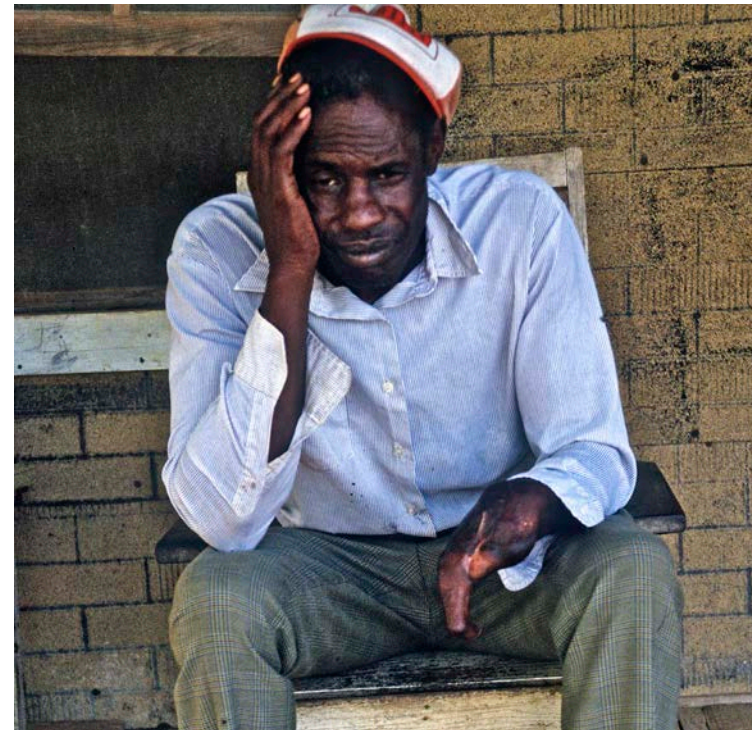




1975 - Washington, GA

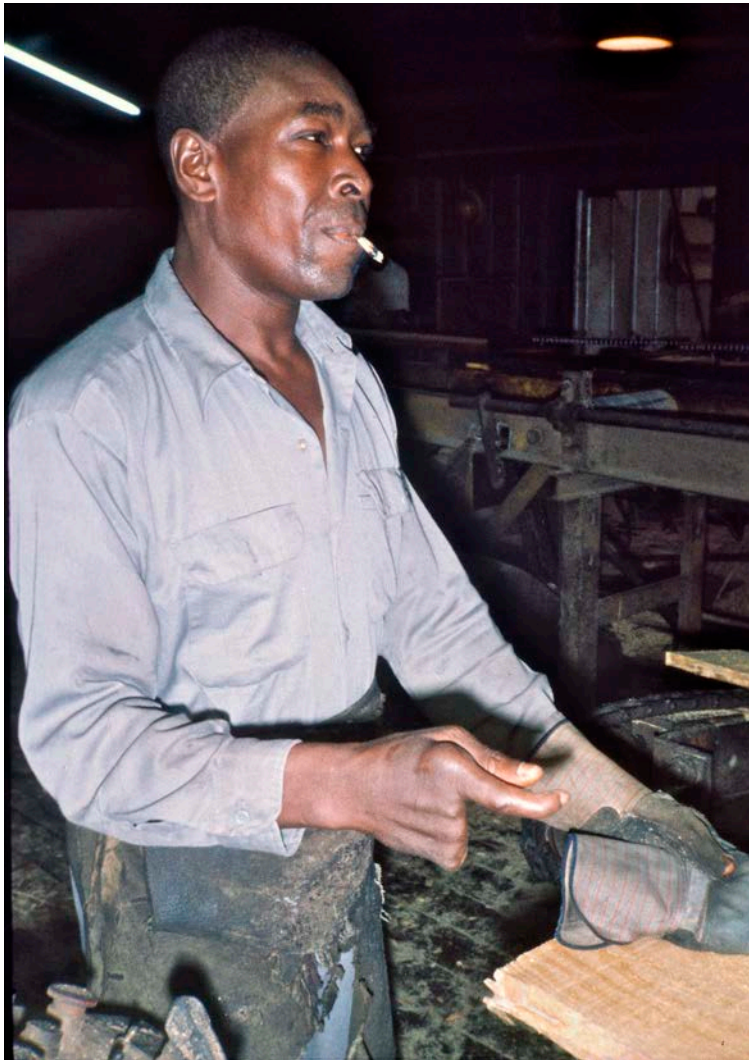


1975 - Washington, GA



1996 - rural Bullock County, AL

In a society that makes such violent inroads into life, in a country where European concepts such as workers' management and unions are light years from the worker's consciousness, the time-clock easily becomes the new whip of the slave master—a symbol of our perennial violence. When, five years later, I returned to see Sam Kator (photo on page 65) to give him my book, I found he'd been beaten to death by police in a prison cell. Traveling in the world of black Americans inevitably becomes a journey into the soul and into the history of every person you meet. You begin to understand the traits and tendencies we've impressed on the souls and collective consciousness of black people through slavery as well as how, ever since, we've not only perpetuated and revived both their distress patterns and our own, but also intensified them.

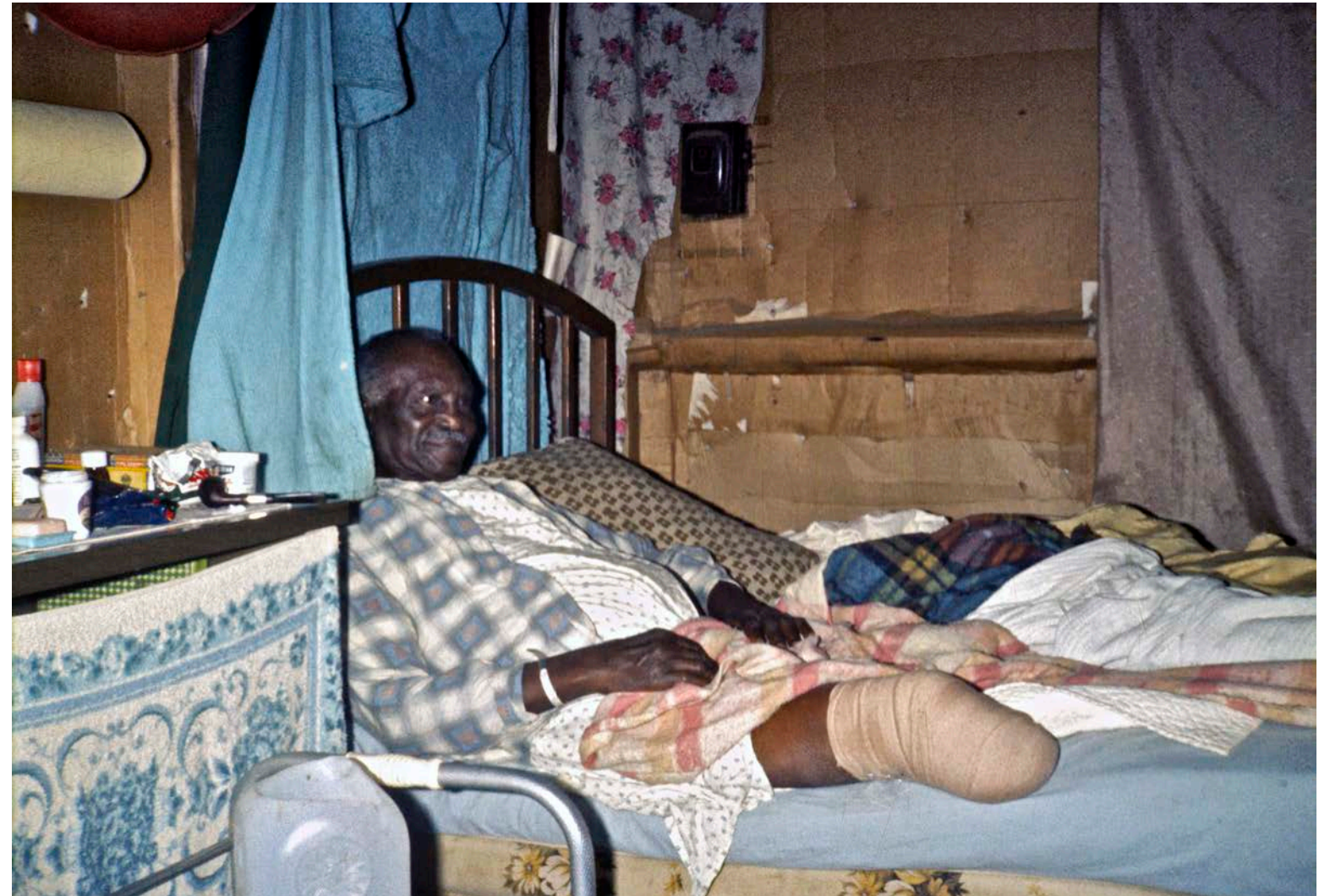


1975 - Washington, GA



1996 - Immokalee, FL

In my search for answers as to why we constantly see an enemy image in our fellow human beings—an image we use to justify violence—I wondered about the working conditions that continue to blunt us in body and mind. Rough work is still performed by blacks while whites direct it. Many blacks have been killed in these sawmills and even more feet and fingers have been cut off—as on this worker. In Central America I saw how the US provides military support for the bloody repression of trade unions, yet I was shocked to find almost no trade unions in the Southern States that could protect such workers. These workers received no compensation when the saw cut their fingers off, and they had to be back at work two days later, for as one was told, “there are a lot of hungry niggers outside waiting to get work.”



1973 - Tunica, LA



1996 - rural Bullock County, AL



1974 - rural Bullock County, AL

*Poor slave, take the shackles off your body,  
poor slave, put the shackles on your mind.*

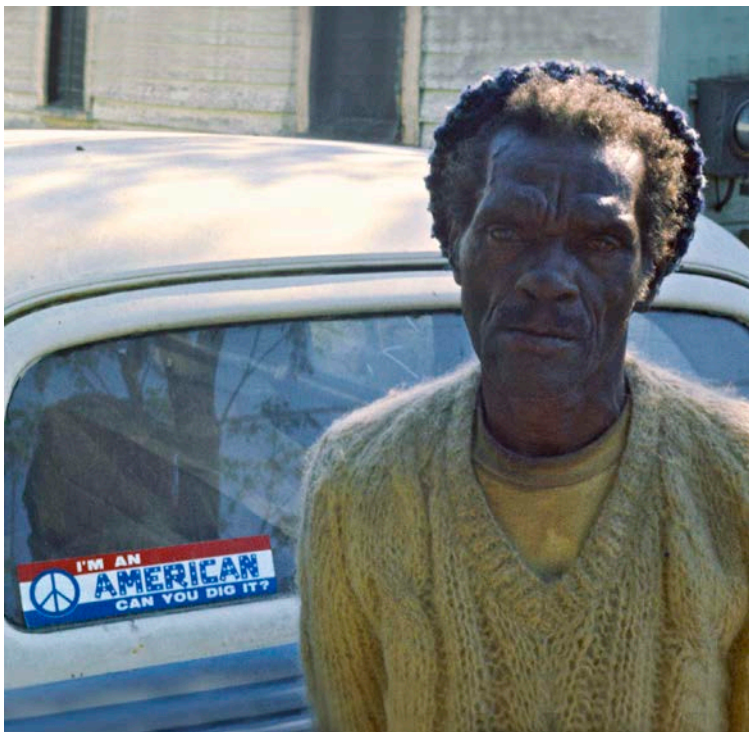
*Please listen to me carefully  
and if I'm wrong then correct me.  
But if I'm right my song do praise,  
now let's see if we agree:  
The definition of a slave  
means one not free entirely  
so a slave is still a slave  
if he can't think independently.*



1994 - rural Bullock County, AL



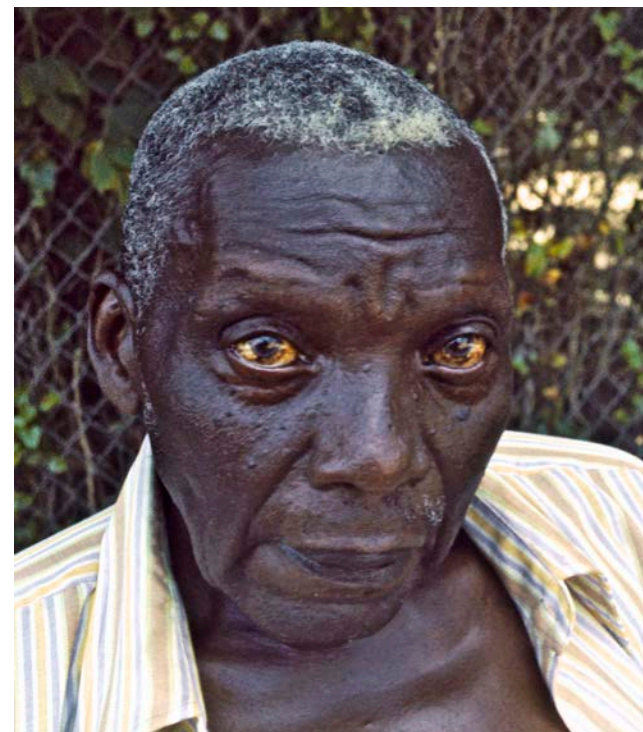
1974 - Washington, NC



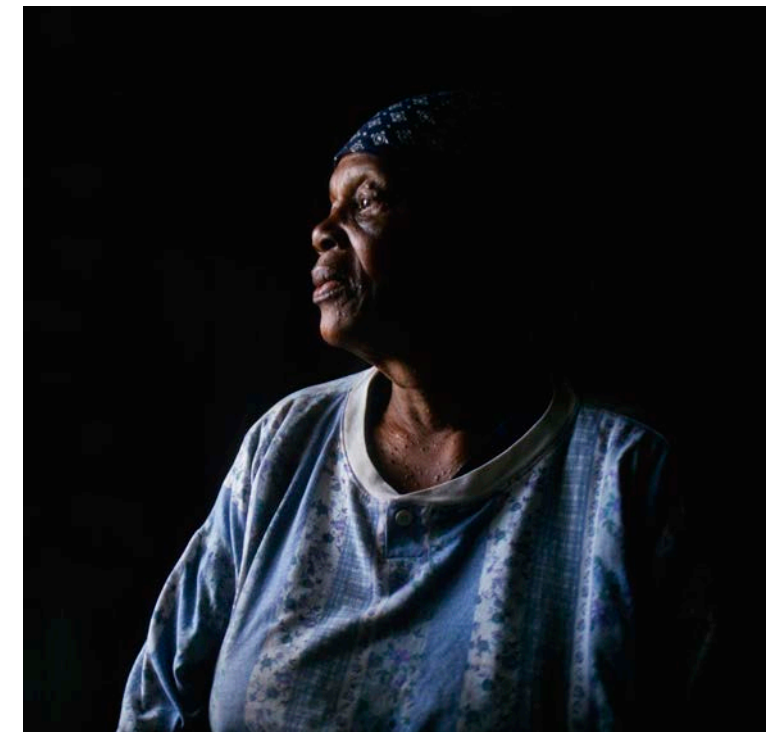
1974 - Greenville, NC



1973 - St. Francisville, LA - still Jim Crow



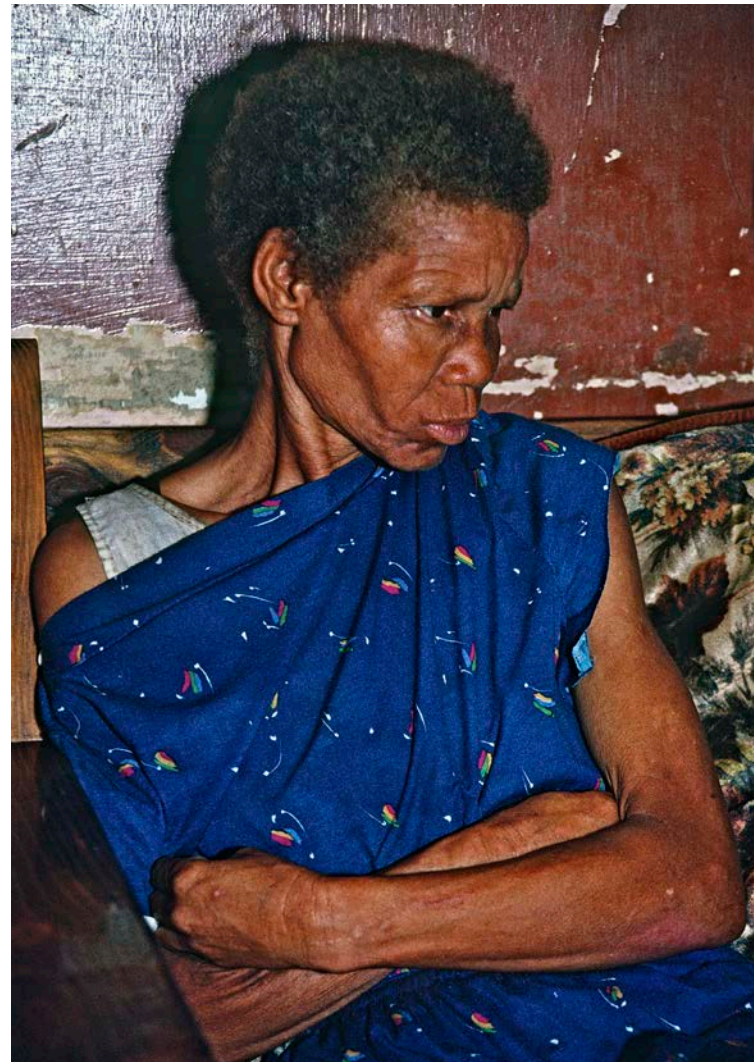
1975 - Dallas, TX



1994 - Timica, LA

*A tree is still a tree  
though it sheds its leaves when winter comes.  
But it blooms again in spring  
for it did not lose its roots at all.  
But a slave remains a slave  
without the knowledge of his roots  
until he's taught the past  
not just some, but all the truth.*

*Poor slave, take the shackles off your body,  
poor slave, put the shackles on your mind.*



1996 - Bullock County, AL



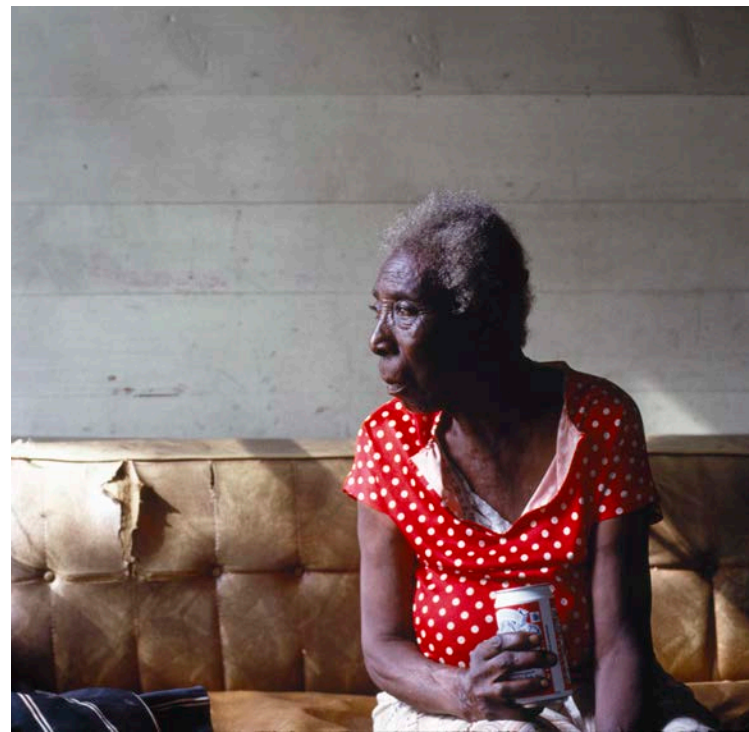
1974 - Immokalee, FL



1974 - rural Alachua, FL



1973 - Baltimore



1994 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Washington, NC

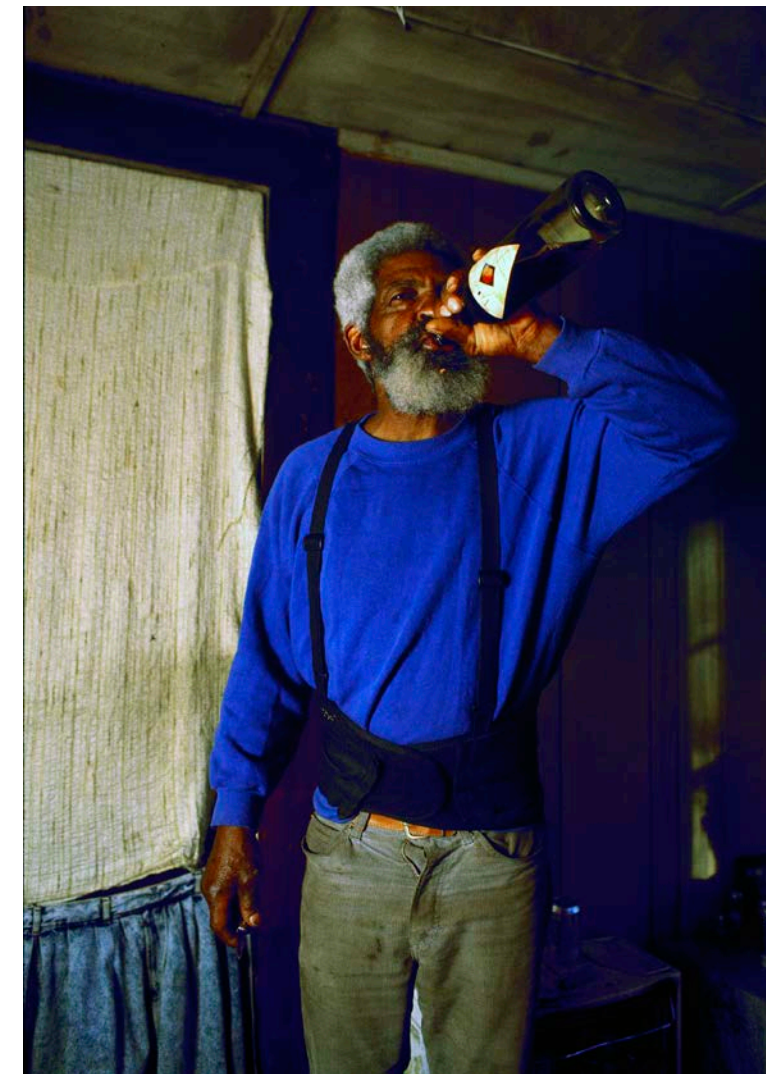


1978 - Zebulon, NC

*There was a brother the other day  
telling me he's feeling high  
but I just sadly had to sigh  
for drugs and booze ain't glory,  
and if I had the chance to get high  
I would tell the truth and not a lie,  
for the highest high a man can get  
is from wisdom, knowledge and understanding.*

*Poor slave, ease the pressure off your body,  
poor slave, put it on your mind...*

#065

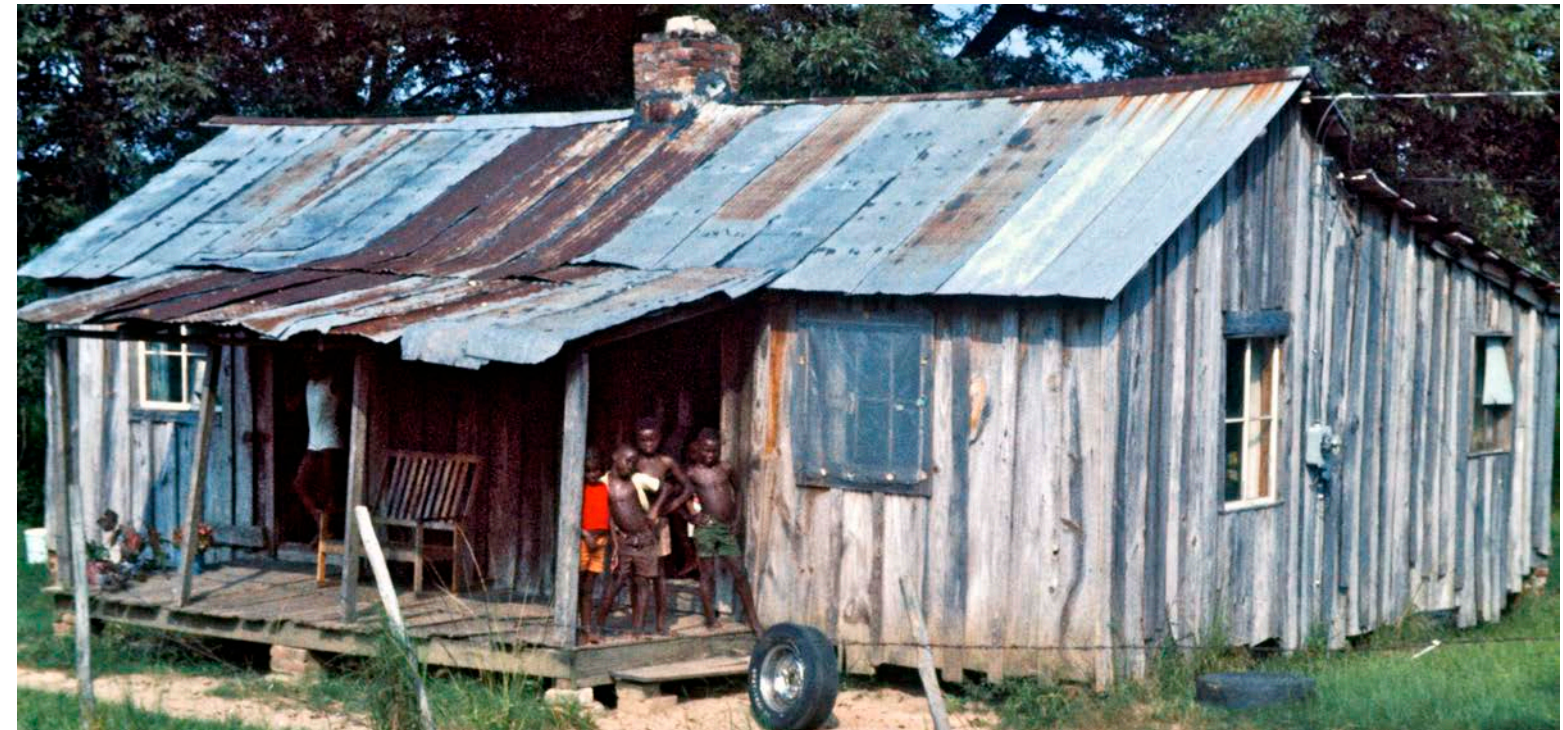


1996 - Philadelphia, MS

When I lived with the underclass, I understood how the physical shackles also became mental shackles. These shacks in which we've confined our slain brother Cain since slavery are utterly inhuman and do not admit a feeling of freedom or the opportunity to unfold intellectually and creatively. One hundred years ago, we lived next door to blacks. Seeing our neighbors consigned to inferior living conditions is incomprehensible and hurtful to the innocent white child. Growing up, we're slowly manipulated into developing hostile images—with the result that the natural joy of being with blacks in the US or immigrants in Europe is violently suppressed. When the vicious circle of oppression is thus fulfilled, it becomes natural for whites to rationalize away how these outcasts live right next to their own luxury homes in miserable shacks, often smaller than this original slave cabin.



1978 - Bullock County, AL



1975 - rural Bullock County, AL



1974 - original slave cabin on plantation, SC



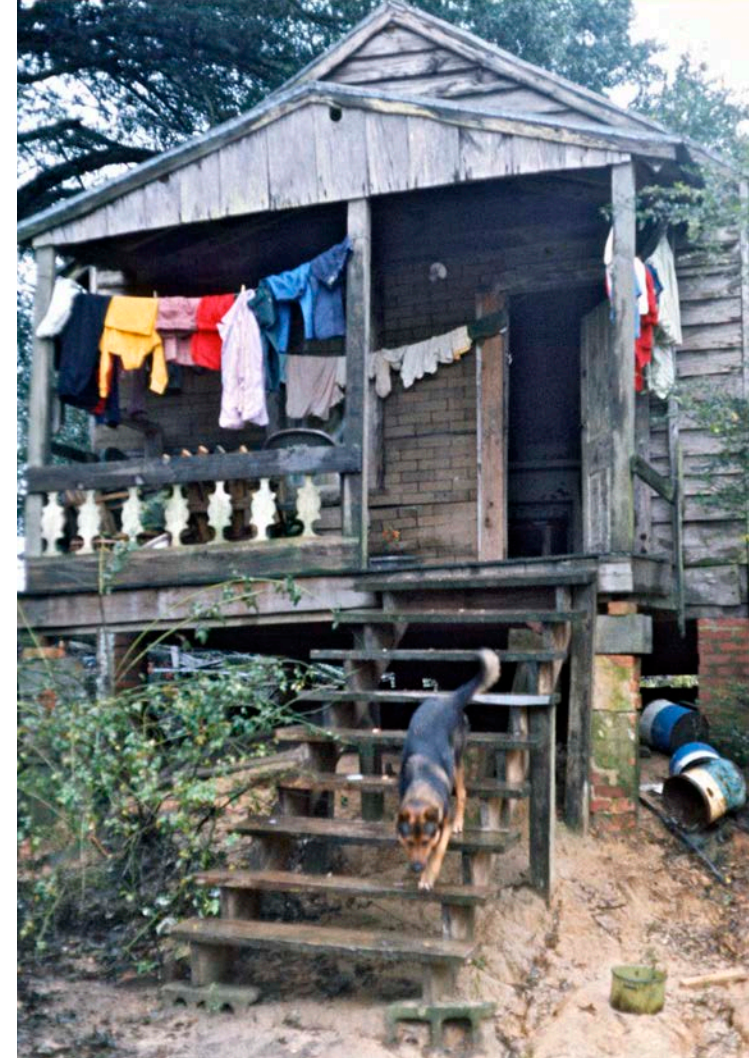
1973 - near Bamberg, SC

Or as white students often say after my lectures, "Before I saw your show, it never occurred to me that real people lived in those shacks!"

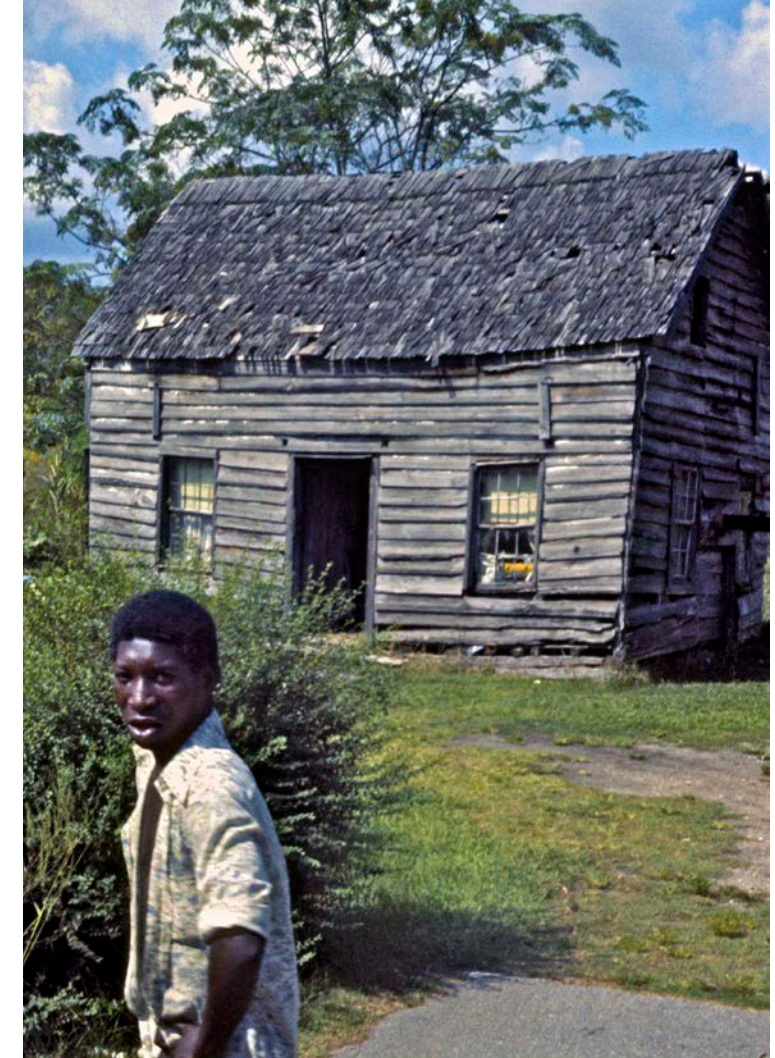
Yet, the gloomy abyss in our minds, reflected by these slum conditions, is far worse than in my photographs. The pictures don't show how the wind whistles through the cracks, making it impossible to keep warm in winter or the sagging rotten floors with splits so wide that snakes and vermin crawl right into the living room. The powerlessness I feel trying to photograph these stifling sensations mirrors the powerlessness they impose on our trapped victims. Even if I could have afforded a wide-angle lens to record the narrowness, the images couldn't show the absence of running water, toilets, showers, and electricity. I saw thousands of Americans grow up in the glow of the kerosene lamp.



1974 - rural Savannah SC



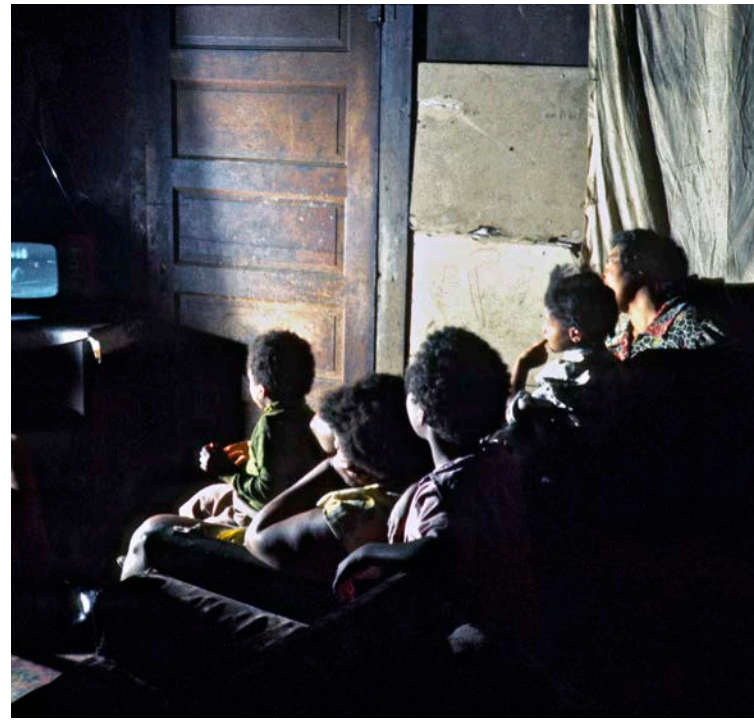
1973 - rural MS



1974 - rural Savannah, SC



1974 - rural La Crosse, FL



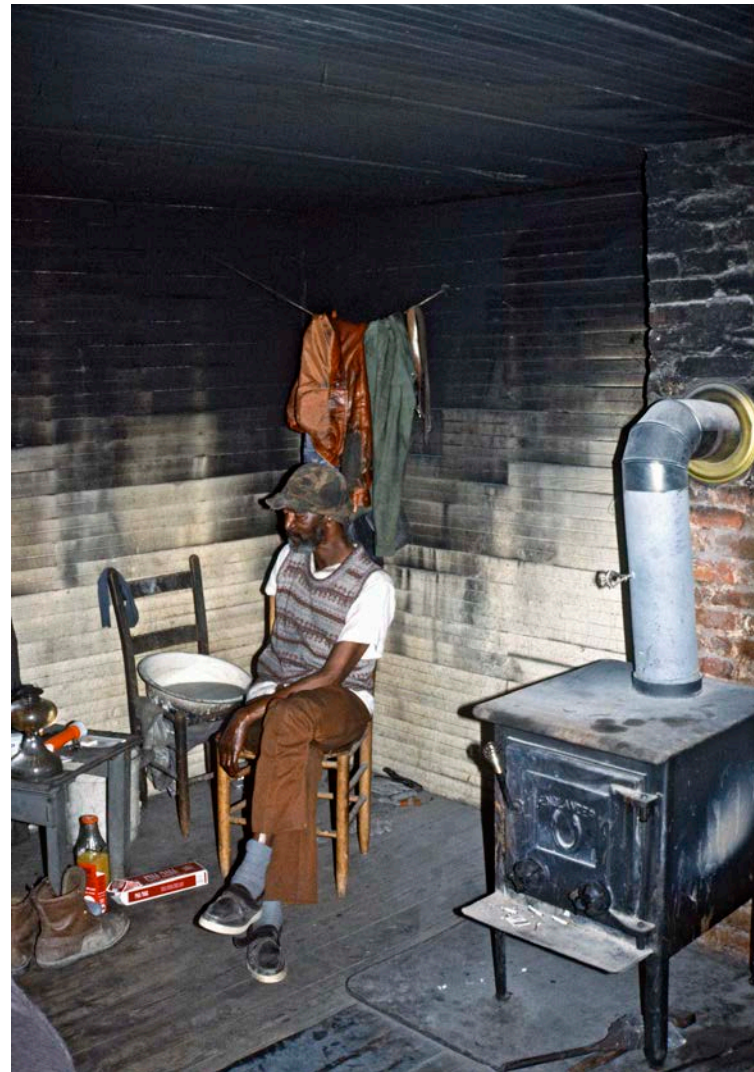
1973 - Zebulon, NC



1990 - Burke County, GA



1974 - Jacksonville, FL



1996 - rural Capron, VA



1975 - rural Burke County, GA

In the same way I didn't feel capable of portraying the strange psychic feeling of suddenly being transferred to a condition we in Denmark haven't known for the last hundred years (although it is delightful, after all the stifling noise characterizing American homes, to suddenly stand in the silence of no TV or radio). Liberal whites, who don't fear their lights will be turned off, sometimes argue during my lectures that blacks should be happy for the same reason. With such romanticism we reveal a terrifying insensitivity toward the psychology of involuntary poverty.

And even if you are perhaps free from the invasion of the commercials of affluent society inside your shack, you nevertheless have your prospect destroyed by the aggressive omnipresent billboards right outside.

# Shacks today

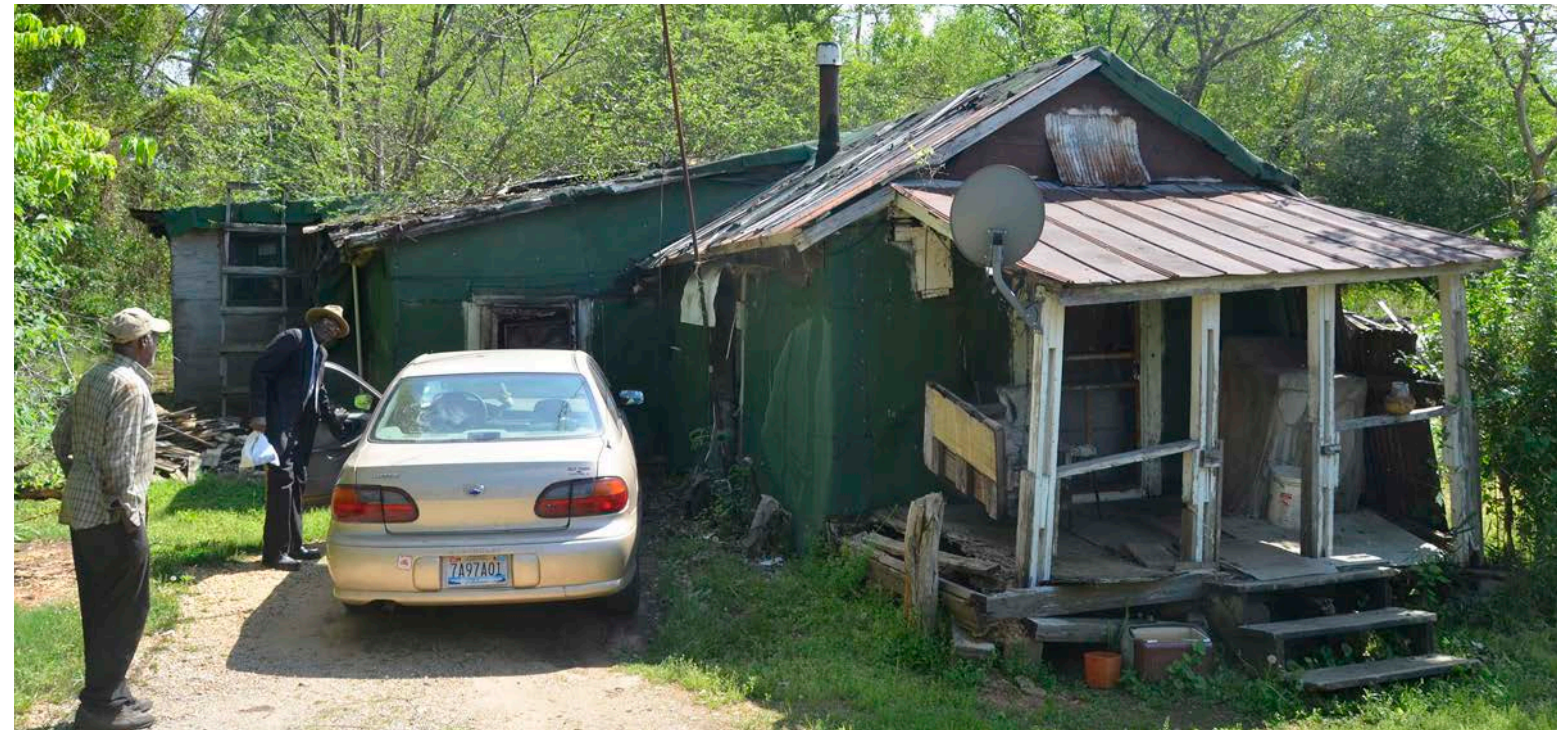
In the 70'es I took thousands of photos of shacks to give to the Schomburg Collection in Harlem in the belief they would soon be history. How wrong I was. I still see delapidated shacks everywhere. Here are a few from my last tour in 2012.



2003 - Union Parish, LA



2009 - St. Francisville, LA



2012 - Preacher returning home from church, Perry County, AL



2012 - Old man with cell phone in his shack, Perry County, AL



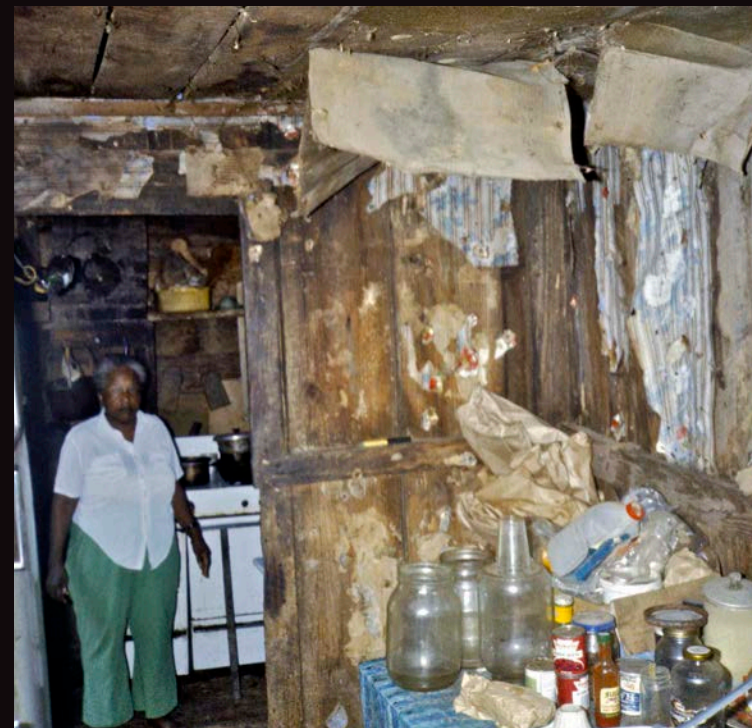
2009 - St. Francisville, LA - 98-year old blind woman



2012 - Preacher relaxing in his shack after church, Perry County, AL



1975 - rural Tuskegee, AL



1975 - Bullock County, AL



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC



1975 - Bullock County, AL





1973 - Natchez, MS

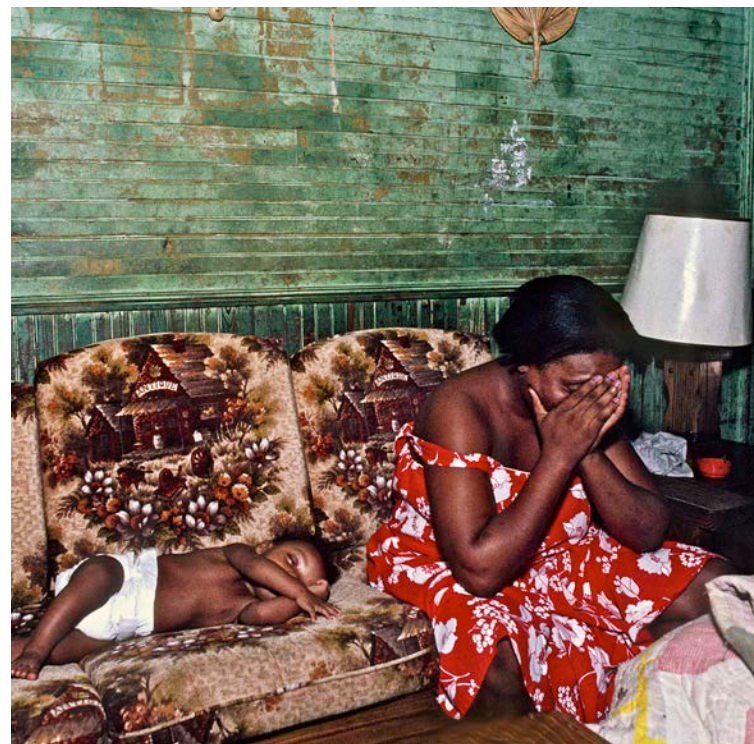


1974 - Palm Beach, FL

Similarly, I felt it difficult to photograph America's rich upper class. Unlike today's boastful rich, the rich displayed guilt in the 1970s. The gap between rich and poor has grown dramatically since the 1970s, when the US had achieved its greatest equality ever. At that time, the upper class allowed only "modest" mansions and ranches around the country. I could only photograph one room at a time, which in no way showed the true dimensions of their mansions. Although the photographic gap between rich and poor was small, the psychic leaps I took from shack to plantation home or urban ghetto to millionaire home always felt as if I'd taken a trip from Earth to the moon.

So I used Søren Kierkegaard as my guidance:

*"The philosophy of our time is like the rich man who on a dark, but starry night goes out in his comfortable carriage with its brilliant head - lights and carries his own light and darkness with him. He enjoys his security and the light which is cast on the immediate surroundings, but he does not understand that this strong glare dazzles him and prevents him from seeing the stars which the poor peasant, on foot or in his lamp less cart, can observe to perfection in the vastness of the sky."*



1995 - Montgomery County, AL



1974 - Alachua County, FL

## On hitch-hiking and psychic leaps



1971 - Newton, MA



1974 - Daytona Beach, FL



1974 - Cambridge, MA



1975 - Oglethorpe County, GA



1974 - Greenville, NC



1975 - rural Burke County, GA

Hitch-hiking in America is a perpetual attempt to try to overcome people's fear and make it a positive experience for them to pick you up. When you see the thrilling red brake lights and rush up in the dark and tear open the car door only to look into the barrel of a frightened driver's gun you know that it is to your mutual advantage and security that you should be forced to show the contents of your pockets or passport in this way. Trust can be promoted with a nice elaborate sign. I experiment with all kinds of slogans such as "Saving fuel for you" (during the 1973 fuel crisis) and "Bible belt - and no Good Samaritan?", but sad to say the only thing which gives people real trust is advertising that I am not American.

Trust is essential for demographic hitch-hiking. Rides with women are regarded among hitchhikers as a special psychic encouragement and security after all the aggressions of so-called "rednecks" and "perverts." But women are a problem, too. Since foreigners usually find white American women extremely open and, unlike female drivers in Europe, they often invite you home making themselves extremely vulnerable. On the one hand it is important always to let the woman set the boundaries of the new friendship. In this way there is some chance of avoiding the sexism inevitably imposed on you as a man. Society has never given you the choice of whether or not to become a sexist or racist, instead you are left trying to counter-act the negative acts that cause so much suffering. Without an awareness of your suffering you are bound to hurt the oppressed with your "master-vibrations." On the other hand you cannot just - as with male drivers - float along into any situation, as you can then easily cause hurt feelings. To be a good vagabond is harder than being a tightrope walker.

Even the most competent vagabond makes mistakes here, not least because you yourself are so vulnerable and the immense hardships on the road often make you fall in love with types you would never otherwise open up to. I had a striking experience of giving such injurious signals when a driver offered me the so-called "love drug" MDA which makes you unbelievably in love with all people. But the next ride I had was with a stiff 80-year-old woman who due to my ungovernable love couldn't help being affected and in the course of the next hours began to behave like an amorous teenager. So, we were both left a bit crestfallen when the intoxication disappeared. Among the most beautiful things you experience as a vagabond are, however, such relationships with old people whom you one way or another

manage to avoid in normal life. They are the most harmonious group for the hitchhiker as they - unlike working people - live with the same sense of time as the vagabond and furthermore can give your journey its important fourth dimension: the historical perspective. When you hear statements from them like "What this country needs is another great depression to bring us all together again" you experience the enormous alienation which makes being together with the vagabond so important for these people. But the hyperactive ones can kill you with their psychic leaps! In Florida a 72-year old rich man, the notorious "Wild Bill" Gandall, picked me up. When he heard that I photographed he made me his private photographer. He wanted me to expose the "filthy rich" on Palm Beach and took me to the most exclusive parties, where we wallowed in champagne, women and multimillionaires. Immediately afterward he would take both me and luxurious gifts over to the black slums in West Palm Beach or the slave camps outside the city. Then in the next moment he would be driving around to report these "criminal" conditions to police, courts and city councils. From six in the morning to two at night he stormed and raged over the injustices. If we were lost, he would stop anywhere to ask directions. One night it was outside a full suburban church. He ran in, stopped the service, presented me as a minister's son from Denmark, then delivered a thunderous indignant sermon after which he conducted the choir. After half an hour the congregation lay in fits of ringing laughter and he suddenly remembered his real mission and sent church-goers to their cars to get maps, after which a large circle lay on the church floor to find "Indian Road". Every day he had new projects. One day he learned from some young people about "organic farming" and got so inspired that we got started right away on procuring four truckloads of manure from the Everglades in order to fly it over to his estate in the Bahamas. After a week like this I was totally defeated from lack of sleep and proportion and had to leave. Oh, how I enjoyed the freedom on the highway again! But the next ride was with an 82-year old woman who was so hyperactive that she only napped while I was actually driving. If she had not sent me up to Philadelphia a few days later to get one of her cars and let me use her credit card to invite my poor friends from the cotton and tobacco fields as well as passing drifters and hitch-hikers to the finest restaurants on the way back to Florida, she might very well have worn me out completely.

*Letter to Mog, an American friend.*



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC

One reason I can never get tired of traveling in America is that it's the only country I know of where you can take such psychic leaps almost daily. Sometimes, when I lived with, for instance, a poor welfare mother in a northern ghetto, I would go hitchhiking north of the city, where the rich people live, in order not to burden her food budget. Often I was picked up by a well-off businessman, and when I entertained him with my travel stories, I would occasionally be invited home for dinner in his big home with central air-conditioning. During dinner I'd tell about how the mother with three children in the ghetto rarely could afford decent food. If I was with a conservative family, sooner or later they'd usually say I was certainly welcome to live with them so that I didn't have to return to those conditions. But liberal families would generally load me up with expensive food items from the freezer and drive me all the way to the border of the ghetto and give me money for a taxi the rest of the way. "Here comes Robin Hood," I would say and laugh proudly when I came home. Being a good vagabond, I'd learned, is a matter of give and take. One doctor in Skokie gave me eight pot roasts for a welfare mother in South Chicago, and a businessman in North Philadelphia gave



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC

me a big bag of tokens so the son in my family in South Philly wouldn't have to walk to Temple University. I rarely found the same effusive compassion for the poor in the South, but I experienced psychic leaps there too.

One morning I was cutting firewood for this 104-year-old woman in South Carolina. She and her 77-year-old daughter, Scye Franklin, usually had to cut their own firewood. Their shack resembled the medieval houses in the Open-Air Museum in Copenhagen though it had a well (many did not). Scye's husband was 97, and all three slept in the same bed to keep warm when the fireplace turned cold in the morning. Their house was owned by the white landlord (living behind the trees in the rear), to whom they paid \$30 a month.

Since then, when I hitchhiked by and showed drivers my photos, they'd say, "You must have taken these in the '60s." I'd say, "Well, come and visit my friends in that shack right there in the fields." They'd sit with Scye's family, looking down in disbelief and shame at the wide cracks in her floor, then give her some food and me a few dollars for my photography.

These donations enabled me to lecture for the next 40 years, and I often brought my wealthy students and friends—such as multimillionaire Anita Roddick here (owner of the cosmetic chain The Body Shop)—to visit my friends in the shacks, even after the year 2000. Anita later sent them big checks and wrote about

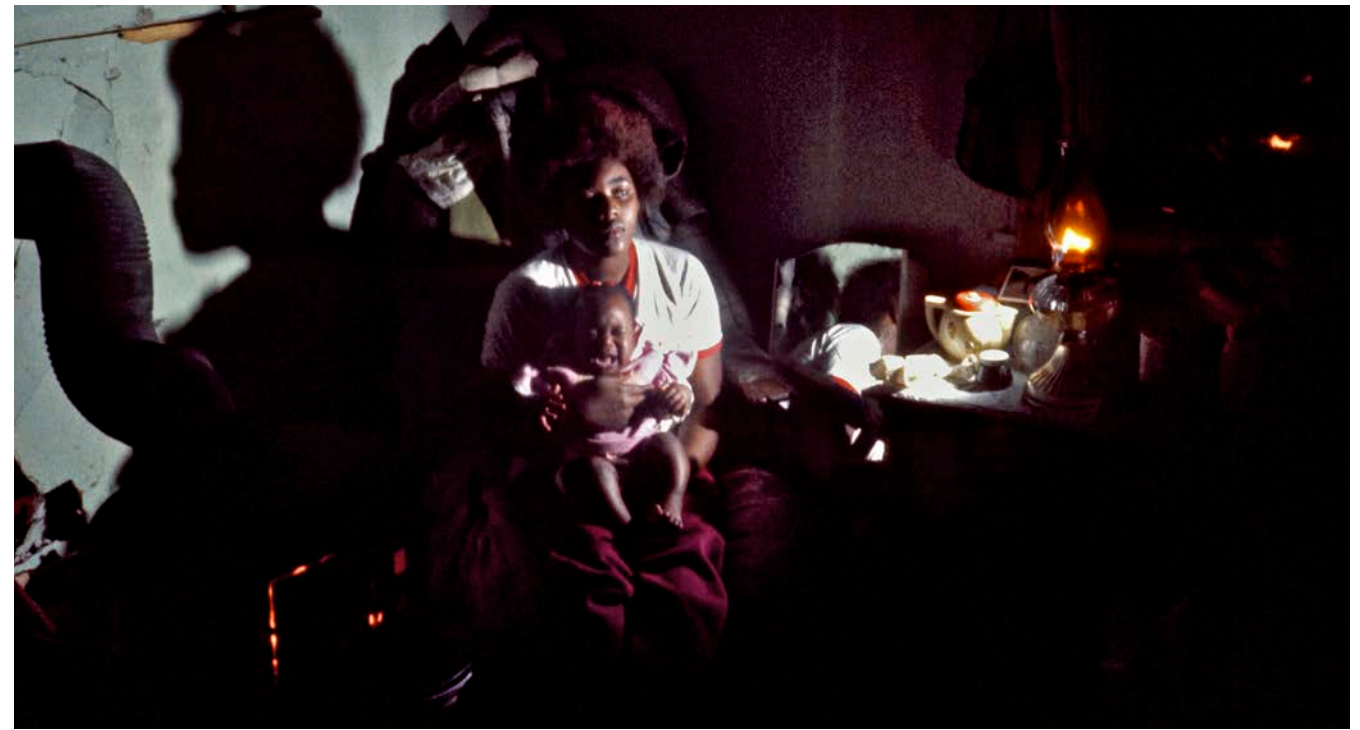


1994 - Anita Roddick in Bullock County, AL

them her books, "Poverty shames us all. I tried to see if The Body Shop could set up a small-scale economic initiative within the communities that we visited." The meeting between the super-capitalist and the sub-proletariat is always mutually rewarding.



1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC



1978 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC

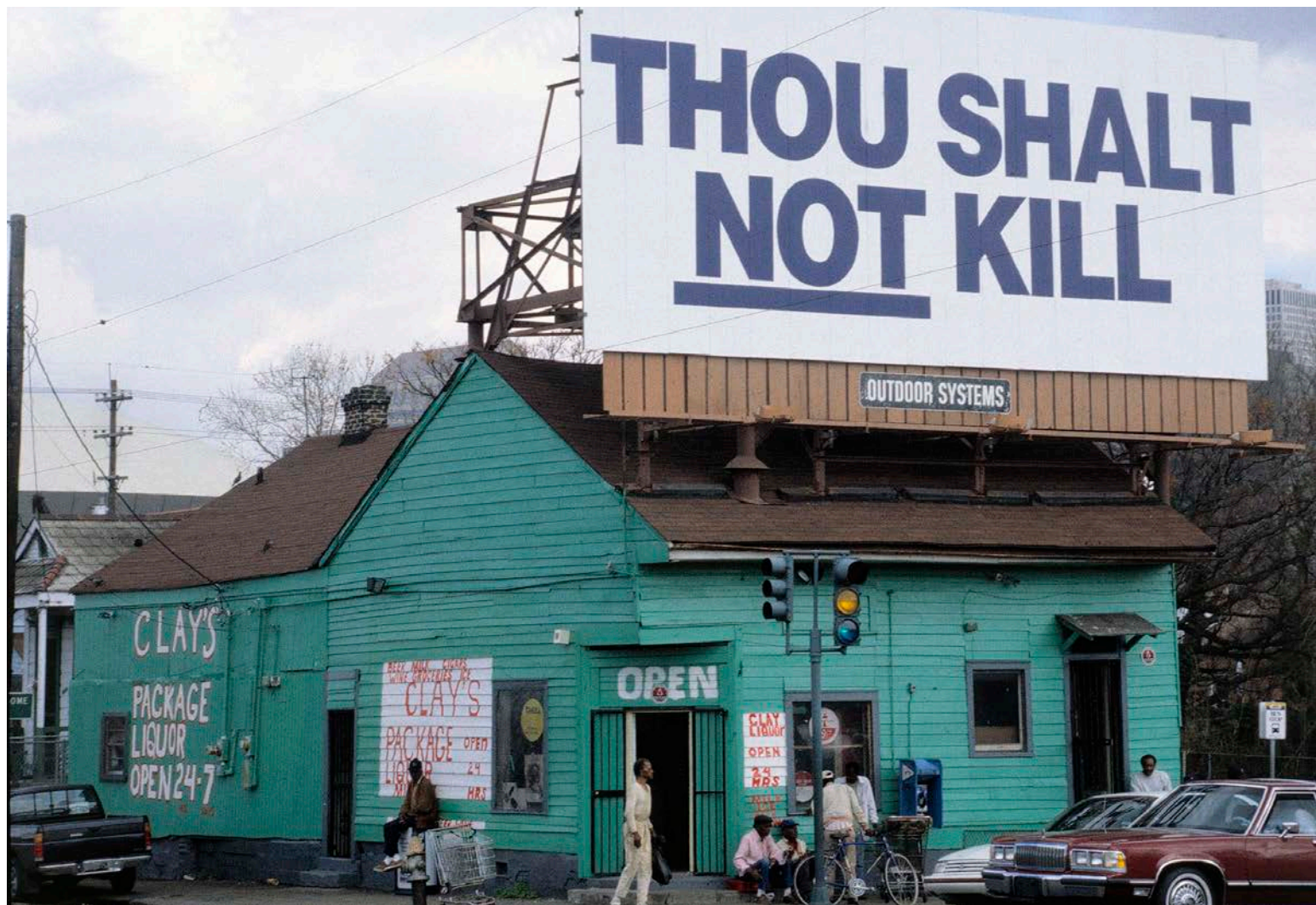
To switch environments so fast can be shocking when the physical distance is only a few miles. But when you roam about for many years, you realize that such psychic vagabonding is necessary for your survival. Having been shaped by a middle-class Danish environment, I found it overwhelming to live entirely in ghetto homes for very long with their overcrowding, constant noise, and psychic oppression. After a while I found it necessary to search out to more affluent homes where I could spend a few days in my own room and get peace of mind. But I soon got bored here and found my way back to the ghetto homes.

In Washington, NC, I lived in four black homes, three of them without electricity or running water. When I stayed with this young woman, Cay Peterson (beside the kerosene lamp), I had

to sleep all night in an armchair since she was sleeping on a couch with a baby. There was no more space. My situation was even worse the next night in a shotgun shack where the mother screamed all night in a piercing soprano at her son, James Paige, because he'd brought a white guy home to share his bed. I hid his pistol in a stack of clothes for fear they'd use it against each other. In another shack I was kicked out by an angry neighbor who hated whites. It was hard to understand this constant rejection by most blacks, who refused to let a white inside the doors. I didn't at first see that this was a natural reaction to our own white rejection when in precisely those same years we actively pushed millions of blacks into ghettos. "You must not fraternize with the oppressor," said our outcasts, seen in parallel today among Europe's marginalized Muslims.

The conditions in these homes were so miserable that in the end I walked around with a constant headache from hunger and lack of sleep. One night I was so sick and overwhelmed with fatigue that I found myself on my way to the city jail hoping to be allowed to spend the night there—an escape I'd never sought before. But, as always, when I was exposed to pain and suffering, the gates of heaven opened up. Without this almost religious belief, the vagabond cannot survive. Just before jail, a young white woman picked me up and took me to the most lavish home I'd lived in in a long time. There were private tennis courts and golf courses as large as half the ghetto in that town, an indoor swimming pool—even airplanes and sailboats. In the ghetto homes, I'd been able to hear every sound, whether outside or private, through paper-thin walls.

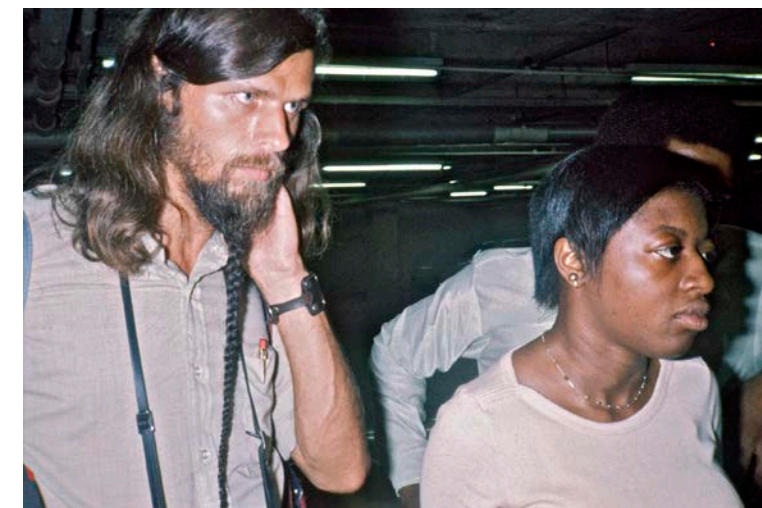
Here we had an intercom to communicate between the different sections of the house. There was even an indoor fishpond as big as some of the pools in the shacks when it rained. Where had all this abundance come from? The answer's not always so simple, but people later told me that the woman's father, a lawyer, owned many of the dilapidated ghetto shacks in this town, a town where 60% lived below the poverty level. I wondered how I'd ended up in his home just when the misery he'd helped create in the ghetto had practically driven me to prison. Again, I felt the blacks' indictment of my white privilege and how everything in society forces us immigrants into the white side of the pattern of oppression in the US.



1992 - New Orleans



1974 - New York, NY



1975 - with Joan Little, Raleigh, NC



1975 - Angela Davis in Oakland, CA



1975 - San Francisco

Others were not so lucky. Just then a black woman whose family I knew was sitting in the city jail. She'd been raped by the white prison guard and soon became world famous because she, Joan Little, killed the rapist. White rape of blacks is not uncommon in the South, but it was startling that Joan Little had had the courage to kill her rapist. Without a major human rights campaign, she would've been sentenced to death in this state, where even burglary was punishable by death.

All over the world, children are born with open and loving minds, with an appetite for life. But in America this wonderful innocence is brutalized early on by the government's harmful and incomprehensible message—that it's right to take another person's life! This brutalization they reenact later in life, whereby the violence increases, whereas in Denmark it decreased when we abolished the death penalty.

The psychic leaps I'd made in Joan Little's hometown had coincidentally given me insight into the economic preconditions for white supremacy. Such contrast journeys are necessary to see society clearly. I can't, e.g., stay long in white homes before I begin to see with their eyes, to see "negroes" as inferior. Oppressors all over the world develop this devastating view of those they've harmed.

I always try to be open to such brainwashing, for if you don't allow yourself to enter the worldview of the oppressor, you have no opportunity to love them and understand the pain we get when, as open and loving children, we learned to dehumanize our closest neighbors. Without understanding our deeper motives and pain, I wouldn't be able to understand why racism continues generation after generation despite our lofty ideal of "love thy neighbor." In my years as a vagabond, however, I was able to break out of this brainwashing and return to black culture.



1974 - Washington, NC

## Credo

Dear Edwina.

I've finally gotten to a home with a typewriter, which gives me a chance to tell you a little bit about what has happened since we were together last. I have ended up living with two young white women here in Greensboro. They are treating me as if I had gone to heaven, which has an overwhelming effect on me after the last couple of weeks of a helter-skelter existence. One of them, Diane, is a model and a criminologist of the leftist kind, and likes my pictures so much that she will do everything in her power to get me money to buy more film. I'll have to wait at least half a year, but she has promised that by then she will collect some money for me by telling people that it is to be used for a home for handicapped children or something. I think it sounds a little unsavory, but she says that may be it will teach them that it is the government's job to provide such human rights, and not something which should be left to private charity. Well, I doubt that she will really be able to collect anything for me. Every time I have had that kind of small hope I have been disappointed. I guess I still have to be content with selling blood and with the small gifts of money I get on the road by entertaining people with my pictures and experiences. Last week I had an income of nine dollars, which is the best ever: five dollars from an interested salesman who picked me up, two dollars from a black woman in Tony's father's grill, and two dollars from a guy in West Virginia who found my picture of the junkies with the Capital in the background interesting and bought it. Included in the deal was his lunch bag which contained three chicken legs.

Now, since I have had my photobooks made, it makes me so happy every time I experience that kind of positive reaction. But it also scares me a little sometimes. In one place a woman started crying when she saw my pictures, and I didn't know what in the world to do. It is strange with Americans. They have lived in the midst of this suffering all their lives without giving it a thought, and then suddenly, when they see it frozen in a photograph, they can begin crying. Some accuse me of beautifying the black, I just don't understand it; I photograph them exactly the way I see them, and a photograph doesn't lie, does it?

But the more I ponder over it, the more I come to realize that this parallax shift in the way we see blacks must be due to the fact that they have lived in this master-slave relationship for such a long time that they simply are not capable of seeing blacks as human beings.

But when Southern whites nevertheless react positively to my pictures, I believe it is because in reality they are unhappy about seeing with these "master"-eyes. They are longing to become human, and the moment I can "prove" to them that blacks are human and not slaves, eternal children, or subhuman this makes them themselves human and no longer masters or super-humans or whatever. If I don't interpret it this way, how then should I explain that even the worst racists down here give me money once in a while, although mumbling something or other about how they think "it is funny how I run around photographing niggers." I have to admit that it often seems difficult when I try to depict the master-slave relationship as an institution not to end up depicting it as if people in this system really have this "nature."

Often I feel that my own view becomes contaminated by this sneaking poison in the South, because I put great emphasis on respecting the dignity of these people, especially the older people. They have lived in this master-slave tradition all their lives, and both for the blacks and for the whites I feel that it would do violence to them to try to tear them out of this tradition (though the coming generations absolutely must avoid this crippling of the mind). I, therefore, never try to impose my views on them, but try to understand theirs and to learn from them. Precisely because from the beginning I respect their dignity, I often build up such strong friendships with them that through these friendships I can get them to respect and to learn from my point of view. As a vagabond in the South it is absolutely essential to be able to communicate through friendship instead of inciting hostility and confrontation.

But if you are able to do that - and even receive constant love and admiration, as I am fortunate enough to, or almost daily hear sentences like "I envy you" or "Do you know that you are a very lucky person?" - then you are walking a thin line where you easily get mired down in the mud by your internalization.

This gap between my utopian reality (the love of people by envisioning them as people in a free society) and my actual reality (loving people as they are in their present unfree condition) is just as difficult to bridge as a river that constantly grows wider and wider, so that you slowly lose sight of the other utopian bank, while you little by little drown in mud on your own bank. However, it seems that if you interpret "the mud" (the actual reality) on this side of the river correctly (that is, if you dig down to people's deepest longings, even if they still do not see the

connections between it all), then they give you the material which will allow you to build an ivory tower so tall and beautiful that you can sit up there and tell people down on the bank below you how nice the other bank looks.

But since you yourself do not have any personal contact with the other shore - a contact which could have changed your own character and entire soul - there is no way you can communicate your vision to the people below, since they see no evidence that you yourself have actually been “touched” or changed. For visionary ideas do not necessarily make you more loving and compassionate than those struggling to help each other keep their heads above the mud (the challenge for most Americans today). They therefore soon forget the message of your story, but find the story of my un-American pictures itself so interesting, that they allow you to build the ivory tower even higher and to reinforce it and beautify it. In frustration and depression at not being able to communicate your message down to them, you get more and more insecure and have a greater need for recognition and admiration of the ivory tower you have built - even more than for their recognition of why you originally wanted to build it. Finally you become so confused and insecure that only their recognition of the tower itself, its beauty and form, counts for you. And you build it higher and higher, until you get up to those cynical heights where you can no longer really see either your own or the opposite bank, and they begin to look alike.

Moreover, you have now reached such a height that you lose touch with the people on your own bank as well and decide to send your ivory tower out in book form so people have something to entertain themselves with there in the mud. Though what you really started out to do was build a bridge to the opposite utopian bank, you end up building a tower on your own bank. Instead of helping people out of the mud, you are in reality making their situation worse in that you have now given them something either to be happy about or to cry over right where they are and you are thus reinforcing this muddy river bank.

Moreover, your ivory tower is morally reprehensible precisely because it is built on a foundation of mud: your artwork is the direct result of the exploitation of the people you originally had it in mind to help, and the higher your tower becomes, the further you remove yourself from their suffering. It is thoughts like these which have made me increasingly depressed in the last months. I constantly hear people saying, “How I envy you that you can travel among the blacks like that,” or the like, and I realize that

I have already distanced myself so far from the mud. And it is when I realize, in spite of this yearning, the impossibility of fashioning a bridge, that I can become so desperate that I feel that the gun ought to be my real weapon rather than the camera. But immediately then the question arises as to in which direction I would shoot, since I - as you know - feel that everyone is equally mired in this river bank – and thus both guilty and innocent at the same time. Where is the rainmaker who created the mud puddle? And therefore I keep on wading here in the mud, trying only to keep my camera clean enough that it can register the victims - without really believing myself that it will ever be of any use.

Well, but what I really wanted to tell you was a little about what has happened since we parted. One of the first people who picked me up was a well-off Jewish businessman (Jews are always picking me up to thank me because Denmark saved a number of Jews during the war, though I wasn't even born at that time and though I increasingly feel that I am just as much American as Danish). He did not really feel like taking me home, since he was completely knocked out, partly because his business was going badly and partly because his brother was dying of cancer. He was strongly under the influence of tranquilizers, but he realized that he needed someone to talk to and therefore took me home to his wife. It was a very powerful experience for me. Completely shaken, they waited from moment to moment for a call from the hospital saying that the brother was dead, and against this gloomy background my pictures made an enormously strong impression on them. When I took off the next morning, they thanked me very much and he tried to give expression to the experience with tears running down his cheeks by quoting “I used to cry because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.” Before I left, he bought me 15 rolls of film.

From Philadelphia I then went to Norfolk to stay overnight on my way south. I walked around the ghetto looking for a place to stay and talked with some of the old women who were going around with their little handcarts to collect firewood in the ghetto's ruins. One of them told me that she could now afford only four pig's tails a day instead of five because of inflation. It was strange to hear that in the shadow of the world's largest naval base. I ended up staying with a 32-year-old single black mother. She was not the type who normally invites me in, but her uncle had taken me to her apartment to show me how her ceiling was leaking, in the

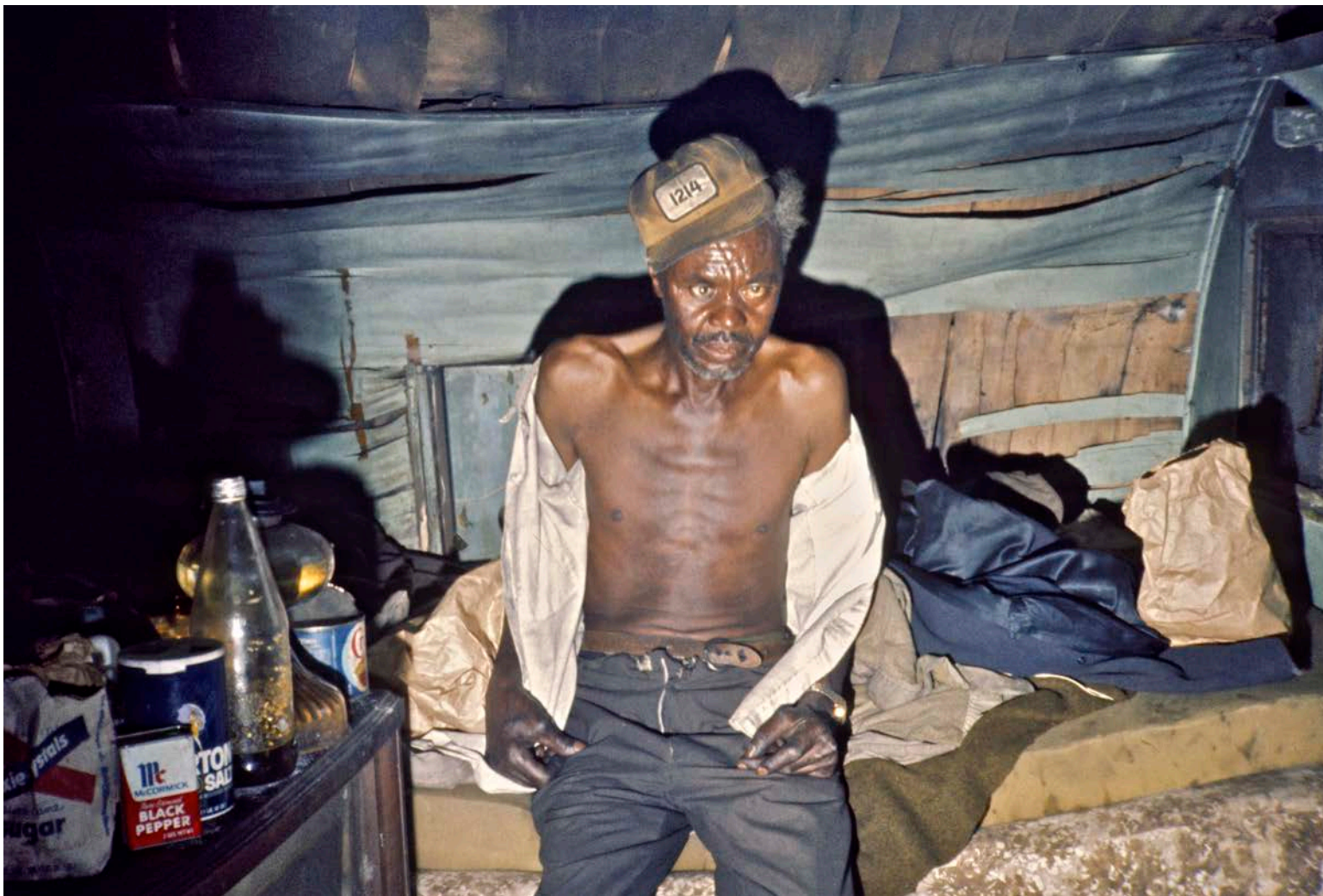
hope that I was a journalist who could get the city to repair it. When he left, I got on with the woman so well that she let me stay. She had just had her first child and it was a wonderful experience to see her spend almost every minute tending it. I sat for hours watching. She was also deeply religious, and when the baby was sleeping, we sat praying together or she would read aloud to me from the Bible while she held my hand. She would sit there for a long time staring up at a picture of Jesus right under the dripping ceiling with a look so intense and full of love that I was very moved. After a couple of days in town, I went down to Washington, North Carolina, arriving just after nightfall. I walked around all evening looking for shelter for the night, but everyone was scared of me, thinking that I was a “bustman” (plainclothes cop). First a man said I could stay in his uncle's house on the sofa. He took me to an old red-painted shack which was filthy and without light. His uncle came out with an oil lamp in his hand and was extremely angry and used his stick to demonstrate it, but we managed to get in and I got some old chicken legs on a dirty plate in that corner of the shack which served as the kitchen, although there was no running water. But the old man was still mad and it got worse and worse, and finally he threw me out with his stick. He wasn't going to have any whites in his house, he thundered. Then he took big boards and planks and nailed them up in front of the windows and doors for fear that I would break in, and walked off into the darkness, still screaming and yelling. He had no trust in whites. Further down the street a woman called from a porch, offering to share a can of beer. Later, while I was sitting trying to converse with her sick husband, who was in a wheelchair and was not able to talk, I noticed her gazing at a picture of Christ on the wall. A while later she indicated that I should come into the incredibly messy bedroom in the back. I wondered what the husband was thinking about that, unable to make a move. In there she first embraced me, staring at me with big watery eyes. Then suddenly she fell down at my feet, and while she held my ankles she kissed my dirty shoes, whispering, “Jesus, Jesus.”

I have, as you know, often been “mistaken” for Jesus among Southern blacks because of my hair (which is one reason I keep my silly braided beard), but in most cases their sense of humor allows us to laugh together at their Jesus-identification. You will probably see it as yet another example of the “slave's” identification with or even direct infatuation with the “master.” Whatever is behind it, it is probably of some help to me in



1973 - Norfolk, VA

breaking through the race barrier. But in such a shocking situation as this, I simply had no idea of what to say, as I didn't know if it would be wrong to shake her out of her religious experience. I searched for a fitting Bible quote... the futility of the Samaritan woman drinking from Jacob's well... but I couldn't get a word to my lips. I stood there for more than an hour before I had the courage (cruelty) to break her trance. It was such a strong experience that I didn't feel I could stay there for the night. As I wandered around the streets again, at around ten o'clock I met a young black woman who must have been a little drunk, for she asked right off if we couldn't be friends (unusual from my experience of black women in the South). She said that if I could find a place to stay that evening, she would come stay with me. I doubted it would work, but we walked into one of those Southern “joints” (speakeasies) and talked to her cousin about possible places. All of a sudden she started kissing me wildly all over and asked sweetly, “Are you a hippie?” I said no, but she didn't get it. Actually this joint was not the safest place to hang out. Around us in the dark we could dimly see 15 to 20 “superflies.” A couple of them came over and warned me in a friendly tone that it was a



1974 - rural La Crosse, FL

dangerous place, but I answered with conviction, “I ain’t scared of nothing,” which usually impresses them, since they themselves are scared of their own shadow in these joints.

But then all hell broke loose. Someone must have told the guy the woman was “shacked up with” about me, for suddenly he came running in with a big knife and went first for his woman. Luckily he didn’t use the knife, but he beat the poor woman to pieces, hit her in the face and gave her a real beating, worse than I have seen in months. I must have been pretty cold-blooded that evening, now that I think of it, because I immediately pulled out my camera and tried to attach the flash, but just then two guys came running over and grabbed me: “You better get the hell out of here. When he’s done with her, he’s gonna go after you.” And they practically carried me out of the place. I never saw the woman again. Though I have seen this kind of thing so often, I was more upset, because in some way I myself had been the cause of it. With my perceived oppressor status, it is if I can’t attain deeper human relationships without becoming either victim or executioner. For the most part I am of course a victim (of understandable rejection), but since I always try to go all out with people, it happens now and

then that I cross the invisible line separating the victim from the executioner. This I hate, because I am then forced to take matters into my own hands instead of letting other people direct things. I didn’t get that far on this night, though, and I’m beginning to fear that I have gradually become so hardened that I have lost my own will power. Perhaps it was this thought that nagged me and made me react differently than usual later that night. For when I had walked around for yet another couple of hours, I finally managed to get a roof over my head with two old bums. They were drunk as hell, and there was an incredible mess. They couldn’t even afford kerosene, so there was no light. We were all three supposed to sleep in one bed. There were inches of dirt underneath it and every 25 minutes one of us had to get up to put wood on the stove, since it was very cold. At first I was sleeping between them, but then I realized they were both homosexual. So I moved over next to the wall so I would only have one to fight off, but he turned out to be the most horny. In that kind of situation I usually resign myself to whatever happens, but this night I didn’t feel like it, perhaps because of the earlier experience in that joint. He was what you might call a “dirty old man” with stubble and slobber,

but that was not the reason. I have been through far worse things than that. I had probably just gotten to the point where I was tired of being used by homosexual men. I hate to hurt people, but I suppose that this night I was trying to prove to myself that I had at least some willpower left. So I lay on my side with my face to the wall. But he was clawing and tearing so hard at my pants that I was afraid they were going to rip, and since it is the only pair I have, I couldn’t afford to sacrifice them. So I turned around with my face toward him, but he kept at it and pressed his big hard-on against my ribs and began to kiss me all over – kisses that stunk of Boone’s Farm apple wine. The worst was that he kept whispering things in my ear like, “I love you. I love you. Oh, how I love you.” Well that was maybe true enough at that moment, but it drove me crazy to listen to it. As you know, I feel that especially among black men this word has been overused. I don’t think it is something you can say the first night you go to bed with someone. The only thing missing was him saying, “Oh, you just don’t like me because I am black.” But luckily I was spared that one. Well, he finally got his pacifier, but that did not satisfy him, as he was the kind of homosexual who goes for the stern. He just became more and more excited and finally became so horny that I felt really guilty, but still I didn’t give another inch. He tried and tried. Finally he destroyed the beautiful leather belt you gave me that time when I couldn’t keep my pants up anymore. It made me so damned mad that I grabbed his big cannon with both hands and turned it hard toward the other guy who was snoring like a steamship. “Why don’t you two have fun with each other and leave me in peace. I want to sleep.” But it didn’t help, so the struggle continued all night with me every five minutes turning the cannon in the other direction (about four times between each new load of firewood).

Finally the guy left around eight o’clock and I got a couple of hours of sleep. Later in the day I met him in the local coffee bar. He came over and asked if I was mad at him. I said, “Of course not, we are still good friends. I was just so damn tired last night.” He was so glad that he began to dance around, making everybody there laugh at him. He was one of those who are outcast among both blacks and whites. I was very sad, because I felt that I had destroyed something inside myself. I felt a deep irritation that I had not been able to give him love. In his eyes, I was a kind of big-shot and it would have made him happy if I had given myself fully. There was just something or other inside me that went “click” that night, so the whole next day I felt a deep

loathing of myself. I am constantly finding many shortcomings in my relationships with people, but the worst thing is when my shortcomings hurt such people, who are already hurt and destroyed in every possible way by the society surrounding them. If I could not constantly give such losers a little love, I simply would not be able to stand traveling as long as I have. The only thing that has any meaning for me in my journey is being together with these lonesome and ship-wrecked souls. My photographic hobby is really, when all is said and done, nothing more than an exploitation of the suffering, which will probably never come to contribute to an alleviation of it. But still I can’t stop registering it, because in some way or another it must get out to the outside world.

That strength I get by being together with these extreme losers, and the love I often receive from them, is what in spite of everything gives me a slender hope that my pictures will be able to speak even to society’s winners. That I nevertheless reacted so negatively that night may also stem from the fact that I recently had a similar experience which hurt me deeply. It was the same day that I left you in Plainfield. One of the first ones who picked me up on the road in New Jersey was a white guy in his fifties or sixties. He immediately began talking about how he had always been the black sheep in the family and even used the expression “dirty old man” about himself. I often see this self-hatred among older homosexuals and resonate with that feeling, having been the black sheep in my own family for other reasons.

He asked me to go home with him and talk with him, and I couldn’t say no, although I did have in mind to get to North Carolina the same day. After we had talked all day, he took me in the evening to the movie theater where he was the projectionist. He was running a John Wayne movie of the usual kind. In the middle of the film he began to stroke my thighs. It didn’t really surprise me, but I found it so ironic that the whole time he stood there commenting on the film, especially the two-fisted scenes, cheering John Wayne on: “Give it to ’em, knock ’em out” etc. How could he identify to such a degree with John Wayne’s frightening universe of male chauvinism and macho oppression, which more than anything else had oppressed him throughout his life and given him this violent self-hatred? During the intermission I walked around in the large shopping center where the cinema was located. No matter where I went, sales-stimulating plastic music from the loudspeakers followed me, and I suddenly felt a



terrible disgust with America, which I erroneously equated with my John Wayne experience. But in the midst of this disgust I felt that even though these people are to such an extent their own oppressors, it had to be possible to get through to them and tear them loose from this sadomasochistic pattern. In the evening, when I came home to him, I tried to see all the beauty in him. It was not easy, for he was indeed of that type whom society has condemned as repulsive and obscene, but with all the energy I had just received from my stay with you, I had such a surplus that night, that I really believe that I felt glimmerings of love for him. But then the thing happened which was to defeat me. In the heat of the night in bed my wig slipped off, and out fell my long hair. I could clearly see his astonishment and distaste, but he tried to hold it back and mumbled something in the way of: "Well, at least you aren't a dirty hippie." (When hitchhiking and to survive among conservative whites I usually wore a short hair wig and rolled up my 17-inch-long beard). But from that moment our relationship was smashed to pieces, and I was not able to get him to open up again. He would probably have preferred to kick me out right there and then, but I was allowed to stay since it was pouring that night. Although he was short and had short, stumpy legs, he was so fat that I had to sleep all the way out on the edge of the bed and could only keep from falling off by supporting myself all night with one hand on the floor. I therefore couldn't sleep, but just lay there thinking about how strange it is that people can have such strong prejudices that they even take them to bed with them. Since it was still pouring the next morning, I wondered if I should stay another day and try to break through the ice, but that was obviously not what he had in mind. Almost without mumbling a word he drove me out to the main road near Milltown, where I stood in the pouring rain for the next seven hours, since, as you know, people will never pick you up when you need it most. You must be crazy standing out in the rain, they think. It was then that the Jewish businessman at long last fished me up. As you can understand, I was almost as far down as he was, though I didn't tell him about my depressing experience.

Well, I will tell you more about Washington, N.C., in a later letter and just finish off by saying that I am now on the way out of the depression I was in over you back then, though the memory of you still hangs like a heavy dark cloud over my journey. It is still a mystery to me how I could be so hurt by our relationship, and why it took the direction it did. Although you are younger



1974 - Plainfield, NJ - Edwina's family in 2005 visited me in Denmark

than me, it nevertheless developed into something of a mother-son relationship, which I in no way could have imagined at the beginning of my love for you. Your strength and wisdom did not let you be seduced into a relationship as unrealistic as ours would have become. You belong to the black bourgeoisie, and though I loved to fling myself in your luxurious upholstered furniture, I ought to have realized right away that it wasn't my world. You were fascinated by my vagabond life and supported me in my project with your feeling of black pride, but your pride was nevertheless threatened by the world I represented. Right back from when your ancestors were given an education by the slave master, your family has kept up this class difference, and I can't help feeling that this mile-wide psychological gap you have been brought up to feel between yourself and that ghetto I normally move around in, was what actually destroyed our relationship. But no matter how I analyze it and try to understand it, it is hard for me to accept that it should end like that between us. The suffering I went through in your house, I never wish to experience again, but as a vagabond, I have nevertheless become so much of a fatalist that I believe it has been good for something, and that it will make it easier for me to identify with and become one with other people's suffering, though of course the suffering I see around me in this society is of a far more violent nature than what I experienced with you. Even so, I will still use the word "suffering" to describe the process I went through with you. Without this suffering you couldn't have knocked me so much off balance. From the moment you realized that we weren't right for each other, and your love cooled down to a certain aloofness, I

experienced a growing desperation in myself. I am by nature not very aggressive, as you know, and not even very self-protective, but confronted with your beginning rejection, I experienced an increasing aggression which became more and more unbearable. With all your psychological insight, you probably sensed it. At any rate, it blazed up that night when I moved into your bed without being invited, thereby breaking my fixed principle of traveling: never violate people's hospitality.

But if I am really to illustrate the psychological desperation I felt over you in my love, a desperation stronger than any I have ever felt toward a woman, then I can't do it better than by letting W.E.B. Dubois' well-known quotation describe my frame of mind: "It is difficult to let others see the full psychological meaning of caste segregation. It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within may become hysterical. They may scream and hurl themselves against the barriers, hardly realizing in their bewilderment that they are screaming in a vacuum unheard and that their antics may actually seem funny to those outside looking in. They may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by a horrified, implacable, and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own very existence."

I don't think that this picture of my state of mind during those days is very much exaggerated, so insane was my infatuation. But it amazes me that at such an early stage you could see how lopsided our relationship was. A marriage between us, when all is

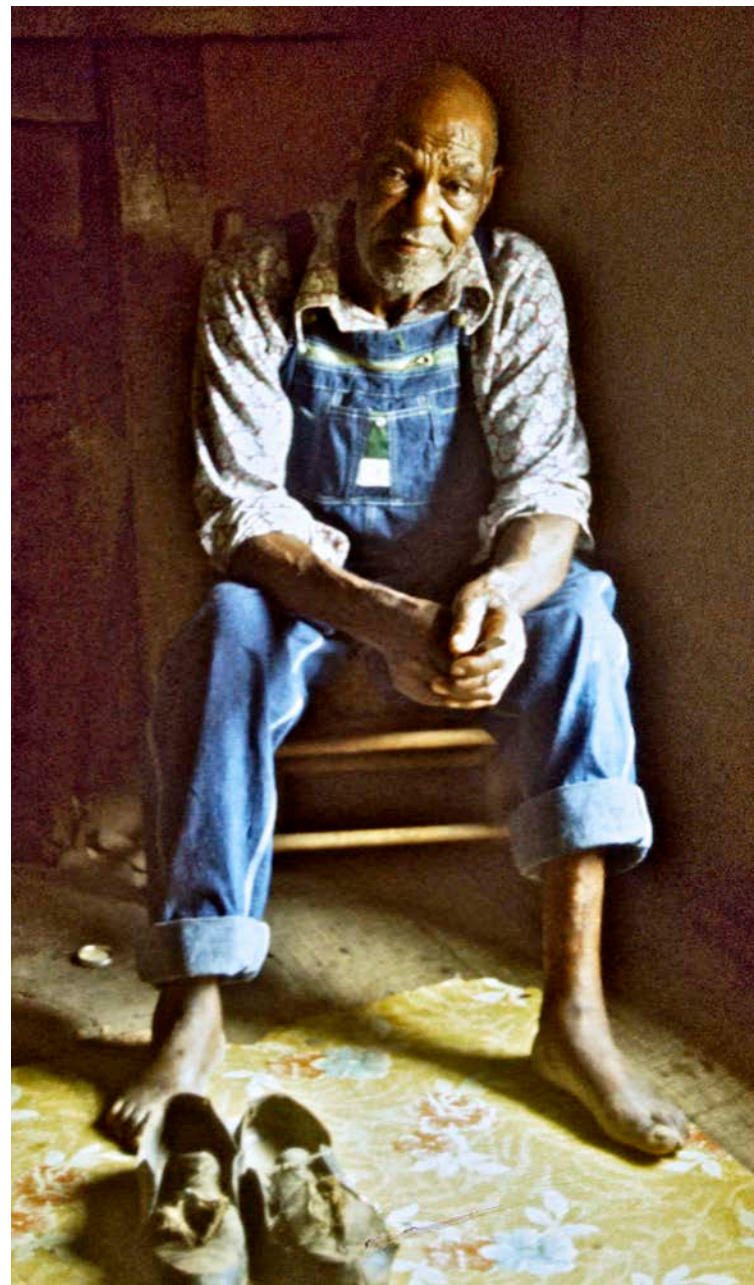
said and done, would have had this invisible glass barrier between us, with me inside the cave, which I have devoted so much of my life to, and with you on the outside. With all your upper-class nature you could never have lived the life I lead in the cave, and which I try to show to the outside world with my pictures. I know that in my mind in one way or another I will always be inside the cave, while you know as well as I do that you will always be on the outside in spite of a certain insight into the cave. Every time I dug myself too deeply into the cave and felt lost, you could always with your wisdom and deep human insight explain it to me and put everything into perspective. It was therefore not surprising that you more and more became a kind of mother for me in spite of all my resistance. The thing I am afraid of is that in spite of your understanding of the cave you have still been so marked by your class that at the critical point when the glass barrier is broken, when all is said and done, you will be found among the horrified and implacable mob. To avoid that, we have to keep working together. If a marriage between us was unrealistic, and for me in the cave inevitably destructive, it is at any rate not unrealistic that there be a deep friendship between us. If you will continue to support and advise me, we can in such a friendship gradually break down that glass barrier and build up a relationship of such strength and value as our two races will have in post-racial America, when our common struggle is over. Through our continued friendship I can thus build the bridge over the river, so that my work will not just become one white man's ivory tower. My love for you still has the character of infatuation more than of friendship. Your beauty and soft, big afro, your gentle deep (and motherly) voice and your sweet lips that used to kiss me awake in the morning still torment me in my thoughts. But as soon as I am out of this cave-like state of mind, perhaps in only a few months, I will be back in Plainfield, and we can begin to build up our friendship - a friendship without which we will never succeed in breaking down the glass barriers and building a bridge to a new and beautiful America. Until then, you remain my beloved, but distant and unattainable, Edwina.

*With love, Jacob.*



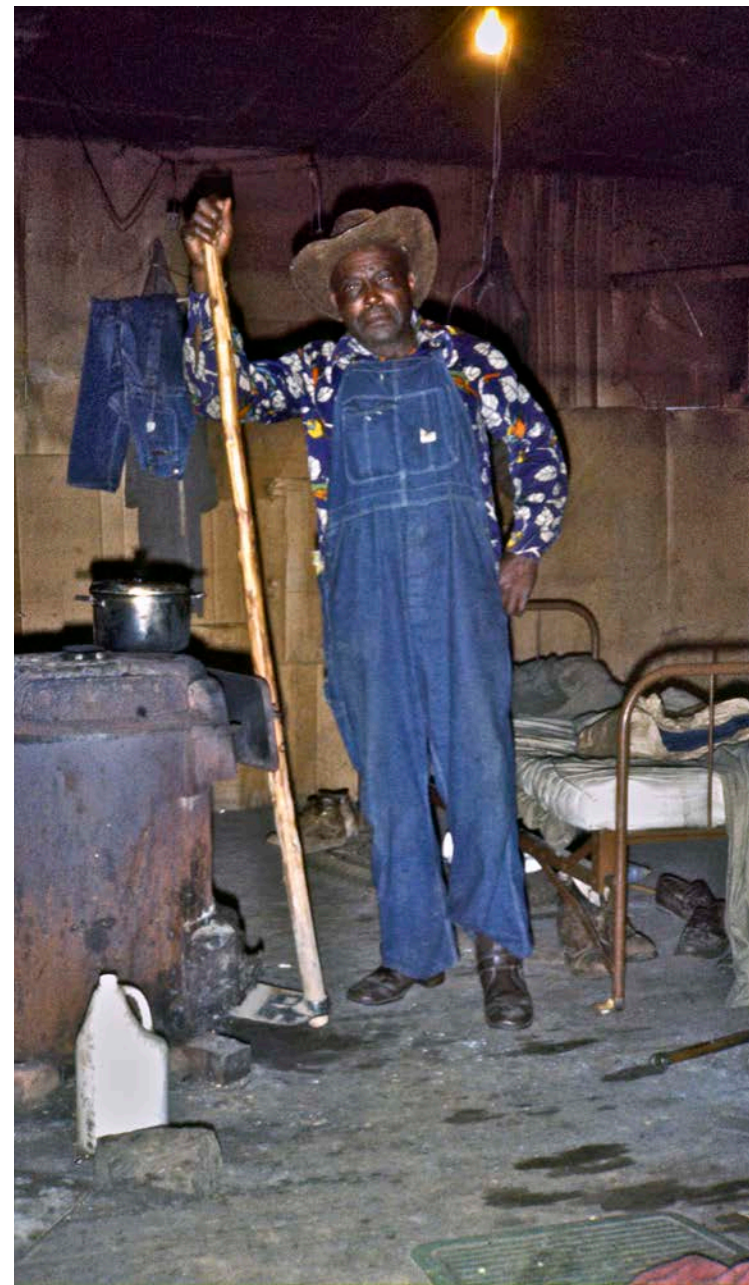
1973 - Orangeburg County, SC

In Alabama I lived with Jack Ray, who'd established and owned several banks. Jack was one of the more liberal men in Alabama and employed blacks as cashiers. He was a loving empathic person, so it hurt me when he referred to them as "niggers," as people did around there. Often, as the poor tramp, I got a strong desire to get a formal education in order to embark on a career and rise to the upper class, but whenever I, as here, got a chance to live the so-called good life, it usually made me so sick that I quickly fled to the highway again. For where did all the money, with which Jack had bought his luxurious home outside the city, come from? He told me he'd made his fortune by giving loans to poor black sharecroppers so they could buy a mule or move from their rotten shack into a streamlined plastic trailer and join the new plastic proletariat of more than 30 million Americans.



1975 - Bullock County, AL

But many sharecroppers couldn't even afford these modern shacks. They have enough trouble paying off their mules and are in debt to both the bank and the white landowner, to whom they often had to pay the greater share of their crops, just as we in feudal Europe paid the church and the squire. The American system started after the Civil War, when neither planters nor freed slaves had any money. Driven by hunger to work for little or nothing, destitute blacks made agreements with their former slave-owners to borrow land, housing, and seed. The profit was supposed to have been shared. But debt and dishonest bookkeeping usually brought the sharecroppers into a situation materially worse than it had been under slavery (the master at least had an interest in feeding them). The system has continued from generation to generation, and on top of the eternal debt to the landlord came the debt to the commissary store and finally the bank,



1975 - Oglethorpe County, GA



1973 - Gadsden, AL



1973 - Gadsden, AL

all helping to create a white upper class. Already, when he picked me up in 1973, Jack Ray had made himself so rich he could fly me around in his private jet. When I returned, I found that his banking empire had grown even larger, and he invited me to dinner at a club for whites only. As a sponsor of everything from scholarships to orchestras, he joined the Chamber of Commerce in 1993. The Jack L. Ray Family Park was dedicated to him, but no blacks attended the festivities. Perhaps because his most important contribution to society consisted of monetary policies that helped double the net worth of every white American, from 6 to 12 times that of every black American, between our first meeting and his death in 2006.



1974 - Charleston, SC

Later, I visited this tenant farmer, who lived near the banker. Both he and his wife were 78 years old and should have stopped working years ago. But he said, "I have to work until I drop dead in the fields. Last year my wife got heart trouble, so now I must do the work by myself." Twice a year he walked to the local store to buy a bit of flour and a little sugar. That's all he ever bought. I asked what they ate for breakfast. "A glass of tea and a little turnip greens," he answered. What about lunch? "Just turnip greens," he replied. What then for supper? "Mostly turnip greens."

Another tenant farmer, skinning a rabbit, spoke with me:

- But often you went to bed hungry?

- Yes, sir, more times than not. But sometimes people would give us some bread or a meal.

- White people?

- Sometimes whites, sometimes colored. Sometimes we would have nothing and go to bed hungry. We went to bed a million nights hungry. Sometimes we wanted to hunt, but were too weak to catch rabbits.

My attempts to find out about conditions for these sharecroppers ran into an almost impenetrable wall of fear and intimidation. I'd imagined that this fear was entirely historically conditioned. One night, however, after a visit to such a sharecropper, I was making the 10-mile trek down a dead end to my shack when I was "ambushed" by a pickup truck with its headlights on me and guns sticking out. I managed to talk my way out of this jam, but little by little I realized that such intimidation was deeply rooted in the violent system of peonage, which has prevented sharecroppers and farm workers from fleeing their "debt" through beatings, imprisonment, and murder.

During World War II (in which the US was hailed as the Land of Liberty), the US Justice Department admitted that "there are more Negroes held by these debt slavers than were actually owned as slaves before the Civil War."



1973 - Yazoo City, MS



1973 - Orangeburg County, SC



1994 - Pahokee, FL



1975 - Burke County, GA



1975 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Elizabethtown, NC



1975 - Notasulga, AL

Yet the Justice Department did nothing to prosecute these slave owners, who even traded and sold peons to each other. Although there was an increasing number of peonage cases in the 1970s, only a few ended up in court, and only the cruelest, such as a case in 1980 in which a planter chained his workers to prevent their escape, reached the press (and the American public).

In the 1990s, The Atlanta Constitution ran a big story about a landowner who'd fled to the Bahamas, a tax haven, abandoning his debt-ridden tenant farmers, who had no idea whether they'd been bought or sold. The more I began to penetrate this undercurrent of dread and terror, the more I felt that the 20th century had a far more violent influence on the black psyche than slavery.



1973 - Zebulon, NC



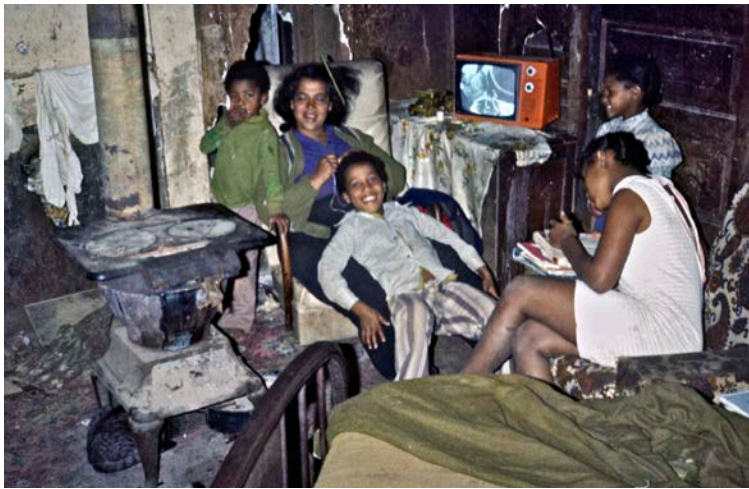
1990 - Bullock County, AL - 96-year old woman



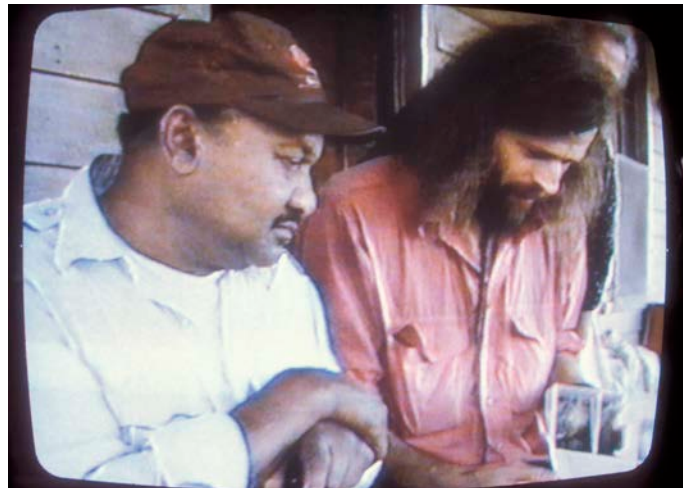
1974 - Washington, NC



1973 - Zebulon, NC



Mosel and children 1973 – 5-year-old Gwen to the right at TV. They always had TV.



Lefus on Danish TV in 1992



From left Kenny, Gwen with book, Rene, Betty Jean and Mosel in 1978.



Lefus died March 17, 2004, 77 years old. I saw Mosel shortly before her death in 2008.



When I last saw Lefus in 2003 he had stopped drinking.



Gwen with the book in 2003. As a lab technician she mails me about the family.

How important it is to vagabond in the fourth dimension - with the time factor included - my friendship with Lefus Whitley shows. For pictures often lie even for the photographer himself. Lep, a gangster in New York, in 1973 invited me home to visit his parents in the woods of North Carolina. There I took the photo of his father Lefus drunk and apathetic at the TV on page 99. Such "honest" pictures of Lefus made it difficult later to get my show into high schools for fear they would intensify students' negative prejudice of blacks as "lazy" and "apathetic". I am afraid I even myself saw him that way since every time I over the years visited him he was laying drunk on the floor except one time in 1991 when we made him sit up to be on Danish TV. I always needed the help of his son to find his family deep in the forest in new rotten shacks since he burned the previous down in drunkenness. So my prejudice lasted 30 years until I in 2003 traveled around to make video interviews with my friends about their own perception of their lives, contrary to MY interpretations in my show. For both family and neighbors confirmed that Lefus had never missed even one day of work in his entire life. As a hardworking tenant farmer in his youth, he only drank a bit on weekends, but it worsened

when he lost his land when white landowners forced out the remaining black farmers. He then became a construction worker, and his crew picked him up every morning at five and drove him to Raleigh where he built most of the skyscraper seen in the state capital today. All those years he only drank after work and after giving his wife Mosel what she needed to raise the family – that is, when I was visiting in the evening. My superficiality came from never having lived with the family because I always lived with his son Lep. I had been “lazy”, not Lefus, which again taught me never to judge people until we have lived with them 24 hours a day. Years later Bruce Springsteen did the same mistake when he stole this picture to put on his bestselling “57 channels and nothing's on” album without asking or paying neither me nor Lefus a dime. Contrary to our stigmatizing thinking about people like Lefus as a “lazy freeloading n.....” he had until his death March 17, 2004 never received any support from society. So why do we blame free let “high society” get away with both landgrapping and freeloading? Bruce Springsteen might be “Born in the USA”, but as I always said, “my friend Lefus built America!”



Lefus became world famous in 1992



1978 - rural La Crosse, FL



1974 - Manhattan, NY

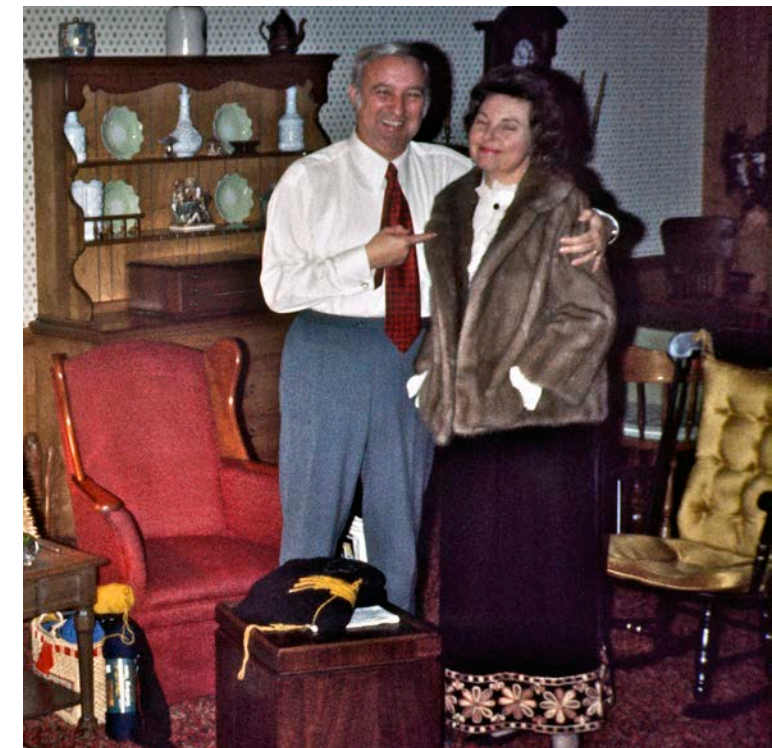


1994 - Pahokee, FL

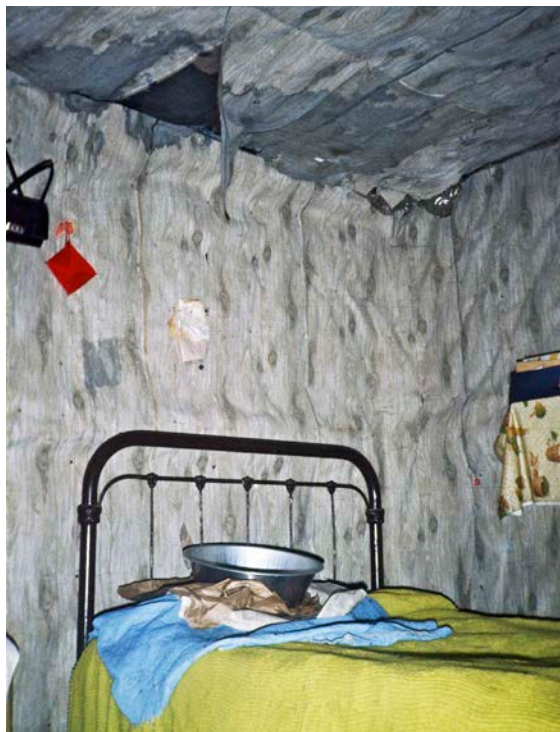
My friend Jack Ray, a recent beneficiary of this violent ignorance, unknowingly fit one more piece for me into the pattern of hunger and dread I saw in the rural underclass of the '70s.

Racism haunts all countries but is more visible in America because it's intertwined with ruthless class oppression—the biggest gap between rich and poor in the industrialized world. Without a protective welfare state to keep the market forces at bay, many are made so poor they lose both their freedom and the initiative to brave the market. When 2% today own 80% of everything in the US, it's easier to see where this banker's mink fur comes from. The only thing he couldn't buy was real happiness. Again and again I see that the upper class is compelled to substitute mink coats, alcohol, nerve pills, and cocaine for personal happiness.

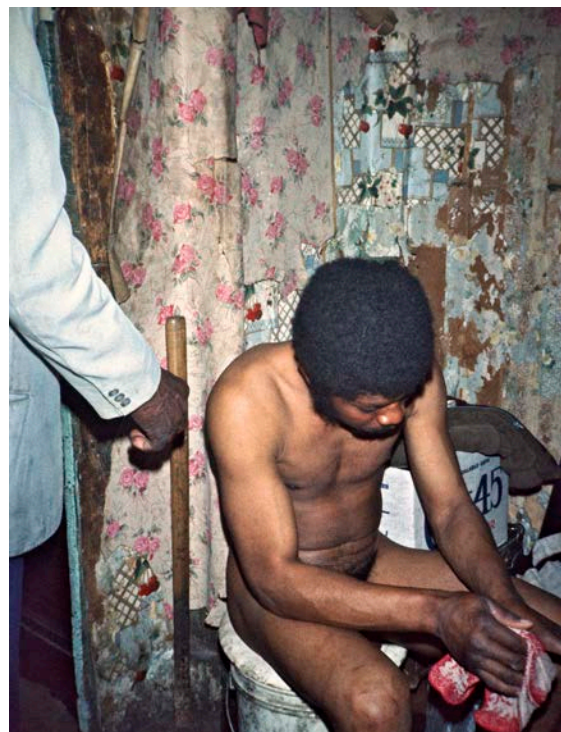
I began to feel poles apart from the prevailing white ignorance, which seems forever unable to understand why their own white ancestors could "make it" in a short time, while, after more than 100 years of "freedom," blacks still struggle.



1973 - Gadsden, AL



1975 - Tuskegee, AL



1974 - Washington, NC



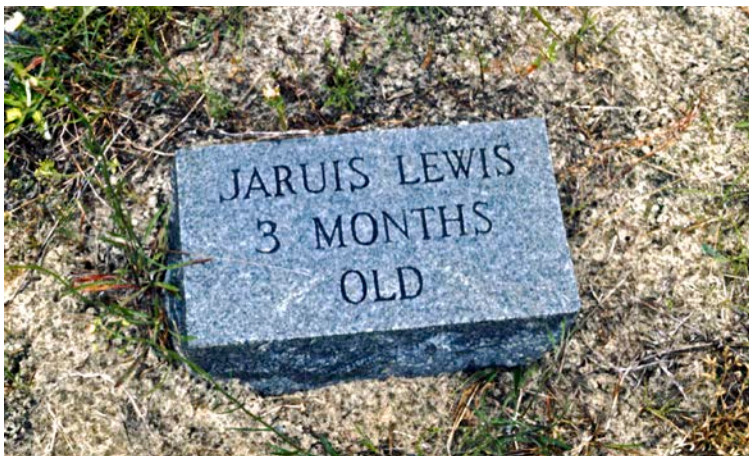
1996 - rural Selma, AL



1974 - Washington, NC



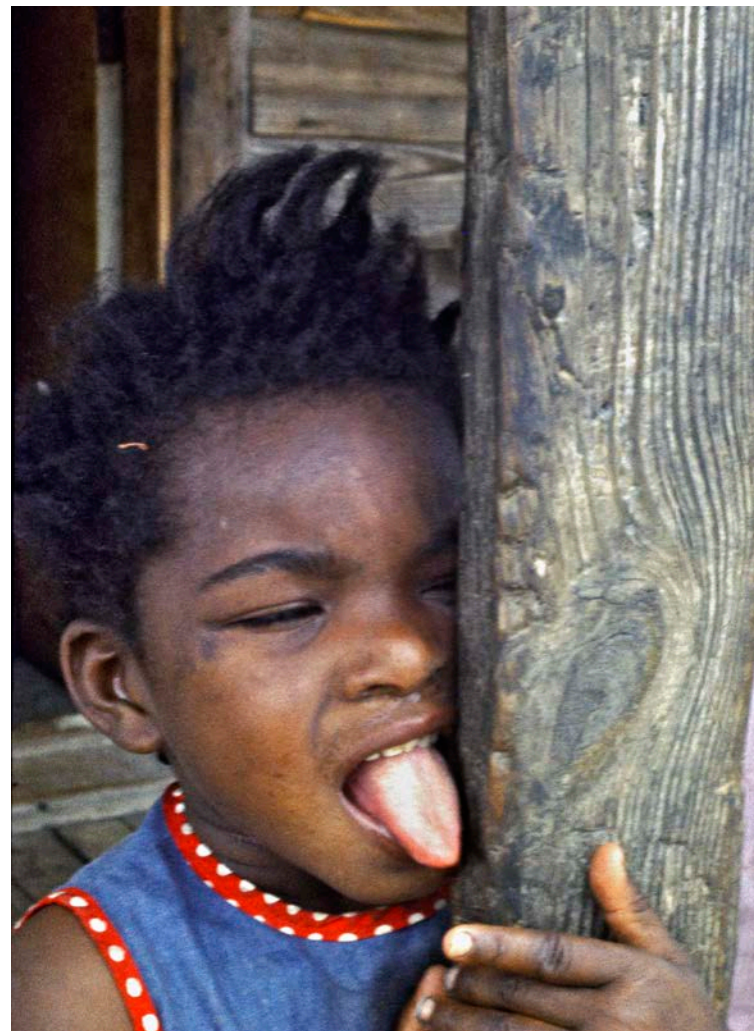
1975 - Bullock County, AL (Mary's grandfather 102 years old, killed wife shortly after)



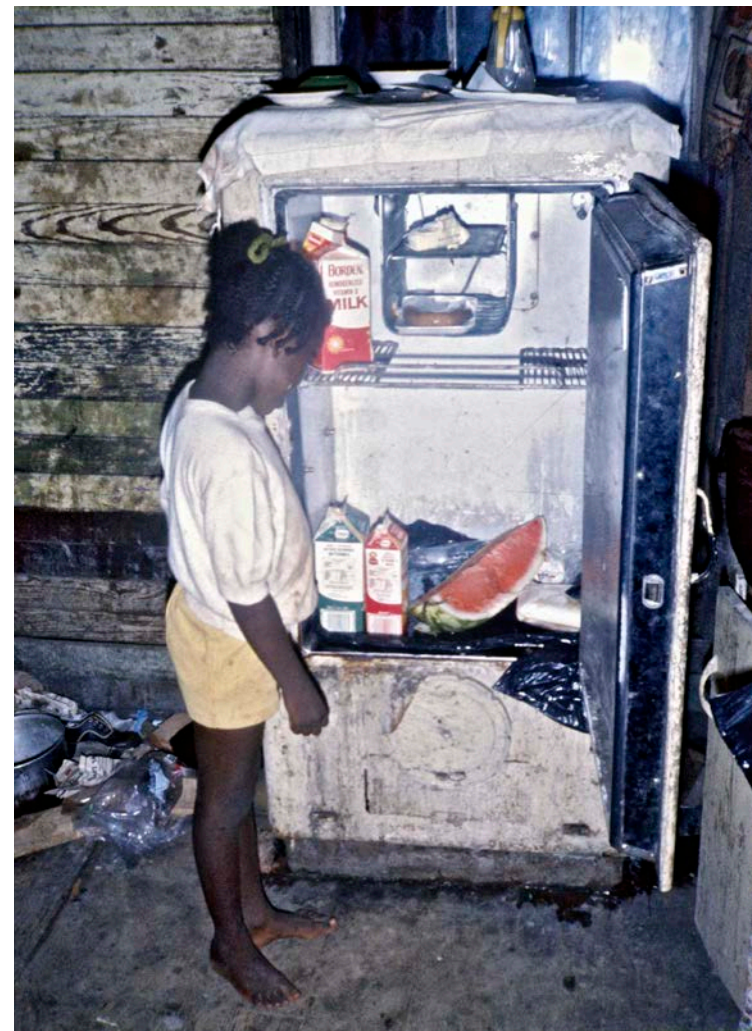
1974 - Vanceboro, NC



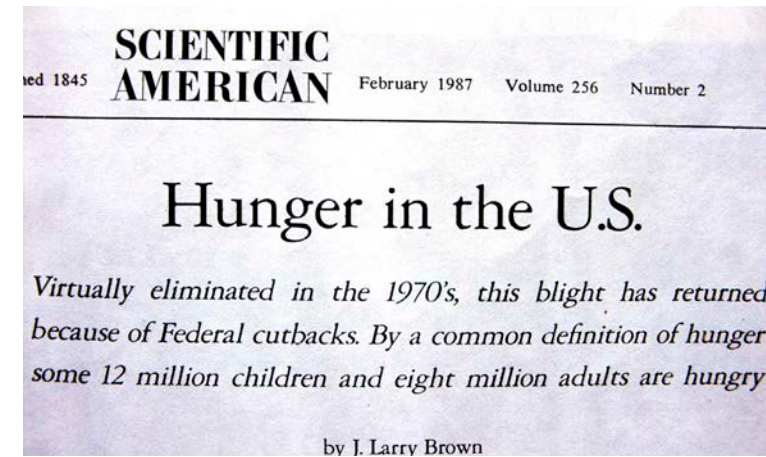
1973 - Baltimore



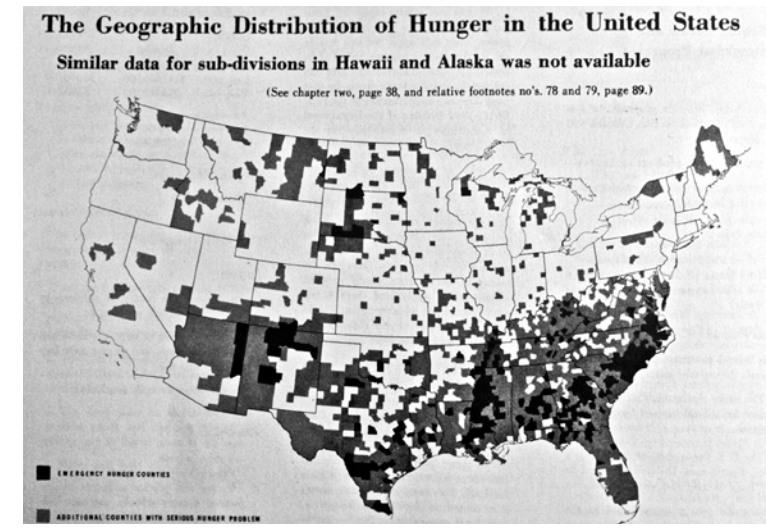
1974 - rural Greenville, NC



1974 - rural Pireway, NC



by I. Larry Brown  
1987 - Scientific American



The hunger, and the reasons for it, which I saw around the banker were not unique. Traditional American wisdom insists that if a man goes hungry, he has only himself to blame—because he's unwilling to work. So why did I so often see the hungry work harder and longer than those causing their hunger? It's the children such social cynicism hurts most. Malnutrition gives them reduced resistance to disease, which is why starvation was usually called "pneumonia" on the death certificate. Everywhere in the South I saw these tiny tombstones hidden away in the fields. In many districts, infant mortality among black children was 8–10 times higher than among whites. In comparison, the black infant-mortality rate was only twice as high as among whites during slavery (as it is for the country as a whole today). In other words, more than 6,000 black babies die each year because they don't have the same healthcare and nutrition as whites. Even more of the infants could be saved every year if they had access to the same weekly visits by nurses before and after birth, which we take for granted in a welfare state like Denmark. Bangladesh has a life expectancy longer in 2021 than in 10 counties in Mississippi. I found it difficult to photograph hunger since few were visibly

emaciated. Many people, in fact, were overweight because they had to eat a lot of carbohydrates to get enough protein, like Blondie Ecell's mother (seen here). When I returned to give her a copy of the book, she was ashamed I'd referred to her as overweight. Since then, obesity has become so commonplace among the poor that much of the shame is gone. While we better-off whites previously criticized the lethargy of malnourished blacks, today we criticize their obesity.

I've often wondered whether, as a photographer, I myself discriminated while trying to change white racists with my pictures—or because I myself was subject to their racist views. But there's no excuse for hunger in a highly developed society. Contrary to racism, poverty and malnutrition are solely a result of how we vote. And since the 1970s Americans have voted in every election to widen the gap between rich and poor. They forget that countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Japan, which have achieved the greatest income and health equality (and so don't crush the initiative of quite as many), exhibited the greatest economic growth in the world during the 20th century.



1974 - Daytona, FL





1992 - Dayton, OH



1984 - private party with B.B. King hired to play in Houston



Starving man in Pahokee, FL in 1990 less than an hour away from the millionaires on the right in Palm Beach



1974 - millionaires in Palm Beach, FL

USA  
1996



1996 - rural Selma, AL

USA  
1975



1975 - Pireway, NC

Yes, and it's happening right here in the U.S.A. Right this minute as you read these words. Who's Caroline? One of thousands of hungry children throughout the rural South suffering from a lack of nourishment so severe it affects her present health and the development of her mind and body. In the words of a white Southern doctor to a Senate committee . . . "Malnutrition is not quite what we found; the boys and girls were hungry, weak, in pain, sick . . . suffering from hunger and disease and, directly or indirectly, they are dying from them—which is exactly what starvation means." A few years ago, the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund was established to do something about this critical situation. And it's working. In the last three years, alone, 112,988 of the neediest people have been assisted. What's more, by providing the money for buying Federal food stamps, the food purchasing value of this

assistance has multiplied an average of nine-fold! Thus your tax-deductible \$10 contribution to the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund buys about \$90 worth of urgently needed meat, milk and bread. Just \$25 can feed a large family for a month! Please help by sending as little or as much as you can. Today? Thank you.



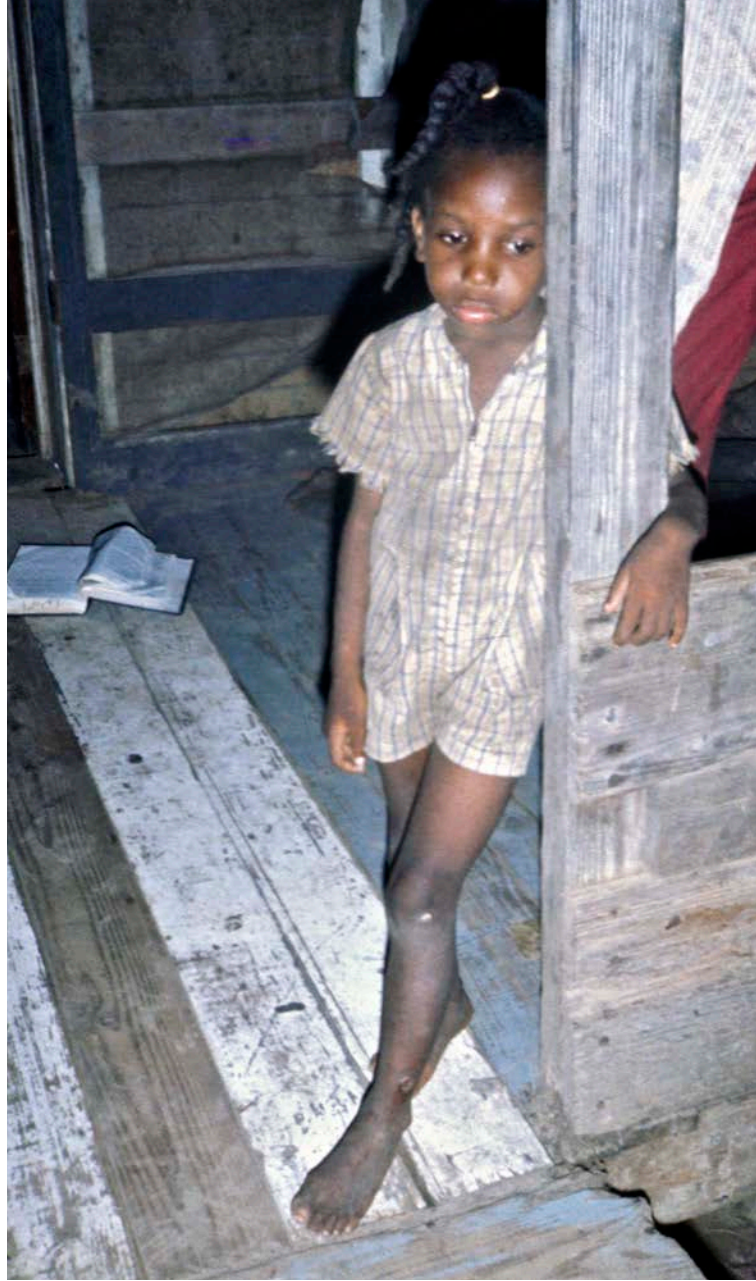
NAACP EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND. 1973 - NAACP

1973 - NAACP



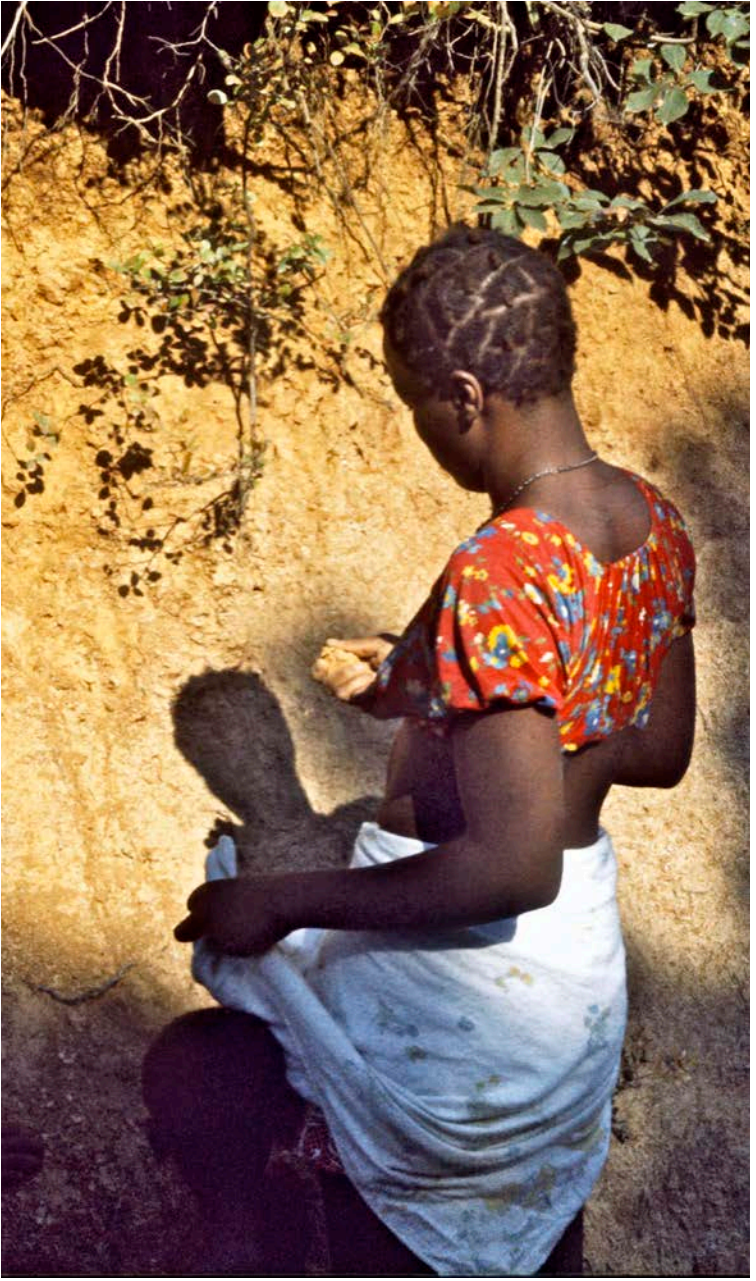
1974 - anywhere

The hunger we indirectly inflict on our outcasts reinforces our racist view of them. During the years I traveled, I found whites increasingly blaming the victims, rather than federal policy, for their lethargy. The deaths marked by tombstones only represented the tip of the iceberg. A poor diet leaves people listless and susceptible to numerous diseases, which is one reason why life expectancy for blacks is seven years shorter than for whites (as seen again under Covid-19 conditions). Historically, numerous black children have, due to hunger, suffered irreversible brain damage, which also causes laziness, apathy, alienation, and the inability to work. I found it difficult to get close to these sullen, withdrawn children—they were incredibly fearful of strangers. Again and again, while staying in run-down shacks, I ate cornbread, grits, and baked beans with lumps of fat.



1975 - rural Meridian, MS

In better-off homes, I was served more traditional "soul food," like pig knuckles, hog maw, chitterlings, pigs' ears, feet, and tails, as well as similar fat crumbs from the white man's table. Hundreds of thousands got less than the 3.5 pounds of bacon and pork a field hand received each week under chattel slavery. I found the worst hunger on remote backroads and among the urban elderly. A hungry dog is a sign there are hungry people nearby. In winter, when hunger was at its worst, I saw blacks digging up roots in white-owned fields. Many black women in the South eat dirt. When I first visited, nearly 50% of black women in Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina ate clay. According to the New York Times, it was still happening in 2000. This woman, exhausted from anemia, led me to a slope where she dug for the "food" she shared with her son.



1975 - rural Meridian, MS

- Do you ever eat dirt? - Sometimes...  
 - Does it taste good?  
 - Yes. (With surprise) Have you never eaten it?  
 - No, but I would like to try. What kind is it, clay? Red clay?  
 - Yes, it is really red....  
 - What do you call it?  
 - We call it sweet dirt...  
 - I thought it was called Mississippi mud. That's what they call it up north. (Many blacks in the North I found out had it mailed by family in the South).  
 - Do you ever eat laundry starch?  
 - Sometimes.  
 - Who else eats dirt around here?  
 - My mother and my aunt over there. Everybody, I think.



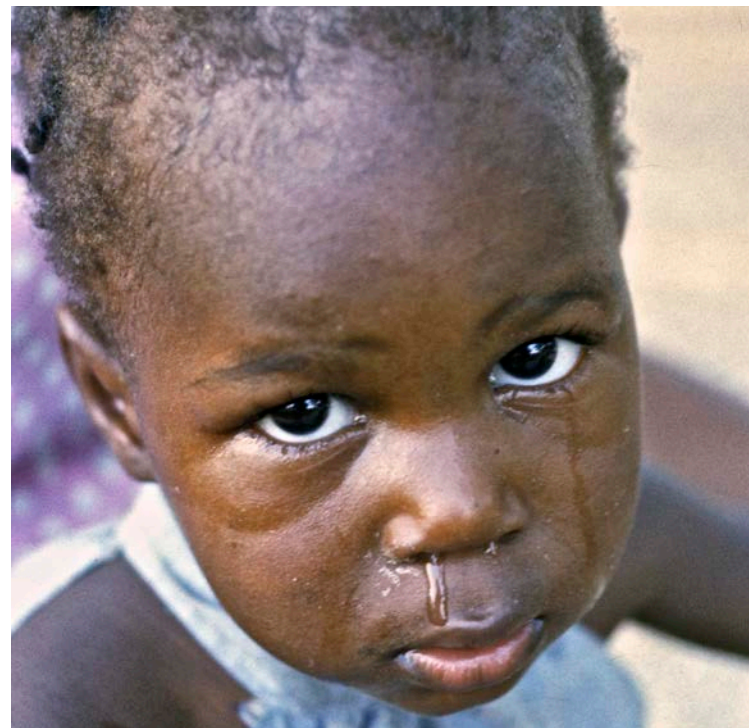
1975 - rural Meridian, MS



1975 - rural Meridian, MS



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



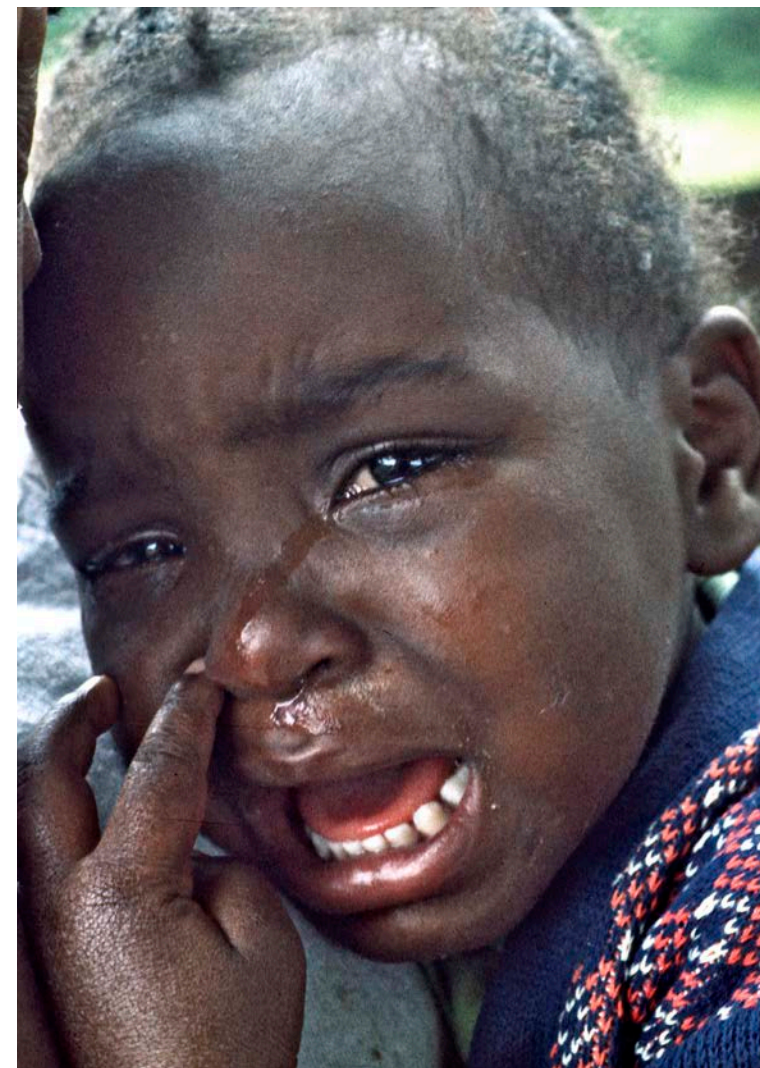
1973 - Vanceboro, NC



1974 - Greenville, NC



1973 - rural Wallace, NC



1974 - rural Morehead City, NC



1973 - New York

The personal encounter with the constant whining, restlessness, and snotty noses of children who cry incessantly because they're hungry seems almost a relief—is infinitely preferable to the empty eyes and dead silence of children whom hunger has made so apathetic they're no longer able to cry. Are we ourselves able to cry? When I cooled off in the endless shopping malls with their numbing muzak, I almost cried over the contrast to the extreme poverty I'd just seen. Over how easily and blithely through such escapes we let that kind of hunger be chiseled into the experience of blacks throughout American history. I wasn't born into this oppression, but how would it affect me, over the course of my life, to witness what happens to a people's soul? To see mothers lay their children in the grave? Or to see mothers die at a brutal rate (13,600 black women die annually in childbirth)? Only 3,481 would die if they had access to white healthcare—fewer than 2,000 if they had European healthcare. How can we spend billions on designing new car models each year while condemning our children to rank only 15th lowest in child mortality (17,686 babies died unnecessarily in 1977)? Does being bombarded by ads for cars and other goods make us blind to human values and the suffering around us? What does it say about our priorities that the car graveyard in the background is fenced in, but not the human cemetery in the foreground? Priorities which let GM destroy the electric trolleys in American cities in 1936 in order to sell more cars, forever trapping us in concrete spaghetti mazes, like that of Los Angeles, which eventually caused 500 deaths a year thanks to the annual emission of 460,000 tons of car pollutants—not to mention crippling black children in the inner city with lead poisoning.



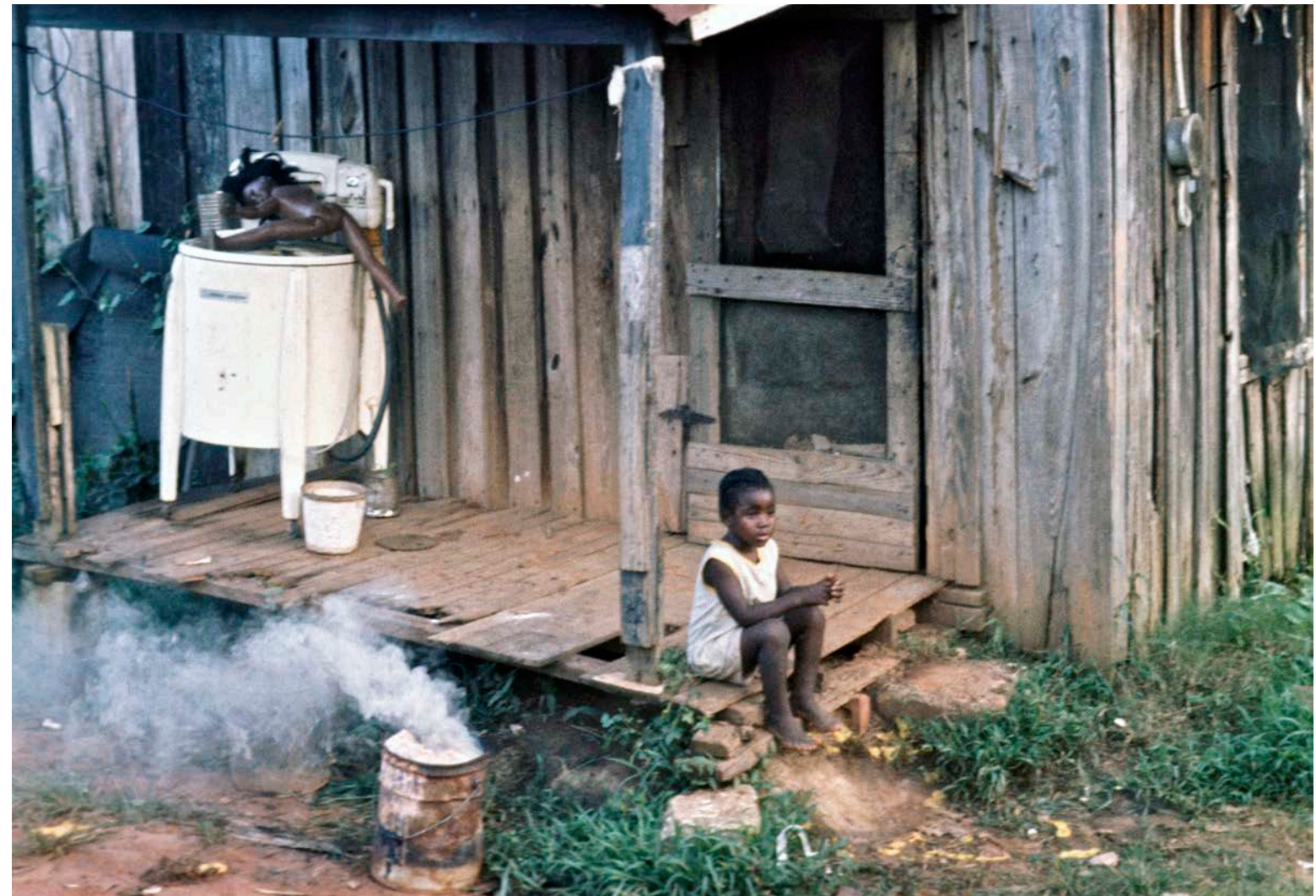
1974 - New Bern, NC



1974 - New Bern, NC



1974 - rural Eastern NC



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



1991 - New York



1974 - 42nd St, NYC



1996 - NYC



1974 - NYC



1973 - NYC. Rolls royce with black chauffeur

The ideological blinding that insists people “row their own boats” is upheld through persistent appeals to our selfishness and greediness. The laws of our system, invisible for most people, manipulate us with incessant Horatio Alger propaganda, with stories about Rockefeller and “the self-made man”—lessons in the attainability of success. The enormous exploitation and suffering necessary to create, for instance, a Jeff Bezos and his time-clock slaves is left out. The road to success is portrayed as a road with obstacles, which a determined man with the necessary qualities can overcome. The reward is waiting in the distance. The road is lonesome and to achieve success one must adopt wolf-like qualities: eat or be eaten. One can only succeed at the cost of the failure of others.



1974 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - New Orleans

I was shocked in the 1970s to see America's great inequality, but it was difficult to photograph the dynamics that created the many victims I saw in the streets. Still, I was sometimes quite visionary: This bank, E. F. Hutton & Co., engaged in money laundering for the mafia, lost millions on Black Monday and almost caused global capitalism to crash in 1987. Then it merged with Lehman Brothers and kicked off the financial crisis in 2008 almost succeeding in overthrowing global capitalism. Years of "Reaganomic" deregulation combined with worthless subprime loans, many given to the struggling black middle class, forced millions out of their homes. I now saw blacks like these in Harlem in food lines. After the crisis the average white became twenty times as wealthy as the average black although whites had only been six times wealthier when I arrived in 1970.

## Wealth Gap Grows Between Whites and Minorities

The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of newly available government data from 2009.

These lopsided wealth ratios are the largest since the government began publishing such data a quarter century ago and roughly twice the size of the ratios that had prevailed between these three groups for the two decades prior to the Great Recession that ended in 2009.

### 20-to-1

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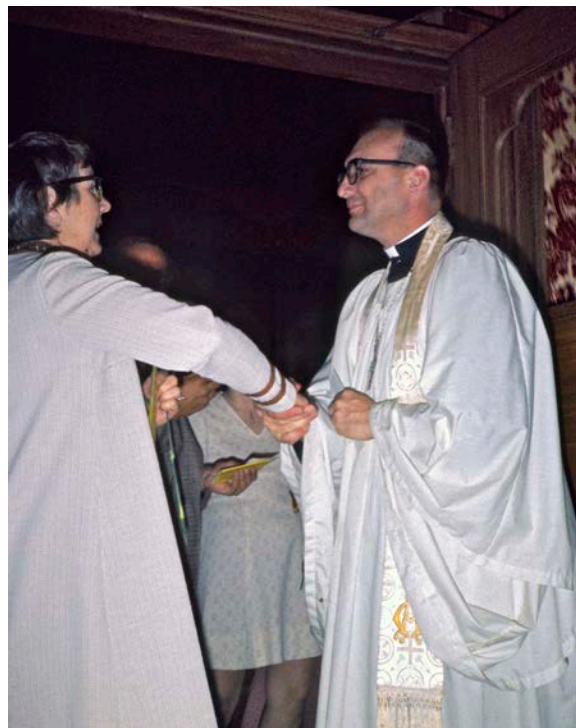
2011 - Pew Research Center



2009 - Harlem, NY during Financial Crisis



1971 - NY - This bank E. F. Hutton & Co. merged with Lehman Brothers and caused the financial crisis



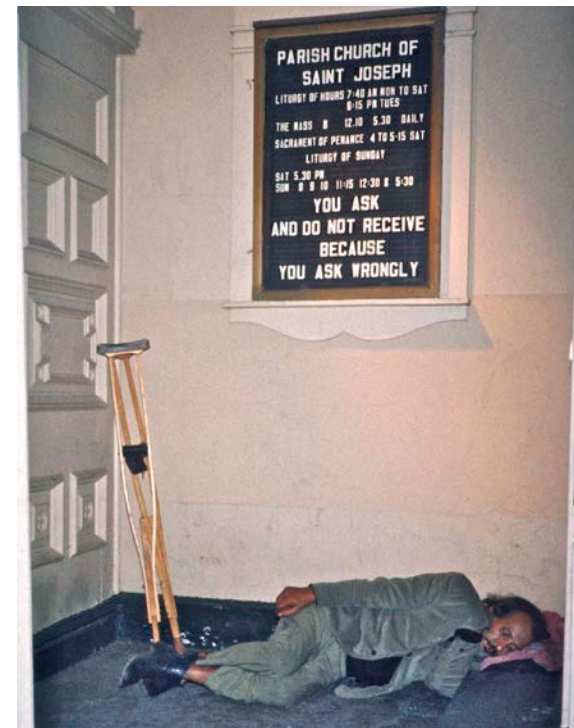
1975 - San Francisco



1974 - anywhere



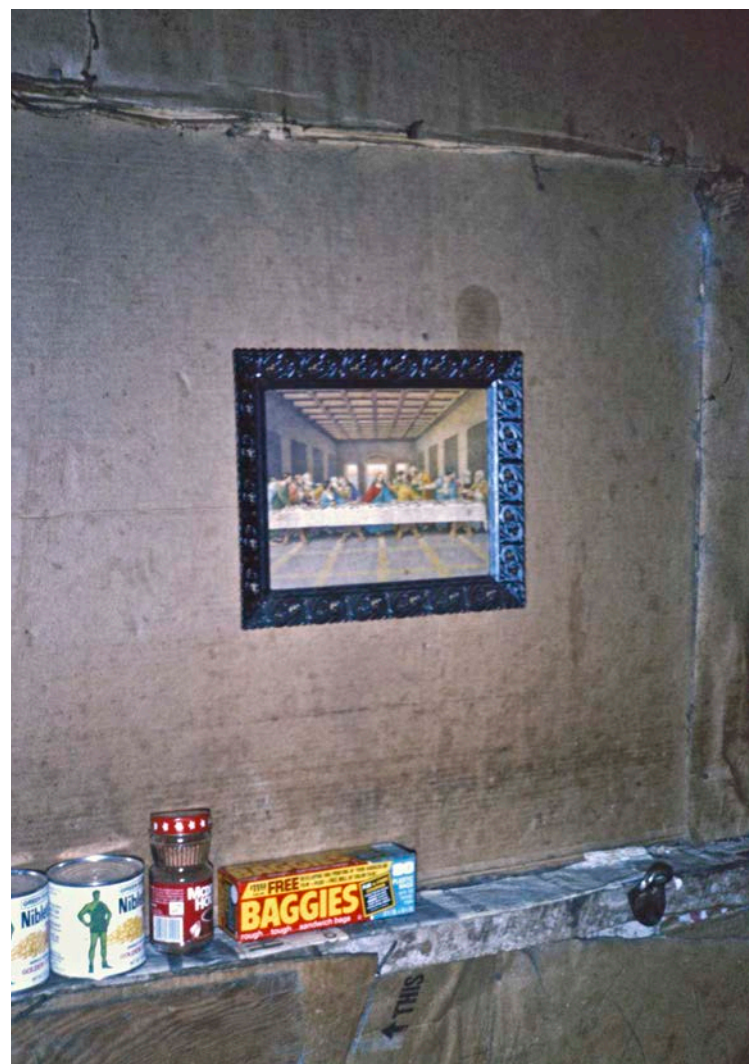
1973 - Charleston, SC



1974 - NYC - You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly



1975 - Bullock County, AL

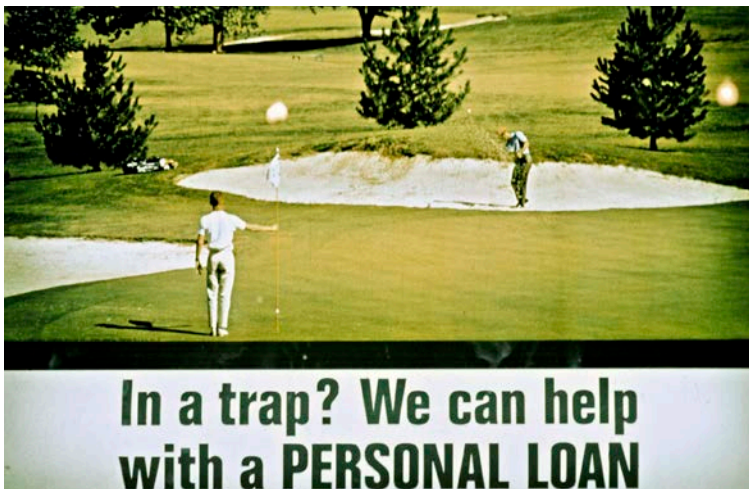


1975 - Union Springs, AL



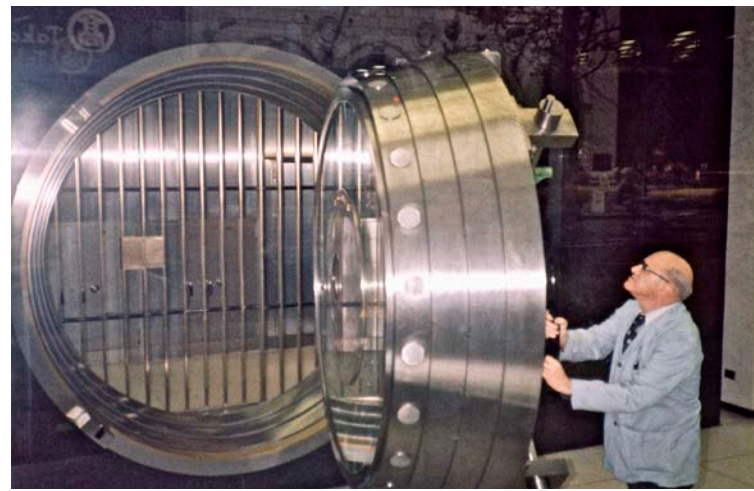
1978 - Waynesboro, GA





It's easy to see how this wolf philosophy manifests itself. Gigantic money-palaces in the middle of black slums comprised just one of the more hideous aspects of this philosophy's pathological nature. Today, the money is only located in white areas and surrounded by an army of homeless blacks who didn't exist in the '70s. Next to dirty neighborhoods infested with rats and violence, you can walk into banks built like marble castles with huge gold-trimmed vaults. Yes, there's plenty of money in the banks, held by insurance companies, and among those who own them. But why then, I ask—with the morality of the street and the vagabond—is there no money for my crippled friend Lee, who must sit in the street every day and beg for pennies? Lee told me that he'd studied law at university in his youth but had to quit when he got polio. He still studies and I brought several books for him on the topic that most interested him, namely business law, which he still believed would be a way of pulling himself up by his bootstraps. Lee wasn't only a victim of his own pocket philosophy, but a caricature of the social disease that determines that American doctors will make so much money the poor can't afford them. While all other wealthy countries have free health insurance, American doctors operate for profit, with the result that thousands die of causes that wouldn't be fatal in Europe. Before Obamacare, 50 million people couldn't afford health insurance at all. Why should the middle class pay less than 4% of their income on healthcare while the poor pay more than 15% (for dilatory third- and fourth-class care)? The result is that the most affluent white Americans are as healthy as the Danes, but the health of the (black) poor is comparable to that of populations in underdeveloped nations. Why are there fewer doctors per capita in black ghettos than in Central Africa? And why don't they ever make house calls there?

In the Norfolk ghetto, I spent a whole day comforting a lonely, grief-stricken man whose wife had died the night before because he couldn't get her to a doctor, and I couldn't help being overwhelmed by guilt. I recalled the many mornings in my childhood when I



asked to see a doctor for my "stomachache" because I hadn't done my homework. Few can afford to cry wolf, as I had, in the midst of a wolf society, where healthcare for profit is a deadly business indeed: 24,000 blacks die annually from lack of "white medical care"; 39,500 American women a year die in childbirth for lack of "Scandinavian health care," and the American man's life expectancy ranks only 35th among U.N. member nations.



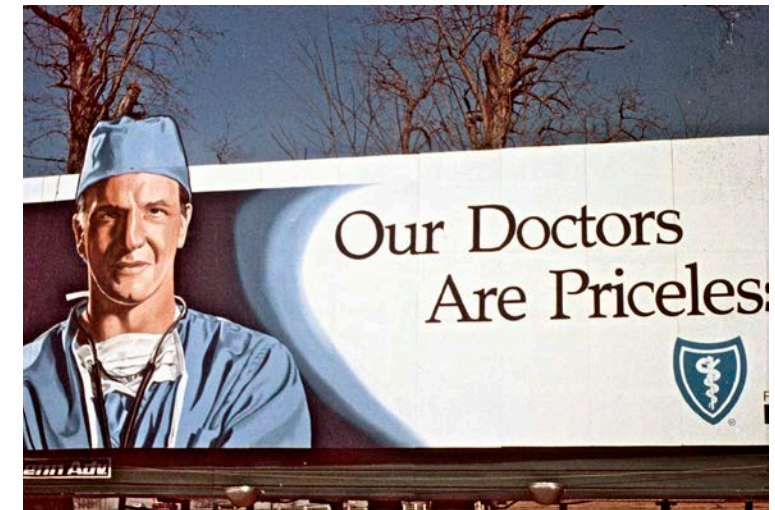
1973 - 5th Ave, NYC



1971 - New York, NY



1973 - 5th Ave, NYC



1987 - MS

Since Americans pay almost twice as much for their privatized health care as Europeans and also have to pay more than the price of a house for just four years of university, you understand why most can no longer afford or have time for our six-week paid vacations. They don't grasp that precisely because the Danes pay twice as much in tax, we have so much money left over, after all bills are paid, that even workers can afford to travel the globe. (I use Denmark as an example since so did Bernie Sanders when he ran for president in 2020).



1975 - Waynesboro, GA

The death statistics only show the surface. Willie Williams here sits hunched up all day in an armchair staring blankly at the two men who'd once given him so much hope: Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. His wife, Julia, is lying in bed, sick and debilitated from hunger. She can't afford special diabetic food as they only receive \$72 a month. They're alone, forgotten by society in a world of emptiness only interrupted by the cheerless dripping of rain through the ceiling.

The most pernicious of poverty's diseases is, without a doubt, apathy, the state of mind into which millions of people are thrown when they realize they can't hold their own in a world of the upward-climbing optimism of the wolf philosophy—and simply give up the struggle.



1974 - Washington, NC



1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1998 - NYC



1991 - NYC

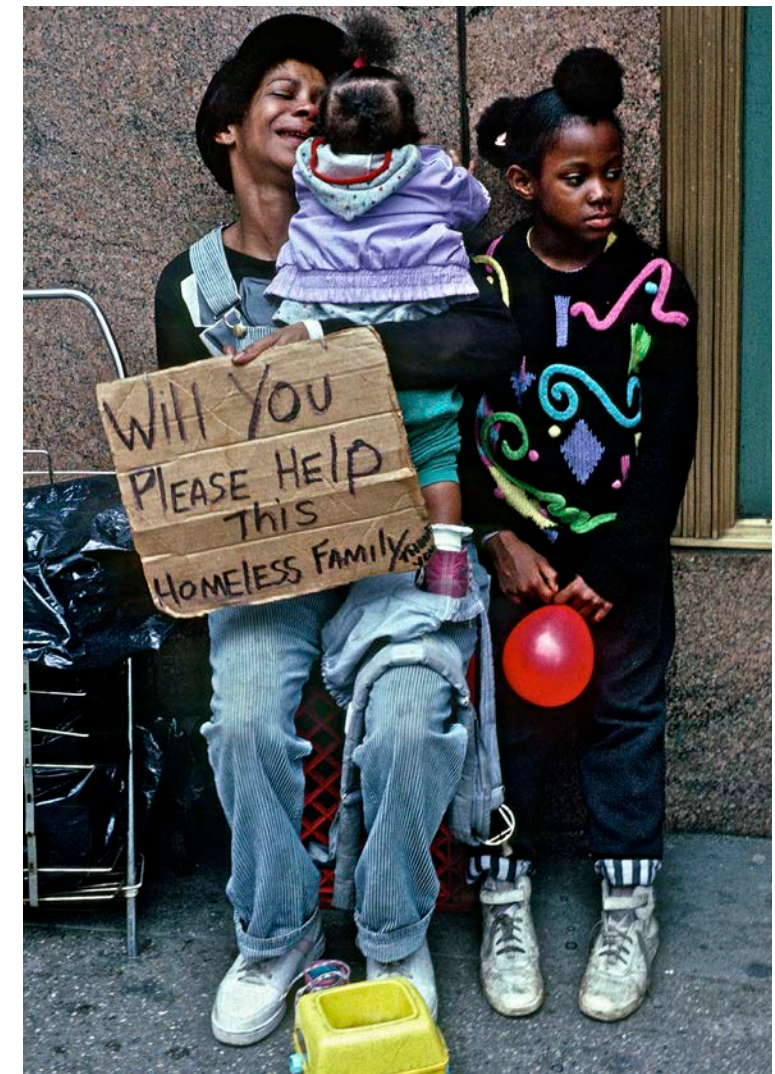
The needy in the United States are a minority and see affluence everywhere they look. As a result, the solidarity and pride often characterizing rural communities in poor countries are absent; poverty becomes crueler and much more psychologically destructive here than anywhere else in the world. In America you're constantly told that it's your own fault if you're poor. Thus you fall into violent self-hatred, a morbid state I find unequalled anywhere else in the world. This state of mind destroys societal love, the invisible threads of mutual interdependence and trust that bind people in a wholesome society. The destruction of love sows increasing distrust and fear. Although fear seems to direct everyone in such a society, first and foremost it paralyzes the poor.



1975 - Bullock County, AL



1990 - New York, NY



1995 - NYC



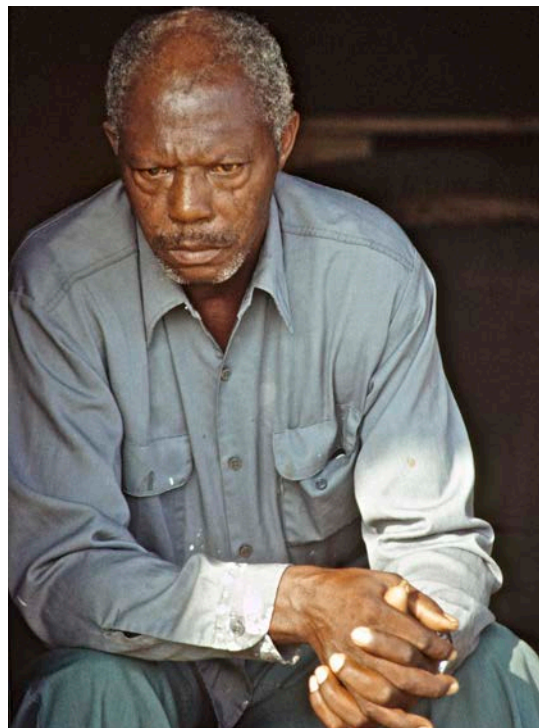
1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Tarboro, NC



1978 - Zebulon, NC



1996 - rural Houma, LA



1995 - Bullock County, AL

One of the things I find most difficult getting used to in America is this ubiquitous fear—and its resulting reactions. Not only the primitive fear of other people but more frighteningly the institutionalized fear of old age, sickness, and insecurity, which seems to darken the golden years of so many people and leads them to think and act in ways that seem totally irrational and self-defeating when, like me, you’ve been shaped by “cradle-to-grave” welfare security. A desire to hold onto white supremacy is one of the resulting distress patterns among the victims of such fear. This in turn made blacks, such as this woman, who initially fled from me, fear whites.

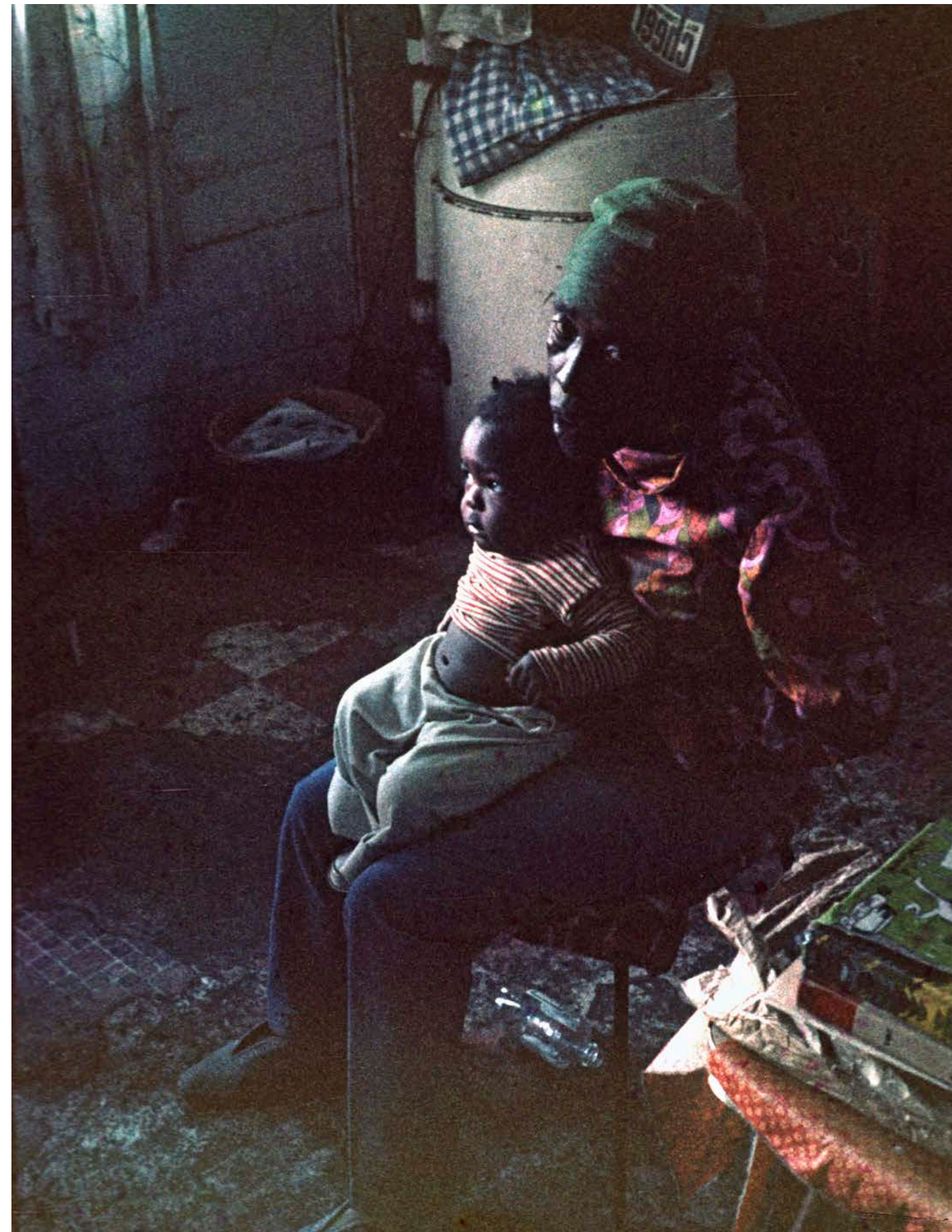
- Are you scared of whites around here?
- Man, see, I don't mess with whites no kind of way.
- What's wrong with the whites?
- Them whites, they mess you up, man. They make you lose your home, make you lose your man, make you lose your husband if you got one. They make you do everything that ain't right ... I am talking about these around here... What is you?
- I'm not southern white...

I always felt that blacks exaggerated a bit when they told me such things. I've always had a rather naïve faith in the goodness of people, probably because I haven't grown up in poverty and insecurity. Without this faith I couldn't have traveled the way I did since my faith usually encouraged the good sides of people. Consequently, I got along well with southern whites, whom I'm more fond of because of their warmth and honesty, than the more liberal but colder and less direct whites in the North.

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1975 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Elizabethtown, NC



Mary at night in her shack on the forest backroads in Bullock County, 1974



Mary dressed up for church in 1974

The bitter truth, however, dawned on me when, on the humid stifling backroads of Alabama, I came to Mary and her son, John, to get a glass of water. Without indoor plumbing, we ended up—in more ways than one—sharing water at the Samaritan woman’s well. Mary and I romanticized our relationship in these harsh surroundings, but her trust in people around her wasn’t like mine: She had three pistols and a shotgun under the bed. These turned out to be some of the happiest days of my life, and to this day we still nurture strong feelings for each other. When I went away briefly to see a Ku Klux Klan meeting in Kentucky, Mary gave me a silver cross as protection. As it turned out, Mary needed the protection more than I did. One night, for no reason other than her having a white man living with her, three whites threw a firebomb into her kitchen. The entire house went up in flames. She managed to get her son out, but her brother, who was asleep, perished in the fire.

Americans often blame me for Mary’s tragedy. In guilt over an unmentioned apartheid line in their hearts and minds actually caused our Shakespearean tragedy. Similarly, we Europeans condemn Americans for this peculiar gut resistance to intimate black-white relationships, while we forget our own primitive resistance to relationships with Muslim immigrants. Everywhere in the world, the minds of both oppressor and the oppressed are devoured with obscure obsessive objections toward intermarriage and intimate interrelationships. But for the outsider of a particular oppression, it’s easy to see that neither the oppressor nor the oppressed is free!

The tragedy threw me into my recurring dilemma: Can I, as an outsider, have fully human relationships with those deemed pariahs? Those who want to maintain a caste system will always condemn such relationships. Crippling taboo systems can therefore be broken down only if on a personal level we try to be fully human to everyone—with the risk this entails for deeper feelings and infatuation. But ignoring each other’s background can also, as in Romeo and Juliet, imply danger for oneself and others—danger or, if it’s conscious, fear, which must never limit us in our human involvement, in the love of our neighbor as of ourselves.



My departure from Mary and John



Mary did not have the same trust in people as me



Mary at her house after the firebombing

# Can there be “free love” under unfree conditions?

Thoughts on my lifelong relationship with Mary.



10-year-old John and I always shared the bed in the old shack. 1975



Mary and her new “boyfriend” from Florida 1984



Mary with her new shack and still untilled piece of land in 1978

In the years after Mary’s tragedy, my audiences blamed me almost daily for having caused it: “You shouldn’t have exposed a poor black woman to that kind of danger with your irresponsible (sexual) exploitation.” I wonder why Americans always imagine sex when they see images of a naked woman rather than the intimacy I tried to convey with my pictures. In Mary’s case, she was less a “naked” woman than a bikini-clad woman on the beach, and yet religious universities like Baylor in Texas forced me to remove Mary’s slide before lecturing. The obsession with sex makes Americans blind to the deeper oppression Mary was subjected to. The truth is that even if Mary and I had wanted to have sex her circumstances made it virtually impossible. As a vagabond, I always shared the bed of her 7-year-old son, John, in their tiny bedroom, which accommodated two single beds. And I had to be out of the shack before 5 a.m., which is the reason I often preferred to sleep with a neighbor.

Why did I have to leave? Thanks to the good old nighttime integration between the white master and his favorite slave mistress, which began during slavery. “Nighttime integration and daytime segregation make this a very mixed-up place,” Rosa Parks wrote when she rebelled against both during her famous Montgomery bus boycott a few miles from Mary’s residence. In return for sex, white landowners would offer financial support to single black women, who became dependent on it to survive. Mary’s sugar daddy, Harry, would always show up around at 5 a.m., telling “his hysterical jealous wife” as Mary called her, that he was doing field work.



Mary and her friend Bertha with her boyfriend 1984



The violent veteran always threatened with his guns. 1978

She always talked warmly of him, and for moral reasons (as well as to avoid losing their beneficial arrangement), having sex with me at the same time was unthinkable. When I came back with my book describing the firebombing in 1978, Mary was heartbroken because Harry, who’d bought her a large piece of land with a bigger shack after the fire, had just been killed. I would spend the next 23 years with her in that romantic two-room shack without much romance between us—Mary, who was still attractive, immediately found a new white man to support her. He was a violent traumatized Vietnam veteran, but he let me stay in the other room. They were grateful for my arrival because they hadn’t spoken to each other in weeks, and I helped mediate between them. When I came back in 1982, she’d fled because he’d tried to kill her with one of the very guns I’d photographed him shooting with.

The next one was an old “redneck” from Florida who, like the other two, was deeply racist. He let me stay there and photograph all the affection Mary bestowed on him when he was around. Through Mary I met a whole network of rural black women practicing “nighttime integration.” They even came in the daytime to practice it in our shack. I photographed Mary’s friend Bertha after she became pregnant with her sugar daddy’s baby. All the local blacks knew about “nighttime integration,” and I never understood why it didn’t seem to bother them. Nor did I understand why, just like Mary, they kept voting for George Wallace, a racist who’d once blocked their door to higher education with his policy of “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever.”



I am soaking wet picking peas with Mary in 1986. Photo by another field worker

This overt exploitation seemed to end for Mary in the ’80s. Nonetheless, we still didn’t feel free in our relationship—this despite the fact that our mutual affection had grown as we’d gotten older. She’d always been a fieldworker, picking cotton as a child instead of going to school, but without a sugar daddy’s income, she had to work extra hard. I did my best to help, so some days I’d be standing on stage in front of a thousand guilt-ridden students; the next day I’d pick a thousand baskets of beans and peas with Mary—she affectionately referred to our relationship as “pea-ing together.” With the adulation I got from my students came the risk of feeling like I could walk on water. So I balanced that delusion with walking in the mud beside those whose stories I was telling—sometimes, as with Mary, water-soaked in the stifling August heat.



*Mary in a relaxing moment after a hard day's work in 1988*

I felt the historic master-slave relationship revived when the white landowner came around at 5 a.m. and dumped us in a remote field where we worked in the hot sun until quitting time. In the evening we grew our own food on the “40 acres (minus 38) and a mule” (I was the mule plowing her two acres) that she’d received in “reparations” from her deceased white lover. “You’re practicing Danish slavery,” I told her. Unlike slaves in the US, the slaves in the Danish Virgin Island and other Caribbean islands were allowed to grow their own food on small plots of land while slaving for the master during the day. That way their personal initiative and enterprising skills weren’t broken, in contrast to what I still saw a century later here in the Black Belt. In any event, when the moon was finally rising romantically over the fields, we were so exhausted we literally fainted on the bed—our backs and sex drive equally broken. In the winter the reason for our celibacy was different. On each lecture tour, I’d always make time to see Mary and other friends in the South. Since Mary had no telephone, I’d call Eula, an old woman nearby, to send her grandchildren over to announce my arrival. Mary would spend the day cooking my favorite soul food: pig tails, turnip greens,

hog maws, etc. After this fantastic meal, we’d drive all over the woods to visit old friends (in years past, I’d bicycled on those around and photographed them in their shacks). Since many of these shacks had burned down, usually in stove fires, only Mary knew where my friends had gone on the endless dirt roads cutting through the dark woods. One of those I’d photographed in my youth was Mary’s 98-year-old grandfather (page 99). Mary told me he shot his wife (on the left) and died of grief a short time later. More than anyone else, Mary has been responsible for updating my photographic record of the people living in remote shacks. With her at my side, people didn’t fear or distrust me as a white man—issues I’d struggled to overcome in my vagabond years. But now that we were old friends, they always expected me to bring cases of beer. Night after night we’d drink until it was so late I’d be unable to drive home, and we’d pass out wherever we were in the woods. I loved these relaxing nights with Mary, who, with her charm and lively personality, could open doors everywhere—except to any sex life between us. When we finally tried to have a romantic night in her shack, there was so much tension and violence in the neighborhood, with drunken revelers



*John with pregnant Debra the year before she was murdered. 1990*



*“Two acres and a (Danish) mule” in 1984*

from a nearby club driving into our yard to smoke dope or have sex in their cars, that she sat behind the curtains for hours with her shotgun. The firebombing, which had occurred in our innocent youth, left deep scars in both of us.

The person she feared most, as it turned out, was her own son, John. John had been conceived in violence: He was the son of a white man who’d raped Mary when she was 16. She was constantly calling me to help get him out of jail, usually for burglary, theft, or possession of a firearm or crack. She had the naïve belief that I, as a white man, had the authority to make a difference. Being biracial, John suffered from a lifelong identity crisis as well as low self-esteem. He loved me from childhood as the father he’d never had, but violence followed him everywhere he went. He’d even stolen his mother’s guns and expensive gifts she’d gotten from white lovers, which he pawned for crack money. He also left pregnant women all over Alabama, forcing us to drive around the state comforting them while Mary futilely attempted to keep up with a growing number of grandchildren. Debra, whom I photographed pregnant in our shack, was one of his sweetest



*Mary always ready with her guns to protect us. 1994*

girlfriends. A year later, when I asked where she was, Mary said casually, “Oh, Debra, she went into town to buy milk for the baby but was shot and killed when she left the store.” I think it was the fear of violence that made Mary avoid black boyfriends. There was one exception, which I only found out about by accident. After a couple of days with her in February 1996, I asked her about her constant sniffing. She explained that she’d gotten the flu out in a frozen swamp. “What were you doing there?” I asked. Almost as a side remark, she said that someone had tried to murder her on New Year’s Eve. Fifty years old at this point, she’d given up on finding another white boyfriend, so for the first time in her life, she tried a black boyfriend, a man who’d been released after years in prison. She realized he was dangerously violent and tried to break up with him. He suddenly forced her into his car at gunpoint and drove her into the swamps. He put the gun to her temple, but she’d been drinking a Coke and used the bottle to crack his skull. She fled through the icy swamps a whole night before finding a shack. Well, that’s probably the Southern way to get the flu, I thought, but I wondered why she didn’t tell me about this terrifying incident until I asked the right question.



Mary 47 years old in 1994

I'd long ago become used to the violence around her, but the many European travelers I brought with me to meet Mary, whom they always adored, were often shocked. When multimillionaire Anita Roddick traveled with me in 1994, she immediately bonded with Mary and wanted to employ her in some idealistic business project she planned to set up for poor blacks in the Black Belt. We'd been out drinking and playing pool, and I'd told Anita that she could just have my bed in the van while I slept in Mary's bed. Anita, however, had been frightened by all the violence she'd experienced on this, the first evening of our tour. Mary's drunk cousin, for example, went around shooting out all the lamps we passed. Anita was terrified about sleeping alone in the woods and afraid that Mary's shack would be firebombed again. Her Body Shop Company had insisted on following behind us with some armed bodyguards, but both she and I had refused, since the idea was to travel on my "vagabond terms." As a result, I was faced on our very first night with a choice I'd never had to make before. Should I sleep with one of the richest women in the world or with one of the poorest? A multimillionaire or a farmworker? I knew that if I slept with Anita, I risked hurting Mary's feelings by choosing to sleep with a white woman. If I slept with Mary, I risked losing the terrified Anita for the rest of the trip. It wasn't an easy situation, so we dragged it out, playing pool and drinking more beer. Around four in the morning I solved my dilemma by telling Mary a white lie about how we were on such a tight schedule we had to leave the same night to meet someone in Mississippi the next day. Needless to say I was way too drunk to drive, but I managed on the deserted backroads to drive a mile into the forest, where I shared my "Body Shop" with Anita (no hurt feelings on either side). Afterwards Anita sent Mary a big check, but the violence and despair Anita met with everywhere convinced her to give up her idealistic project in the same way that other investors had always ghettoized and broken the initiative of the most powerless people in the Black Belt.



Mary showing Anita Roddick the hats and quilts she makes 1994

The fear of violence can be overwhelming. In August 1990 I left Denmark for New York, and as usual criminals broke into my van on the Lower East Side (on the first night). The next evening, while I was cleaning up broken glass, I heard shots. I looked out of the van and saw two Puerto Ricans running. They both fell. Out of habit I grabbed my camera and sprinted over to them, but when I began taking pictures, I realized I was staring into the eyes of two dying people. I began to shake all over. In a panic I ran up to the lesbians I'd lived with for many years in a loft on Ave D. Still shaking, I told Martha what had happened. My second shock came when she laughed and said, "Well, Jacob, welcome back to America. Yesterday, when I stood looking out the kitchen window at a black woman waiting for the bus on Eighth Street, she suddenly sank to the ground, dead. Hit by stray bullets." I thought about her laughter. How else could these sensitive female poets, who made movies about the violence done to women, deal with the horrors of their environment? I'd planned to photograph the crack and crime epidemic in their neighborhood, while Bush was on a shooting spree of his own in Iraq, but I was so terrified I jumped into my van the same night and drove the 1000 miles straight down to the relative peace of Mary's shack. When I was with Mary, I was never afraid of the violence in the local club, where in the best moments we loved to do the latest Da' Train chain dances. In the worst moments, I photographed black men "hitting on" their women (see the photo of one of Mary's friends on page 291). I loved that funky joint in the middle of Alabama's woods. Unfortunately, one of the regulars burned it down, along with my American Pictures posters on the walls, after getting into a fight. But the scariest violence didn't come from people. In 2011, when Mary was 65 years old, I was coming from a lecture in Mississippi. In fact, it was more of an attempt to empower the audience—almost all women—of historically black Tougaloo College. "Where are the men?" I asked. "They're all in prison."



John still in severe pain a few days after the hurricane in 2011

Once again I experienced the destruction and hopelessness caused by our pervasive racism in the Black Belt. After my all-day empowerment workshop, while I was on my way to a more elitist black high school in Atlanta, I heard on the car radio that a devastating hurricane was headed my way. The reports of this approaching "historic superstorm" got worse and worse, as did the weather around me, so I drove faster, trying to reach Mary's house sooner. She'd moved into the brick housing project in town, where I'd be safe. But barely had I reached my safe haven when Mary came running out in the rain, shouting that she'd lost cell-phone contact with John, who was out in the woods. With her motherly instinct, she knew something was wrong and insisted we drive out to look for him. The hurricane was now all around us, and this became the most frightening experience of my life. We couldn't see a yard ahead—it was like driving through a swimming pool except trees were flying through the air all around us. I soon lost any hope of finding him at all—let alone alive—but Mary knew every bend of those dark backroads, and she was determined to get to her son. Then the miracle happened. We found John underneath his truck, which had been tossed up in the air and landed on his foot. We pulled him out, and though he was screaming in pain, we got him back to the house. As I've often said, "People you can always have faith in, but don't ever trust cars—or nature." With girlfriends for life comes also a commitment to their children's lives.

Which leads me back to the question: Was Mary ever my "girlfriend"? Completely different in every sense as we were, it's a miracle in itself that our relationship lasted a lifetime. With a mixture of pride and fear, we both romanticized it for its Romeo-and-Juliet likeness. Since we'd been born on almost the same day, I even tried to find astrological answers to the mystery. She was in every sense a product of her violent circumstances. In her younger years, she was always cursing and yelling, especially at the blacks



Showing Klan leader Jeff Berry her new garden in the projects 2005

around her—they themselves were no less vocal. But no matter how many blacks were around, the minute she talked to me she would speak in the most soft-spoken loving voice, often smiling in embarrassment about all the anger she'd just displayed. And then the blacks would break out laughing because they'd never seen how much "peace and love" she contained and probably missed being able to express those long-subdued sides of themselves. But was this a healthy relationship? Was it natural? Whatever kind of love it began as, it naturally evolved over the years into a deeper and deeper physical attraction to each other. After heating water on a stove (made from an old barrel), we loved bathing each other in the tub on the living room floor. We loved cuddling and holding each other all night. I was one day reminded of this when Vibeke, my Danish wife, moved to Boston to help handle mail orders for my book. By mistake she opened a letter from Mary, who'd written about how she loved lying in my arms all night. "Why can you do that with Mary but not me?" Vibeke teased. I'd met her a few days after my book was published in Denmark. She came up to me and said, "I just read your book ..." A short time later, I said, "Ok, let's get married, but remember, when you marry me, you also marry all the people in my book, who caused us to meet." And since then she's met many, housing some of them in Denmark as if we were one big family. No, the real obstacle in my relationship with Mary was not of a moral nature although she was deeply religious and attended church throughout her life. She was very much grounded in herself and loved playing herself for the camera crews I brought with me. When Danish TV filmed us sitting down to a meal together, she insisted that we say grace together (as we normally did). Oh no, I thought, I don't want to be seen in Denmark giving in to all this American religion, but I had no choice. My "prayer of distress" was received, for just then one of the heavy cameramen crashed through our living room floor. He stood there with only his head and camera above the floorboards. I was hopeful now that





Mary 42-years old in 1989

the Danes wouldn't look down on my surrender to religion but see us as we saw ourselves—a bit above it all. After all my pondering about it, I finally understood the deeper problem behind our 40-year-long celibacy: Whenever we got close to slipping into a sexual dimension of our love for each other, we immediately recognized the historical pitfall before us—we would be continuing the centuries-old white rape of the black woman. We both wanted to feel detached from the “nighttime integration” Mary had been a victim of. We wanted our love to be free and untainted, but this was impossible. We were the ultimate victims of this deep pitfall, which prevented us from fully exercising what should be normal between a man and a woman: “free love.” I often wondered whether a truly healthy interracial relationship is possible in a society that obviously is not yet free.

And so the years went by until one day in 2009 Mary got both cancer and a brain tumor, which gave us other things to think about. I wasn't used to giving oxygen and at night got tangled up in all the hoses around Mary, but, luckily, I had a Danish traveler with me who could help. In some ways it once again felt like a bound relationship, but primarily I felt the joy of being able to



Saying grace before our meals. 1991

help a person I'd been close to since we were young, exultant, and thought we could change the world. It was strange and yet wonderful to push a seriously ill old woman around town in a stroller to her doctor's appointments, pay her medical bills, and look after her. Since we knew we'd never see each other again, I was glad that Marianne, my friend from Denmark, could take a lot of pictures of us. After her death in 2014, I had another Danish film crew with me to make the movie, *Jacob Holdt – an American Love Story*. I wanted to take them to the old shack where Mary and I had spent so many years together, but could hardly find it since it was now completely covered by Indiana Jones—dense jungle. It was depressing and dangerous to walk on the rotten floor, but I was glad that all my posters were still hanging on the walls although a cameraman noticed that one of them had been defaced: someone had cut out the square with a nude photo. “Those crazy Americans,” we all agreed. “Why didn't they cut out the photos of violence?” The crew wanted to film me in there telling the story of my life with Mary, but I suddenly started to cry uncontrollably. It was as if years of oppressed emotions suddenly poured out of me. When my daughter saw it at the film premiere, she said, “Dad, I've never before seen you cry like this.”

But in the meantime another miracle had taken place, for three years earlier Mary had for a short time recovered from the brain tumor. And so we had one more time been together a last time before her death. I'll never forget that last evening, sitting with her in her home in town. She still was the only one in the projects who kept a garden like the one we had around her shack, with all the flowers she loved—even the banana tree under which I'd photographed her and a Klan leader in 2005. Her yard stood out in sharp contrast in this drab project where everyone else had only worn grass around their homes. Inside she was still active, making quilts, hats, and clothes for her six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. With her help I was making ancestor



Our liberated shack with my posters after we kicked her white sugar daddies out in 1985

trees with their names and birth dates so I'd be able to remember them and stay in touch with them after her death. This is how I discovered that many of the youngest had been given African names, like Neikata and Takivie. Times had changed since I'd met Mary 40 years ago, when they all had slave names. And then, on our last night together, just as I was about to fall asleep at her side, something happened. Out of the blue she said, “Why don't you give me some of your sweet stuff now? Don't you think it's time for that before it's too late for us?” And without waiting for an answer, she swung me with one arm on top of her huge belly. I was paralyzed by confusion. She was extremely overweight from her medication and in my head I again heard my lecture audiences accusing me of “taking advantage of a poor black woman.” And so, to avoid that from my readers as well, I'm not going to reveal what happened—we all have a right to some privacy, don't we? But I admit that I found the idea of making love to a great-grandmother repulsive but at the same time attractive—with its promise that it's never too late “to make it” and become “Free at last, Free at last, Thank God almighty we are free at last.”



Helping Mary with her blocked arteries and oxygen hoses in 2009



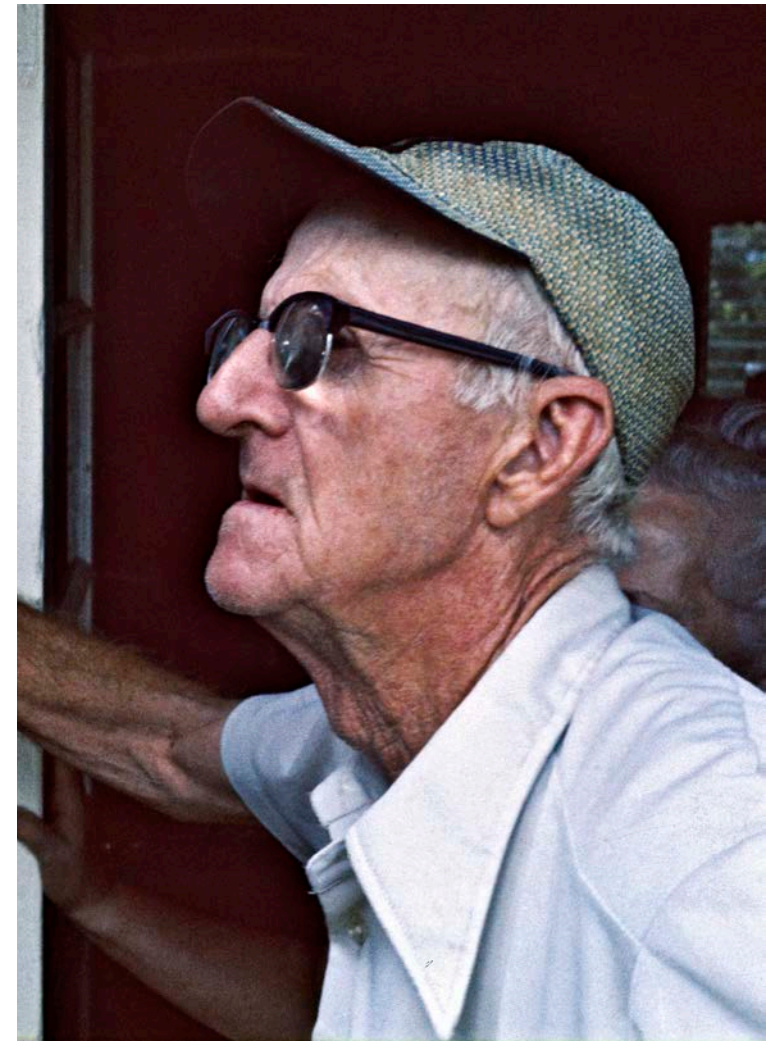
1975 - rural AL



1974 - rural NC



1973 - Baltimore



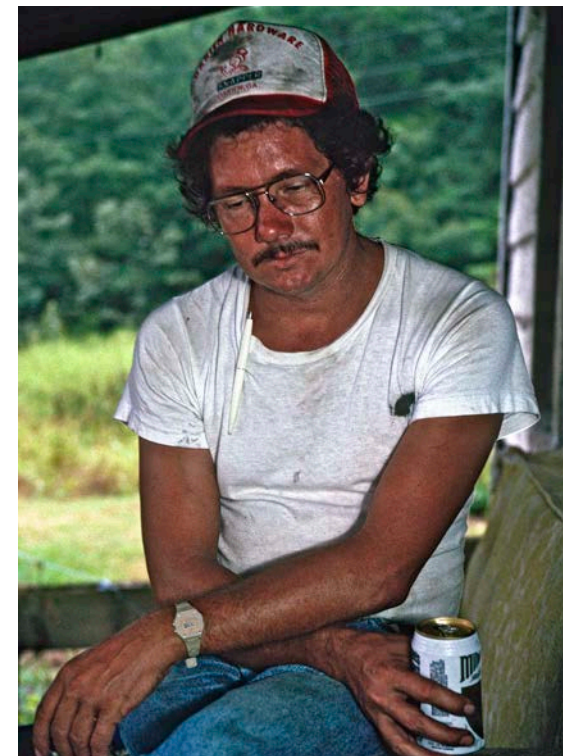
1975 - Troy, AL

Recording of a white man (top left) who picked me up close to Mary's place in Alabama:

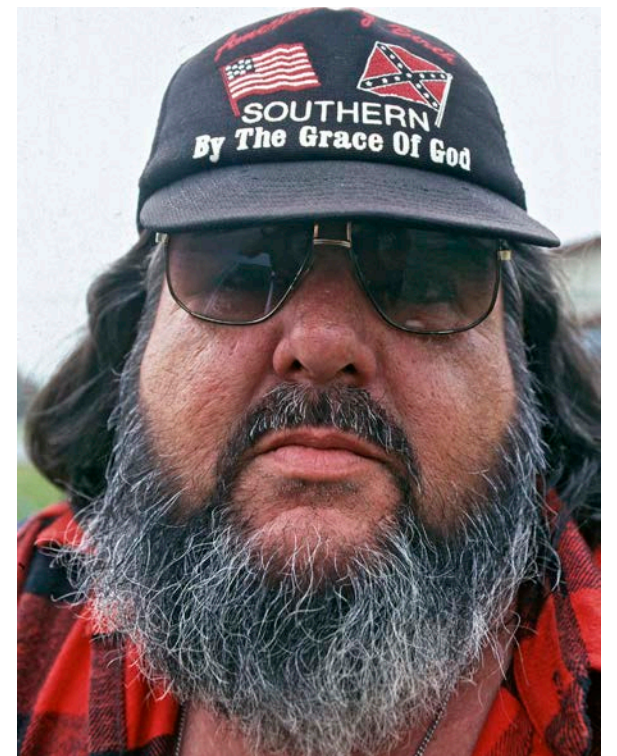
- *What do you think about integration?*  
- *I don't go for it at all. Let them be on their own and go ahead. Hell, I don't believe in mingling up with them, going to school with them, going to church with them. I've never had anything against niggers. They can't help being a nigger any more than I can help being a white. They are a different race of people and let them be different... - You always voted for Wallace? - I sure have... but he has got nothing against niggers as far as them being niggers is concerned... There is a lot of niggers who vote for him... he gets lots of nigger votes...*  
- *What did you think of Martin Luther King?* - *Who... Martin Luther King?... Why* - (spitting out the window) *He wasn't nothing but a troublemaker... a communist agitator...*

This Southern racist is a textbook example of the oppression we go through to become oppressors. The innocence of his childhood had been systematically oppressed by his parents' irrational injunctions: "Niggers are dirty. Don't play with those children; they'll stab you." As with children throughout the South, his

natural zestfulness, appetite for life, and affection for others were suffocated. While he was being hurt, his mind shut down, and over the years the accumulation of additional pain became chronic distress patterns. Incessantly he now had to replay his unhealed distress experiences like a broken record: "nigger, nigger, nigger." Listening to such voices of history, I knew that the bombing of Mary's house was the extreme but logical consequence of this oppression. If he'd grown up in the North, he wouldn't have ended up with such an evil mindset. And maybe even less so had he been raised in the Denmark of my youth (before today's racism). When I showed him my pictures—of Mary in bed, for example—the degree of my crime (to a southern white) against this apartheid system dawned on me. As a "neutral" Scandinavian, I felt that Mary was extremely beautiful and attractive. I therefore got quite a shock when I saw the disgust this white man expressed at the thought of being next to her "dirty, dark, repulsive skin." Little by little, I realized that this negative view was rooted in white supremacy and had ended up becoming an internalized deeply held honest conviction that had infected not only whites all over America, but also blacks' view of dark-skinned beauty.



1975 - Bullock County, AL



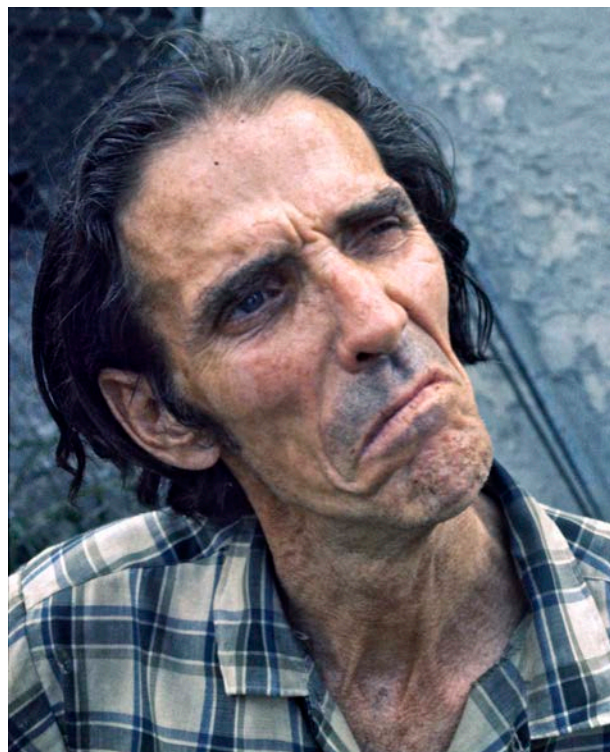
2003 - Angola, LA



1996 - Immokalee, FL



1975 - Meridian, MS



1973 - Baltimore

Vagabonds and blacks have a special relationship to poor whites. With their guns hanging inside pickup trucks as symbols of power, they're the ones who shoot at hitchhikers late on Friday nights, throw beer bottles at you other nights, and try to run you over at all hours. While the better-off whites set the tone, the poor exercise much of the direct physical oppression of black people, who contemptuously call them "poor white trash." It was they who were given the brutal and sadistic roles of slave overseers and catchers. Like poor whites today, the overseers sensed that they were held in contempt by plantation society and took out their insecurities and anger on the blacks through acts of relentless cruelty. It was to them that demagogic racist politicians addressed themselves, but when blacks got voting rights and swung the political pendulum toward more liberal politicians, poor whites lost much of their policing role and the little pride they had. Like blacks, they suffer from self-hatred and react violently against their surroundings by, for instance, throwing trash all over. They too have had their intelligence impaired by malnourishment and neglect and can be even more fearful than blacks.

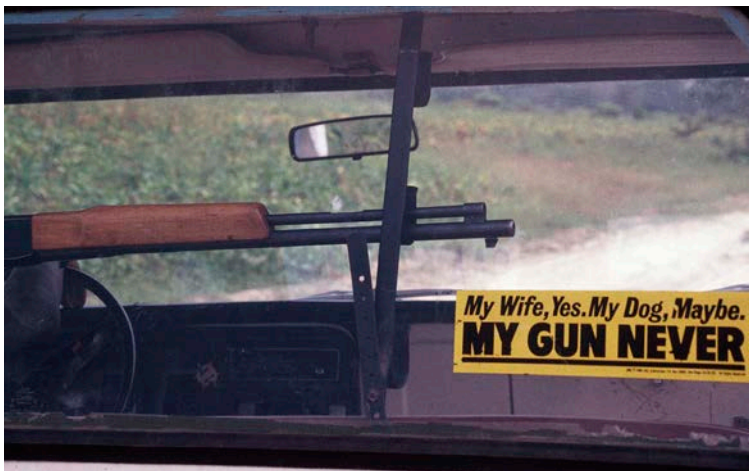
When I approach their shacks, they often run inside and lock the doors. When I go hunting with them and see their cruelty to animals, I realize the source of their violence and abusive behavior was their own early oppression—beaten as helpless children into their insensitive and repressive social role.

This cycle of mistreatment is similar to that suffered by blacks, who tend to replay their violent experience on their own kind. Poor whites not only have their own children, but also blacks as a vulnerable and socially sanctioned target group.

Having always been told that whites are superior, they feel left behind when they see blacks with better jobs. They feel that "niggers have gotten too many rights" and that "no nigger can ever achieve the same status as even the lowest white." They therefore sense that they fell off the wagon when they see that many blacks today live better and have better jobs than themselves.



2003 - Philadelphia, MS



1986 - anywhere



1972 - Jackson, MI

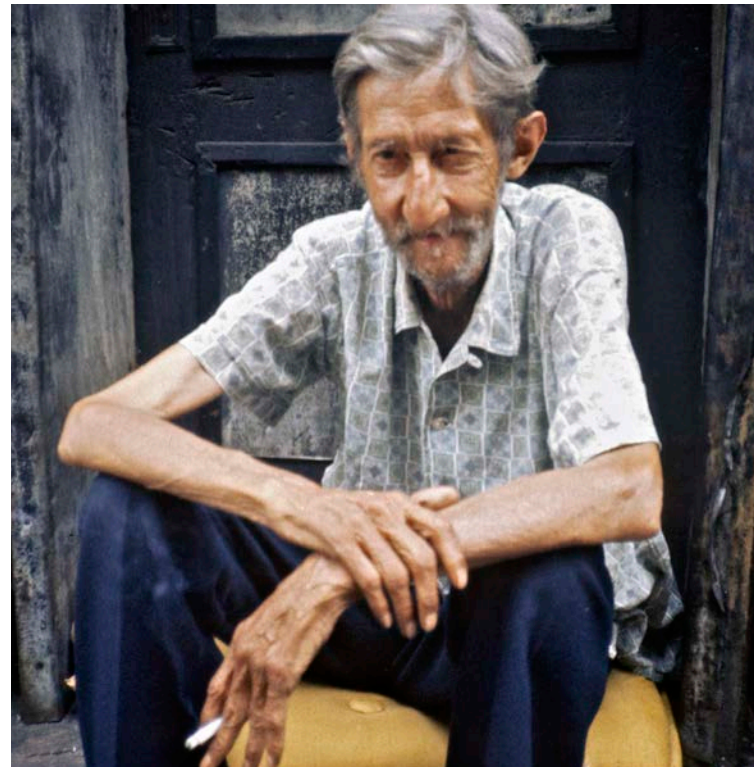


1974 - rural Kinston, NC



Historical photo

They don't understand the inner dynamics of our system, which often leaves them unemployed, and instead blame someone who's a little different—just as similar groups in Europe use Muslim immigrants as scapegoats, Irish Protestants use Catholics, Israelis use Palestinians, Japanese use Koreans, Indians and Africans use lower castes and tribes, and everybody fantasizes about the Jew—especially where no Jews exist! Since no society or system has ever been free from oppression, we must in every new generation learn to embrace and heal patterns of anger before they accumulate and manifest as genocide. If we don't dare to confront the dark sides of ourselves, we all too easily act out of displaced anger. With no cradle-to-grave equality and security in America, the poor are especially at risk here. Their racism, poor education, and our persistent insensitive smear campaigns against them as “rednecks” and “crackers” makes them even more rightwing than most Americans and against any social safety net that would also benefit blacks. Unable to attack the real targets of their frustration, white anger often turns to racial violence. Such bitterness caused poor whites to lynch almost 5,000 blacks.



1974 - NYC



1996 - rural MS



1974 - rural Elizabethtown, NC



1975 - San Francisco



1974 - Jacksonville, FL

# Teenagers Kill Black, 15

*Continued From Page 2*  
 Two other residents confirmed this part of her statement.  
 "They were encouraging the kids to attack them," said woman. "They were shouting 'get the nigger' and 'kill the bastard.'"  
 Several members of the social club, which is just north of the park where Johnson was found and across the street from where Sanders was beaten have denied seeing the attack or taking any part in it.  
 Police have canvassed buildings in the predominantly Italian neighborhood searching for witnesses with no success.  
 A Post reporter also interviewed dozens of people in the area without finding any witnesses to the attack other than the woman mentioned. She asked to remain anonymous because she feared possible reprisals against her family. But he indicated she would talk to police.  
 Many members of the community said they'd heard about the incident but none admitted to actually seeing the attack on the victim.  
 Several incidents with racial overtones have erupted in recent months between local whites and black teenagers attending nearby Chelsea HS and Food and Maritime Trade HS. Community and religious leaders have insisted that those incidents were not racially motivated but were caused by a natural conflict of interests over the use of a local gymnasium.

1974 - New York, NY

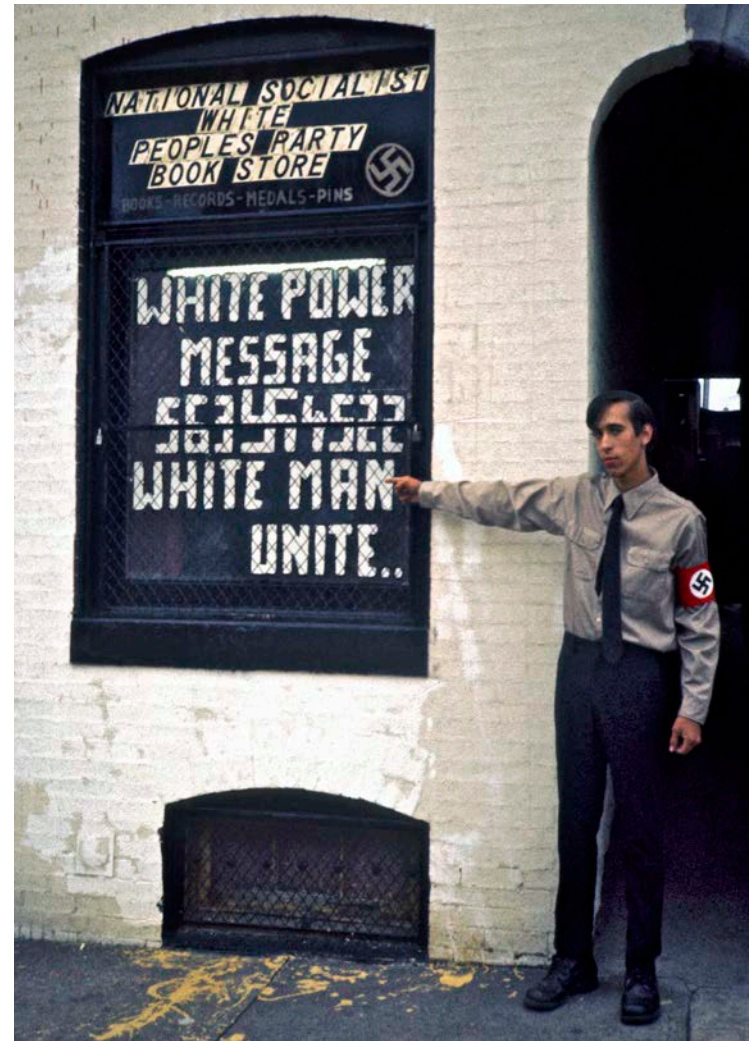


1974 - Little Italy, NY

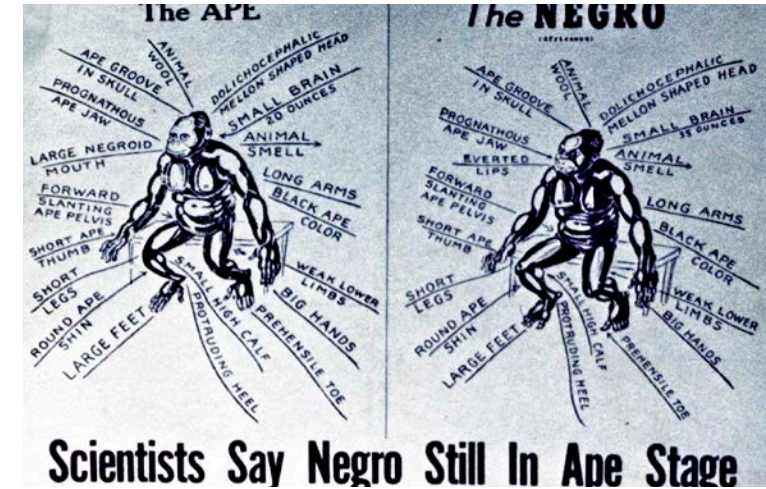
The lynchings continue. Derrick Johnson was only 15 when he walked into a poor white area of New York. White parents generally instill xenophobia and racism in their children with guilt and subtlety, but here they stood in doorways, exhorting their children to "Kill the nigger" and "Kill the bastard." The children attacked Derrick with baseball bats in broad daylight. When police questioned people in the neighborhood, no one would provide any information. We know from European experiences that such poor embittered whites can be manipulated toward fascism or communism, but their narrow-mindedness and authoritarian outlook often led them to embrace a violent rightwing radicalism that's been far deadlier and more threatening to outcast minorities in Europe than in the United States over the last 100 years.



1974 - Little Italy, NY



1973 - Baltimore



## Scientists Say Negro Still In Ape Stage

My Nazi friend here in Baltimore first joined the Communists, but discovered that they wanted equality for blacks and went over to the Nazis, who say whites are superior to blacks and they will "send all niggers back to Africa." While the Nazis thus adhere to the general desire in the Northern states (similar to most white Europeans) to keep our outcasts out of sight ("evasive racism"), today's Ku Klux Klan does not want to get rid of blacks, only to keep them "in their place" ("dominative racism"). In the South I saw how the police worked with the Klan, disarming all the blacks in the area of a Klan meeting but not Klan members carrying pistols and submachine guns. One night, dressed in a white robe-like coat, I managed to sneak into one of their cross-burning ceremonies, where I taped this speech:



1974 - Little Italy, NY



1972 - Miami, FL



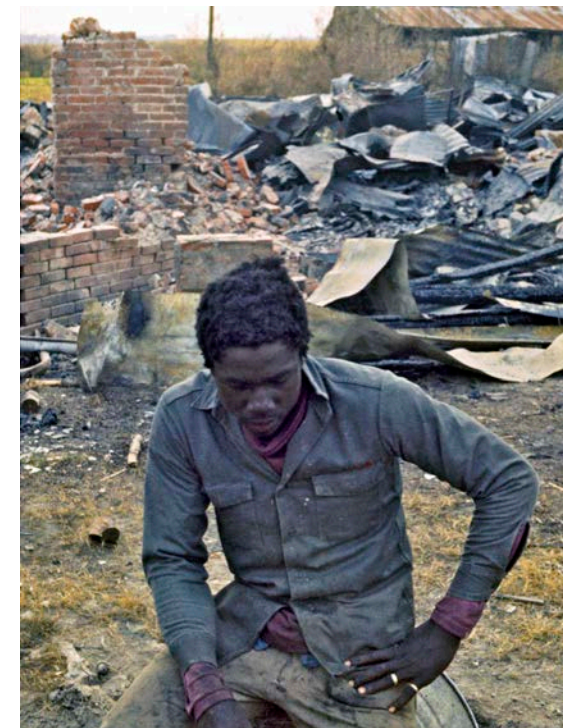
1978 - rural Gadsden, AL



1972 - Baltimore



1974 - Gainesville, AL



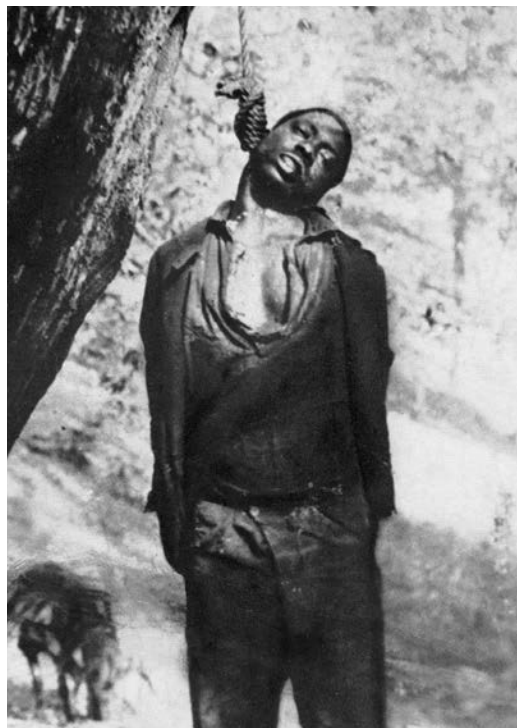
1973 - rural LA



1978 - rural Gadsden, AL



1975 - Tarboro, NC



Historical photo



1978 - rural Gadsden, AL



1978 - rural Gadsden, AL

“Yes, the conspiracy gives us a lot to think about ... and most of you are just thinking about them monkeys running around pulling their own tails. You are still aggravated and agitated by all them little monkeys running around yelling: “I’m discriminated against, I want that policeman fired,” and all that kind of junk. And it incites you to want to do something. But friends, the conspiracy is deeper than a bunch of wild jungle-infested Ubangi-lipped niggers. And there’s three things you can’t give them! Absolutely only three things: You can’t give a nigger a fat lip, a black eye and a job! (applause)

... On another occasion we ran these four niggers down and was ready to... to... (indicating rope-lynching) (applause)... and just when we were ready to launch our missiles towards their burr-head, somebody said, “Hold it, we have them and we thank you for catching them.” So they took them down and locked them up. And the next morning, the mayor said to our official: “Sir, we are sorry, but we had to let them go, because I don’t want my town torn up.” And these niggers jumped up laughing hysterical “Ha, Ha, Ha,” like monkeys jumping’n pulling their tails. (laughter)

Friends, some years ago the Klan was called to Washington to go before the investigating committee—believe it or not—on the assassination of King. They turned this committee over to two—not blacks. I will refer to them as niggers because they squandered five million of your hard-earned tax dollars to come up with an answer to the assassination of King! Well, first of all: You can’t assassinate a nigger! (applause) You can only assassinate a statesman or a man of renowned character and ability. You don’t assassinate trash!”



Historical photo

Individually, these lonesome and despairing losers were often just as afraid of me as I was of them. In spite of all my prejudice, I couldn’t help but like them as individuals. Human beings ready to murder what they call “trash” are people whom society has perpetually indoctrinated with the basic feeling that they are themselves trash. Their insecurity and self-contempt gives them a strange categorical need to hate others.

Yes, that’s what I wrote in my book in 1984, when I was trying to understand the Klan after I’d picked up a poor hitchhiker on my lecture tour. During our long drive he revealed things that made me suspect he’d been a victim of incest. So in a loving way I asked about his childhood, and sure enough, he poured out how his father had raped him again and again. Yet, he tried to defend his father, which in my experience is how such victims begin redirecting their



The lynching in 1981 of Michael Donald in Mobile, Alabama. Ku Klux Klan members kidnapped at gunpoint a randomly chosen 19-year-old college student on a city street “to show Klan strength in Alabama”. Next morning his body was found hung by the neck in a black neighborhood. One of the Klansmen, James Knowles, was later sent to the electric chair. Morris Dees from the Southern Poverty Law Center relates how the audience wept as the confessed lyncher told how Michael begged for his life while Klansmen prepared the noose for his neck. Police photo

anger and scapegoating others. I also realized that, as with most of the abused children I deal with, he’d never received any help. We who are better-off don’t like the distrustful vibrations we get from the children of pain and reserve our love for children capable of radiating the love they themselves were shaped by. And nowhere do you have more time to give them emotional therapy than on America’s endless highways. They are always incredibly grateful and will do anything for you afterwards.

And so, after showing him my book, he now begged me to come with him to this Klan gathering. First to the open daytime recruiting meeting, where I couldn’t help feeling compassion for the poor white sympathizers shown above. Before we went to the secret cross lighting (for members only), I gave him a meal and let him use my phone card to call his mother. But his face suddenly contorted in anger and pain as his mother told him that two blacks had just killed his uncle. He’d promised to protect me and cover me up in a hood, but did I now dare walk with him and 50 crazy Klansmen with guns deep into a dark forest when he knew I was antiracist (a “nigger lover”)? Would he betray me? I was so afraid that I called my family in Denmark to say, “If I don’t call back before midnight, alert the police.” How naïve! I’d already seen how they worked with the police. But he never betrayed me, which again taught me one of my most important lessons in life:

ALL people in pain—and he was now in pain from both abuse and the murder of his beloved uncle—have a greater craving for OUR love than for expressing their pain and anger in the form of hate and violence.





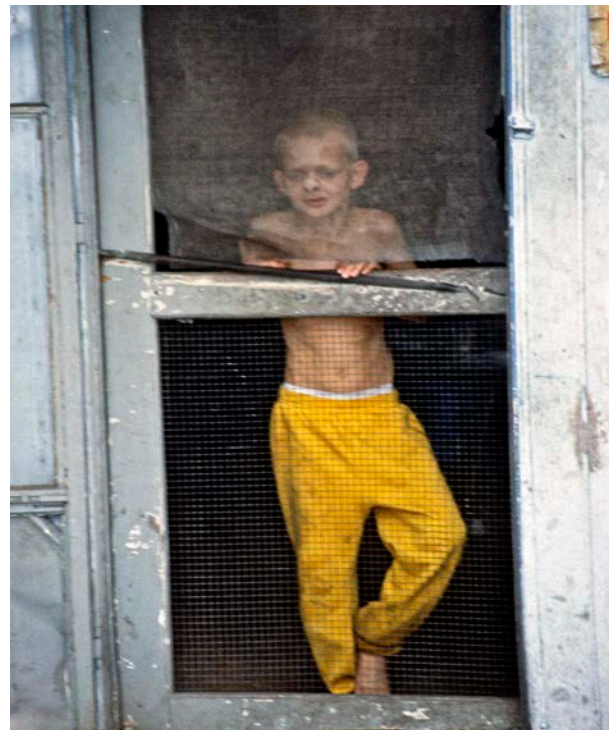
1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1978 - rural Gadsden, AL



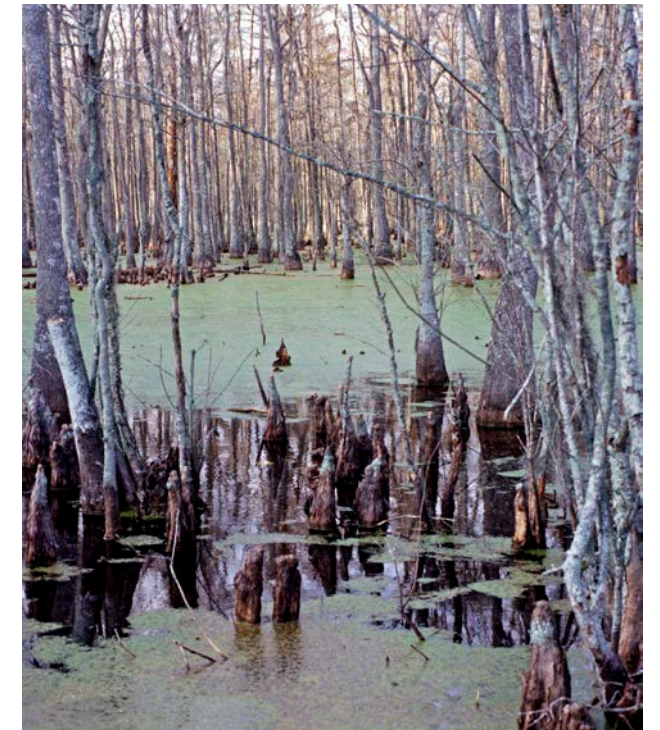
1991 - Woody the night I picked him up



1973 - Immokalee, MS



1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1996 - swamps, LA

In my vagabond years in the 70's most Americans seemed to feel good about themselves and I found hardly any Klan-activity. But the increasing mistreatment of children I have seen since then, seems to go hand in hand with the growth of the Klan and white supremacy groups under president Obama and Trump. Here is about how I came into a family of later Trump supporters. One night in 1991 I picked up Woody, this dirtpoor hitchhiker in Mississippi, who told me that he and his two brothers had personally killed so many blacks, that they had lost count of them.

- I don't know if he killed the first two I got blood on me from, I know he busted his head open real bad.

- Hmm

- John busted open his head real, real bad... Took a big whole piece out of his head - and blood got on me then. That's cause I was holding the dude. Every time his heart would beat, blood would squirt out about 5-6 feet, man. The guy ran about ten steps, then just fell - face first. I'll even take you by the old postoffice tonight and show you it to you, right where it happened. Then they got a big sign says 'No Niggers Allowed' when you go in there on the highway.

- Still? What year is this?

- This is 91 now, fixing to be 92 and they got a sign saying 'No Niggers Allowed'.

- When you went out to kill them, would he talk about it all day before or did you just happen to...?

- No, it just happened. It just was one of those things. He was going down the street and he just felt like doing it. He'd seen them, so he did it....

- Right here is where this guy fell after my brother stabbed him. That may be the cops. Right here is where he fell. I'll show you where he got stabbed at. He got stabbed right on the other side of this telephone pole, right here. And then he ran ten feet and fell. Let's go before the cops are coming 'cause they are bad here at night time.

- What did he actually say?

- He actually said 'I'm gonna kill me a nigger tonight'. He said it all day long and when we'd come back from over the tracks Sammy told him, 'I bet you wont kill that one right there.' And this was a big nigger, you know. And John says 'Bet me!'. And Sammy says, 'I'll bet you.' And he goes, 'Never mind about the betting.' He walked over there and he says, 'Hey, did you meet your maker?' and he stabbed him. The guy's eyes rolled to the back of his head and John twisted the knife and then he pulled it out. The blood, when it came out, it hit me and Sammy.

- How did it happen when....?

- He goes out and he kills niggers for fun. He tells me he likes to see the fear in their face when they die. It was like when we was riding down River Road I was telling you about how Sammy called one over to the car and John jumped out and shot him. Well, two of them split, and one of them stayed there, you know, he was freaking out. I guess he was young or something, you know. Sammy started beating him in the head with some bottle that he had. And then John started kicking him and stuff - and when they had him on the ground bleeding and where he couldn't move, John just stomped him until he died. The only thing I've never seen John do, was go out and run over the niggers that he used to go

out and run over. But I've seen blood on the car and....like I said, I took T shirts and shirts and stuff like that out from under the car after he ran them over. I've seen him beat up many, many niggers many times and leave them for dead.

- How many would you say?

- How many? More than I can count on my fingers and toes.

As always with violent people, I asked about his childhood. His eyes filled with tears when he told me how the three brothers had constantly been beaten and abused by their deeply alcoholic parents.

- From as early as I remember I've got whippings from my mom. She used to come in drunk.... She would hit you anywhere she could hit you. When she whips you with a board, if you move and it hits you somewhere else, you shouldn't have moved.....

It is important always to give such children of pain all the love and affection we can muster.

In my travels I have often been amazed how little caring it takes to make these encapsulated and discouraged people raise their heads again and feel better about themselves.

People, who feel good about themselves will not intentionally hurt other people or even think badly of them.

Only people in deep pain wish to harm others.

All the violent racists I meet these days have without exception been mistreated or humiliated in childhood.

The cross burnings and swastikas are just their inept cry for our help and attention, and it takes so incredibly little

nurturing from us to help them out of their oppressive patterns. Five years later I found some of Woody's victims, such as Sarahs family, who had been stabbed by Woody in their sleep.(Read on page 213 what later happened)

Their shattered lives needed similar nurturing not to be destroyed by the paralyzing fear and unforgiving hate they had developed toward fellow citizens. Knowing how easily such hatred perpetuates itself led the new black government in South Africa to pardon all racial crimes committed under apartheid. My friend Woody is beginning to understand that since he has never had anybody to help him heal his pain, he had turned it outward against blacks in such a horrifying way that he could describe how they tortured and murdered every one of their victims and dumped them in Mississippi's rivers and swamps.

- Did you usually get rid of them by throwing them in rivers and swamps?

- Oh, yeah, many times we dumped them in the swamps....

Here is to the state of Mississippi for underneath her borders the devil draws no line. If you drag her muddy rivers nameless bodies you will find. Oh, the factories of the forests have hidden a thousand crimes. The calendar is lying when it reads the present time. Oh, here's to the land you have torn out the heart of: Mississippi, find yourself another country to be part of!



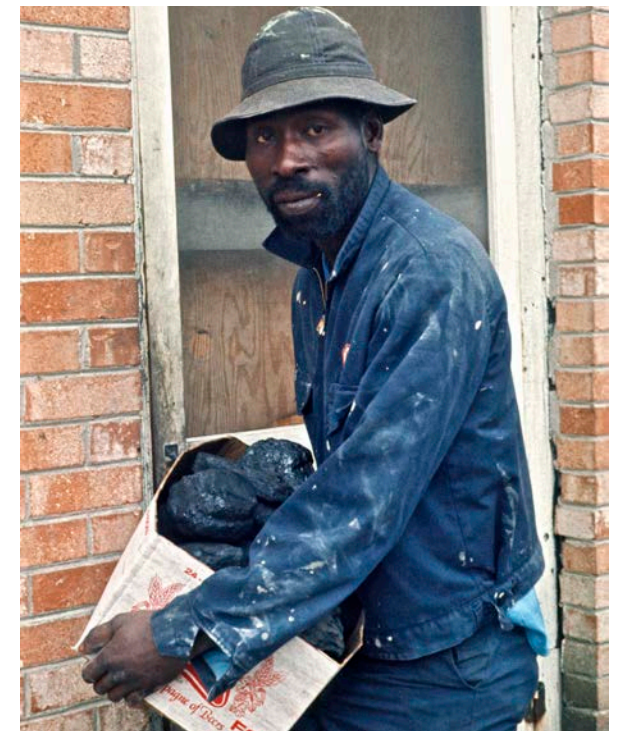
1975 - Tupper home, Washington, GA



1975 - Washington, GA



1975 - Washington, GA. The Tupper Home



1975 - Washington, GA



1975 - Tupper Plantation home, Washington, GA

In Georgia, where I lived with the Barnett family in an old plantation home, I learned about a kind of racism based not on hatred but on a historically conditioned paternalistic love for blacks. Mrs. Barnett spent days taking me around to families her family had once owned—apparently a very short time ago in her imagination (and, as I discovered, in the black consciousness as well).

Mrs. Barnett: *This is the bill of sale to my great-grandfather from Mr. Cadman for Lucinda, her children, and her increase forever. The price was \$1,400.*

Mrs. Hill (her friend from another plantation home): *But, you see, when they came here they were savages, and I think instead of blaming the South like the North blamed us, I think we deserve a bit of credit. They sold them to us and they knew they were selling us savages. But they just kept sending them. And then they began talking about our harsh treatment, but you know when you had people working for you, you would do everything for them, feed them up, give them clothes and housing, and take care of them.*

Mrs. Barnett: *The white people would do anything for the niggers except get off their back, as they say. (laughter) One thing is sure. We still miss them.*

Mrs. Hill: *Yeah, we do miss them.*



1975 - Washington, GA



1975 - Washington, GA

When a “house slave” came in with afternoon tea, the talk, as always in the Southern aristocracy, turned to the follies of their servants—a way of maintaining their paternalistic attitude toward blacks and thus of giving themselves the social distinction of previous times.

What Mrs. Barnett misses isn't slaves as a workforce or as property but the former symbiotic dependence of slave and master. The fact that one could lose a slave worth more than \$1,400 through sickness instilled in the white upper class a paternal concern and sense of responsibility for their slaves. In Mrs. Barnett this love showed itself in her work on behalf of blacks imprisoned for life—in other words, in a need to express love for a group of blacks who, like the slaves, are not free.



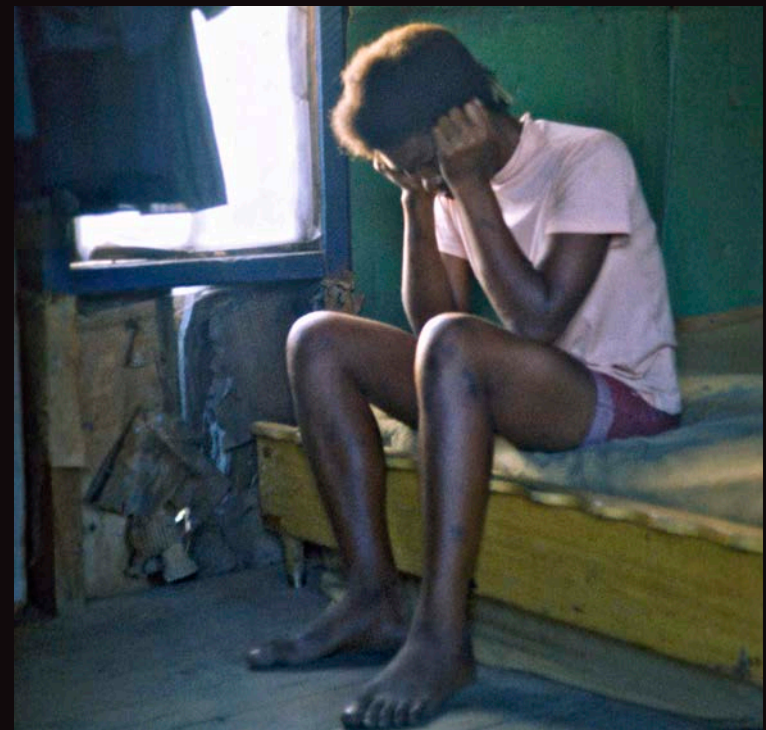
1975 - Phila, MS. Rachel here was raped and murdered when 14



1973 - Natchez, MS



1973 - Natchez, MS



1975 - Philadelphia, MS

Was it this kind of condescending racism I myself was taking on in America? How long could I hold onto the naïve notion that as a foreign immigrant I'd be able to keep myself afloat in an ocean of racism that had drowned everyone else?

In the South I experienced two completely opposite white reactions toward our oppressed: hatred and love. The more I saw these peculiar distress patterns as products of a centuries-old system, the more value judgments, such as good and evil, disintegrated. In spite of their trail of destruction, I could no longer hate these whites. From the moment I showed them respect and understanding, doors began to open everywhere: the doors of Southern hospitality. When I later traveled among South African whites, I was met with an even more overwhelming hospitality, which seemed directly proportional to a greater class difference between blacks and whites. Just as in South Africa, blacks in the South receive the traditional friendliness as long as they have underclass status. They are not paid for their work so much as for their servility and humility, for knowing "their place" and being dependent. Their passive resistance to this subjugation is seen as "irresponsibility" and "shiftlessness," which further confirms the "necessity" of the paternal relationship, thereby elevating white status. This artificially high status adds to the psychic surplus displayed, for instance, in an exuberant hospitality and friendliness toward the individual but not the group, such as "negroes," "Yankees," or "communists." In one plantation home, I'd arrived with my short-hair wig on, but the hostess, Emely Kelley, was falling increasingly in love with me, and one night I surprised the dinner party by displaying all of my hair. Emely

burst out, "I know you're a communist, but I like you anyway." This hospitable class may not participate in white terrorist acts, but it benefits directly from such policing. None of the plantation homes I lived in were locked although they were filled with gold, silver, and expensive paintings—right next to some of the poorest people on earth, whom I often saw commit violent crimes against one another.

One reason I could move around in even the most violent ghettos in the South without fearing for my life was my realization that the slavery of the 1970s held its protective umbrella over me everywhere. And when you're up against a system so deeply ingrained that even your "Scandinavian blue-eyed idealism" isn't understood, you give up and become a participant. Thus, I soon learned the self-crippling and uncomfortable art of having black maids serve me breakfast in the canopied bed (in a separate room from the hostess) while avoiding committing the crime of making my own bed. In Mississippi I saw the servants spend days dressing up the white "belles" in antebellum gowns so we could continue the old balls of the Confederacy, where blacks are present only in the form of a white woman in blackface acting as "mammy." I loved these seemingly stand-offish yet incredibly warm open and charming belles, whose inviolable "white womanhood" was one of the sham reasons for the deaths of thousands of black men in a terror caused solely by the desire to perpetuate white supremacy. Yet the first time I returned to Natchez in 1978 and found the town extremely upset about an article in the New York Times describing the plantation homes as "decadent and promiscuous," I had to laugh, having experienced exactly that myself.



1975 - Philadelphia, MS. Carl at right became a preacher, his brother spent life in prison



1973 - Natchez, MS

## On saying yes

The greatest freedom I know is to be able to say yes; the freedom to throw yourself into the arms of every single person you meet. Especially as a vagabond you have the freedom, energy, and time to be fully human toward every individual you meet. The most fantastic lottery I can think of is hitch-hiking. There is a prize every time. Every single person can teach you something. I have never said no to a ride - even if there were pistols lying on the front seat, or four sinister-looking men wearing sunglasses sitting in the car. Every person is like a window through which the larger society can be glimpsed. A man in New York asked me to drive a U-Haul trailer down to Florida. He wouldn't say what was inside. We agreed that I was to get sixty dollars for doing it, but I never got the money. Through various sources I found out that it was the Mafia I had worked for - they preferred to use a naive foreigner for such illegal transport of narcotics, etc. Or maybe it was weapons for the Cuban exiles in Miami? Another time, in Alabama, this poor old woman of 87 asked me to drive her to Phoenix, Arizona. She wanted to go there to die. I helped her board up the windows in her dilapidated shack outside Notasulga, because although she knew very well she would never return, she still didn't want the local blacks moving into it. The whole way out there she sat with a pistol in her hand. She was scared stiff of me because of my long hair and beard, but she had no other way of getting to Arizona. She was so weak that I had to carry her whenever she had to leave the car, but in spite of this she continued to cling to her gun. The car was so old that we could only drive at thirty miles an hour, so the trip took us four days. She had saved for years in order to have enough money for gas, but she had no money for food, so I had to get out several times and steal carrots and other edible things along the road. For most of the journey she talked about Governor Wallace and how she hoped he would become President before she died. I learned more about Alabama on that trip than I could have learned by reading for a lifetime.

In Florida, two young women picked me up and offered me a brownie. As I was very hungry and sitting in the back seat, I seized the opportunity and ate four whole brownies. I always eat what people offer me, even if it is pills, or dirt, or worse. And every time it gives me a certain insight into society. And so, it was on this day. It turned out they were hash brownies and I had eaten far too many. I got stoned out of my mind and could not hitchhike any more that day, as I was incapable of communicating with the drivers. I walked into Jacksonville and sat in a park waiting for the high to

wear off. Two harmless bums came over and sat next to me, but suddenly I became tremendously frightened of them and rushed into the bus station. I did not dare to be out on the street, even in daylight. (The hash made me extremely paranoid, and it is exactly when you send out vibrations of fear to other people that you get jumped). That day I understood the agonizing fear most Americans carry around and can't do anything about. Since that day I have had more understanding of people's reactions in America. Sometimes I, too, feel afraid of other people. One night in New York I heard a voice calling to me from a dark alley down in the sinister area near Ninth Avenue. I was absolutely convinced that if I went into the alley I would be attacked. But I was more afraid that if I did not do it, it would set a precedent, and then I would be paralyzed, like so many others in America. I forced myself to go in there. Of course, it turned out to be only a worn-out five-dollar streetwalker. I gained insight into a kind of suffering I had never encountered before, which proved to me once again that it never hurts to say yes. As a rule, you are directly rewarded for it.

In Detroit, a five-year-old boy persistently asked me to go home with him and take some pictures of his mother. I didn't have time that day but decided to go with him anyway. When we got to his home, I saw that his mother was sick, and four of his seven brothers and sisters had big rat-bites on their backs and legs. In the beginning I perceived not being able to say no to people as a weakness, since I have always been very yielding. But now I have become convinced that it is a strength and have therefore made it a habit wherever I go. Almost every day when I hitch-hike, at some point I get invited into a restaurant by a driver. I get the menu but it is impossible for me to choose. After an embarrassingly long pause the driver usually suggests something, and I immediately say yes. I couldn't care less what they serve me. Food is just a means to keep going. I have discovered that even the inability to choose has its advantages when you travel. When I was in the blood bank in New Orleans and as usual fought my way through "the gay wall" out of this town with many gays, on my way up to see the floods in the Mississippi delta I got a lift with a fat antique dealer. He kept pressing me to come with him into the dark woods with promises like "I will put you up with a rich white lady afterwards". I did not want to waste time with another "dirty old man", but couldn't get myself to directly say no. So I ended up letting him follow his lusts out in the woods and true enough, afterwards he drove me to one of the large plantation homes in Natchez, where his friend, the



1975 - Notasulga, AL



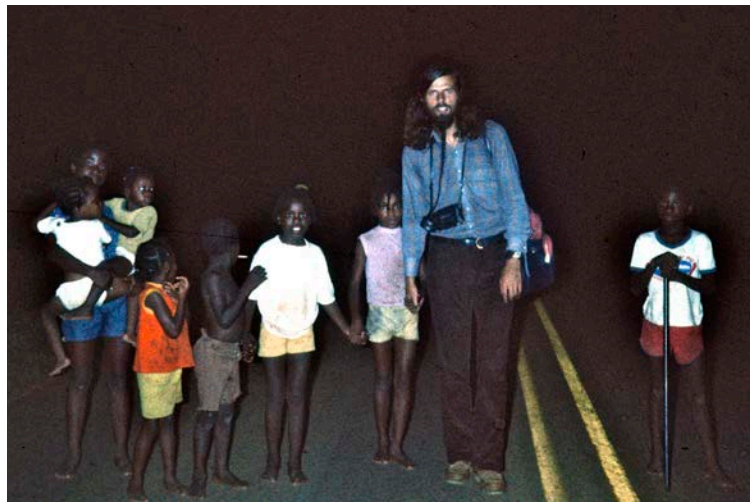
1974 - Harlem, NY



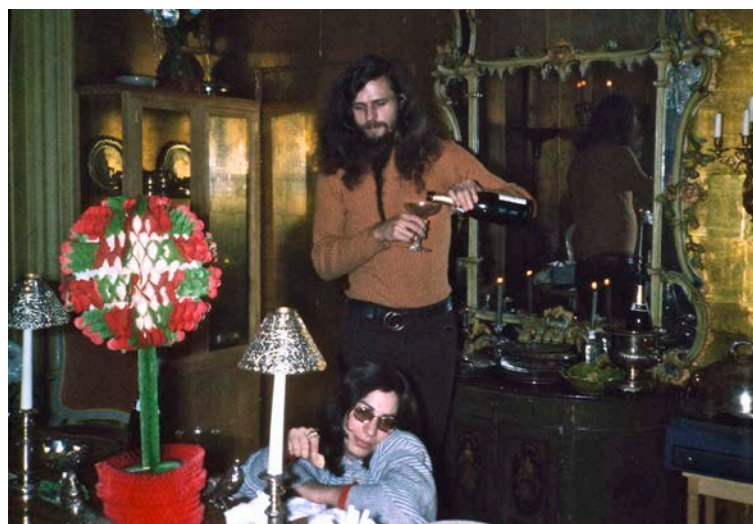
1974 - New York, NY



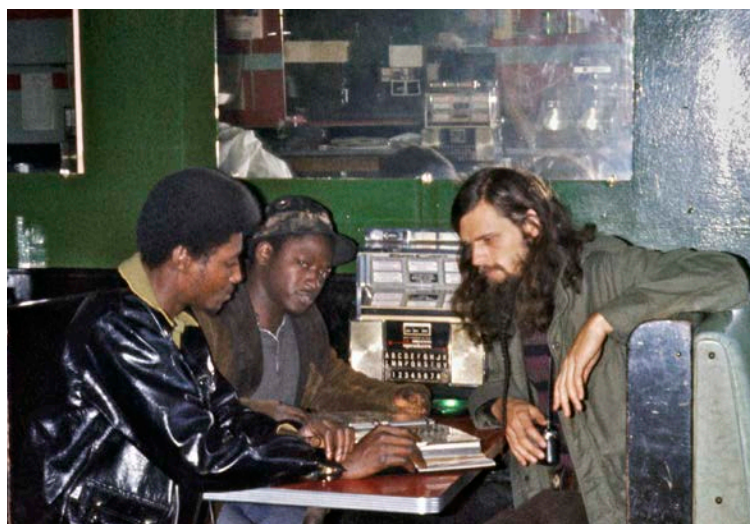
1973 - Natchez, MS



1975 - rural Meridian, MS



1973 - Boston, MA



1974 - Norfolk, VA

owner, Emely Kelley, immediately invited me to equally intimate experiences. I had long ago learned that without saying yes to a little pain, you don't get into heaven. After weeks of hunger, it really felt like getting into heaven to have black servants serve us on silver trays in the canopied beds. Yet it is important to get down to earth again, so when after two weeks I left the mansion, I ended up shacking together that same evening with a black pimp in Greenville, in the poverty-stricken Delta area. We became good friends, and he said that because of our friendship he would give me one of his prostitutes. I didn't say anything. He took me to a bar in which four of his "girls" were standing around. "Choose whatever pussy you want. You can have it for free," he said. I didn't know what in the world to do. I have come to love such black prostitutes with their fantastic mixture of violent brutality and intense tenderness. You can learn more about society from a black prostitute in one day than from ten university lectures. But it was just impossible for me to choose.\*) Then Ed, as he was called, took me home again. From then on he became more open and it turned out that he had put me to a test. He was very interested in the things I had told him, but he had never met a white he could trust, and now wanted to see if I was like the other whites in Mississippi.

That night became one of the most intense experiences I had ever had. We both lay in the bed he normally used for his business and all night he told me about his childhood. It all came as a revelation to me. It was the first time I had ever been in Mississippi, and it probably had a particularly strong effect on me because I'd just spent two weeks living in huge plantation homes with those

enormous antebellum gowns and gold and glitter everywhere. He told me about the hunger, about how he had had to pick cotton ever since he was five years old for two dollars a day, about how he had never really gone to school because he had to pick cotton, and about all the humiliations he had constantly had to put up with from the whites. Then he just wouldn't take it any more. "Hell no," he repeated again and again. He wanted out of that cotton hell. So he had become a pimp. Both he and his girls agreed that it was better to prostitute themselves in this way than to prostitute themselves in the cotton fields. It is the white man who reaps the profit in both cases, but they made more money this way: fifteen dollars a night per girl. He had studied the white man all his life, every single gesture and thought. He felt that he knew the white man better than he knew himself - and yet he didn't understand him. But his experiences had made him a good pimp, though he was only nineteen years old. He knew precisely how to get white men in contact with his girls. But it hurt him to do it. It left a deep wound. He felt he was selling both his race and his pride; but that he had no choice. He hated the white man with all his heart, but he never dared to show it. That night I came to realize that if many blacks in Mississippi felt like Ed, there would come a day when things would not look good for the whites. I was so shaken after that night that for the next few days I was unable to look whites in the eye. I had been lucky that day in that someone had given me batteries for my tape recorder. I was therefore able to record a lot of what he said that night. Now when I travel around among the whites in Mississippi and live with them I often play that tape for myself in the evening. I want to avoid identifying too strongly with their point of view. With their charming accents and great human warmth, it is hard not to let yourself be seduced. The trick is to keep a cool head in the midst of the boiling witch's-cauldron of the South.

I saw it as a coincidence that Ed opened himself up to me, for I had really felt more like being with the prostitutes. But now I'm beginning to believe it was not just chance. It is as if there is always something that leads me into the right situations.

*Letter to an American friend*

\* (I have since found that these unsophisticated sentences from this original letter about my love for prostitutes as an oppressed group in the U.S. and Britain, are often misunderstood in a sexual rather than a political way. For a clearer understanding of my relationship to prostitutes, see page 381).



1973 - Natchez, MS



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



1996 - Bullock County, AL



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



1990 - Georgetown County, SC





1974 - rural Tarboro, NC



1974 - Greenville, NC

One of the most peculiar aspects of Southern hospitality is the desire to immediately “give” a male visitor a very attractive “girl.” Not only among the old aristocracy but also among the “up-and-coming” millionaires. Seldom had more than a day passed before they supplied me with a “date” from the same class (or, more often, one aspiring to become a member of that class), often without having asked me. When I was living in Mississippi with relatives of Senator Stennis, an arch-conservative, I was given a list of possible belles to choose from. Jack Ray, the Alabama banker, absolutely insisted on giving me Senator Allan’s personal secretary for the night.

Their attitude toward “white womanhood” seemed little better than their historical relationship to black womanhood, yet this sacred white womanhood is used as one of the many excuses for the violent suppression of blacks and to instill fear in whites. It’s perhaps as hard for real love to thrive under the crystal chandeliers as it is in the glow of the kerosene lamp among those “shacking up together.”



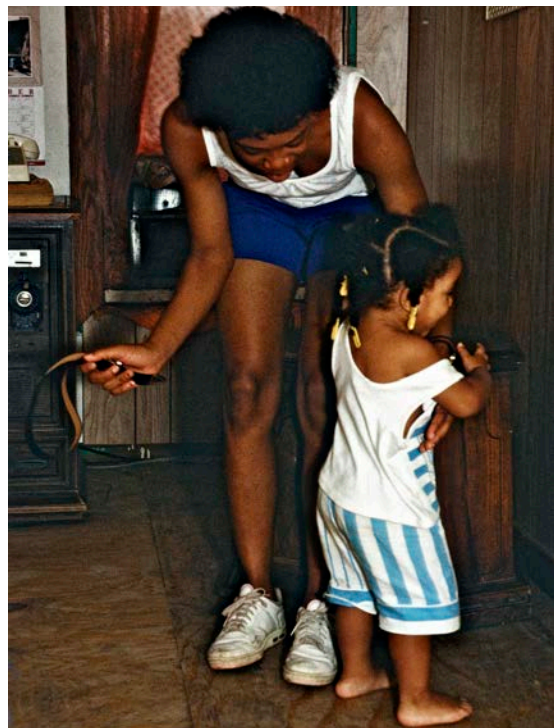
1975 - Las Vegas, NV



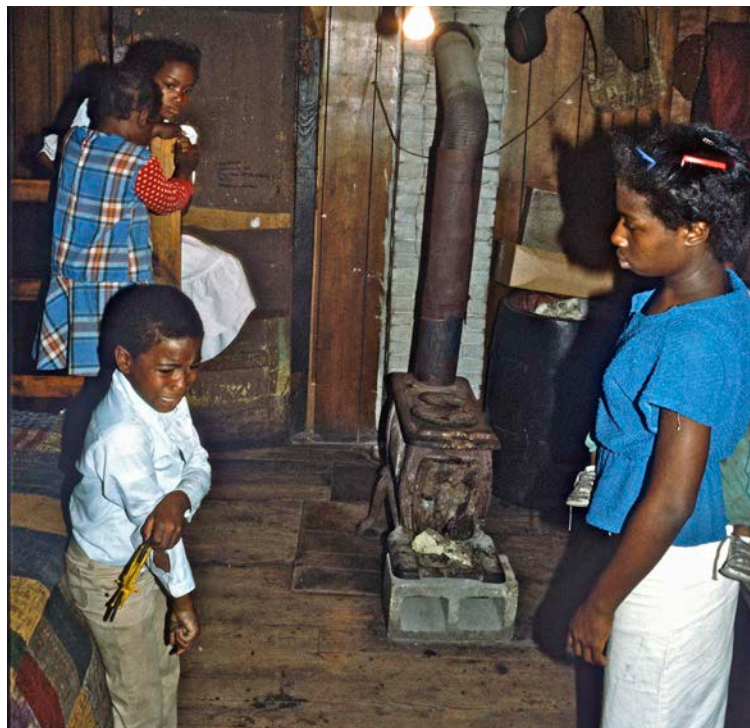
1974 - Tarboro, NC



1974 - Spring Break in Fort Lauderdale, FL



1996 - Tunica, MS



1990 - Burke County, GA

No whites, I feel, can fully comprehend the enormous psychological pressure that blacks, constantly bombarded with the message they're worth less than whites, are under.

The worst damage occurs when the victim begins to believe the oppressor's prejudices. I frequently hear cruel invalidations, such as "You ain't shit, nigger" reverberating in underclass families. They instill in each other our deep racist feelings for them along with the gloomy prospect of being permanently banished to the shadows of white society. The hope I once found among blacks in the '70s I've since seen being replaced everywhere by self-blame.



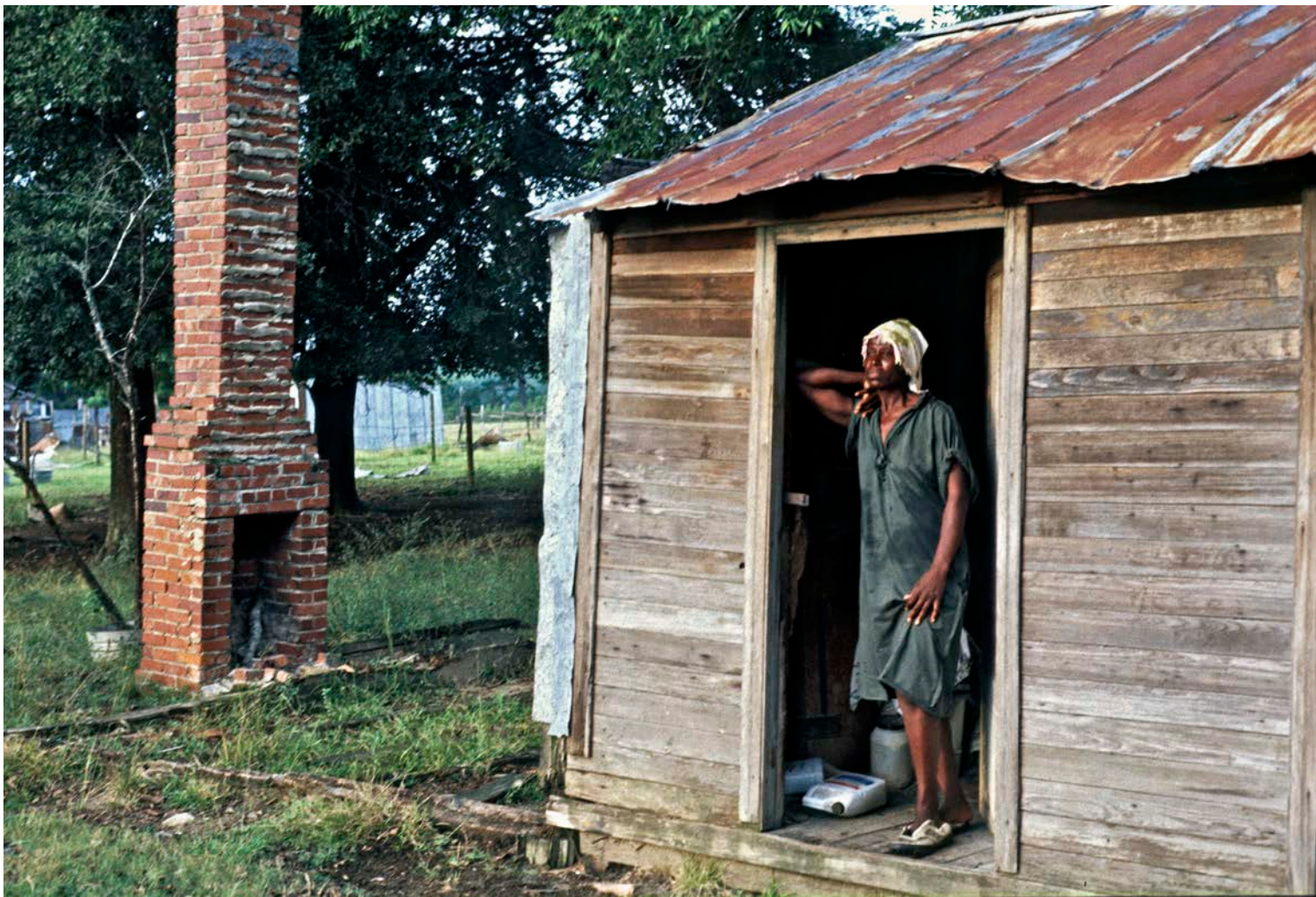
1989 - Bullock County, AL



1973 - Charleston, SC



1990 - Burke County, GA



1991 - Montgomery County, AL



1992 - Montgomery County, AL



1991 - Montgomery County, AL

Between giving campus lectures in the '90s, I loved the all-night discussions of racial issues I had with Wilma in her little shack. She was well educated but voiced in black words what my white audiences think but dare not say:

- My own kind are holding me down. I am afraid of them. My life is endangered by my own people.
- Have you lost faith in black people?
- Yes, I have, because of the way they have treated me.
- Have whites never caused you any harm?
- Never, in Alabama and New York, I have never had trouble from the whites. Always my own kind of people.
- Do you hold it against them?
- Yes, I do.
- But I told you before you must never forget the real ...
- Yes, you call it internalized oppression, right? But I don't see it that way. I think it's just the nature of them to be that way ...
- No, no, no!
- I don't think it is internalized oppression.
- But you must never lose faith in human beings.

- I have lost faith in them, yes, I have.
- But it all comes from up here, it comes from racism. When people are so hurt, and you know that black people are hurt, they take it out on each other.
- Yes, but what you are talking about happened back a 100 years ago. I know what you are saying is true, but we have come a long way since then. Doors have opened for us. But we are holding one another back with hatred, selfishness, and whatnot. It is not the whites holding us back now, we are holding each other back.
- Wilma, you're talking the crap of the whites now. That's what they are saying. Who are the employers in this country? They're white, and to whom do they not give work?
- I know, I know, but I can only speak of what I am going through. They are holding me down. My own kind are holding me back.
- That's how all blacks feel these days, and that's why they end up causing each other more harm. When people hate themselves, they take out all this stuff out on each other..
- I know. All I just want is to get away from them.
- Where will you go?
- I don't know yet, but I'm working on it ...



1992 - Montgomery County, AL



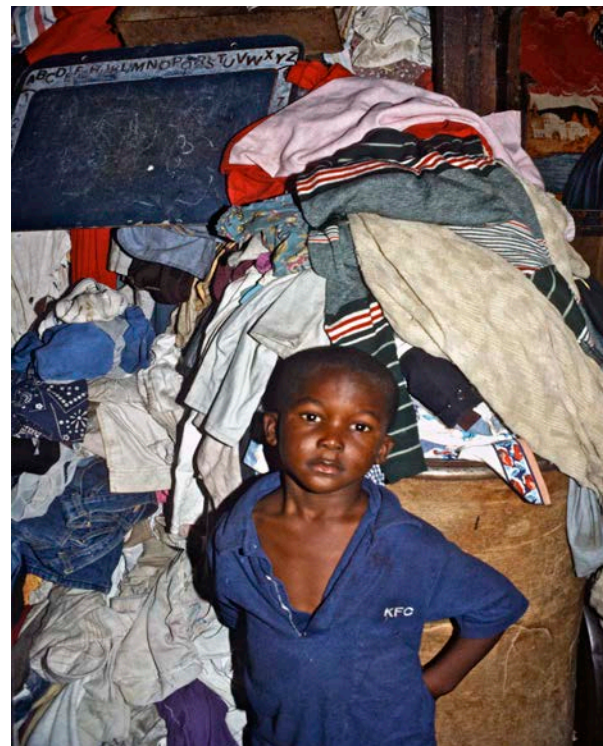
1973 - rural Wendell, NC



1975 - Bullock County, AL

After the hope and optimism of the '70s, I would never have believed that racism could worsen so much that I'd one day sit and defend the victims against each other. People can survive oppression if they're able to clearly identify their oppressor and thus avoid self-blame. In the past, this understanding let blacks see light at the end of the tunnel. A hundred years ago we lived in close physical proximity to blacks.

But today we've become so isolated from each other that blacks, whom we ruthlessly bombard with TV fantasies about how free they are, have difficulty identifying their oppressor—a historical first—and therefore look to themselves for the cause of their escalating pain. And once we succeed in convincing oppressed people that they are their own worst oppressors, everything falls apart. Neither their earnings nor sense of self-worth are great enough to recreate the nuclear family we constantly hold up as the ideal. This sense of hopelessness and failure drives families apart. Nobody feeling good about themselves could oppress another group so devastatingly as we do today. And the victims aren't only the family of the outcast but increasingly the children.



1990 - Burke County, GA



1998 - Natchez, MS

We whites love to say that "my best friend is black" to attain moral stature and black recognition. And we love to denounce the more primitive racism of others but forget that bigots like the KKK and the Nazis are themselves so deeply traumatized that have no real power to affect the overall quality of life of blacks in the US or Muslims in Europe.

No, our victims know full well that it is we, the "good" law-abiding citizens, who are today silently forcing millions of our outcasts into ghettos, into psychological isolation and despair. In our white guilt over not being able to live up to our lofty ideals and liberal Christian values, we flee into escapist black TV shows to cover up for our ultimate crushing of the black family. Today more than 70% of black children grow up without a father and one in 10 without either parent—twice as many as when I first came to America and three times as many as under slavery.



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1973 - rural Wendell, NC



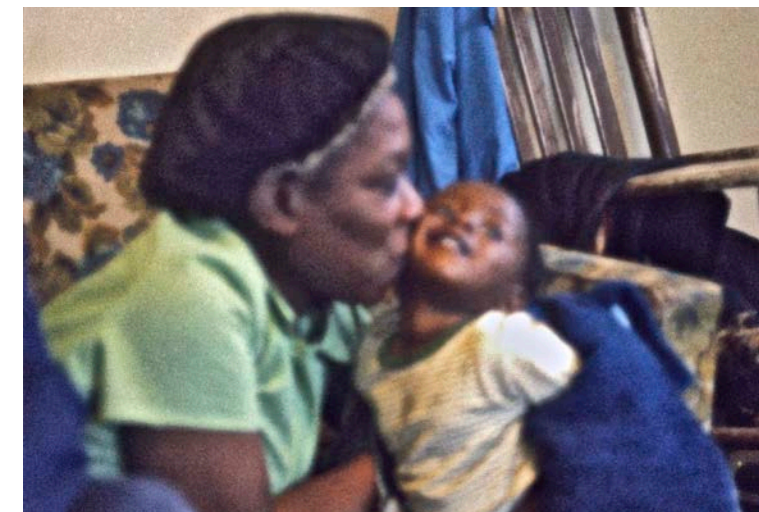
1975 - Notasulga, AL



1974 - Norfolk, VA



1973 - Greensboro, NC



1974 - Washington, NC

The grandmother therefore has to take care of them. Black students, who are capable of succeeding despite the worst oppression since the slave auctions, often tell me that a grandmother was their saving angel.

*Grandma's hands*

*clapped in church on Sunday morning.*

*Grandma's hands*

*played the tambourine so well.*

*Grandma's hands used to issue out a warning,*

*she'd say, Billy don't you run so fast,*

*might fall on a piece of glass -*

*might be snakes there in that grass.*

*Grandmas hands*

*soothed the local unwed mothers...*

[#185](#)



1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1978 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Palm Beach, FL



1974 - Palm Beach, FL



Prison transport FL



1973 - Angola prison, Tunica, LA

Even under the most hopeless oppression, people have an unconquerable ability to survive, and so the concept of the extended family as a survival unit has often become the black family's last desperate means of overcoming the effects of a brutal society. But whereas the concept in Africa meant a closely connected family living in the same village, it has in America meant the brutal uprooting and forcible separation of family members over great physical distances. When liberals excuse the destruction of the black family by talking sympathetically about it as an "inheritance from slavery"—as if the family alone, for no reason, should have carried this legacy on from generation to generation—it's in order to blame an evil system that existed 100 years ago so that they can feel free of responsibility. What I saw again and again was not a black inheritance from slavery but society's inheritance from slavery. When the whole system they live in is hardly distinguishable from (and perceived as) slavery, it's clear that the inheritance from slavery is being forced upon the black family.

Many of the missing fathers of these children have over time built the southern highways in chain gangs. Today there are no chains since bloodhounds and submachineguns are far more effective. By following some of the prison trucks, I discovered that, among other things, the prison workers clean up around the mansions and the private beaches of the richest people in the world in Palm Beach. One of them is Trump who as president with the biggest tax cut in history helped billionaires pay less tax than the working class.

To work here under the guns of white overseers can hardly be perceived by the black consciousness as anything but a direct continuation of the slave work formerly carried out around the large white plantation homes. Just as slaves found it justifiable to steal to survive the hardships forced upon them, many of today's prisoners justify crime as necessary to survive the poverty these white millionaires have forced on them. The wealthy's active reverse class struggle has meant a regressive redistribution of money from the poor to the rich, away from the relative economic equality I witnessed in the '70s. When it's a fact that blacks everywhere in America get much longer sentences than whites for similar offenses, the perception of slavery becomes a concrete reality. Blacks often receive a life sentence for charges of which whites would've been acquitted. The many thousands who suffer from this forced legacy of slavery can in a sense be called our political prisoners.



1974 - Palm Beach, FL



Historical photo of roadgang



1974 - Palm Beach, FL





1974 - Palm Beach, FL



1974 - Palm Beach, FL - Beggar among billionaires



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL

I find most of my friends in this book in a relatively worse situation today than when I first met them. But here on Palm Beach and Miami Beach with America's wealthiest families are people whom Reagan's, Bush's and Trump's tax cuts made even richer. Until a few years ago, blacks (apart from servants) weren't allowed to set foot here—and they're often arrested if they do. Occasionally, however, a beggar gets in and gets a penny from the multimillionaires.

It's also here that America's presidents play golf on some of the finest courses in the world—and use black caddies, whom they pay less than \$5-\$6 dollars an hour. And it's here that these black slave workers can see white millionaires getting out of their Rolls Royces to read the latest quotes from Wall Street.

Nevertheless, I also found a leftist millionaire, Bill Gandall, with whom I spent some amusing days and who let me borrow his Mercedes so I could follow the prison slaves in this money hell. If you use inmates to work for you, you must of course also have the police by your side. When you've killed love and trust in society, all the TV cameras and electronic surveillance equipment in the world aren't enough. It would be horrifying to have your children kidnapped; better to lock them up in a cold isolated world, like Tania and her little sister here, and have a Cuban nanny take care of them. And for busy career parents, it's probably wiser to turn them into slaves of TV than to let them see the world outside, where, only a few miles away, Linda and her family live.



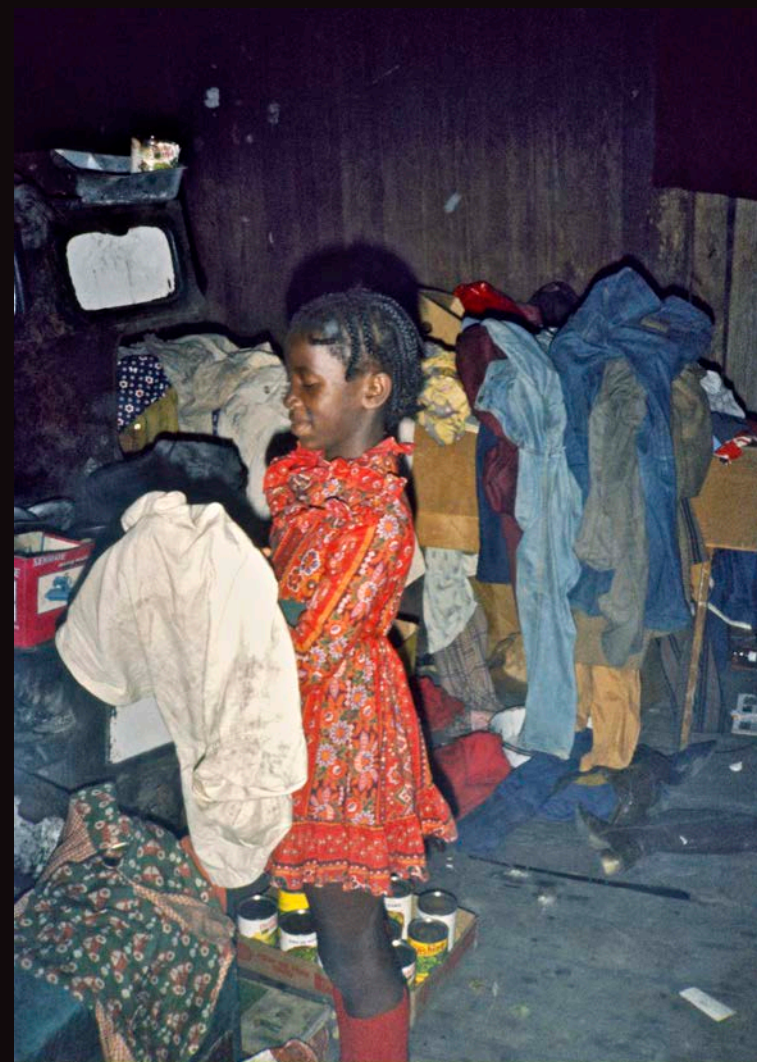
1972 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - Palm Beach, FL with Bill Gandall



1974 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



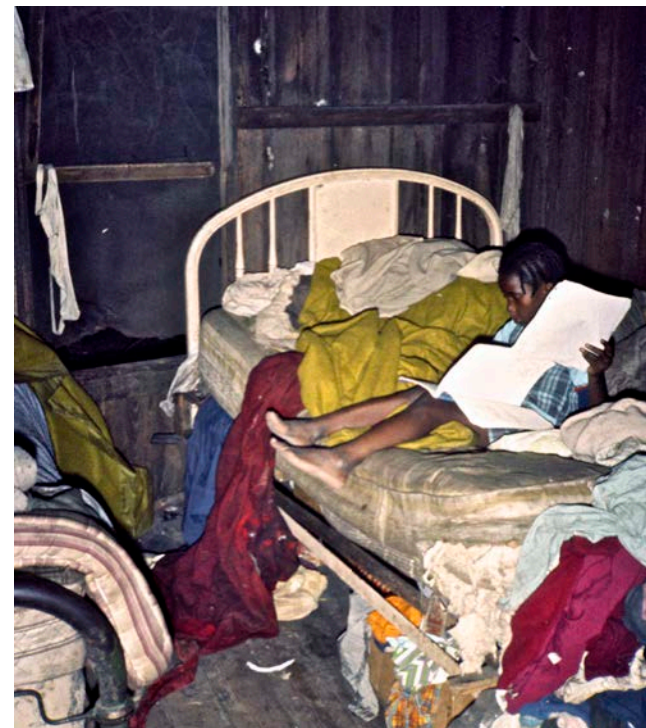
1974 - Miami Beach, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL

Linda lived not too far from Disney World, but I shouldn't say that too loudly since she's never had the money to go there. So poor were they at Linda's that they rarely had light before I moved in with them. I had a little millionaire money with me so I could buy kerosene for their old lamp. It was a day of rejoicing for the family. Linda's father worked from early morning to late night taking care of cows for a white landowner and, after a three-mile walk, often on bare feet, he didn't get home before 10 pm. But this evening we wanted to delight him with a surprise, and when we saw him coming in the darkness, Linda ran out and leaped into his arms shouting: "Dad, Dad, we got a present ... see? See? Light! We got light!"

Afterwards, Linda and her brother danced outside in the glow of the lamp. There was such joy over that light that it warmed me immensely, especially right after my experience of a succession of cold millionaire homes. For the most part, though, I didn't find much to be happy about. Food always had to be cooked over an outdoor fire, and Linda's mother could only sit motionlessly all day in the same chair because of the painful disease she suffered from. Linda had to do her homework before sunset, but sometimes I saw her reading in moonlight. Often, hours passed while she read to me on the bed.



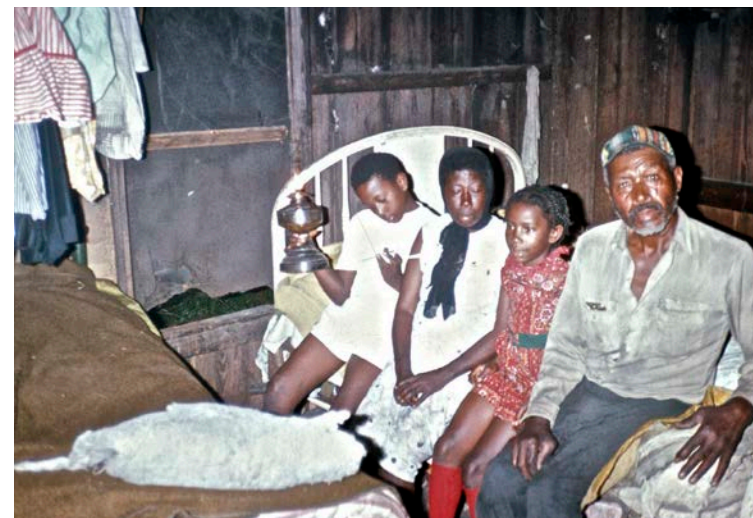
1974 - La Crosse, FL

Linda was without comparison my brightest and most encouraging experience in America. I came to her family at a time when I was deeply depressed and discouraged after months of traveling through the poverty of the black South, which I felt was more destructive and dehumanizing than any other poverty in the world. I looked at Linda and wondered why she hadn't been subdued in spirit and body as had so many other poor black children I'd met in the underclass. What was it that enabled her family to stay together in the midst of this inhuman existence? And why did they have a deeper love for each other than I'd found in any other home I'd been to in America?

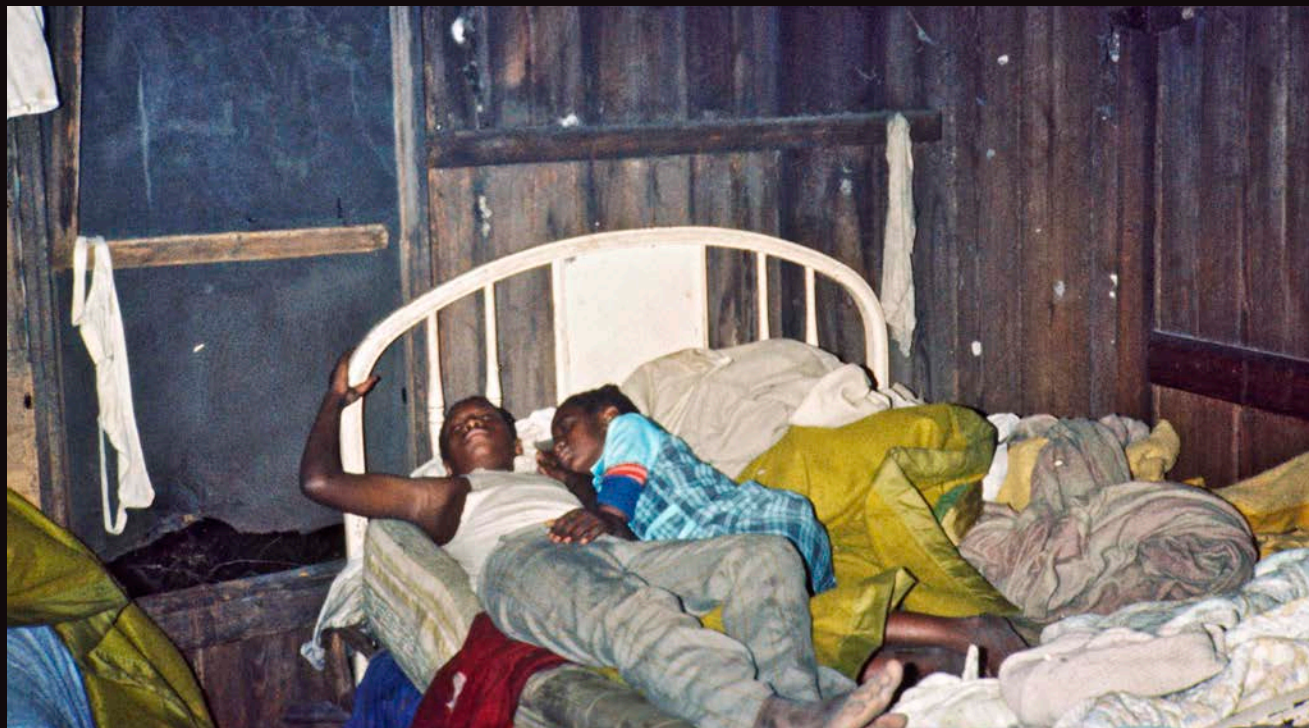
To be in Linda's home was like stepping into a Hollywood movie romanticizing poverty. While poverty everywhere in America is hideous and gives both people and their surroundings a repulsive face, here it had let love survive. That experience, to find love in the midst of a world of ugliness, was so indescribable and shocking that I was totally overwhelmed.



1974 - Miami Beach, FL



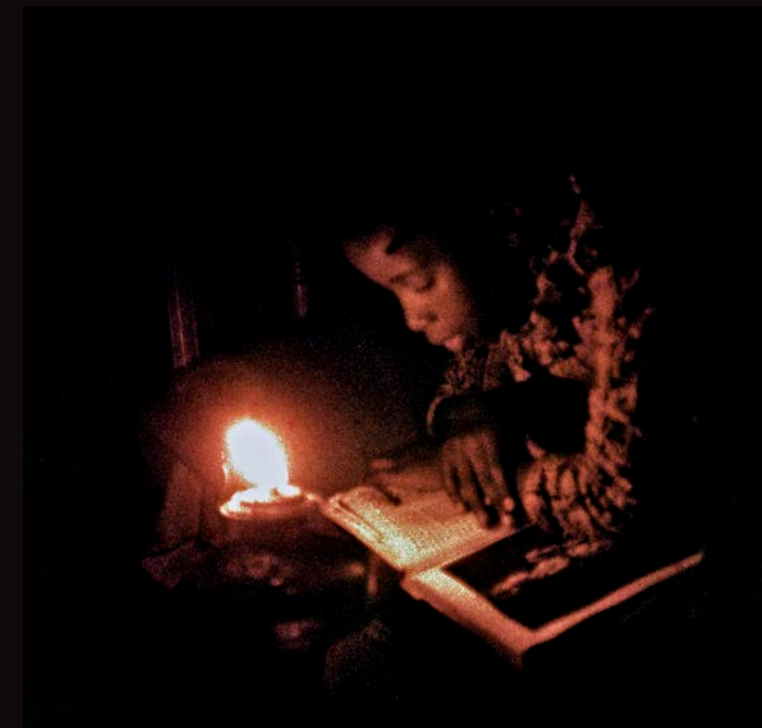
1974 - La Crosse, FL



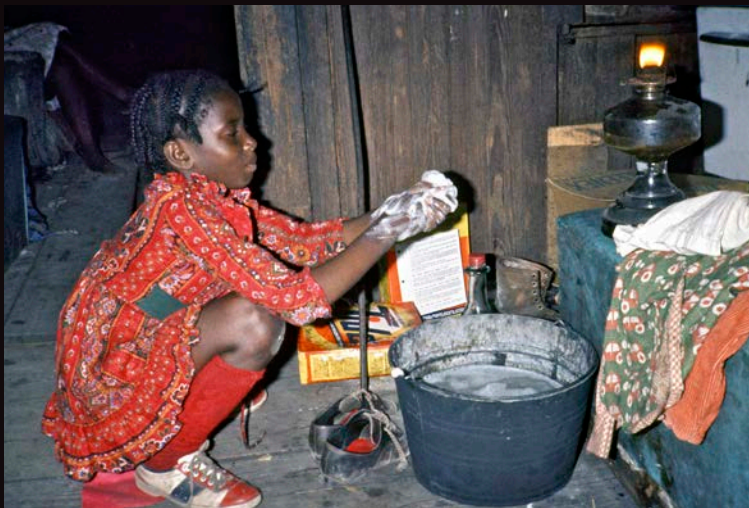
1974 - La Crosse, FL



Miami Beach



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL

*Now that we found love  
what are we gonna do with it?  
Let's give it a chance  
let it control our destiny.  
We owe it to ourselves  
to live happy eternally.*

*Oh, love is what we've been hoping for,  
and love is what we've been searching for.  
Now that I've got it  
right here in my hand,  
I'm gonna spread it  
all over the land.*

*Now that we found love  
what are we gonna do with it ?  
Lets forgive and forget  
let no thought be your enemy.  
I never felt so good,  
I'm as happy, happy, happy  
as a man could be.  
Love is what we've been waiting for;  
love is what we've been hoping for.  
Now that I got it right here in my hand  
I'm gonna spread it all over the land...*



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1974 - La Crosse, FL



1975 - Troy, AL



1974 - La Crosse, FL

“If One Is Truly to Succeed in Leading a Person to a Specific Place, One Must First and Foremost Take Care to Find Him Where He Is and Begin There. This is the secret in the entire art of helping. Anyone who cannot do this is himself under a delusion if he thinks he is able to help someone else. In order truly to help someone else, I must understand more than he – but certainly first and foremost understand what he understands. If I do not do that, then my greater understanding does not help him at all. If I nevertheless want to assert my greater understanding, then it is because I am vain or proud. But All true helping begins with a humbling.”

*Søren Kierkegaard in “On My Works as an Author” 1859*

## *Intermedium*

**Understanding...**

# The roots of white hate

In my vagabond years, I couldn’t understand or even see white hate, but saw and photographed its trail of destruction everywhere. For the same reason, my inner thinking was overwhelmingly negative toward hateful whites, such as the Ku Klux Klan, who thus never opened up to me. All I could see were their billboards, which were raised up high on steel bars since blacks burned them down all the time.

However, armed with the love I received from the students over 30 years of workshops—showing them the destruction their “innocent” racism caused, while they in turn opened their hearts to me, revealing the pain behind it—suddenly, after 9/11, it all started affecting my relationship to a group that had been invisible to me. They now came from all over and took me by the hand to show me their world of pain. Here are the stories of some of my new friends.



## Can we love the Ku Klux Klan?

Love them? For 25 years, I'd been mouthing empty rhetoric in American universities about embracing the Klan—not always easy for black and Jewish students—but never giving a thought to putting the words into deeds, to “walk the talk.” As usual we need a helping hand to integrate with those we fear or despise, for how could I “embrace” without joining? Or, as I usually joke, “How I became a card-carrying member of the Klan?”

Here's how, for a declared “antiracist,” the unthinkable happened. Danish TV wanted to make a movie about my work in America and got the crazy idea to put me face to face with Jeff Berry, America's biggest and most hateful Klan leader. “Ok with me if I'm free. I've dealt with plenty of racist students, and I can't image that a Klan leader can be any worse,” I said. But on the day we were to fly to Klan headquarters in Indiana, a lecture in Maine had been moved because of snow. So instead they set the camera up in New York and said, “Say something to the Klan leader that we can show him.” What do you say to a Klan leader when you're surrounded by blacks and Jews in New York? I started telling him about all the poor white “children of pain” I'd picked up over the years, who'd told me about endless childhood beatings or sexual abuse, and how they'd grown up to join the Klan or similar groups. And how their stories of mistreatment seemed so similar to what I'd seen in many underclass blacks. To tease the Klan leader, I even had the audacity to compare angry ghetto blacks with the Klan, “and therefore feel the same compassion for you in the Klan as for my black friends.” When he saw the video, he was moved to tears, and he immediately sent me an open invitation. (His wife later told me that I'd hit, dead center, the deepest layers of pain from his childhood of abuse.)

Well, I usually had university lectures every day and no time to meet him. But the next year, my lecture agent, Muwakkil, owed me so much money that I fired him (for a while), and he cancelled 41 lectures in revenge. I remember how relieved I was to have all this freedom to join real people instead of lecturing students about them. I called Muwakkil, who is black, and teased, “Ok, then I'll join the Klan to get you to pay up.”

In the meantime, Jeff Berry had been sentenced (at first) to 30 years in prison, so how could I take a meaningful vacation? Well, I moved in with his wife, Pamela, who was now functioning Klan leader. When I saw that her bed was as messy as the beds of other poor whites—membership cards all over it—I helped her clean up and for fun asked, “If I write myself on one of those cards, will

I become a member of the Klan?” To my surprise she burst out enthusiastically, “Yes, please do. We've never had an antiracist as a member. It would mean so much to us.” And the next day, she proudly called her husband to tell him how they'd now recruited an antiracist. Again, I'd learned how easy it is to join or integrate with any group when you approach them with empathy and love rather than antagonism or hate. But could I change them now that I was no longer a passive observing photographer but a committed antiracist activist?

What I learned living with the Klan on and off over the next years belongs in another book. Here are just a few highlights. I conducted long video interviews with Pamela about the sexual abuse she'd suffered through as a child, and she related how Jeff had endured such terrible beatings in his “dysfunctional family” that he ran away from home as a child and lived since then on the street as a “hustler.” Jeff told me in prison how he'd been neglected and unloved by his mother, a heroin addict and prostitute. “But today she's a fine lady after a black customer married her and saved her out of all that abuse. I love my stepfather for it.”



2002 - Butler, IN. Helping Pamela to clean up the mess



2002 - My first Sunday dinner with Grand Dragon Jean and Dennis

Pamela kept telling me there was no hate in Jeff— “he has lots of black friends ... I just don't like when he talks hateful about faggots in our rallies. I still feel deeply hurt over the loss of my best friend, a black woman, when I joined the Klan.” Everyone in the Klan loved me and they started inviting Grand Dragons from other states to Sunday dinner with “our new antiracist member.” Interviewing them, I found the same pattern of deep abuse in childhood. A year after my dinner with Grand Dragon Jean and her official bodyguard, Dennis (Dennis was so proud to be bodyguard for his own wife), I came out to visit them in their poor house in Illinois. When she saw me, she came running out to embrace me. “Jacob, Jacob, I'm so glad to see you again. Dennis just died from a heart attack. I'm a free woman now.” She dragged me right into their bedroom and undressed completely for me. True, she'd taken a photo of me the year before proposing to Pamela—on my knees, red roses in hand, and dressed in a Klan suit—acting out my philosophy of “going to bed with the enemy,” but I was still shocked.



2005 - Grand Dragon Jean outside her home



*Klan leader's granddaughter swept in the symbols of hate*



*2003 - Love between a Nazi and a KKK*

Luckily, she just wanted to show me how her breasts and genitals and entire body were now covered with tattoos. To her, that's what it was to "be a free woman" now that Dennis had died. Why? I have long tapes of interviews with him about the vicious beatings he got as a child from a violent drunk stepfather covered with tattoos. And that tattooed arm beating him endlessly had been such a nightmare that he refused to let Jean get tattoos. "But you understand, Jacob, that you're not a real Klan woman unless you proudly wear the Klan insignias on your most private parts," Jean declared. She was the official seamstress of the Klan's colorful robes and wanted to make me one "for only \$80 because of our long friendship." I called them "clown suits," which always cracked them up since they knew very well that all the KKK is about today is clowning for the rest of us in these historical costumes in a desperate attempt to get a little attention. That they dressed in the borrowed feathers of hate I also felt when their two parrots kept me awake all night screaming, "White Power!" I didn't hear them as screams of racism, but as two deeply oppressed birds who'd all their lives perched next to the answering machine and internalized its message, which I soon heard as "poor white trash power"—a cry for help from a deeply ostracized group of Americans who've never in any meaningful way felt part of the white-power structure from which other whites benefit. When I saw my naïve Klan friends duped into believing that Trump, a billionaire, would save them, I understood how abused and exploited they are.



*The parrots talking foul language of hate*

I saw many examples of how they feel hurt and bewildered when we call them hateful. They kept warning me about going over to visit Wally, a Nazi who'd married the Klan leader's daughter, Tania, "for the Nazis are full of hate" (unlike us). Again, I see this trend, how we humans need to see some people as worse than ourselves to keep morally aloof and justify our own perceived innocent racist thinking. Yet, after just one night of talking with Wally, I found the pain in his life. He told me he'd been happily married in New York, but one day saw his wife and daughter, caught in the crossfire between black street gangs, killed by stray bullets. He went berserk and joined the Nazis. A short time later, he saw the Klan leader and his daughter on the Jerry Springer show, fell in love with her, and drove all the way to Indiana to propose. Being married to Tania was how, my Klan friends said,



*2003 - Wally while he to the regret of Jeff had taken over the KKK to spread hate*

"we got a scumbag Nazi into our proud Klan," which made them feel deeply ashamed. Jeff told me in prison how infuriated he was that in his absence Wally and Tania had taken over the Klan's radio station "so that all Americans now think we're about hate, not justice and civil rights for whites." I took lots of pictures of Wally hailing Hitler with his new daughter, Kathrin, but didn't worry about her being brainwashed into a vicious racist because I saw how spoiled she was by parental love. Wally was so afraid of losing his new daughter he refused to work, spending all his time with Kathrin. Day after day I saw him sit and read children's books to her, and over the years I watched as she entered high school and became a warm healthy woman, unlike so many in the Klan, who were abused or had grown up unloved.

My long and ongoing friendship with the Klan gave me a good chance to test them, just as I'm sure they tested me. I tested them on their feelings about blacks, immigrants, Muslims, homosexuals, Jews, etc. Muslims: "Good God-fearing people" (well, that was before Trump popularized Islamophobia). Only homosexuals were vilified by some, like Jeff, but when I changed the question to "What would you say if your own child was gay?" they usually said, "Oh, then I'd love them like my other children"—an answer I didn't get from most Republicans at the time. On some issues, like capital punishment, they were farther left than most Americans. The most anti-Semitic thing I heard was from Jean. One day she asked me whether I believed in the Holocaust. I sensed that she'd read some of the wild Holocaust denials on the Internet and gave her a long lecture. She was clearly relieved to hear my answer and since then they called me "the professor," which said more about their own low education than about me, a high school dropout. When I started lecturing in Denmark about how I saw less hate in the Klan than in the Danes and their attitudes toward immigrants, an angry black woman stood up and said, "Jacob, my mother took me to see American Pictures when I was 14, and you were my big hero then. I walked around with a t-shirt saying, "Bomb the Klan." But now I must say you're out of your mind." To this woman, Rikke Marrot, now 34, I said, "I can hear you have some prejudice against the Klan, and as you know from my lecture, if you have prejudice against somebody, there's only one thing you can do: heal your hate by moving in with them to see them as human beings.





2002 - Klan leader's granddaughter being taught



2003 - Black and white love in the Ku Klux Klan



Jeff is the only KKK-leader ever to march in Manhattan as seen here.



So why not try to appease such a provocative Klan leader?

Why don't you come with me to America and move in with the Klan? Then you can bomb them all you want. I love to take such pictures." Rikke took sick leave from her modelling job to come with me. It was my chance to put both her and the Klan to a test. I knew what would happen; they ended up loving each other, and she later wrote a book about how she as a black didn't find any hate in the Klan—at least not as much as in the Danes. I loved taking videos when she entertained the Klan by talking about how her "black family killed hundreds of whites." Even though she said it was her Maasai tribe during the Mau Mau Uprising, the uneducated Klan understood it only in a black-and-white American context and sat in speechless admiration of the courageous black warrior who'd entered their lives. "I want to meet our new black member so I can impress the 5,000 blacks I'm surrounded by here in the prison," Jeff Berry said. So we spent 11 hours driving to the prison only to find that they wouldn't let Rikke in. Pam and Rikke stood hugging each other in tears of disappointment. When Rikke saw the deep love between Pam and Jeff, she decided to do something about it with me. Here's why it's important to move in with those you have prejudice against. If I hadn't lived with Pamela, I wouldn't have overheard a phone conversation between her and a neighbor during which I suddenly realized Jeff was innocent of the crime he was in prison for. It was actually his own violent son, always in bar brawls, who'd threatened someone with a gun while arguing with some hostile journalists. Nothing would've happened if my friends in the Southern Poverty Law Center hadn't eventually heard about it.

They do an admirable job of keeping an eye on all the hate groups in America, a job I'd long supported. They charged Jeff's son with "attempted kidnapping," but Jeff couldn't face the prospect of his son going to prison, so he confessed to the crime. And when you're a Klan leader in America, you can easily be sentenced to up to 30 years in prison even though there were no witnesses, no one was injured, and Jeff had never been convicted of a violent crime.

When Rikke and I learned that he was in prison for love and not for hate, we, along with his black attorney, mounted an enormous defense for him. We ran to lawyers and justices and local papers, and I started writing defense pleas on the Internet, calling one "Romeo and Juliet in Klan Hoods." The whole time I teased Rikke, "Hey, I thought you came to bomb the Klan, not to liberate their leader."

Our combined efforts succeeded, and Jeff was freed. Deeply grateful for his "antiracist" savior, he took me around to meet all his poor local friends. Sadly, he'd lost his job and since on my prison visits I'd told him how I let black dealers I knew in the ghettos sell my book as an alternative to selling drugs, he said, "Jacob, can't I sell your book too?" And this is how I got America's biggest Klan leader to drive around selling my antiracist book. He laughed as much as I did at the irony, but why not, we asked, join up with the creatures God sends us to make a little money and have a little fun?

And when I saw how the Klan's primitive website had been totally neglected during Jeff's absence, I got his permission to be

the Klan's official webmaster and free hand to change it. To my surprise, I found hardly any hate I had to throw out (only toward pedophiles). I now understood the background for this, so I let them keep it because we all have a need to hate something when we're in pain. As I said to my black and Jewish friends, "Now you have me as your guarantee that there will be nothing racist or anti-Semitic on the Klan's website. You only get such power over the Klan by empowering them with love and affection. If you attack them with hate and prejudice, they'll only make themselves worse to live up to the role of the 'bad guys'—the negative attention they always sought in their deep self-hate."

It seemed like I could do nothing wrong now, and the Klan started organizing wild parties for me whenever I came by on the lecture circuit—usually bringing highly educated antiracist activists with

me to help them out of their blind hate for the KKK. It wasn't difficult when we were sometimes greeted by the Klan leader with, "Oh, damn Jacob, why'd you come so late? You would've loved the wild party we had last night. We had so many of your black and Mexican friends partying with us, even some of the local Amish people came..." Finally, thanks to our long friendship, I wanted to put Jeff to the ultimate test by taking him around America to meet all my old black friends mentioned in this book. I knew how he'd react, but I invited a Danish TV reporter with me as a witness and to help get Danish school kids out of their endless "worshipping the devil" education and start taking responsibility for the racism in themselves rather than seeing the beam in their brother's eye.

## American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

National Office  
American Knights  
Po Box 62 Garrett, IN 46738

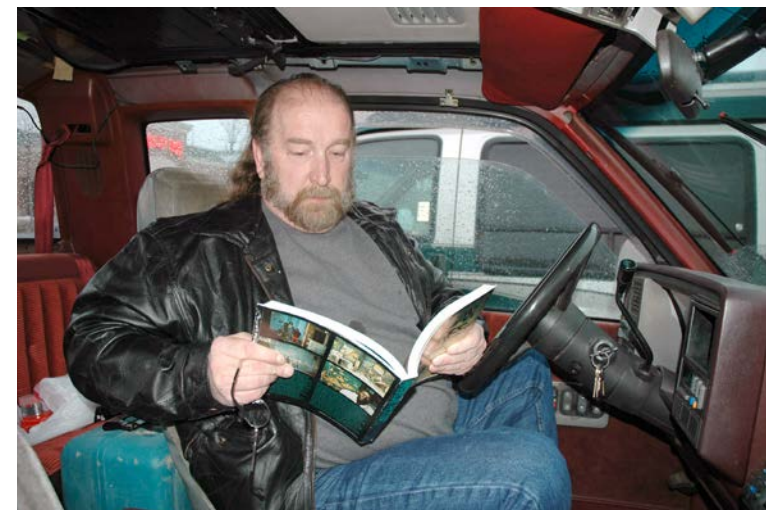
Rev. Jeffery L. Berry  
National Imperial Wizard

Be A Man  
Join The KLAN

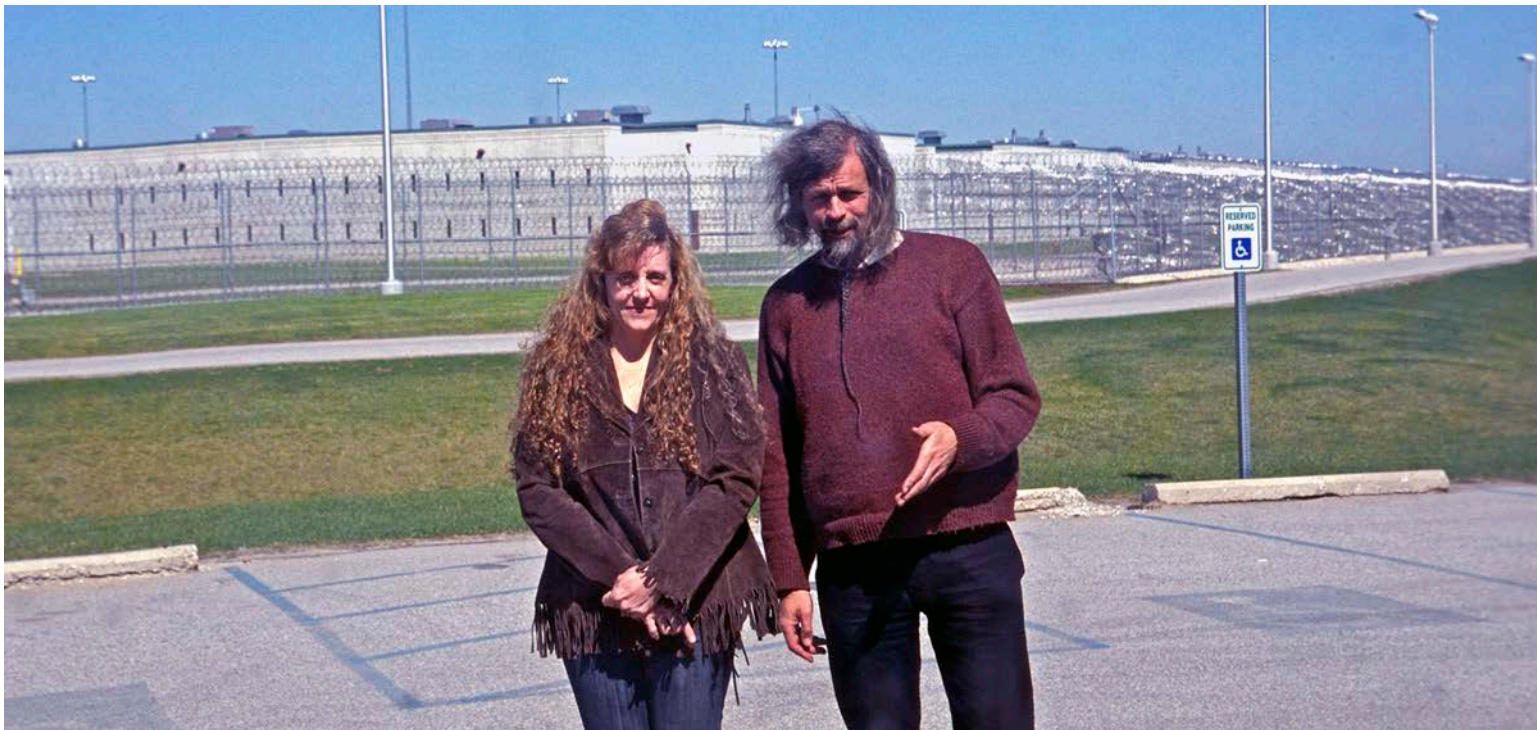
Equal Rights For All - Special Rights For None - Rev. Jeffery L Berry

What we are about Making your life count What the Klan Believes Application  
Realms Jesus Christ is the light of the world Why We Light The Cross  
Remembrances to Joe Dear Mommy Look for sex offenders in your State

An example from my time as official web designer for the Ku Klux Klan



The Klan leader on the road selling my anti-racist book



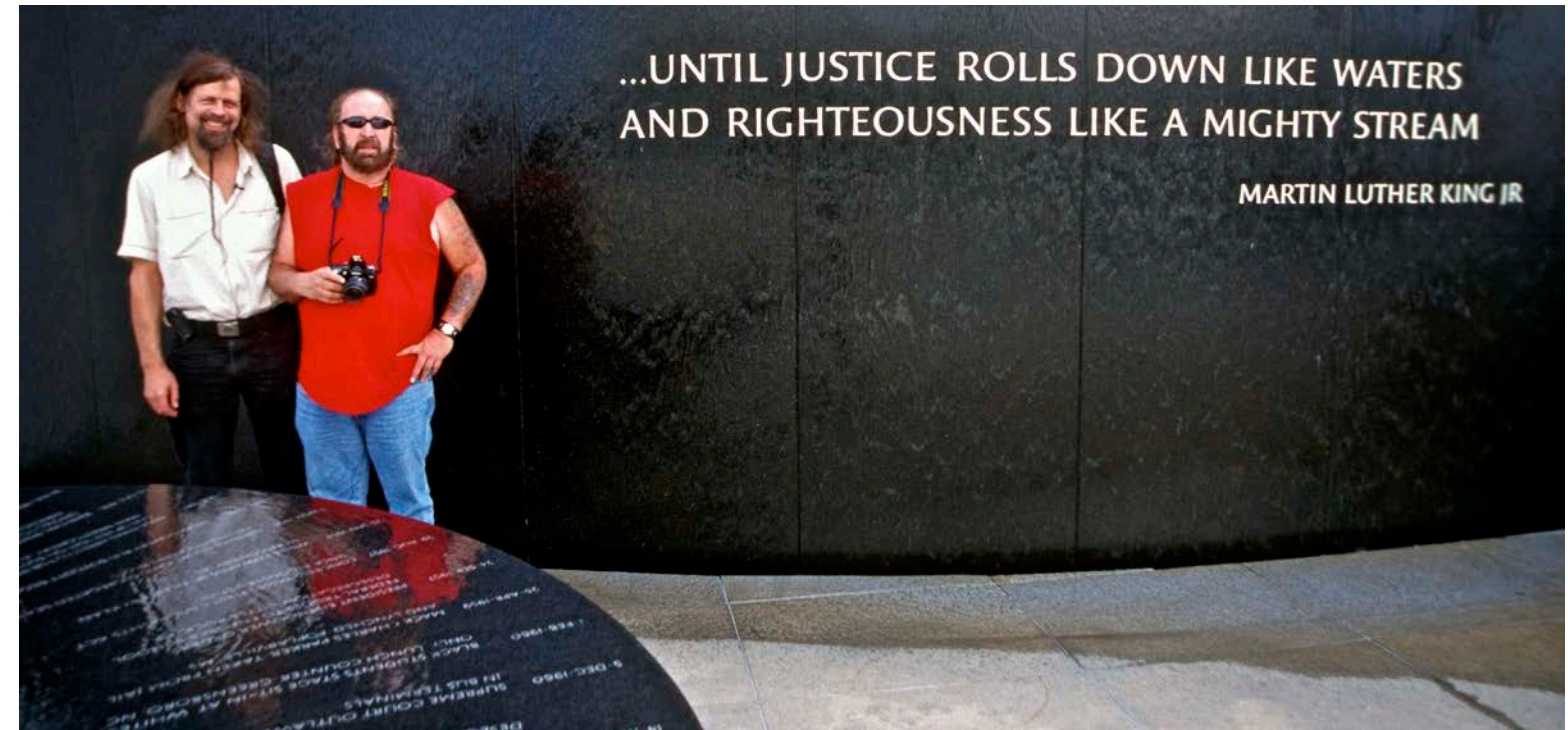
*We spent a whole day driving to see Jeff in the prison where the Klan leader wanted to impress his many new black friends with Rikke.*

There was just one problem I hadn't foreseen. In private I'd never found any deep racism in Jeff, but he, like all Klansmen, knew full well that if they were themselves no one would go on cultivating them as "the evil people"—the only role in which they could get a little attention and world fame. So whenever the camera-man put his lens on Jeff, Jeff started in on all his ridiculous Klan rhetoric. This blew me away. He'd never talked like this in private or among his Klan friends. And what shocked me even more was that he now forced me into the opposite role, playing the great antiracist (also so as not to lose face for the TV viewers). We both ended up hating the media for always selling hate and division and for almost destroying our friendship. In private Jeff loved meeting my black friends, such as Mary, [page 130] whose house was firebombed by racists, and Virginia Pate [page 44], the elderly widow I'd stayed with in the swamps. And the respect was mutual. When we came to Virginia Honore, [page 37] whom I'd known since she was 16 and we'd flirted with each other, and who'd married a prison guard in Angola, Jeff had been driving so much that he'd fallen asleep and was napping in the car. So while we were sitting on the front porch chatting, I suddenly said to Virginia, "I've always known you as a caring Christian who can forgive anybody. But what if I one day brought a Ku Klux Klan leader?" She said, "You know I'll love him as much as God's other children. It's never mattered what friends you've brought with you to my shack over the years—multimillionaires, like Anita Roddick, or the poorest drifters to give them a shower." I said, "Well, I actually have America's biggest, most hated Klan leader with me this time." I got off the porch and woke Jeff up.

Without batting an eyelash, Virginia went into the house to get him something to eat and drink. It was an unforgettable evening with laughter and long discussions, during which, to my surprise, they agreed on almost everything (from a moral standpoint), such as their opposition to mixed marriages. "Jenny," Virginia called, "come out here and hear it from a Klansman himself that it's wrong for you to date your white boyfriend. It'll hurt the children to grow up mulatto."



*The Klan leader with Virginia and Howard known from "Dead man walking"*



*I drove 24 hours with the klan leader to show him the Civil Rights monument in Montgomery with the 41 names of people killed by Klan violence*

And certainly they both believed nothing good could come out of prison or capital punishment. Virginia was married to Howard, a guard in Angola Prison. They'd once adopted a 16-year-old boy to keep him away from crime, but he committed a vicious murder, and now it was Howard's job to lead his adopted son to his execution. (Howard acted as a stand-in in the movie Dead Man Walking.)

Jeff received a loving and forgiving reception among all my black friends—even when I brought him to the congregation of my ex-father-in-law's old shack-church in Philadelphia, MS, the town famous for the Ku Klux Klan's killing of three civil rights workers, dramatized in the film Mississippi Burning. I've always believed in and practiced bringing people together as the best way of helping them out of their prisons of fear and demonization. Certainly, it made a deep and lasting impression on a Klan leader to meet all this forgiveness from blacks, just Jeff and I had affected each other through our long friendship. Still, I hadn't expected it to be that easy to help a leader out of the Klan (that had never been the purpose of my involvement), yet shortly after the trip, Jeff dissolved his entire Klan group. He'd been in the KKK his whole life. It had been his whole identity and only claim to world fame, but it made no sense for him anymore. What happened next shocked me. Some of the members, including his own son, whom he'd saved from prison, got so furious they tried to kill Jeff. He was so badly beaten he was in coma for two months and his doctors doubted he would live. When he woke up, he was blind and handicapped for life. But when I came to

see him and Pamela, they were so happy that they gave me their own bed. Now he was preaching love in a church rather than hate in the woods. I saw no difference from the old Jeff to the new. It just made more sense now for him to search for the attention he craved so much by using light instead of darkness—the holy cross rather than the burning cross. The deep love inside him had, ever since the abuse he'd suffered in childhood, been so crippled and imprisoned that we, looking in from outside, had mistaken it for hate.



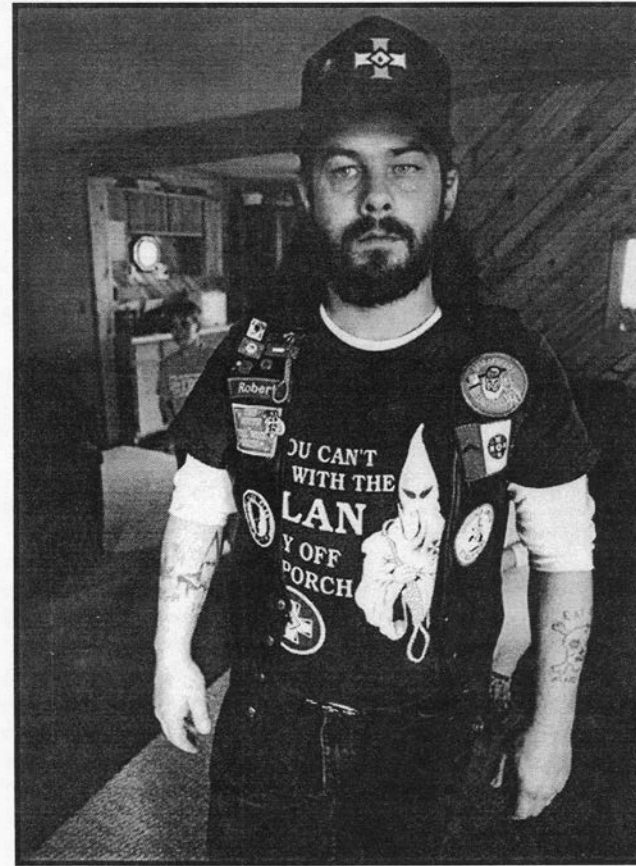
*With Jeff, now paralyzed and blind for life.*

## Love disguised as hate - I.

In books about the KKK, Robert Moore is described as one of the most dangerous Grand Dragons in the US. He threatened that “his Klansmen would open fire to massacre counterdemonstrators if they dared to oppose” his rallies, “and God forbid if there’s any children there.” I grant that such inflammatory language can be dangerous for weak souls, so when I met Robert at a party at Klan headquarters, I was curious to find out what he was made of. Certainly this small fat timid and taciturn man could look scary with all his hateful tattoos, but, I thought, never judge people by their appearances; see what they hold in their hearts (all those layers of beer fat notwithstanding). I got my chance while we were drinking. He kept asking whether he could drive with me to Mississippi since I was on my way to New Orleans. “Why do you want to go there?” I asked. I was surprised since he lived in North Carolina and couldn’t even afford a bus ticket back home. He wouldn’t answer in front of other Klansmen. (You don’t brag about deeds of love in the Klan.) But after we’d drunk plenty of beer, he loosened up and quietly told me his story. Here’s the short version. A former truck driver, he’d been in the Klan his whole life. Recently, he’d had several dangerous heart

operations, after which the doctors prohibited him from ever working again. He got on disability, which pays nothing in the US. So now he was dirt poor in Lexington, NC, and sleeping on the couch of his first ex-wife (he had four). One day on TV he saw how thousands of blacks had drowned during Hurricane Katrina. He was so moved he borrowed money from friends for a bus ticket to Mississippi. For two months he helped blacks rebuild their homes, cut up and remove fallen trees, etc. It was such hard physical work for the fat man that the Klan leader invited him up to the national headquarters, where we met, to recuperate. But now he wanted to go back and continue the work or as he sheepishly put it in Klan rhetoric, “to retrieve my belongings, such as the Klan robe, so I can show it to my 17-year-old son, who’s just out of prison.” Despite the doctor’s warning that Robert risked death if he did physical work, this Klansman had helped blacks rebuild their lives. Stories such as these have always inspired me. They remind me that underneath the stony façade many of us hide behind when we’ve suffered through adversity, you can always find, if you dig deep enough, a heart beating with goodness and love. I was so elated that I had to hug him again and again though it was difficult to reach around that

for the Asheville area. Later I learned he was the same Robert Moore identified by the *Intelligence Report* of the Southern Poverty Law



Robert Moore

Center of the Klansmen who threatened to “massacre” counter-demonstrators. The way Robert Moore appears in books about the KKK



Scary on the outside, but always look for what people contain in their hearts



Robert Moore at our release party for the two Klan members after their 5 years in prison for drugs.



Sometimes it is a little hard to embrace my new friends....

beer belly.

I was so inspired I made him my official driver in America. What have we got the Klan for if not for engaging them in constructive antiracist work? Robert was so proud now to come with me into elitist universities, to which he, as poor white trash, had never before had access. And you hardly get a better driver than a Klansman. Most of his life, from quitting time Friday to Monday morning, he’d driven all across America on weekends, going to these ridiculous Klan rallies for 30 powerless members out in the woods where their local black friends stood laughing at them (the next day they went hunting together as they always had). He could drive 24 hours without sleep, while I could nap and read in the bed in the back of my van. Robert so moved me that I later went with him home. He is one of the few in the Klan who still says “nigger” and uses empty rhetoric like “I stand up for my race!” “Then why do you lie down on that couch while your ex-wife is screwing a Mexican in the bedroom just behind you?” I teased, knowing that Mexicans are a bit worse for the Klan since they’d jobs away from the Klan. “That wetback,” he retorted, “has been a good stepfather to my



*Nancy after she had slimmed down*

sons all those years I neglected them.”

To Nancy, his ex-wife, he said, “He only put up with you and your 600 pounds so he could get his green card.” They both laughed. Nancy claimed she’d just lost 400 pounds, so all three of them could now sit together on the couch. Over the next few days, she confirmed on tape the story Robert had already told me. All his childhood he’d been viciously beaten by his drunk stepfather. When he was 14, he slashed his stepfather’s stomach with a razor while he slept. He served five years for attempted murder. When he got out of prison, he met and married Nancy, but they were so poor they had to share his violent stepfather’s one-room shack. “Robert was completely wild,” Nancy said. They were both drug addicts, and their two sons were taken into custody by Child Protective Services. Practically all their friends were black, and Nancy never heard Robert utter a bad word about blacks. Nor did she understand why he joined the Klan. Although the KKK helped him out of drugs, she now wanted nothing to do with him and has only had black and Mexican boyfriends since they split up.

Robert’s sister was equally abused and at 12 years old took a  
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*Justin admiring his father with hail salutes*

kitchen knife and cut their stepfather’s throat. He survived and she was removed from their dysfunctional family. Yet it was the oldest brother I found most interesting. A hermit hiding deep in the woods, he was surprised that I found him and wouldn’t let me photograph him. He’d been in and out of prison all his life for burning down homes—no matter the race of the owners. Being a pyromaniac was his way of burning crosses (or of burning his pain away).

For abused children around the world do not, of course, all end up as Klansmen, Nazis, Islamists, or gang members. There are a thousand different ways they act out their anger and unhealed wounds. If they haven’t been subjected to physical abuse, it’s usually mental abuse. As Hitler said, the worst wasn’t all the beatings from his father but when he publicly humiliated him. And since little Adolf didn’t have a loving grandmother or saving angel, he ended up taking his anger out on millions of people. That’s why it’s so important that we with “surpluses” learn to be saving angels for those with “deficits,” such as our neighbor’s abused son.

Take Robert and Nancy’s two unloved sons, whom Nancy and her Mexican husband have adopted. The oldest son, Thomas, is in prison for bombing houses, while Justin, who was just released, spent a year in prison for robberies he’d committed with his black friends. “He should’ve stayed in prison much longer,” Robert said of his mentally challenged son. Justin was 17 when I met him, and it was obvious he craved his father’s love. He was seeing him for the first time—the great returned Klan leader he’d admired and missed his entire life. Robert told him stories about his “formidable battles” as an “armored crusader,” and Justin fantasized about becoming a great Klansman, surpassing his father in “nigger-talk” and derogatory phrases—to such a degree it made Robert, who realized his naïve son actually took the phrases seriously, uncomfortable.

So Justin was now running around school bragging about becoming a big Klan leader like his dad when he grew up. This didn’t help with his popularity: He was the only white kid in a ghetto school. Indeed, this son of a Klan leader had never in his life had a white friend! I’d already seen that Klan phenomenon, especially in the South; Klansmen have usually gone to schools up to 95% black. As “poor white trash,” they are the only whites

who can’t afford to take their children out of schools or move away. This explains another contradiction I’d observed. People all over the world tend to hang onto their school friends later in life, so many Klansmen end up with far more black friends than most whites. As Barack Obama wrote in his books, most whites in America don’t have a single intimate black friend. Yet the Klan doesn’t brag about these friendships because then society won’t be able to scapegoat them as villains—the “bad guy” role they seek out in their pain and self-loathing. Growing up on the wrong side of the tracks and being stigmatized by our racist thinking gives them, especially after endless beatings by unemployed drunk stepfathers, a tremendous need to shout, “We are just as good as you whites out there in suburbia!” And they use the only language they know will make us listen—foul racist language. It was sad to sit with the three of them in Nancy’s rotten shack “across the tracks,” surrounded by blacks on all sides. They couldn’t afford to buy kerosene for the stove on the floor, so they kept warm in their overcoats and the love that flowed in the reunited family—most often expressed via the two boys teasing Nancy about her sex life with her Mexican boyfriend, Pedro, whom Robert grudgingly admitted he loves. “Blessed are the meek,” I always think when I’m with the Klan, “for they shall inherit the earth.”

I followed Robert over the years and thought I now knew everything about him. I laughed when I saw him on the Jerry Springer show faking the “bad guy” role he’d learned so well. In front of hundreds of hateful spectators, he beat up Justin for having a black girlfriend, while Justin, the not-so-smart son, attacked his half-sister Tania for having a “Wetback baby” (she wept on stage, “But you love both him and your own Mexican stepfather and only act like this to get your father’s love”). All of them had been paid, driven in limousines, accommodated in the finest hotels, manipulated, and choreographed by Jerry Springer to make the whole world believe that they hate Mexicans and blacks in a gladiatorial show for us, the real haters.

Well, ten years later Robert asked me to marry him to his fifth wife, Peggy, “a good Christian,” a minister’s daughter from up north trying to be his saving angel. So, I drove with a Danish TV-crew all the way to Arkansas. I had wedded Muslim and Jewish couples, so I felt that it could be fun also to marry a Christian-Klan couple. Here’s an extract of my wedding speech, filmed in front of Robert’s surprised Klan friends:



2015 - 10 years after I wed Robert to his fifth wife with invited Klan sympathizers

“Dear Robert and Peggy,  
 Today, we are together with your friends because your marriage through civil matrimony shall now be confirmed. [...] For you two, Robert and Peggy, it has been a long rocky road before you found each other and in some way saved each other.  
 When I met you in the Klan, contrary to what I expected, I did not find any hate in your group, but very much love in the people whom I soon realized had not had much love in their own childhood. [...] I hope you do not mind me telling it here, how you were brutally beaten and mistreated since you were four years old by your violent stepfather ... and when you were 14, you cut up your stepfather’s stomach with a razor blade and got five years in prison. And then trouble started again. One day you were lynching a black....”

Here I choked on my words, literally in deep pain. For during my jogging, the same morning, I fell and broke a rib and was hospitalized. When I went by with the film crew to tell Robert that I wasn’t sure whether I’d be able to make the wedding that

evening and he saw my pain and bandaged wounds, he said that there was something he wanted to confess to me which he’d never told me before. “Well, Jacob, I have to lighten my heart and tell you first that I once lynched a black man. It started in North Carolina when he molested a little girl, four years old. The father of the little girl was a good friend of one of our members. So we picked him up one night when we were at a party drinking a lot of beer ... just like we’re doing here today. We took him up to the mountains and put a rope around his neck and asked him if he had anything to say. He said, ‘May God be merciful upon my soul.’ That is when I hung him. He dropped. And then I cut his throat to make sure he was dead.” Robert, like me, was now visibly troubled. “I have nightmares.” I was in complete shock. “You do?” “Yes, sometimes when I close my eyes, I see that nigger there swinging. Yes, somebody who says they can kill somebody, and it don’t bother them, well, they are full of shit. After all these years I still wake up like somebody poured water all over me. It’s something I have to talk with Peggy about because it bothers me. The nightmares just keep coming back and keep coming back. It is a never-ending thing for me.”

I was speechless and although I should have stayed with Robert, I decided to go back with the camera crew to their hotel to reflect on whether I could now conduct the marriage the same evening. I decided that I could not let him down even though we were now in double pain. I had to be lifted out of bed screaming with my broken rib.

So here are pieces from the rest of my long wedding speech: “... one day, Robert, you saw on TV how Hurricane Katrina devastated Mississippi and Louisiana, drowning thousands of people. You were so moved by seeing all the suffering and ... there you worked to help people build their houses again ... Hard physical work ... here I saw how you put your own life at risk to save black people... This is what I call ‘love disguised as hate’ and it’s therefore people like you, Robert, who give my life inspiration ...

And so I want to end with a quote from St. Paul: ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud ... Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.’ I ask you, Robert, will you have Peggy as your spouse?”

My speech released tremendous joy, surprise, and relief from the partying Klan members, who said they had learned so much about themselves. Since then I’ve continued my talk with Robert about the lynching.

“Would you have done it also to a white pedophile?”

“Yes, Jacob, you know that I don’t see in colors.”

Hm, indeed a convincing answer from a committed Klansman. With my knowledge about the Klan’s tremendous hatred of pedophiles, which apparently also is politically correct in America, I understood his logic. Robert committed his crime in 1985, four years after the lynching of Michael Donald, officially the last recorded lynching. It brought one of the Klansmen to the electric chair while my old friend Morris Dees got a court to award \$7 million to his mother, which literally bankrupted the United Klans of America. Robert was sentenced to only 10 years in prison, for it wasn’t considered a hate killing, just the murder of a pedophile. When Robert got out of prison in 1995, his punishment wasn’t over. His nightmares about the killing continued in a way psychologists today conclude is a classic example of PTSD. This makes me conclude two things.

1. When I met him in 2005, he felt too ashamed of his crime to tell me about it despite being otherwise honest. It was no longer

politically correct in the Klan to lynch blacks or even hurt them, only to demand “equal justice for all” by resisting affirmative action programs for blacks. As the Klan always laughingly said to me, “Everybody thinks we still go around hanging blacks from trees.”

2. Still plagued by guilt and PTSD nightmares when Katrina hit in 2005, 10 years after his prison term, Robert must have felt that only by risking his own life to save black lives—giving back the life he took—could he redeem himself. Around the same time, I’d often heard him talk about how he’d reconciled with his violent stepfather, whom he’d hated his whole life. He’d driven a long way to be him on his deathbed, and it had given him much relief and validation to hear his dad finally say, “I am sorry.” In my talks with him and Nancy, I realized that he himself saw a direct line going from his violent childhood to the youthful rage that first turned him into a drug addict whose only friends were black, then to his rejection of both them and Nancy, terminating with the lynching of a black man.

When you go through terror in childhood, you’re never free and, emotions killed, you disconnect from reality. No wonder I today see Robert post a lot about Jesus on Facebook. In some way I see him carrying the cross of his redeeming savior



When Robert confessed to me about his lynching of a black man

## Love disguised as hate - II.

as well as those of the two crucified sinners at his sides. During my long work with the Klan, I never saw them commit violence against blacks, but I saw plenty of violence among their own. Raine, who belonged to another Klan group, had read what I wrote about the Ku Klux Klan on my website and invited me to her home in North Carolina since, she said, "I have a university degree in sociology and have studied the members of our group and came to the same conclusion as you about their abused childhood." When she served me morning coffee in bed, she told me about her two prison sentences. "What for?" I asked. "Didn't you know I'm a double murderer?" Hearing this from the sweet 20-year-old woman at my side, I almost spit out the coffee. She then told me how, as a 14-year-old, she ran away from her abusive racist father, became an antiracist skinhead, and lived in Los Angeles in a garage with some Mexican girls. One day, in self-defense, she killed an intruding Mexican drug gangster. After two years in prison and feeling betrayed by the Latinos, she returned home, and now 17, she had turned a Neo-Nazi and shot a white antiracist demonstrator, "also in self-defense." Then "Good Christian Klan people" intervened, "teaching me that what mattered in life was to do good to others rather than kill them."

They sent her on missionary work in Africa for half a year. Raine loved Africa and was impressed to see for the first time how black children were disciplined and eager to learn in complete contrast "to the rowdy ghetto kids I went to school with at home." Back home, her rise in the Klan was meteoric, and she set out to become America's first female Klan leader. She was Klan leader Virgil Griffin's speechwriter and brain. She's also the only educated Klan member I've met. She was a declared feminist and pro-homosexual activist, saying "there's too much homophobia and sexism in the Klan." Raine invited me to a Klan fall rally in the woods to meet her friends, but later that year, when I asked whether I could post my photos from the rally on my website, she begged me to wait. The Klan usually loves when I put members on display and give them a shot at fame, which is what their membership is all about, but right then she was applying for "the dream job of my life as a counselor for [black] criminals in our local prison. But you can't work for the state in NC if you're a member of the KKK." So, what was behind her desire to "do good to" blacks? As it turns out, a childhood injury (something she has in common with many other Klan members). Raine had grown up in the ghetto as a poor



Raine and Billy presenting their black and white weasel harmony, but they apologized for taking me to a Chinese restaurant, their favorite food.



Embedding with the Klan. Raine in 2005



The feminist klan member with her books on feminism and gay liberation

white, and her school friends were almost exclusively black. Yet she was never allowed to take her playmates home because of father's racism, which he justified by saying "They're all criminals and drug addicts." He wasn't entirely wrong. Ghettoized children do not, as we know, behave like saints. So ever since childhood, Raine had dreamed of helping her former friends become "better people." In Africa she'd started to understand how ghettoization in America caused blacks to behave in the way that so repelled her father. It wasn't because they were "black." She started deconstructing American racism, which associates blacks with crime. So after a short college education, she now got the chance to help them in prison, where so many of her black friends had ended up. Did she see any contradiction in this? No, "for when the blacks become 'good people' like us," it'll no longer necessary to have the Ku Klux Klan to "protect the white race from their crime and drugs," she reasoned quite logically and, yes, lovingly. Shortly afterward, she excitedly called me up in Denmark: "Jacob, I got my dream job, so you can post your pictures on the Internet." Well, half a year later, I saw articles all over the Internet about Raine's "brutal rape and murder." Shocked, I called her

husband, Billy. He said that after many blood transfusions she'd miraculously survived the assassination attempt by two Klan members, David Laceter and Scott Belk. The Klan group had nothing against her counseling blacks in prison, but she'd warned me about Belk, whom I met one of the few times he was out of prison. He was extremely dangerous because he was a member of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang, which didn't approve of Raine's being on the side of the black gangs, with whom they always had bloody fights. Shortly after I photographed Scott, he and David broke into Raine's house, raped her, and shot her with a submachine gun. She later showed me the bullet scars. David was jailed as the one who'd "pierced Raine with bullets" and was murdered in prison. During the long hospital stay and trial, Raine could no longer hide her KKK membership from the prison and was fired in accordance with state laws. But the story's not over. The black prisoners revolted and forced the prison to rehire their most popular social worker. Were they not aware that she was a member of the KKK, the prison asked? Yes, the blacks had known all along. Prisons have a program called "gang-awareness training" to help them stay out of gangs when they're released,



Scot Belk when I met him in the Klan rally

which isn't easy with all the social control they're subjected to. And in Southern prisons, the KKK is considered just a poor white-trash gang, which is exactly what it is. One day the prisoners had to watch a video of the local Klan group, and they immediately recognized Raine's voluminous figure. This only made her more popular among the blacks: "Wow, she's a gang member just like us!" Although Raine's friends in the Klan had nothing against her work for the blacks, she knew she was in danger when Belk started spreading a rumor she was "snitching for the state." She continued her idealistic work of "improving [the situations of] blacks" despite her knowledge that she was now putting her life on the line. This is again what I call love disguised as hate, a Klan member willing to risk her life to help blacks.

I can't meet a cold-blooded murderer, such as Scotland "Scott" Kevin Belk, without trying to understand his inner human being, and I learned a lot more about him through his later crimes. He was severely abused by a single mother, who, to keep him quiet, turned him into a drug addict at the age of 8. As an adult, he kept up his drug habit and in 1998, along with a girlfriend, whom he'd



The movie about Scot Belk

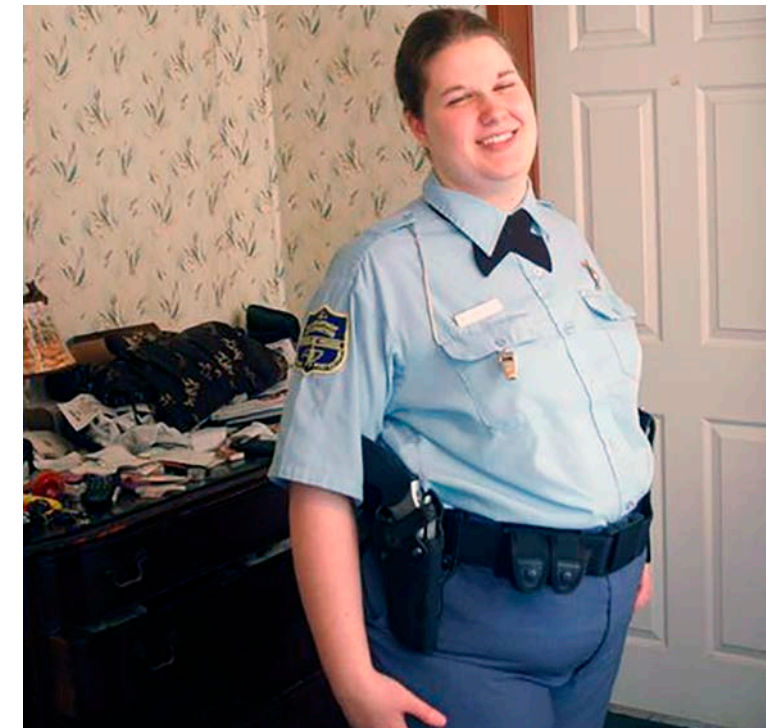
hooked on drugs, he robbed a bank of \$3,000. While having sex with his black dealer, he told her about the heist. Apparently, she betrayed him to the police to escape prison herself, and Scott spent a few years behind bars. Here he entered the Aryan Brotherhood as revenge against his black snitch. When I met him at a KKK rally in 2003, right after prison, he was trying to get his life together, partly by joining a peaceful picnicking-partying KKK group and partly by getting a permanent job as a truck driver. Scott was married to Rhonda Belk at the time. To their great misfortune, his crack-smoking mother, Margarete Kalinosky, moved in with them and got them both addicted to crack, and their lives deteriorated again. Exactly two years after I met him, during an argument over money for drugs, he became desperate, hit his mother with a baseball bat, and strangled her. He then fled with his wife in one of his employer's trucks, driving to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Pretending to be a priest, he painted relief slogans on the truck and drove to Gainesville, TX, where he and Rhonda posed as Katrina refugees. A church helped them get to Seattle, where they rented an apartment from a woman who eventually recognized them from an FBI most-wanted poster. In 2007 Belk got 15 years in prison while Rhonda got five for the murder of his mother, who'd neglected him and forced drug addiction on him from the time he was 8. Scott's life inspired a Hollywood TV series: I (Almost) Got Away with It: Got to Pose as Katrina Refugees, whereby he finally got the "moment of fame" all Klansmen dream of. Not only was his story being brought to the screen by famous actors, but he was allowed to be in the series himself, talking from prison about the drama of his life. Raine's other would-be murderer, David Laceter, had a similar history as a drug addict and narco-gangster and, like Scott, had belonged to the Aryan Brotherhood as well as the World Church of the Creator, a Nazi group, until his murder in 2003. White hate always has deep roots.



After the murder attempt Raine armed herself heavily afraid of a new attack

Taking into consideration how such hardcore killers and haters never got any help during their abused childhoods always reaffirmed my belief that it's never too late to reach them—if only to protect ourselves and society from their rage. I got my chance when Raine arranged for me to meet the imperial wizard of her Klan group, Virgil Griffin, one of the most notorious and hateful Klan leaders. This was a severe test for me since I was deeply prejudiced against him. He was the Klan leader behind the 1979 Greensboro massacre, in which five anti-Klan demonstrators were killed. One of my old friends, Willena Cannon, helped organize the demonstration. One day, while sitting with her and her 4-year-old son, Kwame, in her kitchen on S. Eugene Street, she told me why she'd worked with Jesse Jackson in the Civil Rights Movement to integrate Greensboro's businesses. At the age of 9, she'd witnessed a black man being burned alive in a barn. His screams had been to fall in love with a white woman. His screams filled the night, and she never forgot it.

Thirty years later, both she and her son, Kwame, now 10, were almost killed by the Klan. Unfortunately, Sandy Smith, the ex-girlfriend of my co-worker Tony Harris, was among the dead. I'd hung out with them in Bennett College, a black women's school, when Sandy was president of the student government. I was dating her friend Alfrida, who was just as proud of her beautiful afro as Sandy was of hers. Although Tony urged me to "make a move," these well-educated black women had strong social control against "being with a honky." So I always ended up



but she is proud to get her job back working for the blacks in prison.

only helping Alfrida write her term papers all night while Tony was sleeping with Sandy. We were young and free and thought society was moving toward more racial freedom. So no one was more shocked than Tony when just six years later, as he watched on Norwegian TV (while on tour with American Pictures), the Klan unpacked their guns and murdered his ex-girlfriend in his hometown. Tony and the other blacks in our Copenhagen work collective had resisted when I put pictures of the Klan into the slideshow, saying, "We fight racism today. The Klan is a thing of the past and will make your show look old fashioned." Now they insisted that I put them into American Pictures. I was also shocked because the Greensboro massacre took place right outside the door of the Morningside Homes project, where I'd lived with Baggie, who can be seen with Nixon in my "beauty and the beast" photo on page 312. We were more shocked when the Klansmen were acquitted by an all-white jury—although the whole world had witnessed the murder. In other words, the KKK was still "politically correct" in 1979. In fact, the police had tipped them off about the demonstration, watched them pack weapons into their cars and stayed away while they used them on Tony's and my friends—most of whom were children. But when one of the children in the protest, Kwame Cannon, turned 17 he was arrested for nonviolent burglaries and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences. This was partly because Tony's uncle, Pinckney Moses, whom I'd often hung out with in law school, was too drunk to provide Kwame with adequate legal counsel. But also because his mother, Willena, was warned by the judge that, because of her roots in community activism, there would be dire consequences if



Virgil L. Griffin (C), seen here at a 1982 rally in front of the Raleigh, North Carolina state house, was among nine persons indicted by a Federal Grand Jury 4/21/1983 on charges of conspiring to disrupt an anti-Klan rally which resulted in the deaths of five members of the Communists Workers Party. Griffin was the Grand Dragon or head of the North Carolina chapter of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

*Virgil Griffin in 1982 at a rally*

Kwame didn't accept a plea bargain.

Well, times change, and in 2020 the city of Greensboro formally apologized for the Klan massacre and raised a memorial to the victims. When I had a chance to meet Virgil Griffin, the massacre's mastermind, I decided not to let him in any way feel that I harbored deep negative thoughts about him. Tony Harris, however, wanted me to press him on why he'd ordered the killings. "I promise," I said, "but I won't let the past get in the way of trying to reach him and help him out of his anger." The whole drive up from Atlanta, with Tony's biracial son at my side, I thought the most positive loving thoughts I could muster: "Love him, smile at him, love him, so that he can really feel it."

I knew I only had one day to practice nonviolent communication with Virgil, so it would be a superficial experiment to see how much people are influenced by what we think about them. Admittedly, it wasn't easy. When I met Virgil and his Klan group in a remote forest area one morning, I was more influenced, overwhelmed even, by what their hostile looks suggested they thought of me (Raine had told them she was bringing an antiracist). I started with Tony's difficult question. The great imperial wizard gave the same answer that had gotten him acquitted in court: "We shot communists in Vietnam. So why shouldn't we fight them here at home?" Oh, right, the demonstration had been organized by the local Textile Workers' Union, known to be fairly "Communist" in name, so how could I possibly disagree with the all-white jury that his actions were "politically correct"? Especially in this reactionary southern state such a short time after the Vietnam War? Since Griffin saw no difference between "communists" and "antiracists," I knew that I'd get nowhere with accusations about his past. Instead, for the rest of the day, I forced myself to send him my most loving thoughts and smiles—using unifying "giraffe" language against



*Virgil Griffin when I met him in 2005*

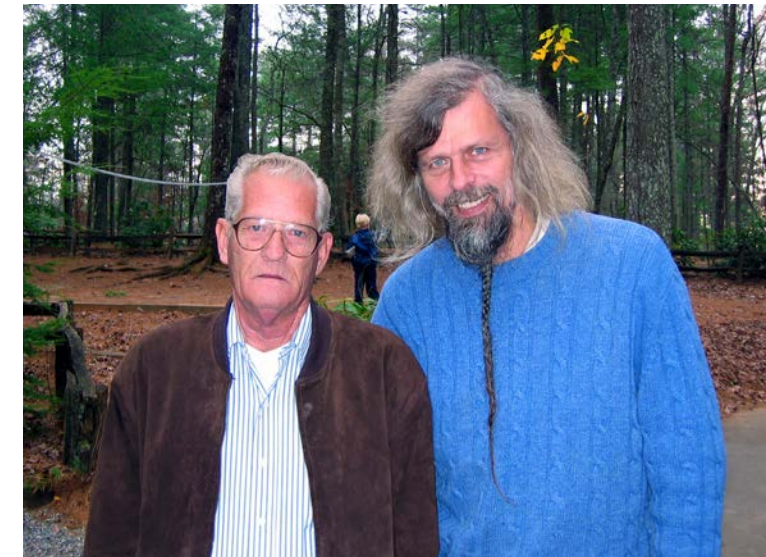
their violent and divisive "jackal" language. Of course, I had selfish reasons too—it makes a lot of sense when you're alone among 50 raving-mad heavily armed Klansmen in a secluded forest. Oh no! Slip of tongue! Don't label these "children of pain" mad. They're victims whose entire lives have been tied up by our distancing or outright hateful thoughts about them. They've never felt our love, only our counterproductive "Death to the Klan" threats, like those the demonstrators shouted in Greensboro—with lethal results for the protesters. I knew they were no different from ghetto residents in their craving for our love and that it's never too late to show them a little of our own so-called "humanity." Still, a Klan leader, just like the leader of a black gang, has to play tough in front the members, so for a long time Virgil avoided me or spoke rhetorically to me if Klansmen were standing nearby. I spent that time slowly making "allies" among the members. As the day went on, Griffin was clearly more and more influenced by my "loving" thoughts (there's far more to actual love). At first he nervously smiled back, but by afternoon he seemed almost flirtatious. This also loosened me up since I have my own desire to be loved. Late in the day, he suddenly asked whether I'd go for a walk with him in the woods "to talk under four eyes." I agreed. His first imperative was to convince me he hadn't burned down any black churches. He'd lost two gas stations because my Klan hunting friend Morris Dees had sued him after the police found an old membership card from Griffin's Klan group on one of the arsonists. "You must believe me, Jacob. I'm a deeply religious person and could never dream of burning down a church." It was so important to him that I believed him that by doing so I gained his friendship. And it wasn't hard to believe him. I knew from Jeff Berry that Klan leaders make a good living by selling membership cards to young insecure men, who go around bragging about their cards, but the leaders never see these men in the Klan. The cards are a huge risk because if police find one on a person involved in



*My date Alfrida - friend of Sandy - whom Virgil Griffin's Klan group murdered*

a hate crime, the Klan leader is held responsible whether he was involved in the crime or not. Klan leaders are extremely wary of letting violent people into their group since they don't want to go to prison. As Jeff once told me, "I can't use 80% of the people who apply for membership. They're nuts." I knew what he was talking about since I pick up so many of these lost "nuts" on the highways. So, believe it or not, this is how the Klan has again become "politically correct," pretty much hiding in small cozy beer rallies out in the woods. Trump took it further, sending the message that it was "politically correct" to come out of the woods and join his white movement in Charlottesville and elsewhere—even with their guns and violence.

Griffin probably mistook my inside (but unspoken) knowledge about the Klan for loving forgiveness—something he'd never gotten from anyone before but clearly sought, for now he really opened up and told me the long story of how he'd been in the Klan since he began picking cotton as a 19-year-old during the Civil Rights Movement, "which was going too far too fast." He'd had a long sad life, but it was coming to an end: He'd recently had three bypass surgeries. "I know I'm going to die soon," he said. "But in February I turn 60, and it would mean so much to me if you could come to my birthday. Please, won't you promise?" I was so surprised and moved that I promised to try. When the day ended, I said goodbye to all my new friends: "So I'll see you again soon at Virgil's birthday." "What?" they asked in astonishment. I suddenly realized that not one of them had been invited to the birthday party! With all the self-loathing typical of Klan members, they're often so disgusted by what they see in each other, of their own pain and misfortune, that Griffin wasn't interested in inviting his own kind. What these children of pain are hungry for is the love from us, those with a surplus. Those outside their ghetto. For the human



*My walk with Virgil Griffin where he opened his heart to me*

warmth they can't readily find or express inside the Klan, whose emotionally stunted members I always see looking lonely during rallies. Over the years that I worked with Klan groups, I was often their longest-standing "member." After less than a year, I usually saw them quit and join Alcoholics Anonymous, NA, or church groups—anywhere they could find a little of that love that the Klan philosophy didn't allow to blossom in them.

That's why my little experiment in nonviolent communication, although I had only one day to conduct it, had succeeded even with Griffin, one of the most dangerous Klan leaders since the '60s. Only a few months later, Griffin left "The Cleveland Knights of the KKK," which he'd ruled most of his life, and the group fell apart. I'm not saying it was solely a result of my involvement; there are always many factors that help change people's lives. But for a man who'd been on the defensive his whole life, including being confronted by a crowd chanting "Death to the Klan!", for him to suddenly meet something he confused with real love can make a difference. This is especially true when it happens at a vulnerable moment, such as when he, as "a good Christian, have to meet my maker."

I always tell my students, "Try this loving method on your worst teacher ... and see how fast your grades go up." Clearly it worked on two of America's worst Klan leaders. Moreover, my long travels among violent people have convinced me that positive thinking about people works on everybody and that it's in our own self-interest, as well as society's, that we genuinely try "to love our fellow man."



## Regarding the pain of serial murderers

While driving one night in 1991, I saw an older white woman in the darkness under the freeway pillars and picked her up. She'd been attacked by black hoodlums and was bleeding so profusely I had to take her to a hospital. An hour later I spotted a man on the side of the road. Angry and tense, he'd been fired without pay from a shrimp boat in the Gulf and had been waiting three days for a ride. Considering the desperation in Woody's eyes, I easily could've triggered the violence in him by sending out vibrations of fear and distrust. When I told him about the white woman who'd just been left for dead by her black attackers, Woody began to open up. (I had no idea at the time how deeply involved in his family I'd become.) He said he'd never been attacked by blacks because he "always attacked them first." Little by little he told me how he and his two brothers had killed so many "niggers that I can't count them on my fingers and toes." Now I was wide awake. At first I'd thought he was just bragging, but there were too many descriptive details and locations in his stories. So when he also talked about his own mistreatment as a child, I made a deal with him: I'd bring him home, four hours out of my way, if he'd tell his stories and let me tape record them. "But I won't tell you where I live. Just let me off somewhere in my town." He knew I could go straight to the police with my tape.

In my show, updated to include Woody and his family, his voice shocked university students. Some years after I'd met him, having listened to his nightmarish voice night after night, I was curious to find out how he was doing. When I finally had the chance on a tour in spring of 1996, I invited a Norwegian publisher of Toni Morrison's books, Eli Saeter, to be my witness. What especially scared her was that everyone we met had been in prison for murder and rape. "They remind me of those men in the movie *Deliverance*," she said. When we arrived, a dense fog hung over the place. It gave our hunt for a serial murderer in this swampy area, where we couldn't see even six feet ahead of us, an eerie unreal aura. After three days we found his cousin. "It's true, as you say, Woody came here five years ago," he said. "He and his friend Bobby broke into a house, and Woody stabbed a 16-year-old girl while she was sleeping. He got 25 years in prison. He was an idiot during the trial. Made noise, laughed at the judge, and made fun of everyone. I tried to calm him down, but to no avail. He destroyed everything for himself."

We found Woody's victim, Sarah, who told us about that horrible night. She'd been forced out of bed by Woody, who ripped open her stomach and lungs with a long knife. She survived thanks to several expensive hospital stays, but no one had given this poor family help processing their pain. It had happened only a couple of days after I'd dropped Woody off. This was depressing—I'd really believed during our night together I'd helped him get in touch with the deep pain and anger he felt. I tried to tell Sarah that Woody was my friend, but my voice broke against guilt and regret when I saw the terror in her eyes. She was unable to see him as anything but a bloodthirsty monster and talked about how he'd behaved like an "animal" during the trial, shouting "I'm gonna get you one day!" before he was dragged out of the courtroom in chains. She'd had nightmares about his returning ever since. It was important to see and understand Sarah, the victim of the would-be executioner, since for so many years I'd dealt mostly with the victim inside the executioner.

When we went to Woody's home, a woman opened the screen door and said, "I know who you are. Woody came home five years ago feeling uplifted. He said he'd been picked up by a strange man who'd gotten him to tell him everything about himself. I wondered who that could be since Woody is the most secretive person I know." Adeline was the mother of Bobby, Woody's accomplice, and lived with Rose, the mother of Woody's two older brothers, Sammy and John.

"Oh yes, it's horrible. It's not like Woody to do such a thing, but he was desperate when you brought him home fired with no pay after working for months in the Gulf. He and Bobby had both been drinking and had taken a lot of drugs, and I believe it was Bobby who did it. They came running home, knocking on the door at 2 a.m., shouting, 'Mom! Mom! We did something terrible!' Then they fainted and collapsed right there on the lawn, where they were asleep when the police picked them up."

I was relieved hearing there'd been nothing deliberate about his bloodlust in Sarah's house, just the deep pain and anger I'd sensed in him. High on dope, they'd stolen a bike in front of Sarah's house then started fighting over it. Woody suddenly broke into the house to grab a kitchen knife to use against his half-brother, who fled. In a frenzy of bloodlust, Woody then kicked in all the doors



*Woody the night I picked him up in 1991 after my lecture in U. of Houston*

and tried to stab the sleeping family. As for Woody's "animal" behavior during the trial, Adeline now recounted that "he'd been frightened out of his wits and his legs shook under him at the feeling that his life was suddenly over." The poor are incessantly harming themselves, I thought, since Woody's behavior had convinced everyone in the courtroom that he should never come out again, and he'd been given an additional 10 years in prison. What immediately forged strong bonds between Adeline and me was the love we both felt for Woody. I was amazed at her understanding of how the injuries he'd suffered in childhood had led to his violence.

Woody's brothers, then? He said they took him out on their killing sprees, when they killed blacks for no reason. Trusting the intimacy I'd established with Adeline, I asked whether it could be true.

"Oh, yeah," said Adeline, who'd often overheard them mention such killings, but added that the father, Vincent, had been even worse. Not to mention the grandfather! "We just did things like

that down here in the past!" It was as if she was apologizing for them.

"Sammy is like his father. A horrible man. It was an organization that stopped him in the end. Life in prison. He's not coming out, ever." Slightly annoyed, she said the reason Woody's eldest brother had been jailed for his latest murder was that the NAACP had called the killing "a hate crime" (in the past nothing happened to them after their murders). She added that Sammy continued to murder blacks in prison. A black prisoner told him that he'd soon be released. "No, you ain't!" Sammy replied, and the night before his release, Sammy poured gasoline over him and set him on fire, reducing him to a charred corpse. Woody had previously told me that Sammy was the leader of the prison's "Aryan gang."

In the absence of a real mother, Woody called Adeline "Mom" and at least once a week called her from prison. It was all further complicated by the fact that Woody had been dating Adeline's junkie daughter, Dawn, for whom she, like her son Bobby, apparently didn't have any great feelings.

And what about the middle brother, John? Did he also participate in the killings?

"I don't know how many, but I know for sure that John killed a man at least once. He only got three years in prison for it."

We later drove out to visit John in the swamps despite Adeline's having warned us sternly against it. "Don't you realize he's the worst of them all! He's tough, cold, and he will in no way talk to you." She drew such a frightening portrait that Eli, who'd heard more than enough about violence by now, insisted we move on, especially since, if we wanted to get there before dark, we were running out of time. But now that I'd finally found the man who could corroborate what Woody had said to me in his interview, I wasn't going to give up. As we drove through the endless swamp, where bare trees stood like skeletal fingers overhung with cobwebs of ghostly Spanish moss, Eli looked more and more pale. "Didn't you come along to experience America?" I was trying to cheer her up, amused that reality had borrowed the worst Hollywood visual effects (on top of the heavy fog still lying over the black crocodile-infested waters). "Why do people sit through such movies when reality is far more exciting," I asked Eli.



*Angel waving goodbye to us from the trailer*

Deep in the swamp too close to dark, I managed to find a rotten trailer with plastic over the windows. The usual rubbish of old car wrecks and rusty boats lay scattered around. And when I saw two dirty little white girls, shaggy and barefoot, their noses snotty, I knew instantly these were John's children. Eli was so scared she locked all the car doors and refused to get out. The scene she saw in front of her was right out of *Deliverance* (in Norway the film was called "Excursion with Death"). She feared that if John came out and shot us no one would ever find our corpses in those swamps. I recalled Woody's detailed description of how their faces had stiffened when they caught one of their own dissolving corpses in the crawfish net.

Yet I displayed neither courage nor naïvete in seeking out John, for in the middle of this dark wetland I felt I was on completely solid ground. I was in an almost euphoric state of being, basking in the light of the transformation one perceives when one of the great questions of life is at last being clarified. It's important to note the ecstatic state of mind I arrived in because when John ended up, as I'd predicted, behaving in a way diametrically opposed to what one would expect of a terrifying psychopath, as his family had insisted he was, it was precisely because I'd mentally built up this desperate man to be the one holding the answer to the riddle of life. Thus, I could give him the unimaginable powers people gain when you show them trust and deep human interest: he felt accepted and loved.

Certainly, he was isolated, hostile, and, yes, awe-inspiring. His came to the door armed with a gun, his beard wild and symbols of violence tattooed on body. Yet rarely have I met a man who was so quick to open up when I told him I was a friend of Woody's. Immediately the gun was put away and replaced by cups of fresh-brewed coffee. I soon felt such an exuberant warmth from John and his wife, Connie, that I went out and persuaded Eli to join us.

He was indeed the same blood-dripping "monster" that Woody had talked about in his interview and hammered into my consciousness for five years. But at the same time—and Eli agreed—he was a small cowed child whom one could hardly help but embrace. When you bear in mind that I could easily have been a shrewd police informer, it's amazing how little it takes to open such people up and how eager they are to talk about themselves. And in that very conversation, with its gradual processing of pain, lies the answer to all violence. Yet governments the world over go blind with their antiquated eye-for-an-eye rhetoric and recidivist repressive reflexes right out of Lucifer's right-wing fortress.

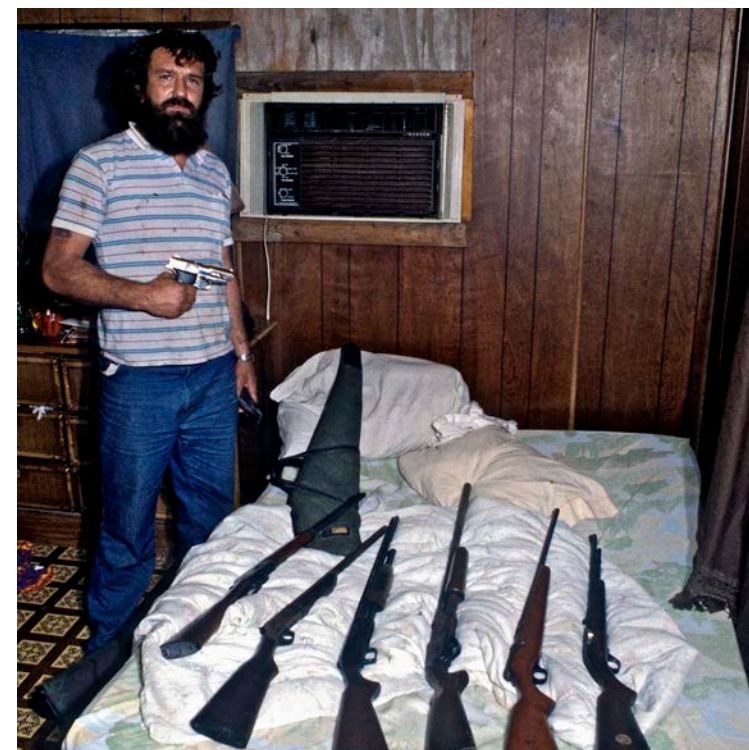
The rest of the day, John and Connie recounted the violence that ran through their whole family. "Just look at Angel here." Connie lifted up the abused two-and-half-year-old. "She's full of violence against her sister. She's the bad one!" And both Eli and I thought that that's how she would end up if told from childhood that she was "bad" and "not good enough." The mother gave her several proper spankings, but we almost never saw her cry. Instead, her red-eyed face carried a permanent mortified look of resentment.



*John demonstrating how he twisted the knife in the black man*



*John teaching 7 year old Natasha how to use guns*



*John showing me some of his gun collection on children's bed*

Both parents talked openly about how it was only when they were drunk that they exploded in violence, and we quickly formed a picture of how horrible the conditions must be for the two children. They gave endless examples of all the violence they'd been involved in. I didn't even need to ask about the murders of blacks; their bloody side comments about them were a perfect fit with Woody's descriptions. When I asked to see the weapons used in the various murders, John brought out seven rifles and three pistols, which he'd already taught the little girls to use. He even demonstrated with his knife how he'd stabbed a black father in front of his family. I tried to frame my photos of him under a picture of his own father, the one who'd passed all that violence on to them. It hung on the wall in a gold frame, radiating an eerie evilness that couldn't be covered up by the photographer's neat studio setup or Sunday dress.

John wanted us to stay the night and go alligator hunting with him the next day. (He made a living illegally poaching alligators and had filled the fridge with alligator meat.) I was willing, but Eli objected to "going on an alligator hunt in the swamps with a serial murderer in dense fog."



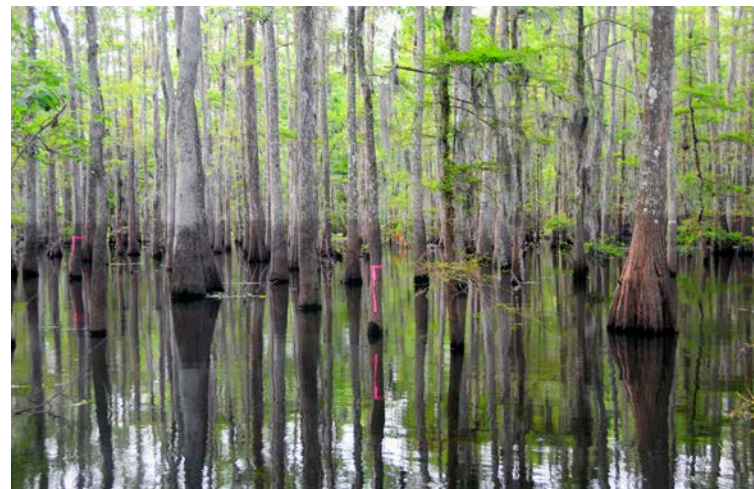
*Family photo of Johns parents, Rose and Vincent*

So after a warm farewell, we set off in the dark. We were petrified on the drive back and could hardly talk about anything else.

### 1996 Fall trip

In the fall I invited the Danish TV-reporter Helle Vibeke Risgaard to record the traumatized family for TV. John was working “offshore,” so Connie could talk more openly about him. For several days we heard about one murder after another—this time for an open Betacam video. Since it all came in a raving stream or in side remarks, it didn’t take long before we were falling-down dizzy. After a few hours, we could neither remember nor even care about all the murders we’d heard about.

Connie was a strange concoction. She appeared to be a rational woman of exalted composure, and yet we knew from Rose and Adeline that she was even more violent than John, whom they actually saw as her victim. Several times she said that if it hadn’t been for her religion and the children, she’d long ago have left him. Yet we soon began to doubt that; without her children, whom would she be able to beat? With John away, we had the courage to drink with Connie, usually until 4 in the morning, and we had ample opportunity to see her relationship with the two abused children. She was loving one moment but the next would fly into an uncontrollable rage, whipping 3-year-old Angel with a leather belt. This developed into a momentary conflict between Helle and me. Helle impulsively tried to reach out and protect the child, which drove me crazy since that prevented me from photographing the abuse. “What an evil man you are!” she shouted, along with similar accusations (understandably I might add). “If you had traveled a little more in black ghettos,” I snapped, “and seen that kind of abuse every single day, you’d know it’s not your job to save every single child in a moment of sentimentality. No, your job, through your empowering presence, is to give these parents the love for themselves that’s necessary for them to express love for their children. Yet to avoid the very sight of violence and abused children, we do the opposite and all flee



*The crocodile infested swamps John and Connie lived in*

the ghetto. And that’s how we ultimately become the direct cause of its abused children.” I also knew that I didn’t have to lecture Connie about how it’s wrong to discipline her “evil children” with violence, for all people know deep down that it’s wrong to beat children. If I’d started in with moralizing sermons, however, she’d just have felt even worse about herself. Also, my “higher common sense” told me that it wasn’t necessary to intervene because the child so obviously expected the beatings. She didn’t even cry. Instead, out of spite she continued the behavior that had made her mother crazy. While I knew that this was an extraordinary chance for me to get some pictures for one of the most central and educational sections of my show about poor whites, photographing this abuse was certainly not something I enjoyed. Often I asked myself what the limit was—when would I actually step in?

Contrary to the unrestrained violence common among poor blacks, the presence of a stranger generally quelled the aggression of poor white parents. My photography was itself what told Connie that her behavior was unacceptable but in a way that was gentler than if we’d reprimanded her or accused her of being “a bad person.” Indeed, that would’ve been a replay of what she was doing with the child. I’ve probably offended a lot of readers at this point (although the same offended readers never complain about the violence in my show). When my show had a renaissance in the 90’s, I think it portrayed the growing violence in us as reflected in increasing child abuse. This led to a growing interest in the pedagogy of oppression. Raising the collective awareness of the roots of oppression will be the true salvation of the child. Nevertheless, I would also readily defend the opposite view, which claims that it’s critical to stop the around-the-clock violence against children (and women), however briefly, even if it means destroying key photographic proof of it. For if the few of us who seek out these outcasts—solely to document and thus exploit them—don’t step in, then who should?



*Connie beating up two-year-old Angel*

No matter what the reason for being in such a situation, the Good Samaritan doesn’t close his eyes, open his lens ... and pass by! The worst thing in this whole situation wasn’t the conflict of these Dostoevskian ethical views, but what both Helle and I soon felt toward the abused child. When we first stepped into this waterlogged hornet’s nest, our immediate sympathy had been for the two battered children with black circles under their eyes. We’d soon feel how “we” always end up helping to force such victims into the oppressor’s role—the vicious circle. Never have I seen it so clearly as in the three-year-old Angel; every single reaction of hers was out of spite. We all know how the abused often bite the outstretched hand and how they destroy everything around them to get attention. At first you feel like picking up the child and caressing her, but the child rapidly obliterates all the surplus affection and love we can muster. And when, from 8 in the evening till 4 in the morning, that “evil” little “Angel” ended up destroying almost all our cameras, microphones, cords, and tapes, then, yes, we gradually felt violence in ourselves build up—all the way to the point where we too had an unspeakable desire to heap verbal abuse on her, beat her up, and kick her across the floor.



*The mistreated Angel. Was she looking for help?*



*Connie whipping the children*

This is how all over the world we hurt the injured. And when year after year you’ve been teaching this to students, it’s indeed a good pedagogical lesson to suddenly “feel” how quickly you yourself can become part of the vicious circle of oppression. How quickly we became Connie’s coalition of the willing! Slowly sinking with her out there in the swamps. Most appalling for both of us was experiencing the close connection between abuse and racism. When we asked three-year-old Angel what she thought of blacks, she became utterly confused. “What do you mean by ‘blacks’? Niggers? We shoot niggers, don’t we, Mom?” When the camera was running and her mother was sober, we could occasionally experience Connie becoming so self-conscious that she said “black” and sporadically tried to use that word in front of the child. This was interesting because it showed that the argument of Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* was valid in even the lowest strata of society, that is, there is a conflict between society’s higher ideals—“e.g., we are all equal”—and the completely different messages parents nurture in their “gut” about “subhumans,” which end up trickling into the child’s unconscious.



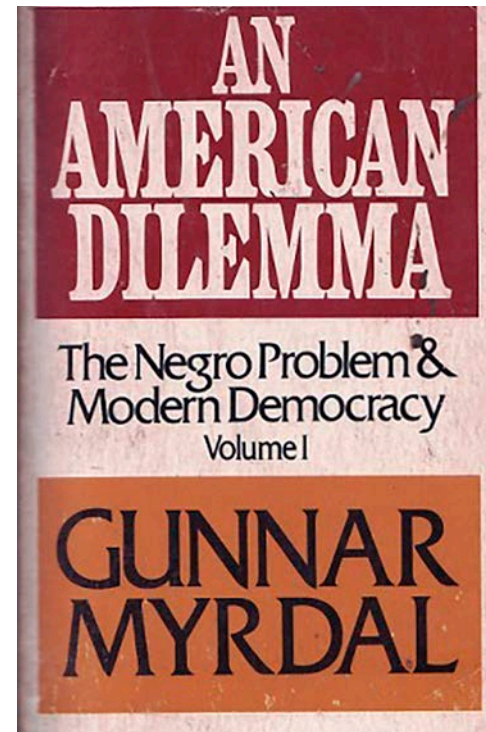
7-year-old Natasha on the day she proudly confessed to having crushed the head of a black boy

We saw this even more clearly in Connie's relationship with 7-year-old Natasha. Connie thought it was okay that Natasha had caused some trouble in school because, Natasha explained, "The nigger sitting in front of me smelled." But Connie scolded Natasha because the school had just kicked her out for starting a gang with four other girls. I sensed something more going on and asked Natasha, "Was the gang to confront the blacks?" This was a difficult question because in itself the term black told Natasha I was on the side of "the niggers." So her answer wasn't quite as easy for her as when she'd theatrically repeated "Niggers smell!" A little later she became herself (rather than the well-behaved girl society wanted to see). She admitted that the four girls had lured a black boy into the woods and smashed his head with a rock until he was pouring blood. She visibly enjoyed describing this horrifying assault in graphic splatter language. Why had she done it? Because one day her mother, apparently in a moment of political correctness, had told her that "niggers bleed red just like us." It was Connie's way of telling her (when she was sober) that "we are all equal, so talk nice about your school friends." Natasha didn't believe this message, which contradicted all the other messages she'd gotten from her parents about "killing niggers" (usually when they were drunk). So she'd started a gang and wounded a boy to find out whether it was true. To this Connie simply replied, "It wasn't a nice thing to do, Natasha." But we'd all been drinking, and Connie said it with a big smile. She was obviously proud. So Natasha got the message that it was all right to smash a boy's head open with a rock to find out whether "niggers bleed red"!

Rarely have I seen such a classic lecture in the pedagogy of racism: This was the crushing "double-edged" killer's sword, the double message as it's practiced by the vast majority—that is, by us, the more ordinary "liberal" right-thinking people—constantly hammering "we are all equal," the American creed, and "Christian love" into our children. And yet, when the issue comes to people in "the inner city," blacks, homosexuals, Jews, Muslims, etc., we lift our eyebrows or change our voices a bit, without even being aware of it, and send the opposite message to the child, somebody is "not as equal." The child can't process such a double message with its hidden oppression and out of hurt and in confusion acts out in various racist patterns while growing up.

Connie somehow gave me hope for humanity, for she underscored what I'd always experienced among vicious criminals and even Ku Klux Klan members: One doesn't have to teach an adult like Connie about right and wrong (as Ivan insists in *The Brothers Karamazov* regarding living without a God). No, everyone knows that it's wrong to kill, to hate, to inflict pain. While being imprisoned in their own excruciating pain, however, they can't always live up to their higher ideals.

Since Connie better than anyone expressed our deeper common humanity, I couldn't help but feel a greater and greater affection toward (and joy around) her. She was this huge lump of explosive violence and hatred, with a peculiar mix of common sense, tenderness, and love, yet she held a deeply entombed desire to express the best of ideals.



The "Bible of racism research" inspiring Johnson to enact his civil rights laws

I was happy to feel this violent attraction to her since it somehow reminded me of the feelings I'd always nurtured for poor blacks as victims. That she herself was a victim became clear when we met Connie's desperately alcoholic and insane father (although Connie claimed there'd never been a directly incestuous relationship between them).

At some point the extent to which moral concepts had slipped from us after only a few days with Connie out in the swamps dawned on us. During the summer, John had caught a raccoon, which became a family pet. The children constantly rolled around in bed with their new toy and fed it crackers. I enjoyed taking baths in the insane mess of their "bathroom," because the raccoon—a "washing bear" in Danish—with its big tail helped wash me in the tub. It was so cute that Helle got the idea she could make a wonderful children's TV program about how it played with the mistreated children (at home she usually produced children's programs), but she'd run out of video tapes. That was my fault. Before our arrival I'd warned her, "This is a family so distraught that you can't directly interview them about their violence. Just let your camera run the whole time, especially when they're drunk, and you'll get the most shocking footage—they'll casually remark on all of their murders."

When we ran out of tapes during the nights of "our drinking and killing sprees," Helle suggested erasing some of the previous tapes. And since murder and violence had after just a few days become the boring everyday "banality of evil,"



Angel with her beloved new playmate

I told Helle that it was okay even though the reason I'd invited her in the first place was to record it all. Only when we were out on the highway did it dawn on us that she'd erased much of the evidence of a—even by American standards—shocking serial-murder story in favor of a trivial children's program.

This was a dreadful example of how quickly we'd been brainwashed into Connie's perverse logic of violence, which she herself best expressed when at one point she asked, "Tell me, are you writing a book about us?" I got defensive but replied honestly: "Perhaps someday, but I'll make sure to protect you all (from legal action)." "No, you don't have to worry about that," Connie said. "The only thing I wouldn't be happy for you to write about is that night when I broke into a restaurant with Woody and stole seafood out of hunger." She knew very well that burglary was illegal and had strong opinions about it since one of the "niggers" in the neighborhood had once stolen her chickens. But she didn't think of killing "niggers" in droves as illegal or wrong (when she was drunk)!

After a short time, apparently neither did we. This was another valuable lesson she taught me: Violent killers aren't created only by beating them in childhood. No, even the best and most righteous of us can be brainwashed into these roles in a short time as we know from soldiers and torturers all over the world – not to forget American police such as George Floyd's killer.



*Angel mistreated by Connie, who was herself mistreated by her father to the right*

After warm hugs, we said goodbye to her and the kids in front of the dilapidated trailer with its plastic-covered windows. I knew I'd miss her—or at least the contact with the violent side of myself she'd exposed for me. A good reason to leave now was the presence of Connie's raving-mad father, who ruined every conversation with his sex-crazy fantasies about Helle. "Can you really sleep in the car with such a sexy blonde without having sex?" he kept asking. You often hear the truth from those who are drunk or insane (he was both). He expressed openly what Americans usually imagine when I invite Danish women on my trips—that if nothing else it's to avoid falling in love with my photographic victims, such as his daughter, Connie.

### Later in 1996

I'd been writing to Woody for several years and got permission from the prison to visit him. After almost 20 hours of driving, I arrived. As per usual in America, the high-security prison was located in a remote area few families could afford to drive to. Woody hadn't had a visit for five years and looked forward to our reunion as much as I did. But it was a shocking experience. After we both went through all sorts of security measures, Woody entered the visiting room chained hand and foot, his body looped with still more (and still thicker) chains. Trying to reach around this iron man felt like embracing a space alien. The beautiful "innocent" look I remembered, of a young boy with long bright locks, had been blown away. With his short hair, tattoos, his missing teeth (they'd been knocked out), and wounds on his arms, he was a creepy replica of Sean Penn in *Dead Man Walking*—but far, far worse. While I had a hard time believing in his mass murder stories that night five years ago, I was now able to believe everything about him. He'd been ferociously brutalized in this prison, which seemed far worse than Angola despite the latter's reputation for being the worst. And he'd spent half his time in the darkness of solitary confinement because of perpetual disciplinary



*Nothing left of this beautiful young man in prison 5 years after*

offenses. How many fights, I asked. He counted twelve with black prisoners and three with whites—all life-or-death struggles. His 25-year sentence had been extended each time. But having ended up almost exclusively with blacks, he'd gained more respect for them. They could also fight back! He told me about how angry he'd been when he'd first—before I'd picked him up in 1991—shared a jail cell with a black man. He'd had a gun smuggled in and shot the "nigger." Not to kill him (years would've been added to his sentence). He'd shot him in the leg to get him moved from his cell.

That wasn't possible in this "high-tech" prison, and he'd learned to live with his black cellmate. "He does not fuck with me and I do not fuck with him." They never talked about race relations. Neither even knew what the other was in for. Sarah was the only one of his victims I knew, so I felt a special responsibility as her messenger. Since Woody had no recollection whatsoever of the night he'd stabbed her, he asked me to tell him in detail what had happened. "That poor girl," he said several times during our talk. About his "animal-like" behavior in the courtroom, when

he'd threatened her, he could only remember that he'd been "an asshole" without even knowing that Sarah was present. I told him how important it had been for Sarah to see Woody's letter to me in which he asked for her forgiveness, and I asked whether he was ready for a victim-offender meeting to heal the wounds. After much deliberation, he replied that he wasn't ready for it. Then I made a terrible mistake. I said that Sarah had been more understanding than I'd expected because her own brother was in prison. Woody's efforts to think in compassionate terms were immediately crushed, and the killer in him emerged. "You have to give me the name of Sarah's brother," he demanded. "I've heard from inmates transferred from Angola that there's a prisoner here who's out to kill me. Here you have to kill or be killed." I knew the prisoner was probably Sarah's brother since, during my conversations with her, her other brother kept saying angrily, "If only I could get my hands on that guy!"

So now I was suddenly involved in a life-and-death struggle and realized that being a messenger, bridge builder, or man of reconciliation might not be as easy as I'd imagined. Like *Our Lord Himself*, I had to decide which of them was going to die! If I didn't reveal the name, it would be Woody, my friend, who'd one day probably have his throat cut from behind. I knew I wouldn't say the name to Woody, but I also knew that if I kept refusing I'd push him away.

Overall, meeting Woody again was a shocking experience. There were a number of reasons for this, one of which was that I had to review much of what I'd said about him in my slideshow. I could still glimpse the wounded child in Woody, but it was harder and harder not to see him with the judgmental eyes of society. I knew that I wouldn't have the courage to set this man free in his present state, but I also knew—as I kept reminding myself—that this condition was caused by this very same judgmental disposable society, not to mention the additional brutalization prison had subjected him to.

As difficult as it was to withhold Sarah's brother's name, it was almost as difficult not to tell Woody about Dawn, the only love of his life. That very morning I'd called Dawn's mother, Adeline; she was in shock. Dawn had attempted suicide the night before. She'd been found half-dead in a gas oven. Adeline had asked me not to tell Woody, but Woody kept asking me about her. And there

was other news: Dawn had had a child with Woody's best friend. I knew Woody would want to kill him along with Sarah's brother. In this brief account, I've merely hinted at some of the problems I'd run into in my attempt to be friends with all parties in an underworld of violence that has its own confusing rules. During the three-day drive back to New York through a depressing rain that lasted all three days, I didn't think of much more than this: MY American dilemma.

### 1998

Almost two years after I visited Woody, I received a surprising Christmas letter. It was from the worst of the three serial murderers—Woody's oldest brother, Sammy, whom I'd tried to visit in prison (also in 1996). As the leader of an Aryan gang, he continued murdering blacks in prison, e.g., by pouring gasoline on them and setting them on fire while they slept. Now he was apologizing that he hadn't replied to my letter. He was legally prevented, he said, since he'd spent two years in the "hole" for stabbing a black prisoner to death. Now, however, he wanted to do something more creative and asked me whether some of my friends would be his pen pals. Several of my black friends in the area were his prison guards. After using them as references and waiting for many years, I finally got permission to visit Sammy. (The warden was a Christian who believed in forgiveness.) Unfortunately, after driving almost a week to get there, I found the prison under lockdown because of a swine flu contagion.

### With a Black Woman in 2003

In 2003 I decided to take a black woman with me to see how the family would react. "I want to see whether they'll kill you too," I joked to Rikke Marott, a model from Denmark. "Jacob," she said nervously, "I'm a young black woman. You're a middle-aged white man. Half the men in these areas are in jail for killing or raping blacks." I replied, "They also kill whites." "That doesn't make it any better."

We first went to see Sammy's and John's mother, Rose. I wanted to hear more about her background. Rose said she came from an extremely poor family: "I grew up far out in the swamps, inhabited by almost no one but our family. Our house had only one room, where all nine of us slept. We were so poor we all had to stay home and help Mom and Dad work. Like most other poor people, we helped to work in the swamps as shrimp fishers.

Really hard work. Not until I was 13 did the authorities find us and send us to school, but I stopped after 5th grade because Mom and Dad needed us for work. So I never learned to read and write then.”

Rikke pointed to her adorable young daughter on the wall. “Yes, my daughter there disappeared back in ’67. She was 16. I got an anonymous call—a voice said she’d drowned in a harbor.” Rikke asked, “Who was calling?”

“Maybe the killer, because no one else knew where she was. She was never found. That’s the worst part.” Her voice trembled and her eyes brimmed with tears. “It’s 35 years ago, but I’ve never let go of the hope that she’ll come back one day.”

“What about your other children?”

“Our family is cursed. There’ve been so many murders and accidents—we are cursed. My stepson is in jail for attempted murder—he cut up a young girl’s belly. She survived, but she’ll never be able to have children.”

When I interviewed Rose about how Woody’s father had ripped out her uterus, she broke down in tears, embarrassed that I knew about it. After it had happened, she’d been so ashamed to be without a womb that she didn’t go to the hospital for a month.



Rose showing her picture of her son Sammy in prison to Rikke Marott

Even then she only went because the bleeding was so severe. In the moments leading up to the tragedy, Vincent, who’d been drinking heavily, shouted, “I’ll make sure you can never have children with another man!” Rose said she’d wanted to leave him, but before I turned off the camera, she went on to confess that she’d killed her husband with an axe. He hadn’t “fallen out of bed” as everyone had told me. Becoming even more emotional, she talked about the murder of Woody’s eldest sister. Adeline had told me in the spring that she’d committed suicide at the age of 16, after a long incestuous relationship with her father. Now Rose said that her daughter had, in fact, been murdered. Numb from hearing about all the murders we forgot to ask if it was also by the father, when she quickly continued.

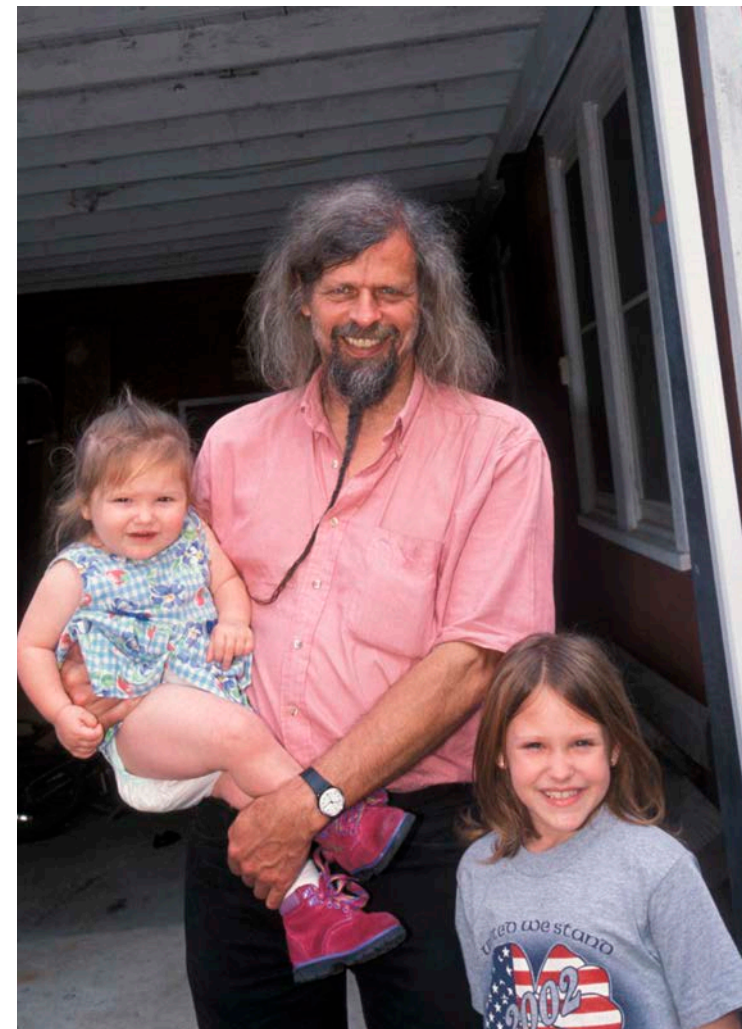
“I have another son in prison for murdering negroes,” Rose continued. “He killed people at random.” She described in detail (and on video) all the killings but failed to mention the victims were all black. Rikke said later, “She’s trying to protect me because I’m black, but she didn’t have to. I felt comfortable with Rose. I could feel that she didn’t care what color I am. What was important to her was that there was another human being who was trying to understand where she was coming from.”

As we were getting ready to leave, I said, “Well, Rose, we’re on our way out to visit John.”

“John’s wife is dead,” Rose said. “Connie was killed last year in one of their drunken fights when she drove off in the car and crashed it. John’s no longer a shrimp fisherman. He works on a boat and is away for days at a time. He’s not in town right now.” “What about the kids?” I asked.

“They were taken by the authorities,” Rose said. “My Christian daughter has the two youngest. The eldest, who’s 17, lives with John and his new girlfriend.”

I was shocked but not surprised. Connie’s violent death was caused by a dangerous mix of cocaine, endless alcohol, and unhealed anger. I’d longed to see her again and was in tears as I made the long drive to visit her children. Would they even remember me after seven years? I was relieved when we drove up to their new home, “with a good Christian family,” and, as if I were a dear uncle, Angel came running out and leapt into my arms with uncontrollable joy.



9-year-old Angel with her new sister Sally in 2003

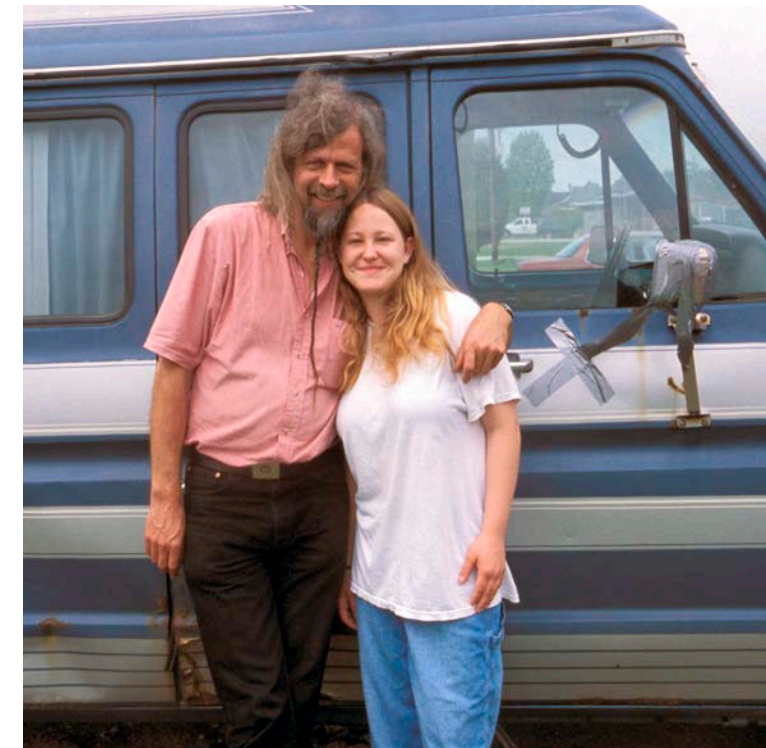


Angel with letters to her mom about being a better child

It’s said that children can’t remember anything from before the age of 2 or 3, but clearly she’d remembered me, arriving with my shame for having wanted to beat her when she was a toddler. Fortunately, this was not her lasting memory of me. Apparently, she’d experienced me in childhood as the only “sane” outsider to witness how deeply she’d been traumatized. Hers was a family that both whites and blacks had fled from out there in the swamps. Although I’d only been with the 2 and half-year-old Angel for one day in spring 1996 and for a few days in the fall when she was 3, I could now see how much our short visit at the time had meant for her as a 9-year-old. She dragged me by the hand to meet her new family, to show me the younger sister she’d acquired and a love letter she’d written to her mother, now dead, promising to be “a good kid.”



16-year-old Natasha loved Rikke Marott



With Natasha in 2003 shortly before she escaped from her father

The 17-year-old Natasha, who'd nearly killed a black boy with rocks and had since spent two years in prison for other crimes, was equally enthusiastic about our reunion. She was also thrilled to meet Rikke, with whom she wanted to be photographed incessantly. They may have been brought up to "kill niggers," but their pain didn't discriminate against the color of the woman offering them love and the hope of soothing that pain. Rikke, who was adopted into a loving Danish middle-class family, came with all the surplus love these affection-deprived children were craving. On my subsequent visits over the years, they kept asking why I hadn't brought that "lovely colored woman" with me.

#### 2009

Yet, the family curse continued to haunt the children—John managed to get them back. He worked offshore, so I didn't see him again until 2009, now in another trailer with a little land around it. I came to expect surprises when visiting a serial murderer and figured I was in for another when I asked him why his lawn was red with blood. He answered with the rusty voice of a hardened older man:



*John showing how the lawn got red from blood in 2009*



*John with his stepson and grandchild Connie showing the guns he used for the killing the night before*



*John with Natasha's youngest dumped child*



*Angel at two with her uncle Woody who later raped her*

"Well, Jacob, you know we always did crazy things when we got drunk. Last night I was so drunk I went out target shooting at my only cow. The cow got so frightened that it jumped the fence and ran off. I ran inside to get my rifle and got on my horse to chase it down. And after a wild midnight ride through town, I killed the damn bastard about five miles on the other side of town. And this morning I went with my 15-year-old stepson out to get it in the pick-up truck. We've just been butchering it here on the bloody lawn."

I replied, "Well, at least you're not killing blacks anymore."

"No, we all mellow out when we get older. I think I stopped that around the time I met you."

I was so relieved his youthful (and lethal) anger had subsided that this time I went shrimping with him deep in the swamps, where for the first time we had time to really talk about his life and his violent fights with Connie, which in the end had cost her her life. What saddened me was that both of his daughters, whom I'd come to see, had disappeared.

Natasha had fled from him around the time I saw her last and now had two children, whom she'd dumped with John. He didn't know where she was; "probably in jail again," he guessed. And Angel was now in prison. Woody had, after 16 years, been released on parole and moved in with John. He'd raped 13-year-old Angel and made her into a drug addict. John was so furious that he put his own brother back in prison—this time for life—for breaking parole. Angel was no saint either. At 13 she'd stolen a car to take some of her friends to a McDonald's and was sentenced to a juvenile facility. She escaped a year later by stealing one of their yellow school buses. I have no idea how she, small as she was, could even have reached the foot pedals. Perhaps she couldn't since she crashed the bus, totaling it. She was now serving a sentence of several years in a prison so far away John couldn't afford to go there. John, I observed, along with his new wife, was trying do a better job of bringing up his two granddaughters than he'd done with his daughters. One had been named Connie after their dead grandmother. I felt that John was now on the right track and was more worried about Natasha and Angel.

#### 2012

I didn't locate Natasha until 2012. She contacted me because she wanted my help in sending her father to prison. She'd learned from Rose, her grandmother, that it was actually John who'd committed the murder in the marketplace for which her uncle Sammy was serving a life sentence. Although Natasha had never met Sammy, she felt it was unconscionable for him to be locked up when she knew that her own father had killed far more blacks. I'd never understood why Sammy had gotten life for murdering a black father in front of his family when Woody clearly says on my tape that it was John who committed the crime. (Sammy's conviction had been the reason I'd often doubted Woody's story.) John had even shown me how he'd twisted the knife in his victim's heart. Since there were so many witnesses to the crime, Sammy and John knew that one of them would be going to prison. According to Natasha, the brothers made a deal on the spot. Sammy offered to take the rap "because you, John, are trying to raise a family. I have no children and am wanted for so many other things that I'll end up in prison anyway." Wow, I thought. Because of this bizarrely honorable deal, struck to prevent Natasha from being fatherless, Natasha wanted her own father in prison.



*With Nastasha during our therapeutic conversation in 2012*



*Natasha with her crazy meth cooking friends in "the hole" same evening*



*Natasha and friends in the late-night bar*



*Drinking Tequila "shots" from Natasha's breasts*



*Natasha and Angel in family photo*

She was now 23 and I felt this was the time to ask her how much she could remember of the murders that had occurred in her childhood. I set a video camera up in front of us in a noisy backyard behind the shack she lived in. She insisted that we first buy a bottle of whisky: "I have so much to tell you."

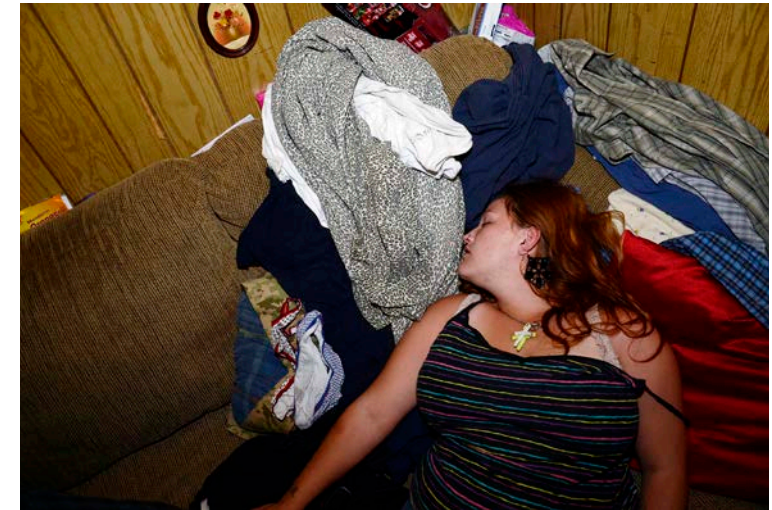
At first it seemed as if she had for so long suppressed the memories that they reemerged only with difficulty, but after a couple of hours, I got the idea to play a sound clip from the digitalized show I'd made 20 years earlier with her uncle Woody. When I played this tape, she broke down in tears and began shaking violently while I held her. It was like it opened deep wounds from her childhood, and she told me how often she'd helped cleanse the car of blood after John had been out "killing niggers" and about some of the killings she herself witnessed. "We were on the road, and this black guy in a little Honda cut dad off. Dad chased him down and clipped him. I watched this nigger fucking tumble out in the ditch—Dad literally clipped him at 50 miles per hour. Dad was just sitting there laughing, saying that this motherfucking bitch is not going to cut anybody else off."

So a day later it came on the radio, that if there were any witnesses to come forward. There was a reward and everything."  
"So, you heard it on the radio, and you knew it was your father."  
"Yes, I was there with him."  
"And then you felt remorse. Was that the first time you felt something was wrong?"  
"Yes, about the only time I ever thought anything was wrong—because I saw it with my own eyes."  
"Only because he was wanted for it?"  
"I don't know if it was because he was wanted for it, but I was there and saw it all. I am not a violent, violent person. Don't get me wrong. I have a lot of anger issues, and if somebody pisses me off, they will see the worst of me, but I am not a cold-blooded killer. Dad will fucking look you in the eye and stab you—just for standing there. He has no guilt, no remorse."  
"But didn't you know it was wrong to kill people?"  
"No, we were fucking raised to kill niggers, so how could I? Not until I was around 14 and heard that on the radio did I start turning against my dad. And shortly after I saw you and the nice colored lady last time, I ran away from home."

I was in shock because she now wanted to use my tape of Woody as evidence in court against her own father. She loved him but now saw him as a remorseless killer. And yet John had over the years become my trusted friend. He would tell me anything, but I somehow always thought or hoped that he was just bragging. Also, I always saw him as a victim. The whisky and the horrific bloody details got us both increasingly excited. Sitting next to me in front of the camera, she began to kiss and hug me (eagerly photographed by her new boyfriend - the father soon after of her third child). She did this more and more—a reaction to the joy of lifting from her heart something she'd repressed for so long. As she talked about her father, she kept justifying his actions with phrases like "My dad didn't want to be fucked over by the niggers."

I picked up a few more clues about John's past in her language, but it was she herself who casually mentioned his rape.  
"Your dad was raped? By whom, his father?"  
"Yes, he was raped as a child. Before he was thirteen. And Sammy too. All the time."  
"How do you know that?"  
"Because my dad told me when he was drunk."  
"How did he tell you?"  
"We talked about a lot of things, and he said he'd been taken advantage of as a child. I said, 'What do you mean, taken advantage of?' One time he said, 'Baby, the reason I was so overprotective of you when you were young was because of what happened to me when I was a child.' He wouldn't go into detail—why would he? He's a grown man. So, I didn't ask for more. Certain things guilt me and him. As father and daughter, we can curse each other out, but when it comes down to it, we will stand back to back and fight through such things without showing emotions."

Later that night I would see that such feelings are acted out in different ways. We were both emotionally devastated after these day-long revelations, during which she, as an eyewitness, had confirmed the gruesome murders of blacks Woody had told me about 20 years earlier. More importantly, she'd also given me the deeper explanation for it all: it was rooted in deep unhealed anger, itself stemming from the constant rape of two small children or young boys. We were completely exhausted at the end of the day, but Natasha now insisted that I take her to the liquor store. After that, she wanted to take me "into the hole," which I knew was the worst place in America. Down in the hole (hang out for criminal addicts), we were joined by her friends—the wildest scariest crack heads and meth-cookers I'd ever seen. With Natasha now clearly out of her mind, one of them forced us into my rental car (me in



*Carrying Natasha home at 5 in the morning*

the back seat and Natasha in the front). The wildest ride of my life was about to begin. We drove 100 miles an hour through the streets—against the traffic on one-way streets and through dark alleys, often with garbage cans flying around us just like a Hollywood chase scene. Several times Natasha tried kill herself by throwing herself out the door. At first, I thought, "Damn! Why didn't I take out insurance on the rental car at the airport in Atlanta?" A little later, I thought, "Why didn't I get life insurance?" I was absolutely certain that with such a drunk and doped-up driver my life was about to end exactly the same way it had for Natasha's mother. Late at night, after a high-speed chase over many rivers and swamps, we ended up in an empty bar where Natasha woke up. Taking out her knife, she demanded shots for all of us and insisted I drink them from a glass squeezed between her breasts. Local tradition, I think they said. I felt safer among their knives than I did driving with them, so I postponed the ride home until Natasha had passed out. She seemed so "dead" we thought she'd had a heart attack. We carried her out to the car and drove home, where, at 5 in the morning, we carried her enormously heavy body—it resembled her mother's with all the weight she had now gained—into the living room.

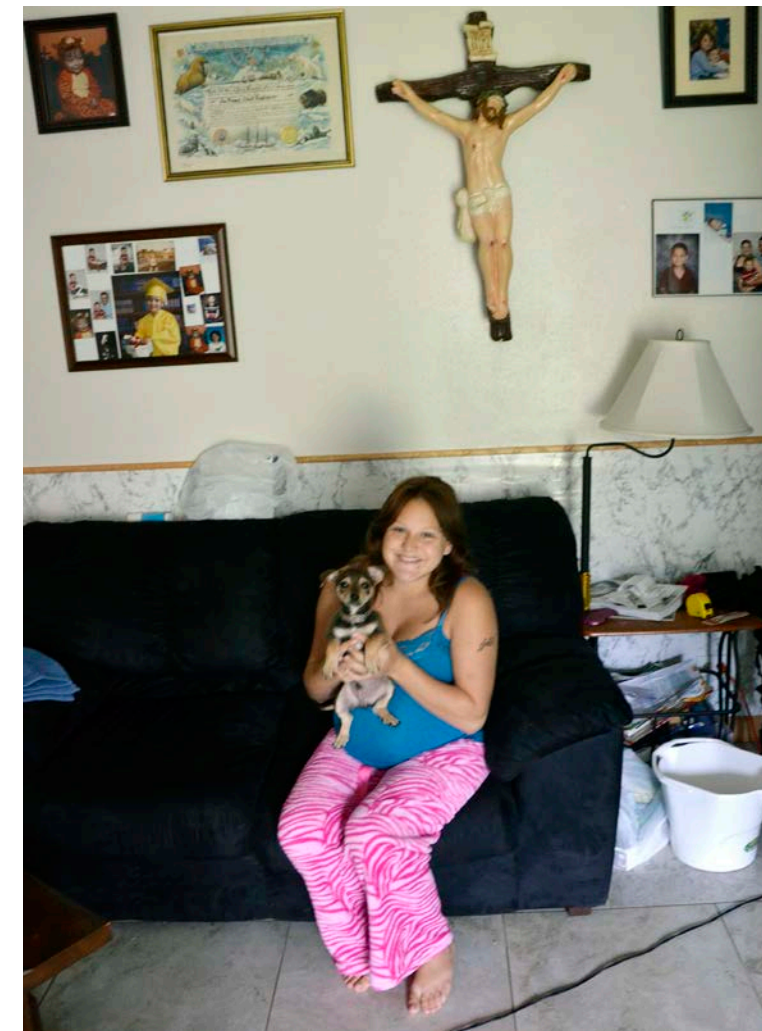




*Angel pregnant with her temporary husband in 2012*



*Connie beating up Angel - "the bad one" - in 1996*



*Pregnant Angel happy in home of her parents in law 2012*

I then fled the crime scene, relieved that I was alive but fearing that the police would show up and compare the dents in my car with the things we'd wrecked that night. Natasha, as it happened, was pregnant and soon after gave birth. When she landed in prison again, this child was also taken from her.

Later the same day, luck was with me and I found Angel in a distant town. I hadn't seen her for almost 10 years (she'd been in prison) and was again surprised that she came running out to embrace me in the same way she had when she was 9. Now 19, she was pregnant. Her husband was a rough Hell's Angel type resembling the young prison-brutalized Woody. Natasha hadn't announced my arrival since they no longer stayed in touch. When I mentioned Natasha wanted their father in prison, Angel couldn't understand why, but then she'd been too young to witness all the killings. At 2 she'd only learned the words she'd remember as her first—"We kill niggers"—without understanding what they meant. After years of acting out the rage of her parents, dooming her to be "the bad one," she'd been released from prison and wanted to start a family. Sitting there interviewing her, I was again struck by

how small she was. She was hopeful about the future, and before I left, she asked me to take some pictures of her with the man she'd married in John's house. Although she lived in relative comfort with her husband's parents, she clearly didn't want me to leave.

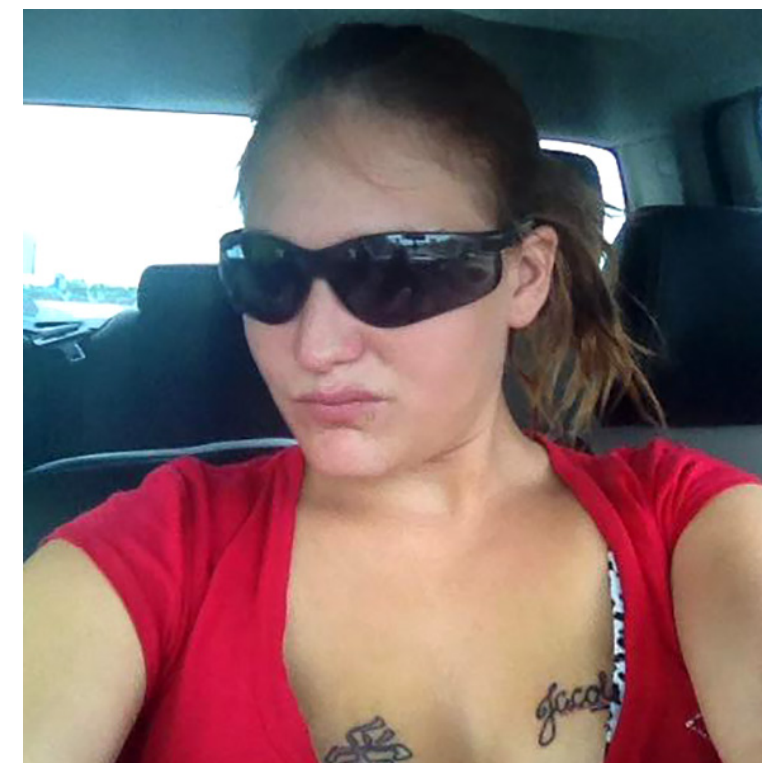
For the next eight years, Angel sent me one desperate letter after another despite the fact that she was barely able to write. First about the birth of their two children, with the exact size and weight of each, then about how her husband had left her and how she'd ended up in a trailer as rundown as the one she'd been born in—dirt poor and alone with her two children. Then came one cry for help after another from various prisons after her children had been forcibly removed. When I asked about Natasha, all she knew was that she was also in prison.

More recently, having served out her sentence, Angel found a new husband, had a baby with him, and seemed fairly happy. Now she sends me cries for help when John, her father, has been hospitalized—a result of years of heavy drinking. "Dad wants to see you. Please come back, Jacob. I'll pay the airfare."

It's obvious that she has no idea how far away Denmark is or how expensive such a ticket is.

During the last few years, their last desperate hope has been President Trump, and Angel's new husband writes long posts on Facebook about "the unfair treatment Trump got after all he has done for us poor people."

While I feel that this traumatized family has been treated unfairly by all of us winners in society, one thing my 30-year friendship with them has taught me is the importance—no matter how little time we have left over from our busy careers—to intervene as saving angels on behalf of the abused and neglected children around us. For even though I only spent a few days with Angel when she was 2-3 years old, she never forgot me, as she made clear one day when she was 9 and one afternoon when she was 19. To this day she constantly writes and calls me, and now even has my name tattooed on her breast (as seen here).



*Divorced and alone with two children and Jacob tattoo 2018*

# Part Two

Romans 7:15, 18-19

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?



1987 - I am speaking in Tufts university, MA

# The Ghetto in our minds

Thirty years of racism workshops for American students has reaffirmed my belief in people's basically good intentions. They'll gather food for the ghettos or hold hands in one long chain all across America "for our poor, hungry and homeless", as did the students seen below, for racism today has little to do with skin color or religion. I often hear whites say they wish they could adopt black children "so they can become just like us." Thus, it's their different behavior we "blame" and "distance ourselves from" in our racist thinking. The different behavior we form people with when we for centuries exclude blacks in the US or Roma in Europe. Or the different behavior from being shaped by oppressive cultures and dictatorships, as many of our immigrant Muslims – or our former Eastern European Jews – arrived with.

Our self-understanding as "liberal-minded" northerners is therefore put to the first real test when we suddenly face an immigrant from outside "our" territory, someone whose behavior is incomprehensible in terms of "our values."

Here in Part 2 we'll look at how, however good our intentions, we tend to react when millions of poor (Christian) blacks from the American South or immigrants from poor Muslim countries seek refuge in the north in the hope of finally being regarded as equals. Do we live up to our lofty ideals and include them in our community? Or do we escape from the challenge into "evasive racism" and force them into an oppressive ghetto, whether actual or mental?



1986 - 5-6 million holding hands across America as part of the "We are the World" campaign



1974 - Greenville, NC



1973 - Boston



1975 - rural Eastern SC



1974 - Queens, NYC

## Ideological blinders

(or Deuteronomy 15: 7-11)

Everywhere I go I meet a shocking lack of understanding among people toward the suffering which is all around them. People in the North talk about the poverty in the South, but are unable to see the poverty in their own ghettos. People in the East talk about the Indian poverty in the West without seeing their own black poverty; people in the West talk about the blacks' poverty in the East, but don't see the Indians' poverty on their own doorstep. And in the South they don't talk about poverty at all.

I saw the most striking example of this blindness in Mississippi when I got a lift with a representative of the usual optimistic type. He talked on and on about how this was a country with opportunities for all. Everyone can be successful, if only they want to. Anyone can become a millionaire in ten years. If you have the strength and desire you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps. I hear the same phrases so often while riding down a road with shacks on both sides, that I probably wouldn't have paid any attention to it if we had not on that particular day been passing through a completely flooded stretch of the delta. It was in the poorest part of Mississippi, where you see almost nothing but tin-roofed shacks inhabited by poor tenant farmers, whose only property is often just a mule and a couple of pigs. The Mississippi River had recently overflowed its banks and a lot of drowned mules and pigs were lying along the road. People sat on the roofs of their shacks, and in some places only the chimney stuck up above water. Others rowed around their houses in boats trying to save their drowning mules. After we had driven through these surroundings for about an hour, I asked him if he knew the

expression "to let people paddle their own canoe," after which I asked to be let off even though I knew it could be days before I got another ride in that part of Mississippi. One day I was strolling down the street in Detroit with a black woman who had been a Black Panther when she was sixteen, but who was now a Trotskyite and a feminist. We were on our way to a Trotskyite meeting, so it must have been on a Friday. I always go to such meetings on Fridays in the big cities, as they usually serve free coffee and cake. On Sundays and Wednesdays I usually go to coffee get-togethers in the churches. At a church it normally takes only an hour before you get your coffee, but with the Trotskyites you really have to go through hell before you get your final reward. Often you have to sit through a stiff three-hour sermon about saving the "masses," but then on the other hand you throw yourself upon the cake with that much more joy afterward. Well, on this Friday, when we were on our way to our cake-for-the-masses meeting, we passed a beggar on the street standing with outstretched hand. Then the thing I least expected happened: the woman totally spurned the beggar, knocking his hand away. I was rather shocked and asked her why she had not given him any money, since I knew she had some. "That kind of nonsense has to wait until after the revolution," she replied. I thought it over a bit and then asked slightly provocatively, "Well, but what if the revolution doesn't come in his lifetime?" There was no more talk on the subject.

In contrast to the middle class, from which these two instances come, people in the upper class are often touchingly helpful toward the poor and their sufferings, if they accidentally catch



1973 - flooding in the delta around Greenwood, MS

sight of them. I encountered a stirring example of this in Gainesville, Florida, when I lived with a rich man who owned an insurance company. One day I went with him when he was out helping a tenant farmer pull his only mule out of a mud hole it had fallen into. The tenant farmer was standing down in the mud hole in water up to his neck, struggling to keep the mule's head above water, while the rich man sat up in his helicopter trying to hoist the mule out. The situation was so much like a cartoon in a communist newspaper that I couldn't help laughing, but neither the proletarian nor the capitalist could see the fun in it. It would be perfect if the rich man himself fell into the mud hole, I was thinking. My pious hope in fact came true, for shortly after, when he landed and approached the water hole, he slipped in the mud and unluckily broke his leg. Since he would have to stay in bed for some time, I was allowed to borrow his Mercedes, and it was during one of my drives in it that I found Linda's shack far out on a deserted back road.

One day the playboy millionaire Tommy Howard (page 170) picked me up in his Jaguar and took me to a fancy ski resort where he spent tons of money scoring "girls".

Yet he was so impressed by my vagabond slogan, "Security is being on the road with no money", that he first gave me keys to his fancy home, but soon after found his dating life so empty that he sold all his business to "live by your vagabond philosophy" and spent the next 7 years hitchhiking and travelling all over the world. In Africa he made his first black friend ever. The irony was that he lived in a town 50% black but had never had a black in his house except for those I came hitchhiking with. Yet my vagabond sociology had long ago taught me that my outsider pocket philosophy of finding happiness and security would be an offense if turned into ideology. Whether you have nothing or too much money it is arrogant blindness towards all those who through misfortune have been forced into homelessness and poverty. That Tommy since could switch to a huge motorhome in which he wrote his travel book "The Freedom Machine" – while I since could travel around in my customized van lecturing on "the freedom to say yes" - again demonstrated our shared white privilege in an unfree society.

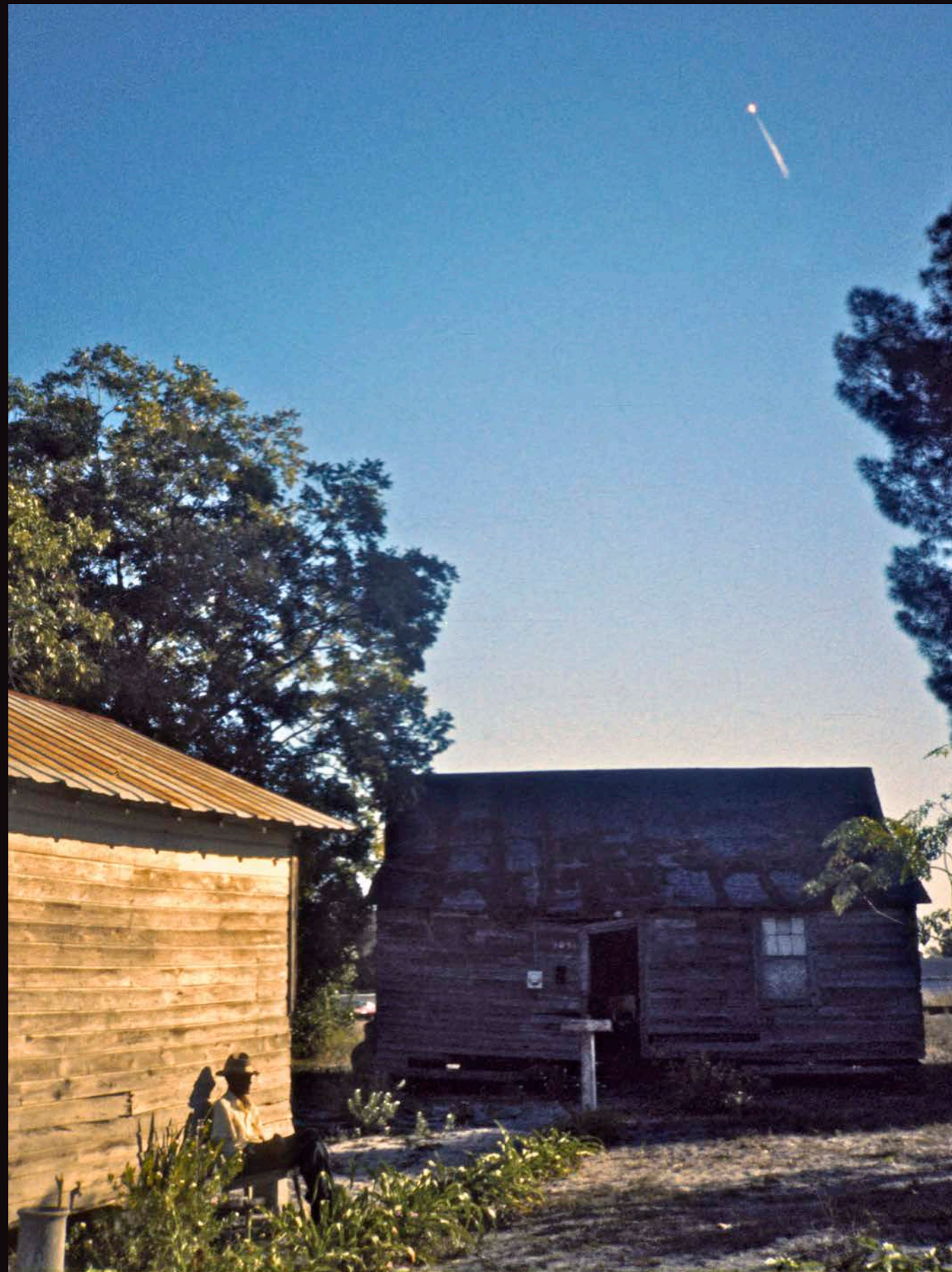
*From letters*



1974 - NYC



1973 - NYC



1974 - Titusville, FL



1974 - rural Greenville, NC

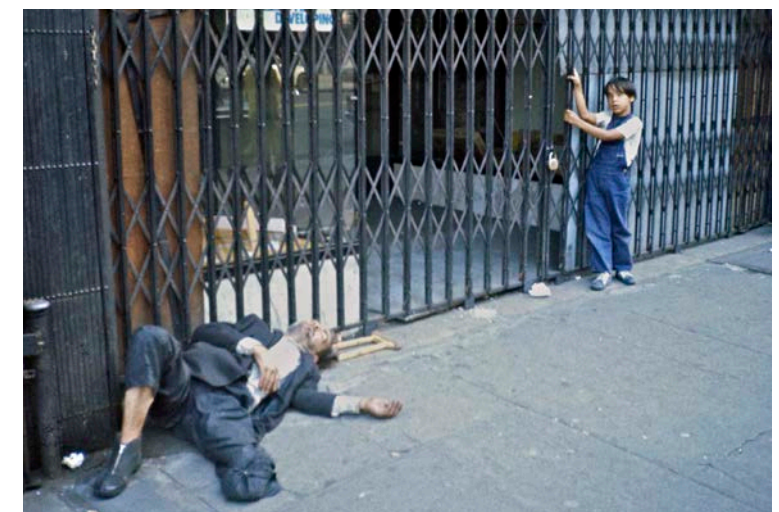
- Do you think the black man is free today?  
Ex-slave Charles Smith: – No, he ain't never been free.

As America's oldest citizen, Charles Smith was invited to be guest of honor at the launch of a moon rocket. He declined because he refused to believe a man could reach the moon. One morning, in an area near his home where I still occasionally hitched rides on mule-drawn wagons, I saw, through the cracks of the shack I'd stayed in, a rocket. But this old man, Cape Canaveral's closest neighbor, didn't notice as the rocket slowly ascended over his dilapidated shack. He had neither electricity nor a radio to inform him of this billion-dollar project. Even if he'd been told, he was too malnourished, too sick to lift his head and watch the rocket.

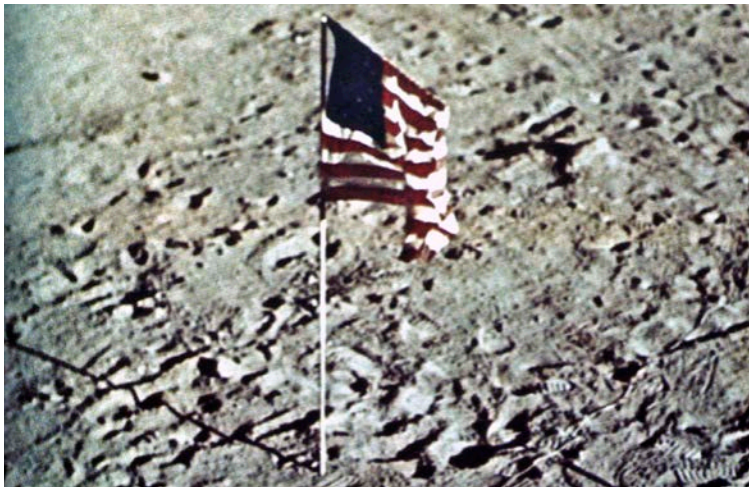
[#247](#)



1972 - Lower East Side, NYC



1972 - Lower East Side, NYC



*A rat done bit my sister Nell  
with whitey on the moon  
her face and arms began to swell  
and whitey's on the moon.  
I can't pay no doctor bills  
when whitey's on the moon  
ten years from now I will be paying still  
while whitey's on the moon,  
You know, the man just upped my rent last night  
because whitey's on the moon.  
No hot water, no toilet, no light  
'cause whitey's on the moon.  
I wonder why he's upping me  
because whitey's on the moon?  
Well, I was already paying him 50 a week  
and now whitey's on the moon.  
Taxes taking my whole damn check,  
the junkies making me a nervous wreck,  
the price o f food is going up  
and if all this crap wasn't enough,  
a rat done bit my sister Nell  
with whitey on the moon,  
her face and arms began to swell  
and whitey's on the moon.  
With all that money I made last year  
for whitey on the moon,  
how come I don't got any here?  
Hm! whitey's on the moon...  
You know, I just about had my fill  
of whitey on the moon,  
I think I'll send these doctor bills  
airmail special...  
... to whitey on the moon!*



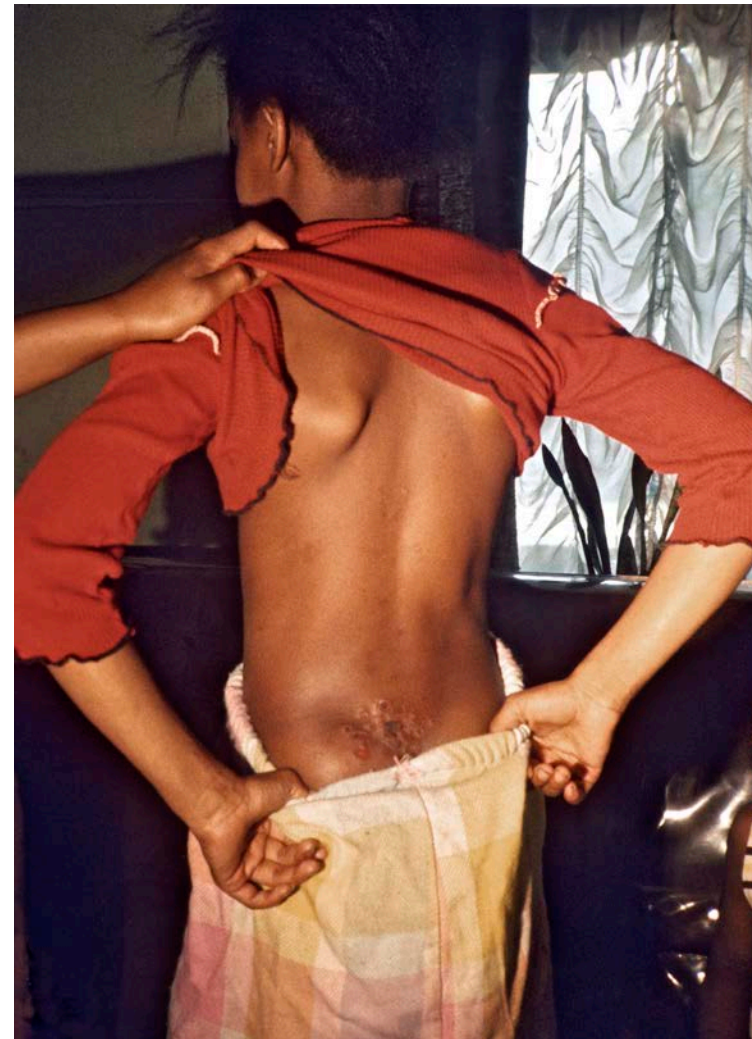
1974 - Bronx, NY



1973 - East Detroit



1973 - East Detroit

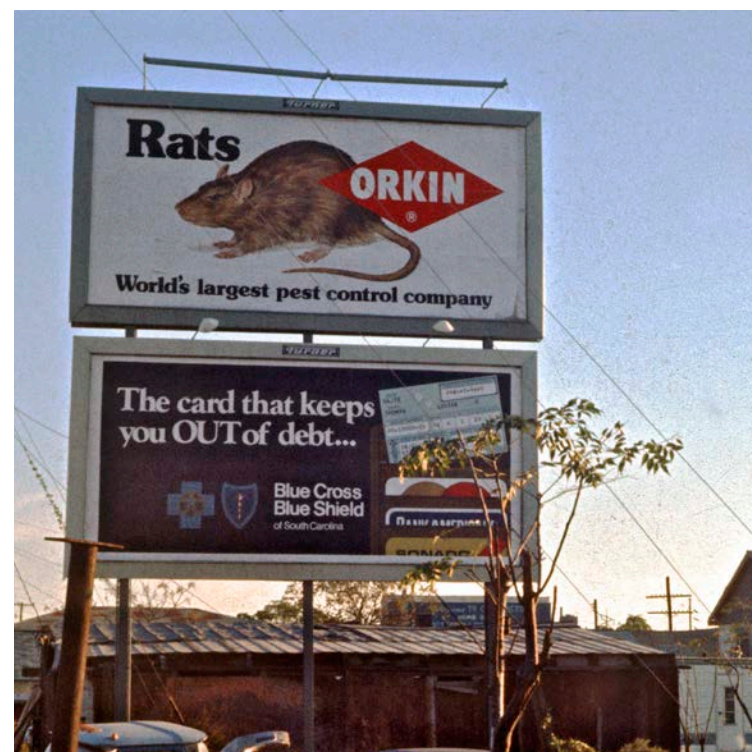


1973 - East Detroit



1974 - Chicago

Six hundred black babies in Chicago died of rat bites and malnutrition the year a flag was planted on the moon. I stayed with a family in Detroit, and four of the children were bitten by rats while sleeping. Their weeping was drowned out by the motorists tearing along the highway right outside the house. Trapped in our own system, we whites must drive superhighways to get from our protected suburbs to our jobs downtown without being confronted by the rats, misery, and violence in the ghettos. But what was done to us in childhood to make us repress our natural love for others? Allowing us to literally drive over them without a thought? What inner wounds can make us create such an infernal noise in this home for our shared unhealed pain?



1973 - anywhere



**LET'S GET RID OF RATS**

**EVERY TENANT MUST HELP**

- Keep your house clean.
- Keep your food in covered jars or cans.
- Keep your garbage pail tightly covered.
- Do not throw garbage in the yard, hallway or dumbwaiter shaft.
- Keep your baby's crib clean.
- Wash your baby's face and body before putting him to bed. Rats follow the smell of milk.
- Watch your baby afterward.

Your landlord has been notified by the Health Department that he must exterminate the rats in your building. You can help get rid of rats in your own apartment. If we all cooperate, we can get rid of this nuisance.

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
1974 - NYC



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



2009 - Baton Rouge, LA - same people from the shacks on left with my book

Yes, the vagabond wandering on foot below busy highways will see society quite differently from the motorist inside the system. Coming up from the South on a late winter night, you're frightened by the speed of the traffic. You see it passing on the elevated highways and realize that your only chance of succeeding is to get up there into all that speed. You try to climb up the icy slopes but keep slipping back. Your Southern dream of leaving the "sweltering heat of injustice and oppression" turns into a nightmare as you realize that the icy slopes don't lead to mountains that have been made low or rough places that have been smoothed as in Dr. King's dream. Eventually you give up the Sisyphean climb and wander on foot in the shadow of the dark pillars under the roadways. Though the pillars seem like the same old Greek plantation pillars already confining you to a new ghetto, you still have hope. You haven't yet realized that you're in the process of entering a divided world, a ghastly realization of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, populated by two distinct races. The Eloi are creatures of the light for whom life is a picnic, except at night, when dark subterranean beings surface to prey on them. The Morlocks, who run all the machinery, can't bear light. Neither the Morlocks nor the Eloi are real; they're aspects of humanity that their living conditions guided in a certain direction.

As a vagabond, you'll see this terrifying vision of our unequal societies today—the forced ghettoization of millions of Southern blacks, who migrated toward prosperity and hope in the North just as today Muslim immigrants have been drawn to Europe. You see in different—perhaps more human—terms than the sociologist.

You understand that, for my friends with my book (right photo), there's been no upward mobility since I met them 42 years ago. They're still stuck in the same shacks (left photo), still locked generation after generation into a permanent underclass, literally run over by busy drivers and thundering trucks. The vagabond has the advantage of standing on the outside and being able to move quickly between different milieus. These milieus aren't just numbers and statistics since you can only survive among the Eloi and Morlocks if, in spite of what the world around you suggests, you believe they too are human beings.

Though these elevated highways symbolize the poor immigrant's struggle against an inhuman system, they're equally representative of the powerlessness of those who ride them—over increasingly misanthropic and deserted cities that they, as a result of distorted priorities, no longer dare navigate on foot. In these barren anxiety-ridden and seemingly "neutron-bombed" landscapes, a car becomes a necessity. The reasonable answer, therefore, is to create even more concrete spaghetti and human sterility, which is why there's no longer enough money for public transportation for the poor. At the same time, we go on selfishly destroying the climate so that further millions of refugees from the south will flee north and have to be accommodated by our children in the future. Rather than integrate with our neighbors, we'll start building Trump-like walls to keep them out.



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



1973 - Boston



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



1974 - Miami



1972 - Miami, FL



1973 - New Orleans



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA





1970 - East St. Louis, IL

Though the world can't afford this unchecked private consumption, we're becoming more trapped in a vicious circle. We're forced into decisions that, from our concrete horizon, suddenly seem reasonable—such as military intervention in poor countries for more oil. A small percentage of the world thus plundered most of the earth's cheap energy reserves in a single century. Car radios and TVs bombard us with sweet "Let's get away from it all" messages to get us to buy bandages to soothe our aching wounds, making us blind to our environmental destruction and climate racism. In our evasive flight, we throw ourselves into ever more contempt for the future of brown children, both abroad and at home. We insist on our "right" to drive our children to remote private schools in climate-damaging SUVs (in the US, away from blacks, and in Europe away from brown children in neighboring schools).



The vicious circle increasingly comes to resemble a flight away from the poverty, ghettoization, and suffering we've created. A chaotic flight drowning in music and messages about the material means for this flight means creating the need for more flight—flight away from ourselves and everything we've built up, flight into ourselves, and out into loneliness. Fleeing whites spend more on a weekend-long ski trip than the underclass in the cities makes in a week (sometimes in a month). And yet, while we're oppressors in one sense, we feel just as ensnared by this system as our victims. And fundamentally just as unhappy.

*For God's sake,  
you've got to give more power to the people!  
There's some people up there hogging everything,  
telling lies, giving alibies,  
about the people's money and things.  
And if they're going to throw it away  
they might as well give some to me.  
They don't care about the poor,  
they have never had misery.  
There's some people who are starving to death  
whom they never knew, but only heard of,  
and they never had half enough.  
If you don't have enough to eat,  
how can you think of love?  
You don't have time to care  
what crimes you're guilty of  
For God's sake,  
why don't you give more power to the people?*



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



1974 - Boone, NC



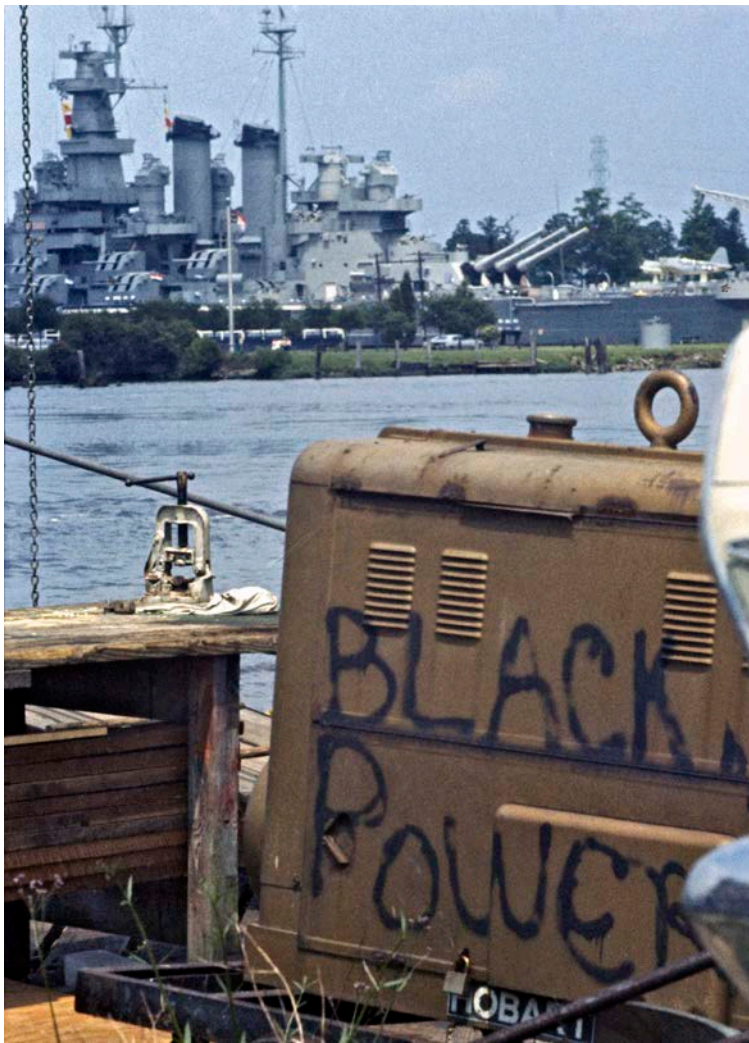
1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



1973 - Baton Rouge, LA



1974 - New Orleans, LA



1973 - Norfolk, VA

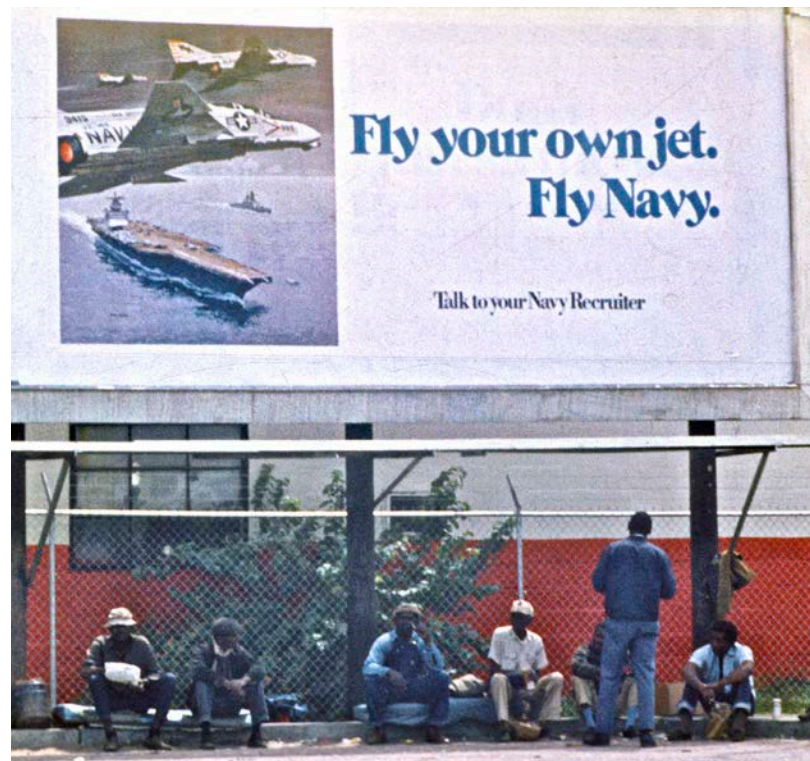


1974 - New Bern, NC

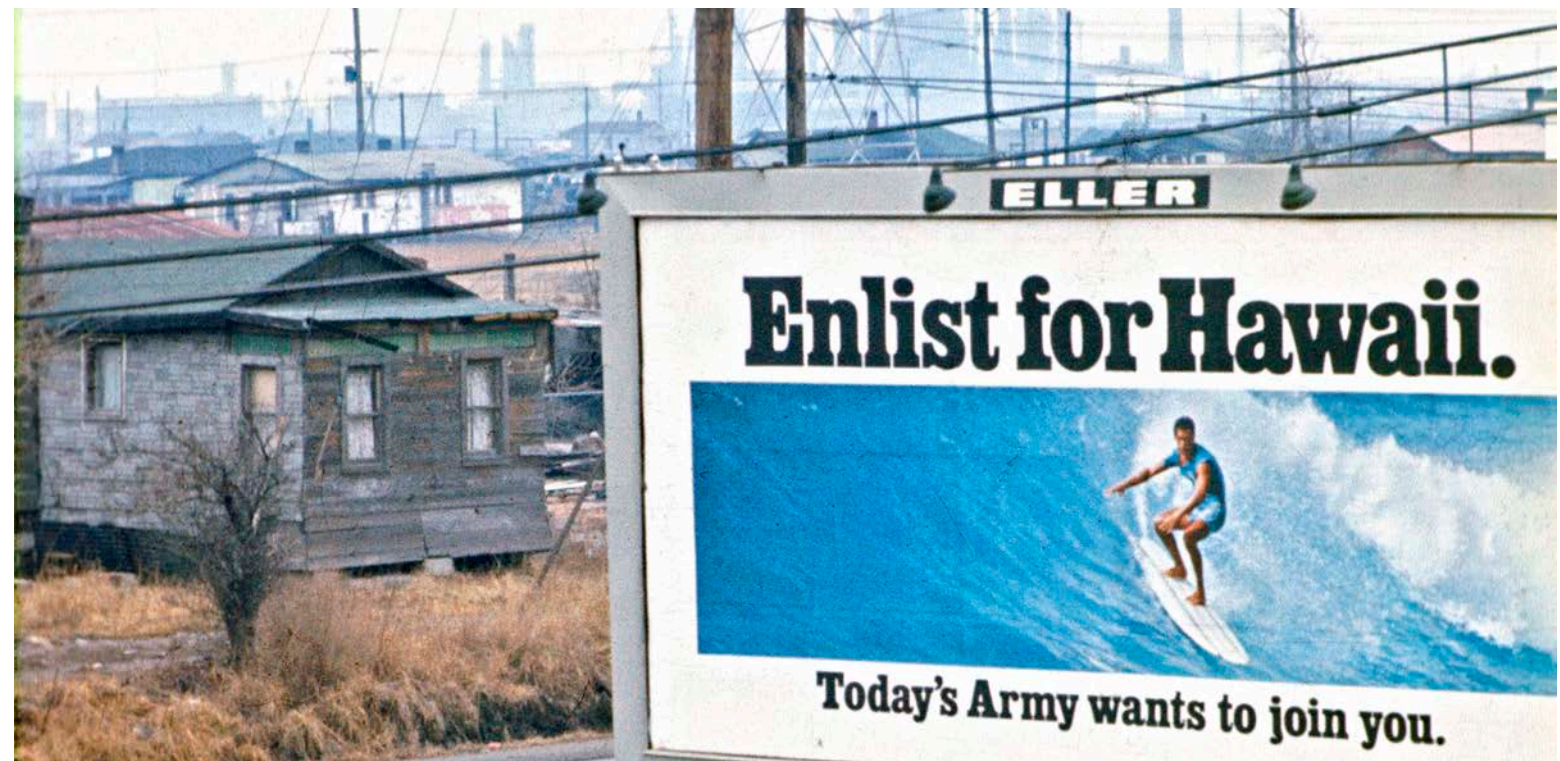


1973 - rural VA

The vicious circle of our consumption creates additional artificial needs. Our behavior is already flooding or drying up the livelihoods for many of the world's brown citizens and imposing on them escalating water and sand wars, driving millions of climate refugees to our shores. True democracy faces a dilemma when politicians in the First World think only of securing reelection, and they're backed by selfish voters who don't want their oppressive behavior limited in the name of the greater good. We let these leaders sweep problems under the rug, selling false hopes to the poor, so that they don't demand from us the behavioral changes necessary for our children's future. Through cynical racism, we push the problems we face today onto our children tomorrow. As a consequence, they will likely feel "forced" in the future into climate-fascist measures—gigantic walls and military buildup to keep the poor out or, domestically speaking, blacks and browns down.



1973 - Richmond, VA



1974 - Charleston, SC

In Norfolk, VA, one of the biggest ports in the world for warships, this starving woman tried to get to a hospital because she was experiencing chest pains, but she had no money for an ambulance. Every morning she sees warships being built through her grimy windows. Lacking TV—she has no electricity—her only entertainment is to watch an aircraft carrier—a vessel that burns more energy in one minute (267 gallons) than her oil lamp would use in one year (12 gallons).

As Eisenhower warned about the military-industrial complex:  
*Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.*



1985 - Buffalo, NY



1973 - general Westmoreland in Charleston, SC

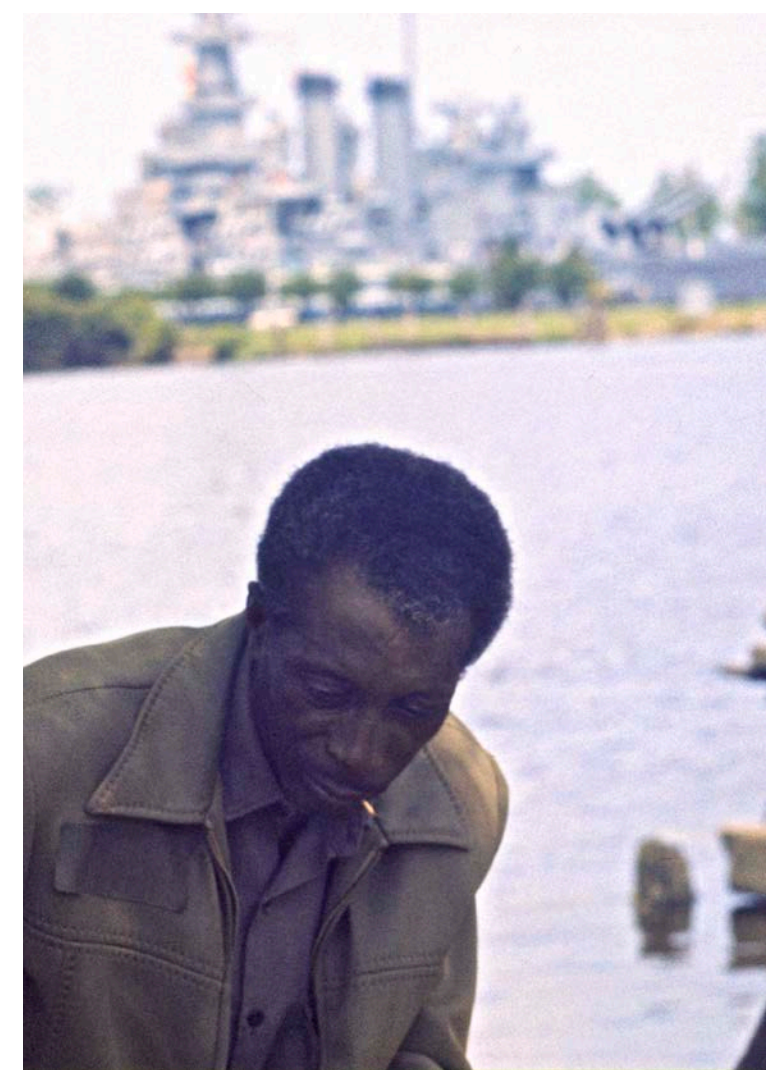
*Statesmen are trying to see who's got  
the power to kill the most.  
When they are tired of power  
the world is going to be a ghost.  
They know we're not satisfied  
the way they scream and holler.  
They give us a promise and throw in a few more dollars.  
There's no price for happiness,  
there's no price for love.  
Up goes the price of living  
and you're right back where you were.  
Now we're going to get on up  
and get some more of it.  
For God's sake, give more power to the people...*



1973 - Norfolk, VA



1973 - Norfolk, VA



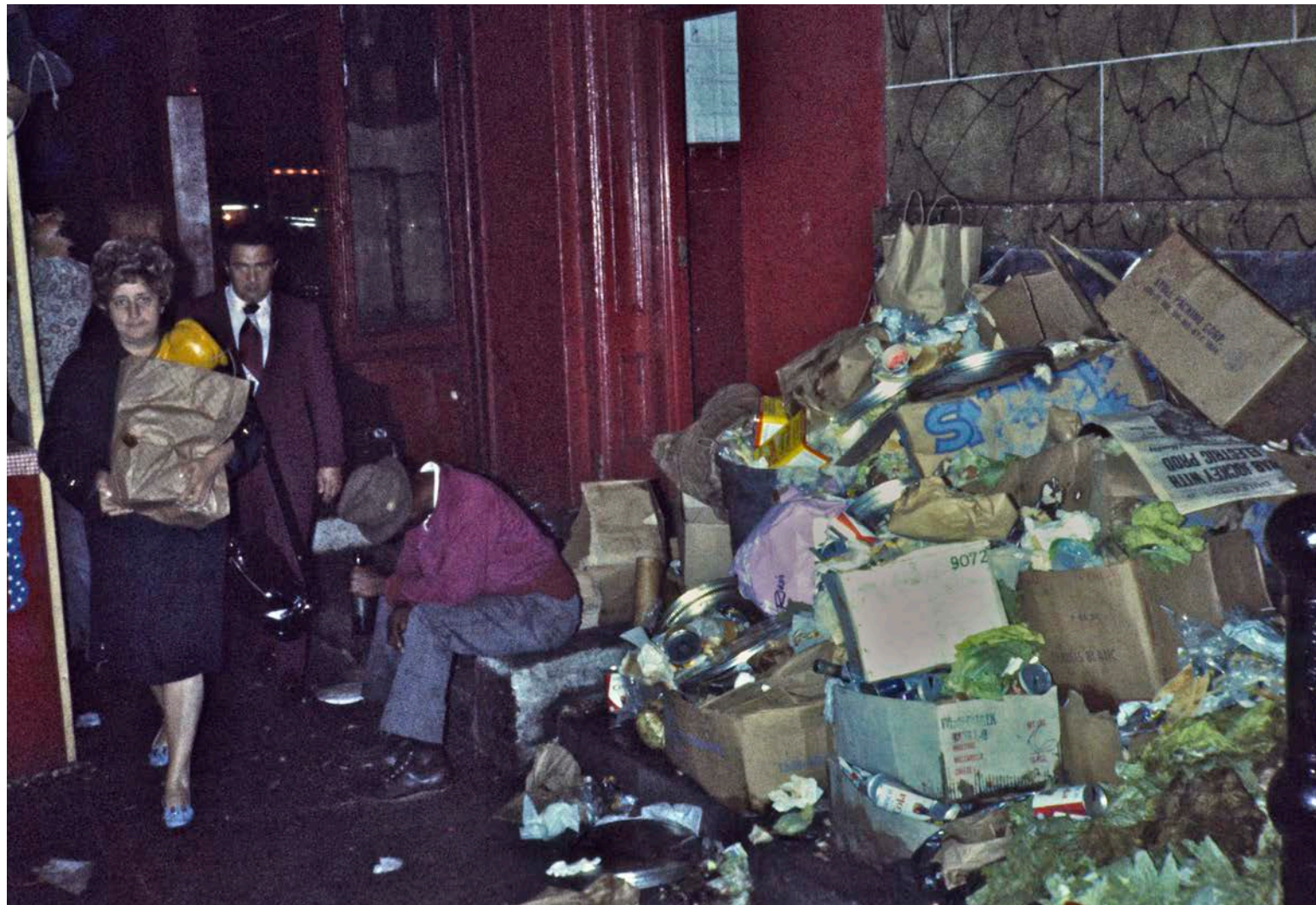
1973 - Norfolk, VA



1971 - NYC



1991 - Bronx, NY



1973 - NYC

We say that our outcasts throw their garbage into the backyard because in the South they were used to throwing it out the kitchen window to the pigs or goats. I've come to see it as an impotent protest against a system that insists on preserving poverty while producing goods at such a rate that it takes the best brains to think up ways to sell them and the worst criminals to dump the toxic waste.

Under democratic welfare capitalism, it's our duty as voters to constantly adjust free-market forces to ensure fair distribution and avoid crises. Yet our system has never been good at providing work for all. We therefore have to dump the surplus—luxury goods for the upper class, toxic waste and arms leveled against the lower class—in our “backyards,” that is, in Third World countries.

Backyard dumping for profit has become such an essential element of our system that without the biggest waste disposal agency of them all, the Pentagon, domestic unemployment would be noticeably higher. Although twice as many jobs could be created for the same dollars by investing in social welfare, the environment, and the climate, it's the nature of the system to thwart planning an economy that produces human rather than material (deadly) goods. Without our intervention, the system thereby creates a frame of mind that forces us to “backyard dump” both our domestic ghettos and poor countries overseas.



1983 - Chicago



1974 - Interstate 95 in VA



1975 - Harlem, NY



1973 - NYC



1973 - NYC



1972 - NYC



2013 - 4th St, Los Angeles



1978 - NYC

*Disposable society has thrown away the best in me.  
It's thrown away sincerity,  
the keystone of integrity.  
Disposable to throw away,  
buy something new another day.  
There is nothing made that's made to stay.  
Planned obsolescence will make you pay:  
paper plates, cardboard skates, plastic silverware,  
automobiles with disposable wheels,  
wigs instead of hair, that's how it is.  
Disposable the way you love,  
not exactly what you're thinking of.  
Dispose of me when you are through  
for fear that I'll dispose of you.  
Disposable your closest friend,  
you're supposed to love right to the end.  
Your rigid mind won't let you bend.  
You're further gone than you pretend...*

# Christmas in New York

New York is an inhuman, cold city. You have to live with the alienation, or be destroyed. In my journey I always try to go the whole way with people I get attached to, but in New York again and again I must break off with people prematurely and thus abandon the human connection that has arisen between us. I have experienced it most strongly this Christmas, which was even more intense than last year when I was held up by three Puerto Ricans on Fourth Street on Christmas Eve.

This year I had just hitch-hiked in from Alabama, but couldn't find any of my friends and ended up on the street down in the Bowery on Christmas Eve. I got to talking with a bum who had lighted a fire to keep warm. He must have been a bum for a long time, for his curly hair was all in knots which could not possibly be combed out. We soon became good friends. He was one of those bums who can talk; the worst are the bums who can only communicate through the eyes.

As we were sitting there talking, it naturally occurred to us that it was Christmas Eve, and we became more and more sentimental, and when we exchanged memories of our childhood Christmas Eves it wasn't just the smoke from the fire which brought tears to our eyes. He had been married, had children, and had actually been quite happy, he thought now, but had suddenly become unemployed, after which his family started to disintegrate and he became an alcoholic. We sat and shared a flask and gradually became rather drunk. A crazy guy started throwing bottles at us which smashed against the wall next to us. At last it became too much for my friend and he took a piece of burning wood and beat the guy until he disappeared.

This happened around Delancey Street, where there is always a bunch of prostitutes standing on the corner. Bums, just like other people, have a desire to find somebody lower than themselves, and so during the course of our conversation he kept returning to his indignation over these prostitutes who were out even on Christmas Eve. Whenever I have drunk heavily with bums they have fallen asleep first, even though we have been drinking the same amount. And he, too, fell asleep, around ten or eleven p.m..

I wondered a bit whether I should stay and keep watch over him, since we had become good friends. I have so often seen poor black and Puerto Rican housewives with children and shopping bags walk over and trample on dead-drunk bums or kick them and afterwards quickly continue home to the pots and pans – a manifestation of their own self-hatred or lack of self-esteem. (In the same way I have often seen rich blacks of the “nouveau-riche”

type – that frightening phenomenon we see everywhere in the Third World trample spiritually on the poor blacks left behind in the 'ghetto.) But since the streets were rather empty that night I decided to leave him after having put a good load of scrap wood on the fire.

I wandered down to my favorite area around Avenue B (the “free-fire zone”), where there are always fights between the Puerto Ricans and the blacks, but which I like a lot because there is an almost even racial balance among whites, browns, and blacks. Here I saw Larry standing in a doorway. We started talking and he told me that he had just been thrown out by his white wife. When we realized we were in the same boat, we decided to go together to find a place to stay. First we bought a bottle of wine. Then we promised each other that if one of us found a place, he wouldn't take it without taking the other one with him. Larry was more extroverted and eloquent, but I was white, so we figured that what one of us didn't have, the other could make up for.

But Larry was the type who had to rap with everybody in the street, no matter who they were. He had been in a respectable marriage for four years, but confided in me that the whole time he had really been a street person at heart. So we had not walked far before we had a whole flock of street people with us; most of them were bums. At one time there were five whom Larry had promised that he would surely find them a place to stay and a bottle of wine on top of that. Two of them walked on crutches. A third went around flailing the air as if he were swatting mosquitoes.

I was absolutely convinced that we could never find a place to sleep for this whole crowd, but since something unexpected always turned up in such crazy situations, I didn't say anything about it to Larry. We asked the few people we met if they knew of a place we could stay, but concentrated first and foremost on the Jews, as the others were celebrating Christmas, you see, and we therefore assumed that they did not have room in their hearts. Since I was the only white, it was up to me to handle this, while the others kept a bit in the background. But all efforts were in vain. One person said that if it really was true that I was a foreigner he would be glad to take me home, but he dared not, so instead he gave me six dollars for the YMCA. Naturally we rushed off and bought a few bottles of apple wine with the money, and from then on things looked a bit brighter. But we were still unable to find any place to sleep, and the wine made the bums loud and aggressive and the man swatting mosquitoes began shadowboxing at people, so that they fled in all directions.



1972 - Bowery, NY



1974 - NYC



1972 - Bowery, NY



1971 - Bowery, NY

It was close to two o'clock when I was sent into the Broome Street Bar to find new "victims." As I checked out the crowd, a dark-haired woman came over to me and stood for a long time staring into my eyes in a strange way. Then she said very slowly: "You have fish eyes." I thought that she was on some drug and tried to keep from looking at her. Then she said, "I want you to come and live with me." I pulled myself together and asked if I could bring a couple of my friends with me. She said no. I said that then I couldn't come, but she nevertheless gave me her address.

I then went on with the others for another couple of hours, but I couldn't get her out of my thoughts. The situation now looked completely hopeless for us. We were really plastered by this time. Over in the piles of corrugated cardboard on Mercer Street we had lost one of the guys on crutches, who had fallen asleep. As it was now raining heavily and I was almost unconscious, I slipped away from the others around five o'clock. I was very embarrassed about it and during the next couple of days I felt very ashamed. But a week later I was lucky enough to run into Larry on Washington Square, and he told me that he, too, had left the others in the lurch and had found a huge fat white woman over in the West Village, where he lived now. That comforted me and we continued being good friends.

I myself had gone back to that strange woman. It turned out that she lived in a huge loft on Greene Street and had a studio on Broadway as big as a football field. Her bathtub was a little palette-shaped swimming pool. All she wanted from me was that I should keep her company. For three days we sat from dawn to dusk staring into each other's eyes. Everywhere there were huge plaster fish; they hung on the walls and gaped foolishly down at us. But there was certainly more life in them than there was in her. For three days I tried desperately to talk with her. All I managed to get out of her was that she felt very lonely and that she had



1978 - NYC. Revisit to Marisol Escobar and her fish to give her my book

never lived with a man before. She was forty years old, born in the ocean, and could only communicate with fish. She had nothing else to say. I was curious to find out who she was, so one night while she was asleep I searched through some of her papers and found out that she was the world-famous artist Marisol Escobar, who had twice been on the cover of Time Magazine and once on Look; but her last exhibition of fish sculptures had gotten bad reviews.

It turned out that she was swimming in money. One day I had to sign as a witness on a contract for several thousand dollars. Half the year she spent in the Gulf of Mexico diving down to her little friends. Nevertheless, she never gave me so much as a piece of bread, and I was getting more and more desperate from hunger. Morning and night I had to follow her to restaurants and sit across from her while she ate. The thought of giving me food never occurred to her. As I never ask people for food, I one day came out with an indirect hint.

"Did it ever occur to you that all your art is entirely for the rich folks, and isn't benefiting the poor people at all?" No answer. And still no food. She had a refrigerator, so at one point while she was asleep I took the liberty of checking to see if there was any food in it. I got a bit of a shock when several big cod-like frozen fish came tumbling out - and nothing else. If I had not been so hungry, I would probably have had a bit more patience with her. Then suddenly came my rescuer wandering into this silence. It was Erica, who had previously helped Marisol polish the fish sculptures. She was laughing and happy, and it was fantastic to hear a human being again. She perceived my situation quick as lightning, and as elegantly as a fish, seven dollars slipped into my hand under the table. Later she whispered to me that I could move in with her. When Marisol fell asleep that evening, I fled over to Erica, who lives in a tiny miserable fire-escape apartment on 11th Street.

Erica, whom I am now living with, is quite simply a find. She is a lesbian, but does not have the feelings of hatred toward men that characterize so many New York lesbians. It always makes me so happy when I can have a good relationship with a lesbian woman. Erica, like me, can't understand the necessity of hating men. It's certainly true that both heterosexual and homosexual American men are alarmingly aggressive, but one must still try to understand the oppression and the society which created this John Wayne culture.

Black men, especially, suffer from this culture, partly because their mothers bring them up to it. (I always automatically wash the dishes in people's homes, but I have come to the point where I have stopped doing it in underclass homes because it usually embarrasses the women: they simply do not know what to do with a man who washes dishes. Is it not, then, wrong of me to try to change their culture when they will still have to live with the oppression?).

And ultimately white women have much the same attitude. Time and again I am invited home by single white women, who unlike single women in Europe almost always have a double bed and therefore put me at their side. But what is shocking to see is how they are usually totally unable to deal with a non-aggressive man. After two or three days they will often say something like, "Have you always been homosexual?" to bring out some male aggressiveness in me, or more often, "Let's go out and get drunk." No doubt they would be a bit uncomfortable if a new guest went right to their refrigerator and ate all the meat. Yet American women seemingly feel uncomfortable if a man does not walk right into their own flesh. With black women I sometimes find it necessary to modify my passive rule about not violating people's hospitality with some "affirmative action." They often do everything in their power to humiliate a "soft" or non-aggressive man, which nips in the bud any chance of building a more meaningful relationship with them.

Erica is a different woman. She has made me into the epitome of male chauvinism: my function in her home is, in fact, to be a pimp. Erica is a stylish prostitute - a call-girl - and it has now become my job to answer the telephone, sort out the obscene calls and ask the nice ones to call again at 5 p.m. for a second sorting. She has an ad in the sex magazine Screw, which apparently all businessmen read, for the telephone rings nonstop. The finals start

around 6 p.m. when I have to choose the very nicest voice and arrange a meeting in a hotel for 7 p.m. We then take a taxi up to the hotel, which usually is on the East Side, as we stick to nice businessmen. My job is to sit in the lobby drinking Coke for about an hour, and if she has not come down by then, I have to go up and knock at the door.

On the way home we usually walk and eat Italian ice cream, which Erica loves. But the most fantastic thing about her is that she is not an average hooker. She just loves to help people and give them warmth in the midst of this coldness. She says that most of her customers are extremely lonely and have a need not so much for sex as for warmth. In fact, seen with typical male eyes, she is no physical beauty - abnormally thin, flat-chested, with curly red hair - but she has such charm and beauty inside, that these men can't resist her at all. Almost everyone gives her a hundred dollars, although we have only agreed on seventy-five, and only one has ever called and complained. She says that most often she doesn't even go to bed with them, but only gives them physical and especially spiritual massage. She has bought me many rolls of film, but for good reasons I have said no to money. In the daytime she goes to singing lessons and dance classes or sits for hours making coffee services out of foam rubber. Every single cup, saucer, and spoon is perfect down to the smallest detail. She has several glass cupboards filled with foam rubber china, as in the most respectable bourgeois homes. She is a fantastic inspiration for me. One day when a man had been mugged outside on the street and had been left lying there for a long time, Erica was the only one who bothered to call an ambulance. But no ambulance came and people were just standing staring stupidly at the half-dead man. She kept telephoning. The thing is that there are only Puerto Ricans living there, so it usually takes up to an hour before police or ambulances arrive. Then she got the bright idea of calling the police and asking them to hurry over because there was a white man being attacked by several blacks and Puerto Ricans right outside; two police cars and an ambulance came immediately. This trick is common in New York, but it seems to work every time.

I have often seen Erica give a whole day's wages to people in need. She would bring it directly from the rich businessmen in the hotels to some beggar on the street. Another night she was even more fantastic. We were on our way to a movie when we saw a bum in his fifties sitting there asking for help to buy a bottle of wine, and for somebody to talk to. We sat and talked with him



1973 - NYC

for a couple of hours over the wine, and he said that he was about to have delirium tremens and was afraid he would die. Erica immediately said that we would go with him to the hospital, and he cried for joy. He had been waiting for this moment for ten years. He had never himself had the courage to go to the hospital. We took him in a taxi to St. Vincent's Hospital. We sat in the waiting room for two hours. He cried the whole time. Then we were told that they would not accept him. He had been sitting there drinking and got absolutely impossible, screaming and yelling. I, too, shouted something about being from a civilized country with free hospital and health care for everybody. Then the police were called and we were thrown out in great style. We took a cab to the emergency room at Bellevue Hospital and sat there with the strangest people: screaming, hysterical, suicidal, and God knows what. We sat there until six o'clock in the morning, but nothing happened. Meanwhile the man drank his entire bottle and sat on the floor and cried with his head in Erica's lap, while begging us not to leave him. Several times he urinated in his pants, and a pool formed around him as he took his penis out and let it hang there. Erica kept tucking it back in, but it kept

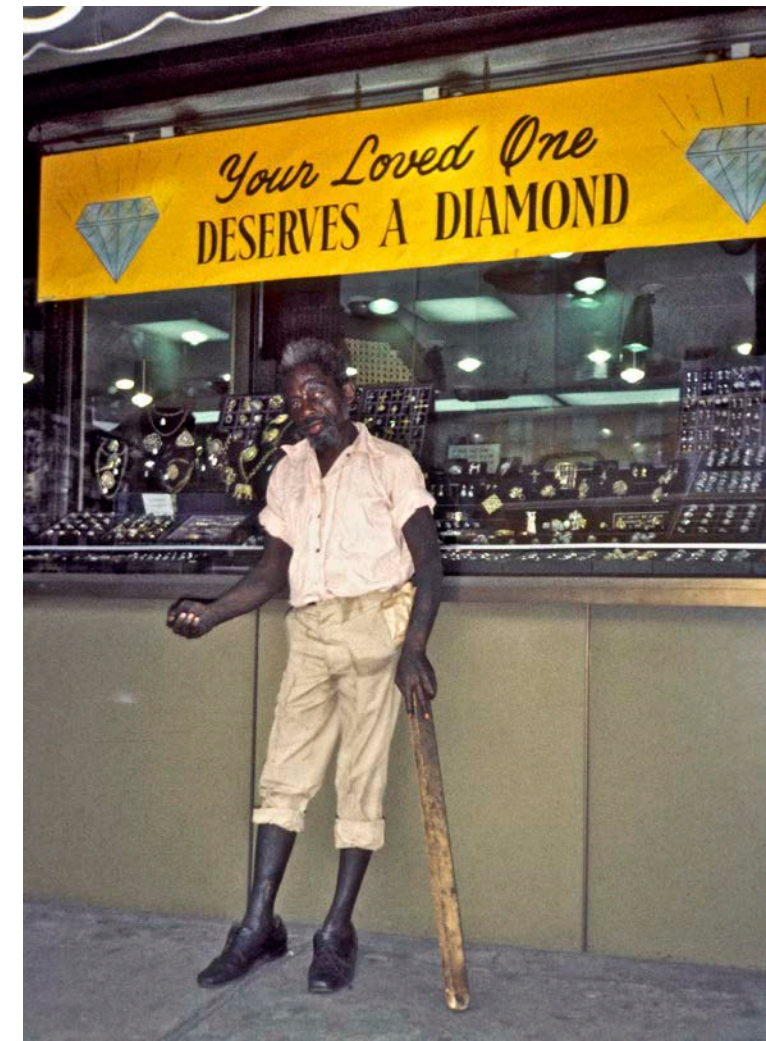
coming out. Most of the patients had by then fled out of the room. Then he began to vomit all over the place, the most peculiar slimy and stinking puke I have seen in a long time. At that point, even the two nurses fled. We tried to wipe it up. Around six o'clock we were totally exhausted, and since the nurses solemnly promised that he would be admitted to the hospital, we went home and slept. Two days later I went to Bellevue to visit him and give him some cigarettes. I was told that no one had been admitted under that name. I was furious and sad and dared not tell Erica about it at all. New York is a city which simply does not permit any human being to be human. If you are to survive here you must learn to leave other people to their fates. Erica, of course, is not from New York, so I will keep living with her for a while longer. But soon I will go back to the warmth of the South. New York's cold does me in every time.

*Letter to an American friend*



1973 - My love sight of NYC each time I came hitchhiking up from the south

When love is made into a sales item and the humanity in us is sold out, one begins to sense the dark side of our minds that created the ghetto. My vagabonding in the world's most advanced disposable system became an inward journey during which I couldn't always distinguish human beings from the system they inhabited. I had to ask myself whether the warmth and openness I received as a vagabond was a genuine American characteristic or whether the system had given the population a superficial hospitality, a need for disposable friendship. But to be discarded after use was preferable to the human coldness I'd known in Europe, which never would've given a vagabond a chance. I learned that where a system is most oppressive and cruel (such as in South Africa during apartheid), you often find the greatest human warmth—a warmth that shouldn't be thrown away in the search for a more just system. Though I found life in the Northern states more just than in the South, I constantly had to hitchhike back to the humanness of the South in order to survive as an individual (many blacks return for the same reason). The more liberal North invited blacks to migrate there in the 1940's and '50s because it needed



1974 - NYC

labor, just as Northern Europe invited brown "foreign workers" in the '60s. But we didn't need them as human beings, and gradually isolated and abandoned them in huge overpopulated ghettos. Our growing insecurity and fear under globalization today leave a deep accumulating pain, which is rapidly changing the world scene. Never before in history have we been so actively involved in forcing so many people into ghettos. What it took us 500 years in Europe to accomplish with the Jews we've achieved in only a few decades with millions of Muslims. Ghettoization ultimately leads to ethnic cleansing, as we've seen in many countries. But only in a few places has a minority become as ghettoized as blacks are in the United States. In many cities, such as Detroit and Chicago, up to 94% of blacks are trapped in all-black neighborhoods.

Our disposable society, with its backyard dumping, of both things and human beings, has killed love by isolating and alienating huge sections of the population. But it can't strangle the scream of pain and emptiness from those we disposed of—as can be discerned everywhere in the ghetto and the underground.



I am, I said, to no one there.  
 And no one heard at all...  
 I am, I cried!  
 And I am lost and I can't even say why  
 ... leaving me lonely still...  
 I've got an emptiness deep inside,  
 and I tried, but it won't let me go.  
 And I'm not a man who likes to swear,  
 but I've never cared for the sound  
 of being alone...  
 I AM, I CRIED!  
 I AM, SAID I!  
 And I am lost and can't even say why...  
 Leaving me lonely still...



1973 - NYC



1974 - NYC



272 1974 - Vanessa Guider here later committed suicide jumping from window



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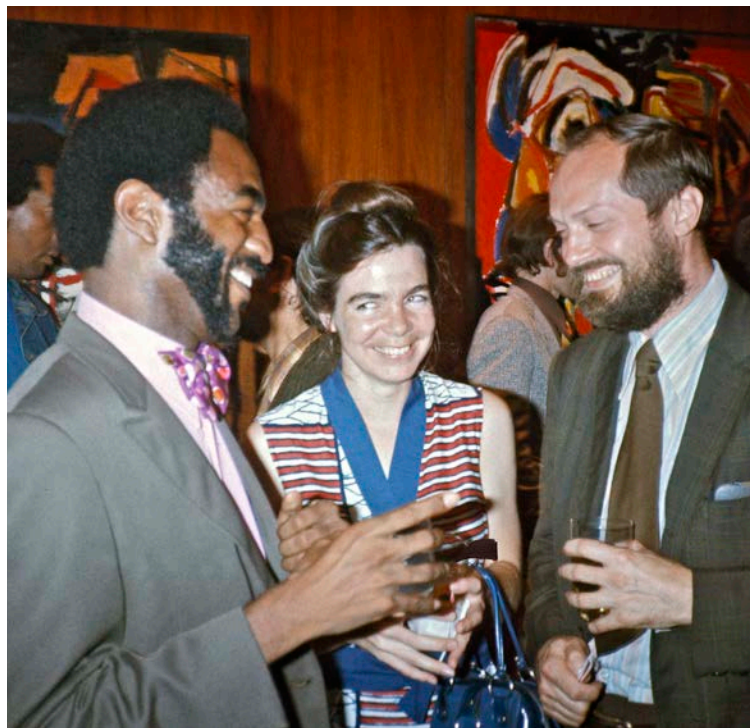
1973 - NYC



1974 - Bronx, NY



1973 - NYC



1973 - NYC



1974 - NYC

The system—or, the sum total of our daily repressive thinking—uses repressive tolerance to deal with the pushback from our victims, mouth gaging the scream from the underground by acknowledging its artistic value, by exalting it.

The oppressed are granted safe conduct to exhibit in art galleries for the better-off and better-thinking among us—those of us with sympathetic words about the “problems of the ghetto” and “our immigrants,” with benevolent sermons on hunger and overpopulation in the Third World. Yet despite all our high-flying talk about “integrating them,” we ourselves flee to the suburbs—our kids don’t go to “black schools”—resulting in further ghettoization. We brag vociferously about having a black friend here and a Muslim friend there, but we don’t wonder why blacks in the US or immigrants in Denmark rarely come to these art palaces. Without batting an eye, we accept black waiters carrying on the master-slave relationship at these functions. As the buffer troops of oppression, we can absorb criticism of the system, distort it, and disarm it by raising it to the level of art. This is also what will happen with my photographs.

Affluent liberals, whom I came to hate and love at the same time because they’re so much a side of myself, will give me all possible support in publishing and exhibiting my critique of society, shocked at the things I’ve seen in America. They feel ashamed because I’ve crossed a threshold they feel they ought to have crossed themselves but, with their paralyzing fear of those they’ve helped to ghettoize, could not.



1974 - NYC



1973 - NYC



1975 - Los Angeles



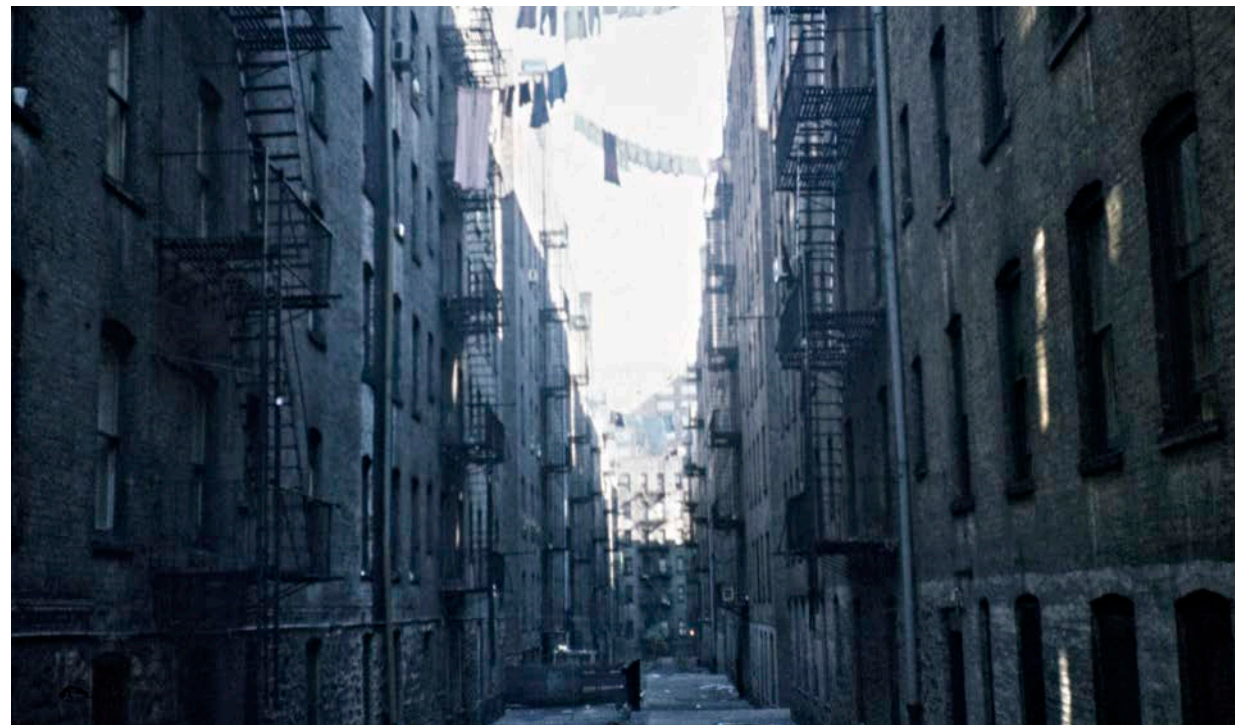
1975 - Los Angeles



1973 - NYC



1975 - Los Angeles



1974 - Harlem, NY



1974 - NYC

Such people exist in all societies, squawking about the necessity for change in order to help ghettos and underdeveloped countries “up.” But when election day comes, all their promises wind up in the status quo wastebasket with votes for the Democrats (or, in Europe, various social democratic parties).

Therefore, I can’t avoid feeling that I too exploited the victims, for I know all too well that these pictures won’t benefit them at all. We’ll feel a little sentimental, realizing that our underclass suffers like this, but we won’t do anything to change our lifestyle. We won’t give up our climate-destroying motorhomes, SUVs, central air-conditioning, charter trips, and distant private schools to redistribute the goods of the earth. And so my pictures will only be a catharsis. Although I knew this and was often told so by underclass blacks who had no illusions about trying to talk to the “inner goodness” in their white oppressors, I persisted and have thus betrayed both blacks and the Third World, making this page the only one in the book almost all African Americans can agree with. I’ve created an entertaining emotional release, thereby strengthening an unjust system. I’m just as hypocritical as these art snobs because I’m playing by their rules. When my critique became too “radical,” they turned their backs on me. I’m therefore forced to water it down so that it risks becoming a teary condescending “paternalistic” naïve vagabond adventure story about the suffering in the ghetto and our unfortunate shadow sides—such as the following sentimental journey into Harlem, not far from the stronghold of these liberals, the Museum of Modern Art.



1973 - Harlem, NY

*If you take the train with me  
uptown through the misery  
of ghetto streets  
in morning light  
where it is always night:  
Take a window seat,  
put down your Times  
you can read between the lines,  
just read the faces  
that you meet beyond the windowpane:  
And it might begin to teach you  
how to give a damn about your fellow man!*



1980 - NYC



1973 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Bronx, NY



1974 - Harlem, NY



1974 - NYC



Harlem, NY



1972 - NYC



1973 - Harlem, NY

Everything in Harlem is black except for the stores, which are owned by white and Arab immigrants (in the past they were owned by Jews). The only stores that aren't owned by these outsiders, the street people will tell you, are the omnipresent funeral homes since white undertakers will have nothing to do with black bodies. Being an undertaker is one of the surest ways of reaching middleclass status. For death is as ubiquitous in Harlem as the fear haunting everyone beneath sporadic uneasy laughter. Yet I feel safer as a member of the ever-present invisible "Whitey" in Harlem than most blacks do, for as always, aggression is aimed at fellow victims rather than at the hated oppressor.

This funeral home next to a drug rehabilitation center illustrates the choices in Harlem—between death or an enslaved life under The Man. Thousands of addicts choose the door on the left. They know all too well that if they choose the door on the right, they'll either become re-habilitated, which means a return to the previous condition in which they couldn't survive without using drugs, or they become "up-habilitated" by learning how to live in the ghetto jungle through deadened sensitivity or some other form of mind-crippling. They subjugate themselves to The Man's blame-the-victim brand of slavery, which changes the victims rather than their oppressive environment.

This woman is a living illustration of the typical choices in Harlem. An attacker broke into her apartment and tried to kill her with a knife. She survived by jumping out a window on the third floor—and is crippled for life.



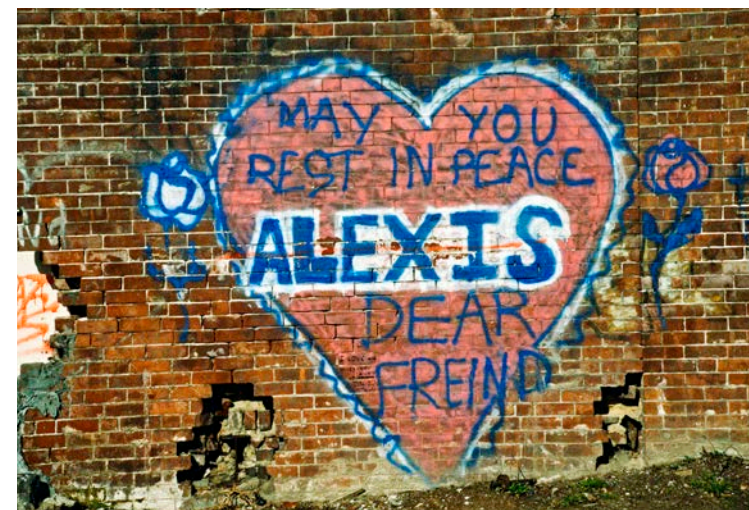
1973 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Harlem, NY



1996 - NYC



1995 - NYC



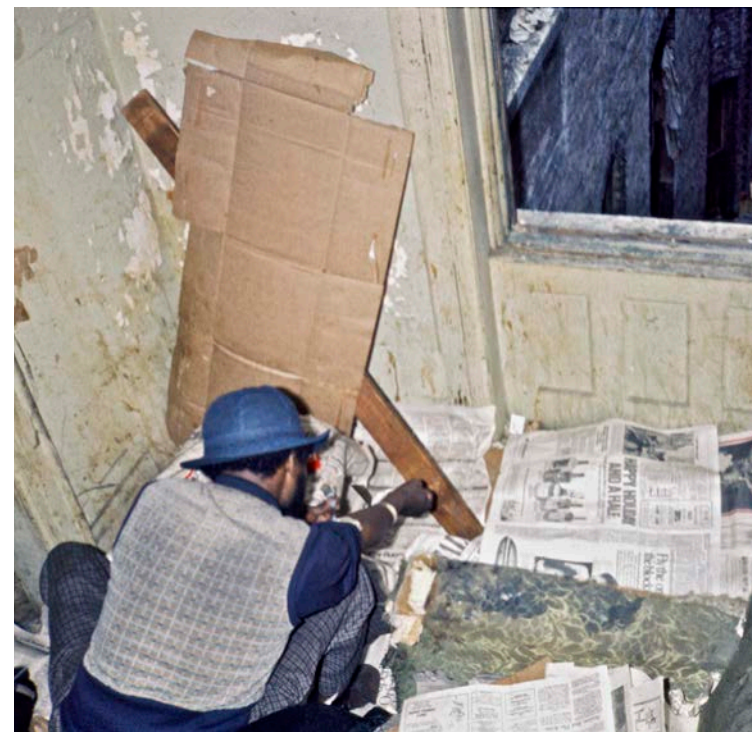
1992 - Harlem, NY



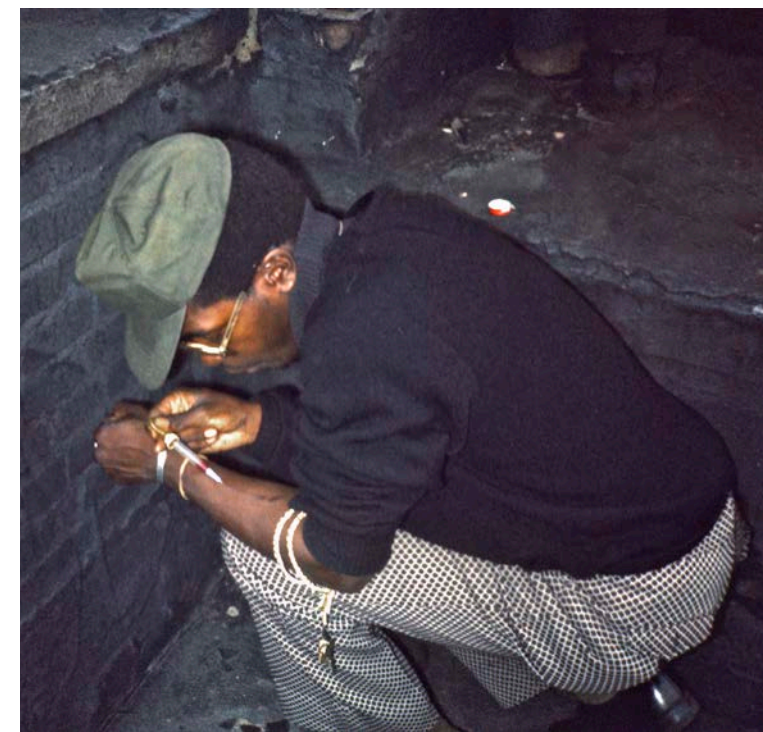
1992 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY



1974 - NYC

The Americans I have the strongest feelings for are the addicts, who've been too sensitive and human to survive the brutal American drive for success. They're not only victims of that violence but are capable of hitting back with all the viciousness injected into them by the "American way of life." Often, on the roofs of New York, I helped tie up these bound souls. Daily, on certain street corners in Harlem, you see thousands of addicts waiting for heroin. At night not even the police brave these neighborhoods, from whose "shooting galleries" we sometimes enjoyed an incredible view of the Empire State Building's "big needle."

The shooting galleries are condemned buildings taken over by junkies who are "shooting up" and "shooting down" anyone suspected of being a cop or a "bustman." Since the penalty for being an addict and a criminal, which is what it leads to—in other words, for being a victim—is the same for being a murderer, they have no real choice. They get a mandatory life sentence whether they act as victims or executioners. The shooting galleries are therefore extremely dangerous.

This man, who'd been an addict for 16 years, suffered from malnutrition and running sores all over his body. He was unable to find any better spots to shoot up and had to take the foul-smelling bandage off his leg to find a vein. He suffered terribly and knew all too well he had less than two years to live. He had nothing to lose and urged me to publicize these pictures to frighten young people, hoping they'd never have to suffer like he did.



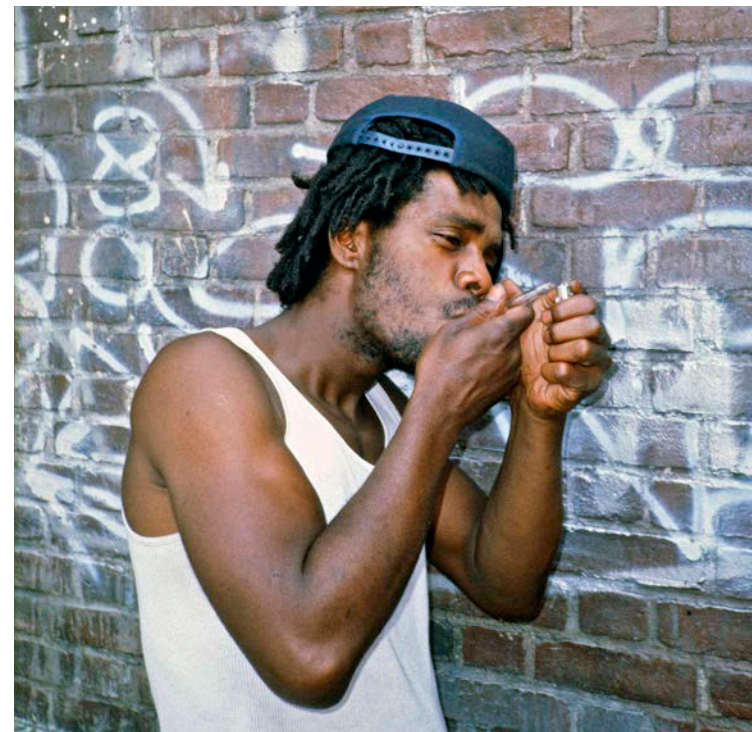
1973 - Harlem, NY



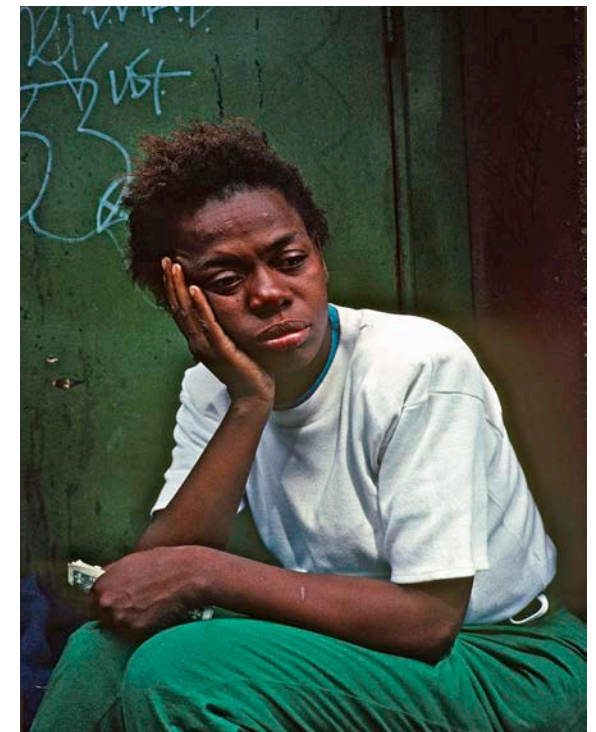
1985 - Harlem, NY

I thought I'd seen the worst in the '70s, when I gradually learned to knock the guns out of the hands of slow heroin addicts. So I was totally unprepared for the devastation of the crack epidemic in the '90s, when victims were wildly shooting guns during their paranoid few minutes of high and constantly broke into my van or robbed their own families to support their habit.

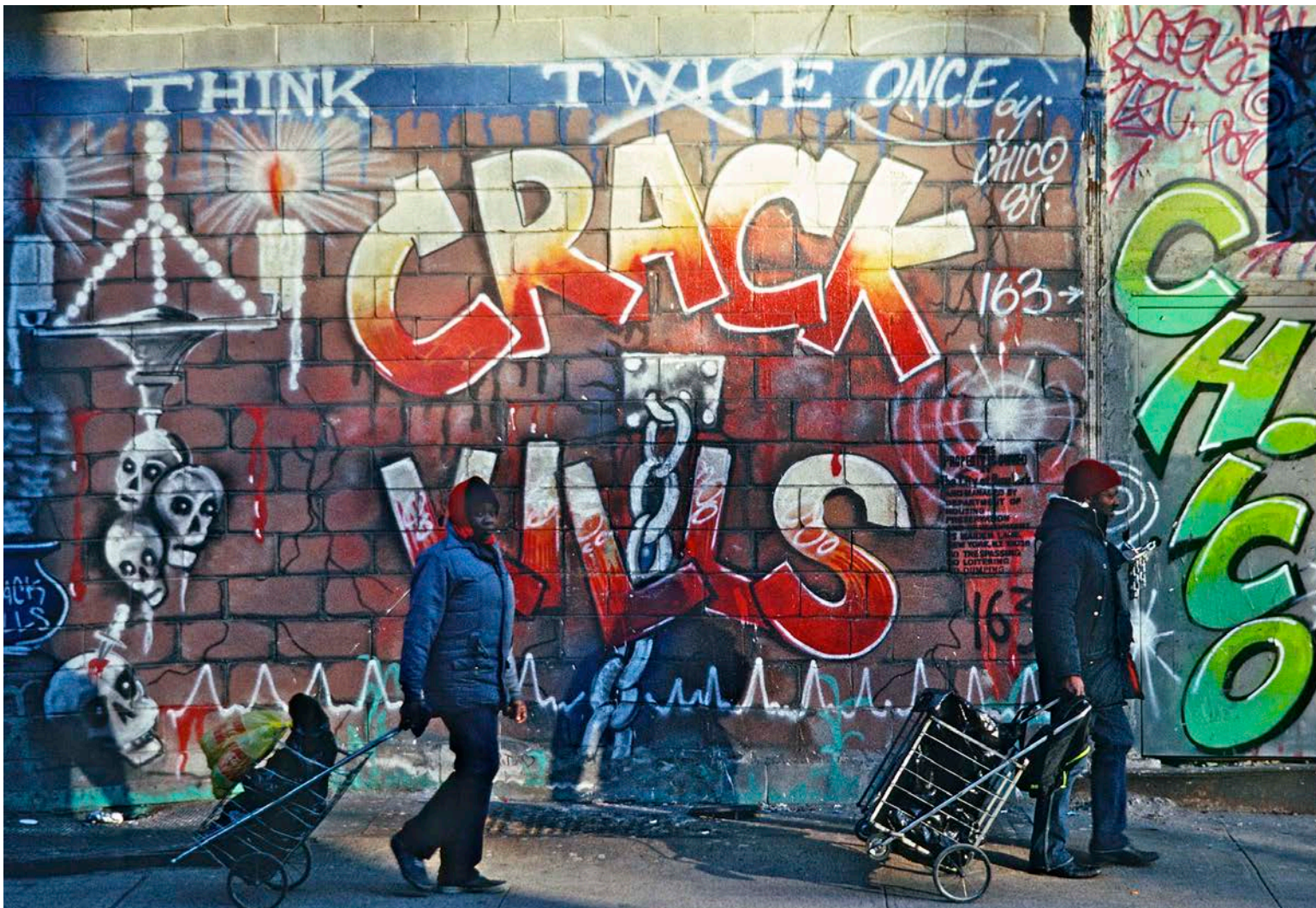
Many of my best friends succumbed to crack. I'd known Robert Yard for years, but shortly after his wedding in Harlem, his wife fell victim to crack. I saw him desperately try to save her and their marriage while her life spiraled into an abyss of crime, prostitution, and prisons until her untimely death.



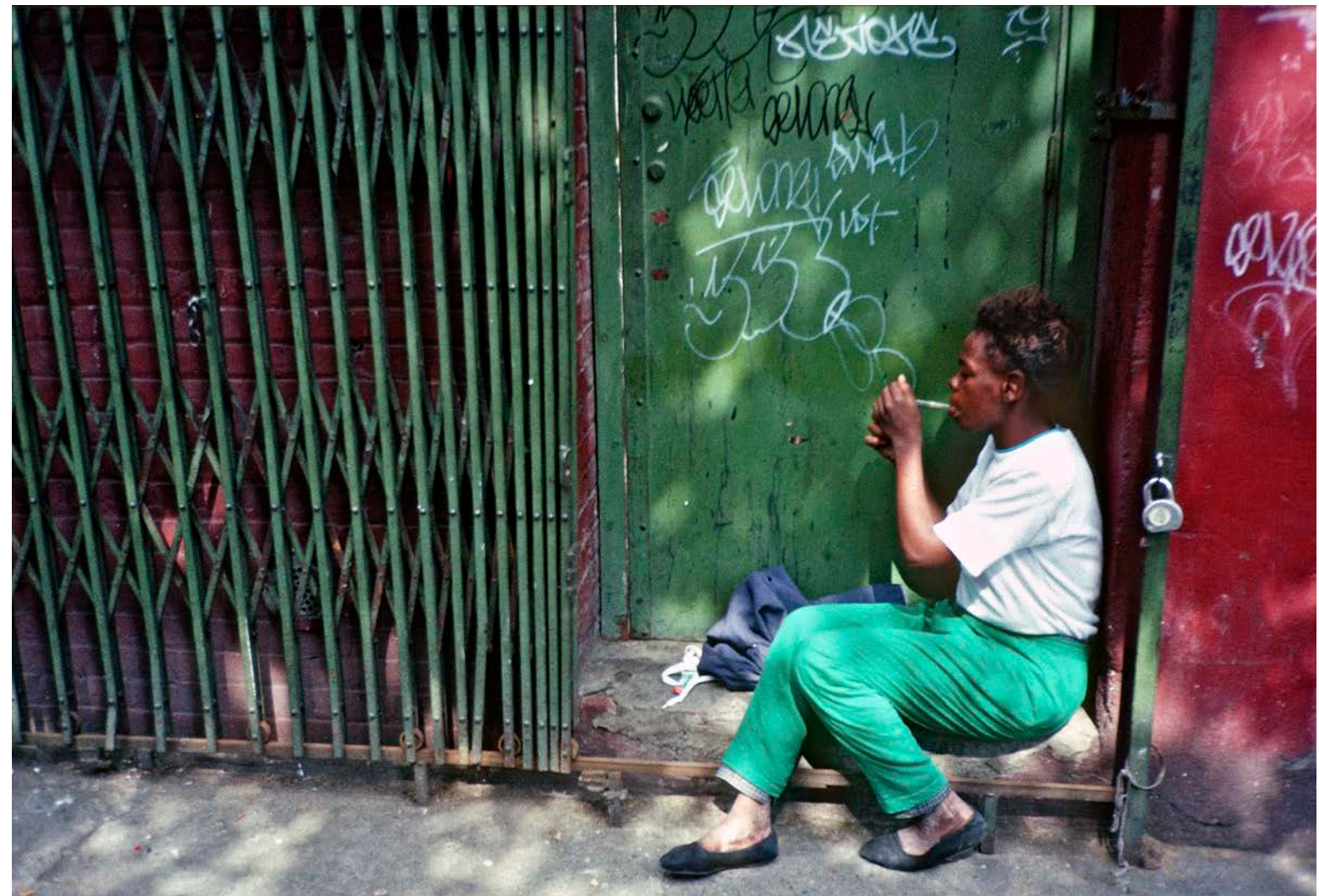
1992 - NYC



1991 - NYC



1991 - NYC



1991 - NYC



1974 - Harlem, NY



1989 - Harlem, NY

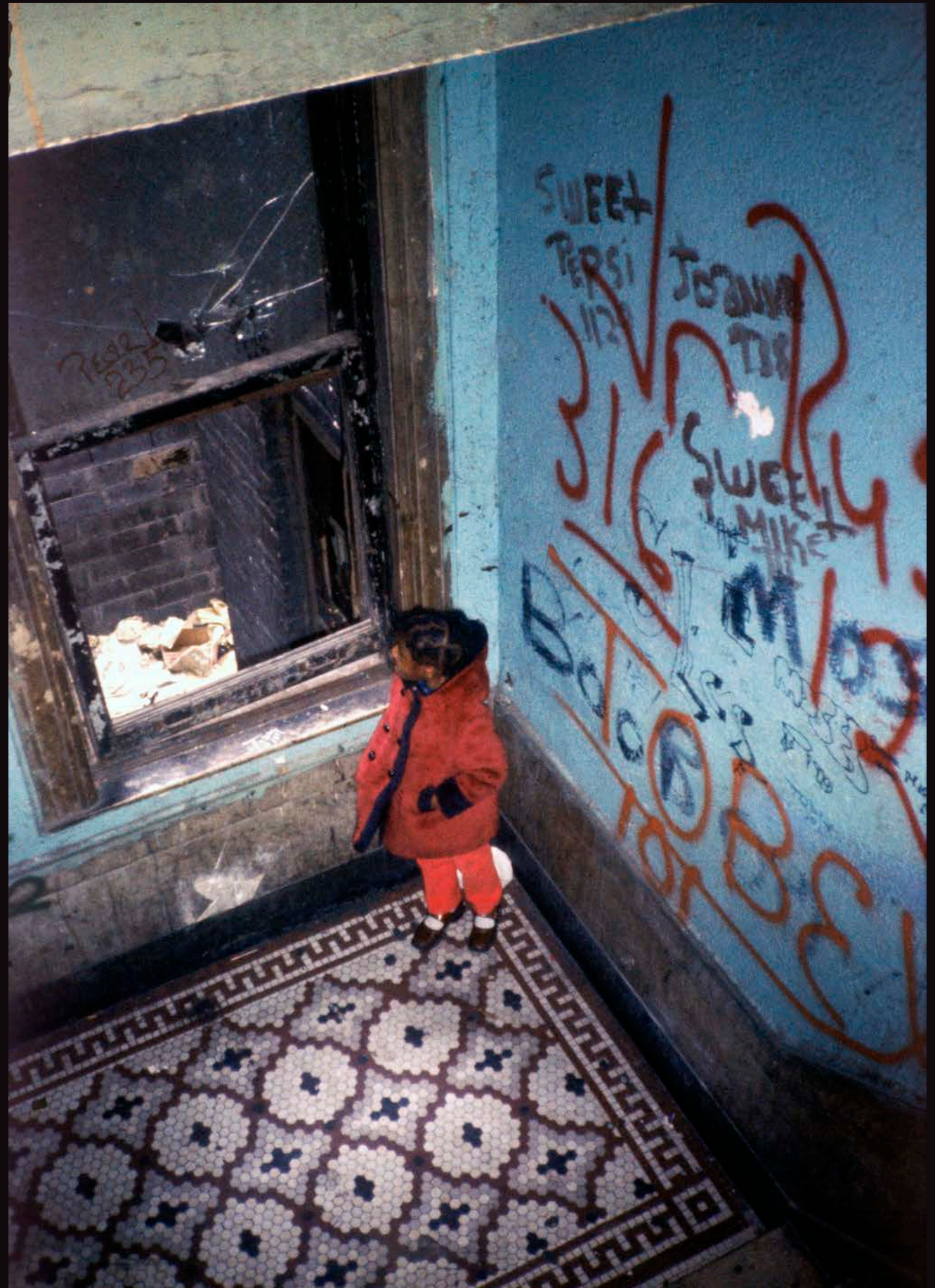
*And when you go to sleep sometimes  
with rats instead of nursery rhymes  
with hunger and your other children by the side.  
And wonder if you will share your bed  
with something else that must be fed  
or fear they may sleep beside you  
or they may creep down the hall.  
And it might begin to teach you  
how to give a damn about your fellow man !*



1974 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Bronx, NY





1973 - NYC

*Come and see how well despair  
is seasoned by the stifling air.  
See your ghetto in the good old sizzling summer time.  
Suppose the streets were all on fire,  
the flames like tempers leaping higher,  
suppose you'd lived there all your life,  
do you think that you would mind?*

But it's not just the adults who suffer in Harlem. The most indescribable and distressing suffering I've witnessed befalls children. It can cripple their minds—their entire being—for life. And it's not only those children who are forced to beg like dogs to survive or the children trying to get a penny by polishing windows for white drivers at the stoplights. Even more, it's the children we murder with our negative thinking about them, the crushing thinking they've internalized to such an extent that they're convinced they have no future. What impression does it make on the children of pain when they see their sisters and brothers shot and killed in the street? When I was teaching a class in Harlem, I discovered there wasn't a single pupil who hadn't witnessed a shootout in the streets—the stray bullets of which strike even the most innocent child. The students refused to believe I came from a country with no guns. "How do people defend themselves?" they asked. And what impression does it make on a young mother to have to say goodbye to her four-year-old son in a world where it's hard to tell the difference between a cradle and a coffin?



1973 - Bronx, NY



1972 - Harlem, NY



1972 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Harlem, NY



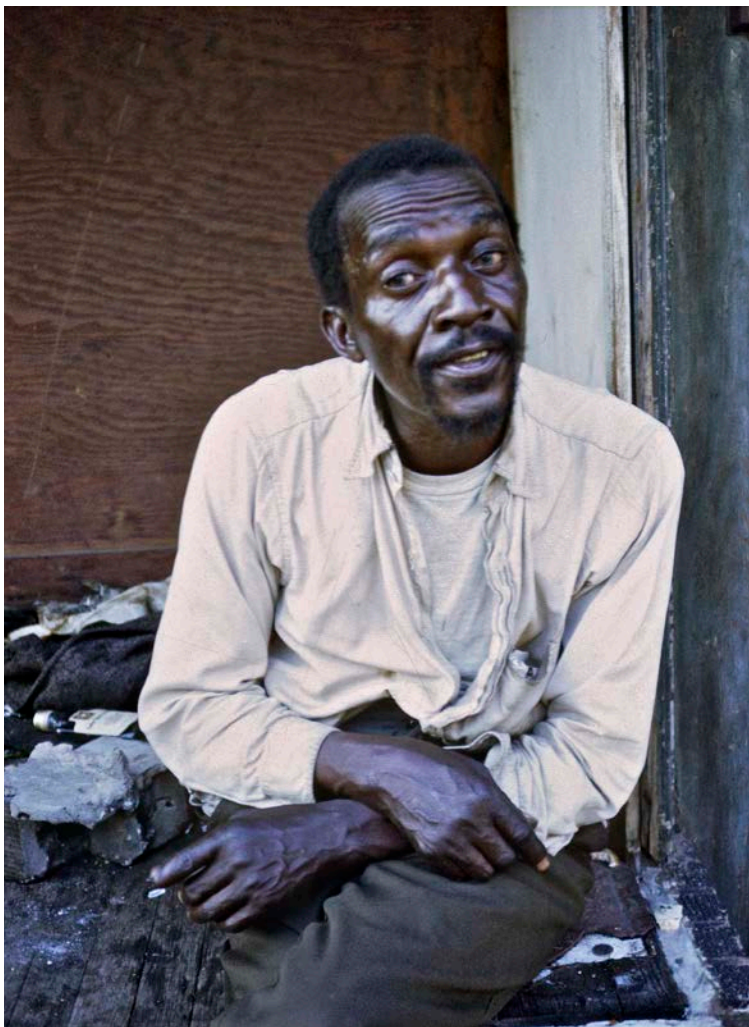
1974 - Washington, DC



1974 - Bronx, NY



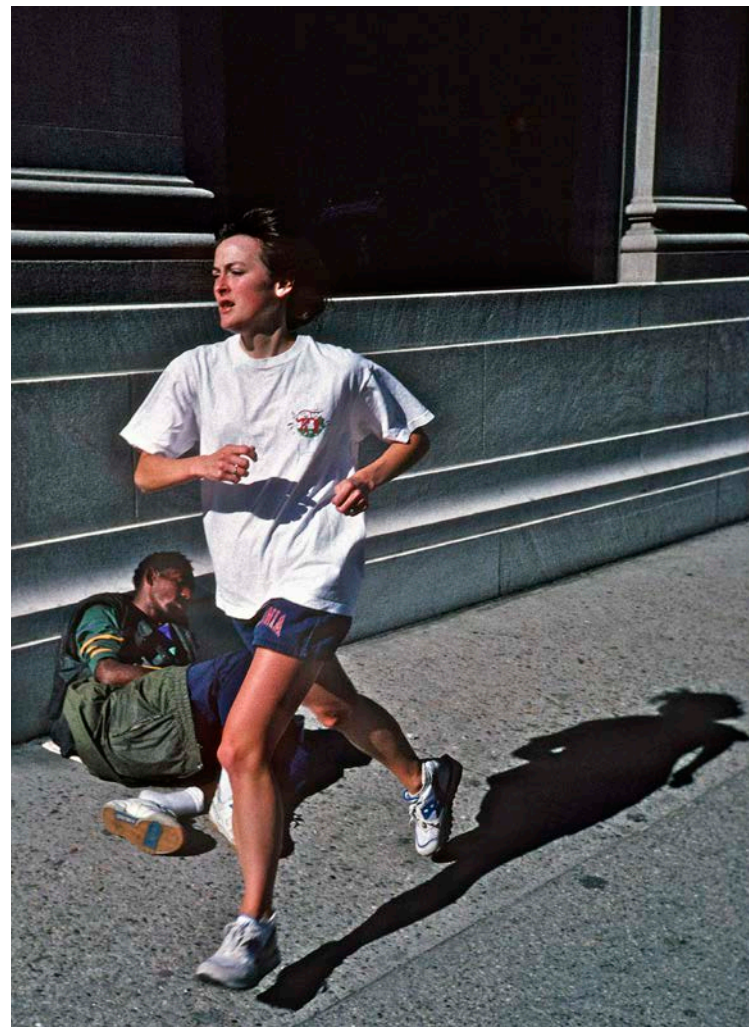
1974 - Bronx, NY



1973 - Baltimore



1974 - Washington, NC



1992 - NYC



1995 - NYC

Interview with a wino:  
“I think everybody was born naked, so we’re all human beings. Until I find someone that was born with clothes on, I’m not going to think they’re any more than me. That’s the way I feel about it.”

*And it might begin to reach you  
Why I give a damn about my fellow man,  
And it might begin to teach you  
How to give a damn about your fellow man.*

This type of “give a damn about your fellow man” journey through Harlem illustrates, in all its saccharine sentimentality, the white liberal way of seeing the ghetto. From the paternal almost loving care of the Southern plantation aristocracy, there’s a direct link to the endless talk about helping one’s fellow man among Northern liberals. Many liberals do great and exhausting work in the ghettos, but whether we breastfeed or bottle feed our outcasts, the result is the same: we’re blaming the victims by trying to accustom them to their unjust outcast fate instead of changing ourselves.

Liberals don’t consider blacks or browns inherently inferior as do conservatives. Instead, we see them as functionally inferior as a result of the injustice, slavery, and discrimination of a distant past. After having experienced this book, they’ll ask in despair: “What can we do?” But we don’t have the courage, or are paralyzed by the fear of looking into the soul to get in touch with our abyss of pain—the pain that makes us such powerless but effective oppressors.

Thus, we liberals, in fact, are one of the most important tools of continued oppression. We help the outcasts adapt to an oppression that renders them functionally inferior enough to satisfy our own liberal needs to administer paternalistic care to the “untermensch” (subhuman).

The black or brown in the ghetto has no time left for the condescending attitude of the liberals and is constantly trying to provoke our true racist/Islamophobic face. They refuse to see as progress the knife in their back pulled from four inches to two inches. They’d rather stab us back into our age-old “white backlash” with these words:

*First of all I want to be loved...  
If I can't be loved, I want to be respected  
If I can't be respected, I want to be recognized  
If I can't be recognized, I want to be accepted  
If I can't be accepted, I want to be noticed  
If I can't be noticed, I want to be feared  
If I can't be feared, I want to be hated*

Blacks’ own view of Harlem invalidates our need to see a victim since they can’t see only the worst in the ghetto without going insane. For instance, they won’t emphasize that 10% of Harlem’s youth are violent criminals terrorizing the streets. They’ll turn it upside down, encouraged by the incredible fact that, despite this criminal environment, 90% of the youth have never been in conflict with the law.

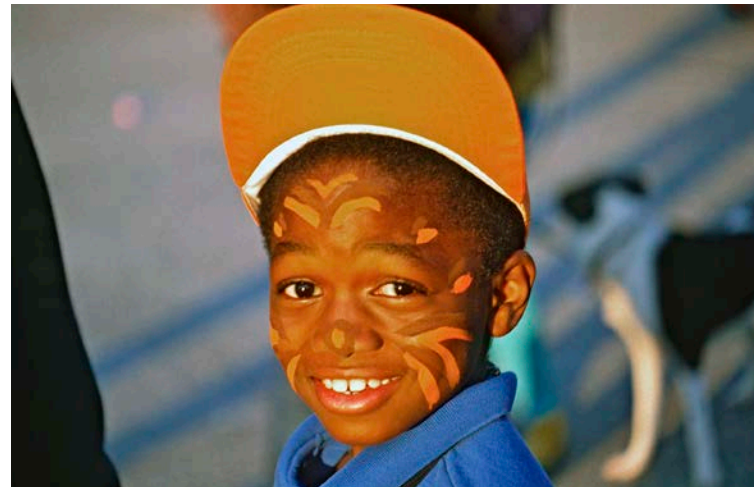
They’ll look at the culture thriving amid the oppression and be heartened by the fact that most of Harlem’s population are surviving. They’ll see the many roses that manage to grow up in this jungle.



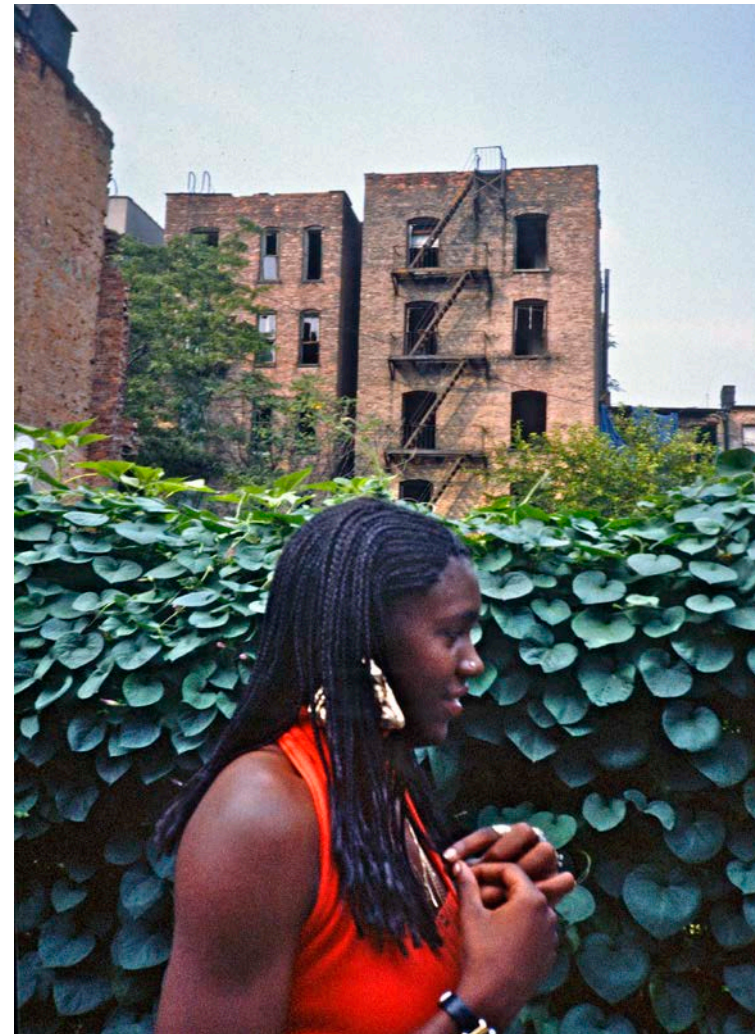
1974 - Harlem, NY



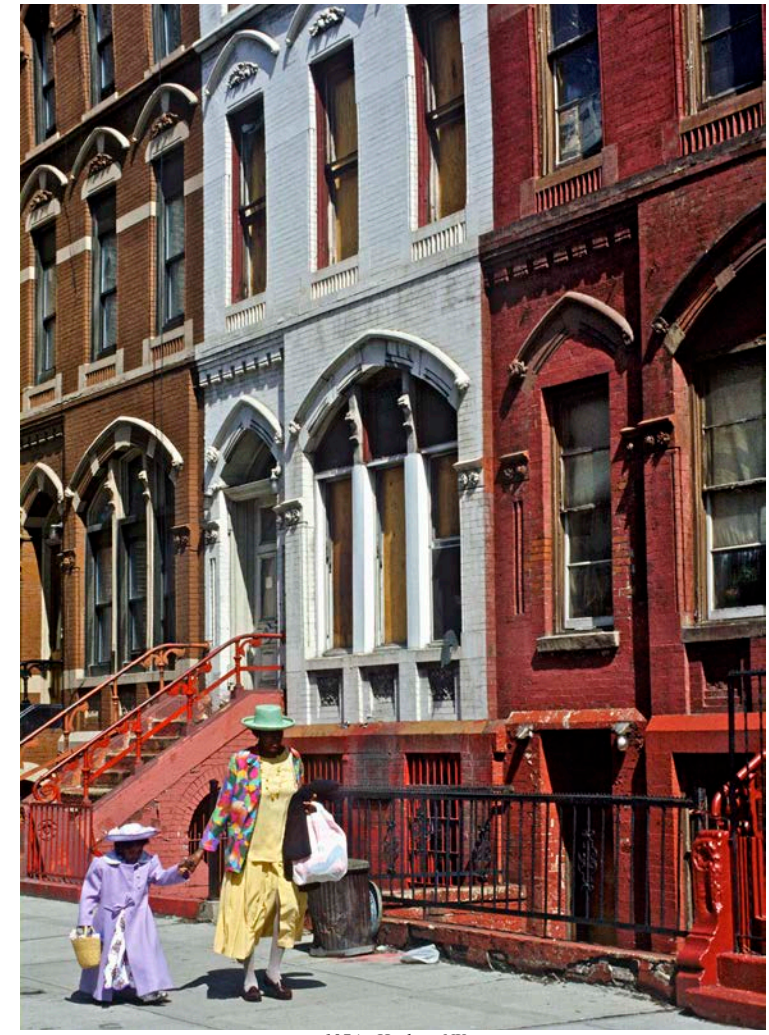
1974 - NYC



1989 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Harlem, NY



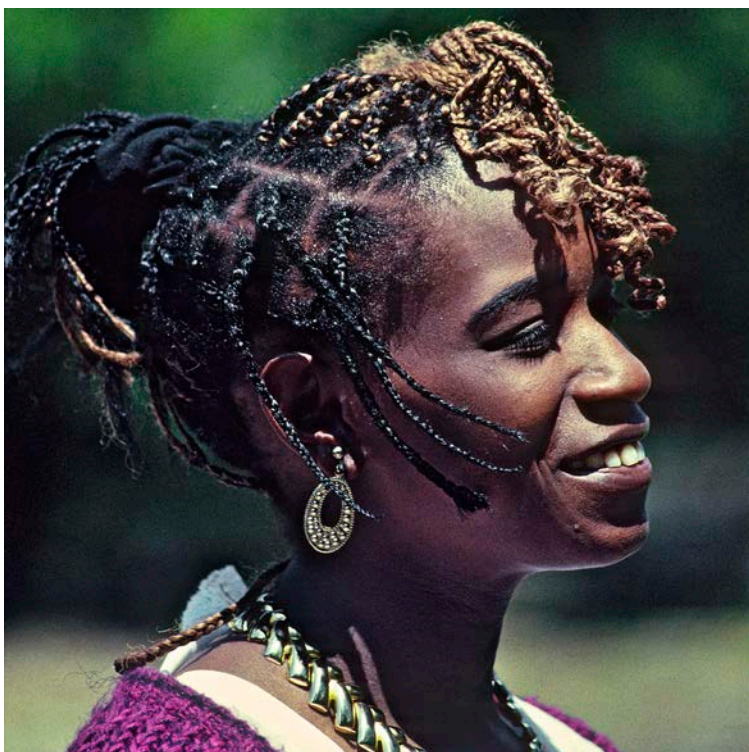
1974 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY



1992 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY

*There is a rose in Spanish Harlem,  
a rose in black and Spanish Harlem.  
It is a special one,  
it never sees the sun  
it only comes out  
when the moon is on the run  
and all the stars are gleaming.  
It's growing in the street  
right up through the concrete  
soft, sweet and dreaming.  
With eyes as black as coal  
they look down in my soul  
and start a fire there  
and then I lose control  
I want to beg her pardon  
I'm going to pick that rose  
and watch her  
as she grows in my garden.*



1973 - Harlem, NY



1973 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Spanish Harlem, NY



1995 - Chicago



1974 - NYC



1974 - NYC



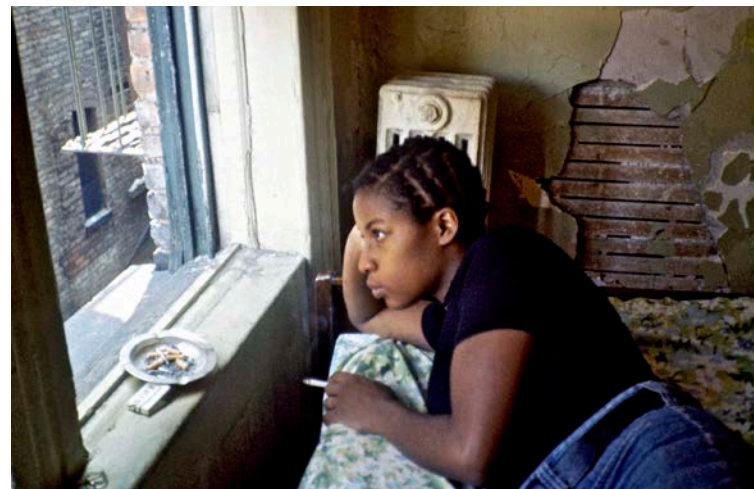
1974 - NYC



1990 - Harlem, NY



1972 - NYC



1972 - NYC



1972 - NYC



1974 - Bronx, NY

For me, such a rose was Marilyn. When I first met her, she was a heroin addict shooting up a couple of times a week. Her situation in the little apartment was desperate, and I admired her for being able to get out of it—I myself sank deeper and deeper into despair while I lived with her. Never in my life have I lived in such oppressive and soul-annihilating conditions. I was able neither to think nor write in the apartment. It's wasn't only the constant break-ins; it was the fear of them, the fear of what might happen next time as well as the fear of walking into the hallway or the street, where you could be attacked with a knife or gun. Narrowness you can become accustomed to. You can get used to a dinner table that also functions as a bathtub in the kitchen. You can get used to having a wire fence between the kitchen and the bedroom so that the rats won't get in and bite your face. And it soon becomes a morning habit to brush the dead cockroaches, on which you've slept all night, out of the bed. Even the shootings and police sirens on America's violent TV shows knocking through the walls can be a pleasant relief from similar sounds coming from the street.

But the persistent fear of that moment when you yourself might get stabbed in the stomach—that you can never get used to. I was attacked even on Christmas Eve. By three gunmen. How I survived living with Marilyn you must not ask me. It's a paradox that, in the richest country in the world, the word "survival," which I'd never even heard before coming to America except in connection with Darwin, has become an everyday concept. But ask rather how Marilyn survived it—not only in body but also in mind. Not only did she survive, but she was even able to wrench herself out of the ghetto and become an actress in San Francisco. Yes, she was a rose who managed to spring up through the asphalt. All over the world we oppressors love to use such encouraging exceptions to further oppress our victims with. We constantly assure each other—with rosy stories of individuals or a black middleclass or an Obama having made it—that we're not only fair but virtually saints. It is a mean-spirited and calculated effort to show that there's something wrong with all those not making it, again blaming our captives for their own captivity.



1973 - Bronx, NY

But Harlem was far from being the worst ghetto in New York. In the South Bronx, where European film crews often shot their footage on the wartime destruction of Germany, there were districts where nine out of ten people died an unnatural death—murder, hunger, overdose, rat bites, etc. In the Brownsville ghetto, I saw two murders and heard of four others the same day.

Most oppressors have difficulty understanding how we build ghettos. There are, for instance, no walls around a ghetto, and it's not necessarily a result of bad housing. It's not only the underclass we ghettoize.

That the ghetto is not anything concrete, like the broken bottles and litter, I saw in Detroit, where housing was far better than in Harlem. Here I was fortunate enough to get to live on both sides of the dividing line between the ghetto and the white areas – all the way out there where every white house is up for sale.



1974 - Saratoga, NY

I can understand many things about white racism, but to this day it's an absolute mystery to me why these whites are moving away from everything they've built up and come to love just because a black family moves into the neighborhood. These better-off blacks live up to the stodgy white middleclass demands in every single respect—a well-cut lawn, a hedge, rhododendrons. And this is what the neighborhood would continue to look like if whites didn't flee.

At the same time, these blacks have a culture far more American than that of the European and Asian immigrants whom we immediately accept into our so-called melting pot. When I lived on the white side of the embarrassing ghetto fence of For Sale signs, hardly anyone could offer any logic for moving except the mistaken one about “declining property values,” which only happens because they all sell out at once. Thus, I experienced it as one great white American conspiracy to prevent blacks from gaining access to the melting pot, masterminded through various forms of illegal redlining by the National Association of Realtors.

One reason I myself often had to flee to the cooler suburbs was the stifling summer temperatures in the red- or rather heat-lined ghettos, with much concrete and asphalt—up to 20 degrees higher as the NY Times has since proven—compared to the tree-covered de facto white neighborhoods. Every time I left, I felt I'd betrayed the black underclass. For when, with our white privilege, we flee to what become attractive neighborhoods, house values and assets rise, and we can borrow against our equity to send our children to expensive universities to get further ahead. But this is stolen wealth since in this process we cause the housing values of blacks to collapse in the areas we turn into ghettos, preventing them from taking out loans secured by their assets, thus making them poorer and poorer. Through this aversive racism, every white in the '70s had made themselves six times richer than every black. Money multiplies, and by year 2000 we'd become eight times richer. After the tax cuts of the Bush years, 12 times as rich as each black.

And today, after the financial crisis—caused by our racism when we gave valueless subprime loans to the struggling black middleclass—we've made ourselves 20 times as rich.



1991 - Freeman's quarter, Houston, TX

On the other side of the fence, I experienced every white who moved as a stab in the heart of the blacks. The older blacks would do everything to please the whites, but the young ones were far more sensitive. The sudden feeling of being forever shut out of society's mainstream—seeing someone remove the ladder leading to the “American Dream” at the very moment you're closer to it than ever—naturally triggers resentment. Sometimes violent. Our stab in their hearts will change a few of these otherwise well-behaved youths into mischief-makers, churning up hate for the remaining whites on the ghetto fringe, who then blame the victim and move.

I'm not dealing much in this book with the problems of the middleclass, but I couldn't help seeing a direct link between the violence we commit against the dignity and self-worth of these people on the frontiers of the ghetto and the violence I experienced in the inner ghettos, between our white all-American stab in the heart of the black middleclass and the frightening backstabbing in the underclass.

I saw the explosion of black crime in the '70s as a result of the irrational anger caused by our white betrayal and therefore didn't understand why it declined in the '90s. Only then did I understand how this crime wave also was caused by white flight. When the big oil companies put lead into gas in the 1940s, studies show it started affecting the brains of developing children, causing increased aggression and reduced impulse control when they became teenagers. This disproportionately affected the black children whom we'd forced into unattractive inner-city areas right next to highways and refineries as seen here in Philadelphia and the Fourth Ward in Houston, where George Floyd grew up. Moreover, the houses whites left to them were full of poisonous lead. I often saw children looking incredibly dumb (brain damaged) or sitting gnawing on lead pipes. And certainly I saw that generation act out through unbelievable “dumb” violent crime. In the '70s the United States began to phase out leaded gasoline, and newborns were steadily exposed to less lead—the



1986 - Philadelphia, PA. Project next to the freeway and ESSO oil refinery

reason crime started falling dramatically 20 years later. Thus, I came to understand that the ghetto is a white socially enforced continuation of chattel slavery's violent milieu. When this internalized white violence comes under direct pressure from unemployment, which is especially severe in Detroit, it explodes in physical violence. Just as the number of black divorces fluctuates with unemployment, so do murder and violence against family members.

Almost every time I came back to Detroit, more of my black friends had been killed. This letter to my parents, written during my first months in America, shows how I immediately sensed the Golgotha-stab of white racism behind the bleeding of a people on the cross.



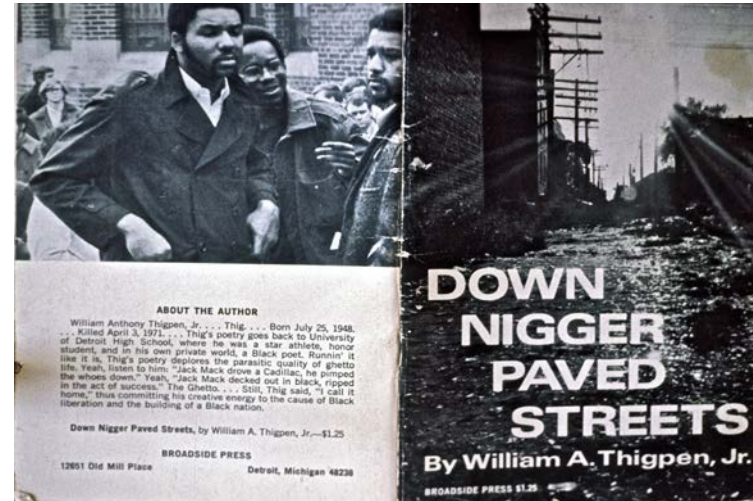
1971 - Alexandria, VA

# Easter in Detroit

(or St. John 19, 31-37)

Dear Mom and Dad,  
This is the most shocking Easter I have ever experienced. I am now in Detroit, which is nothing less than a night-mare. On the way from San Francisco I stopped off in Chicago to visit Denia, the young black writer I lived with at Christmas. Even there the horrors began. You remember the two girlfriends of hers that she and I spent so much time with? She told me that one of them, Theresa - that tender, quiet nineteen-year-old girl - has since been murdered. She was probably killed by someone she knew, since it seems she opened the door to the murderers. She was found by her fiancé, shot and cut up with knives. She was the second person I have known in America who has been murdered. Denia has now bought a gun and has begun target-practicing. That night in Chicago I also experienced my first big shoot-out, probably between police and criminals. We were on a visit on Mohawk Street when it suddenly broke out down below in the darkness. I tried to look out, but Denia pulled me away from the window. Well, I have almost forgotten all that, compared with the things that have happened here in Detroit. First I lived with a well-off automobile-worker's family in one of the respectable black neighborhoods at the seven-mile limit, way out there where the white areas begin. Their son in college, Dwight Vann, had picked me up and invited me home - the third black home I have lived in. Beautiful people. (note: Dwight was killed the year after). Easter morning they took me to church. But then I moved into the ghetto itself with three students, and since then it has been a nightmare. One of the first days I was here, Thigpen, whom I had just been introduced to, was murdered. He was a fantastic person, big as a bear, and a poet (I am sending you his collection, *Down Nigger Paved Streets*). Apparently for no other reason than that he had written a harmless poem about the narcotics trade in the city, he was found the other day executed by narcotics gangsters along with two of his friends. They were tied up and laid on the floor and shot in the back of the head. But what shocked me most was the reaction of the three I am living with. One of them, Jeff, had known Thigpen for years and is photographed with him in a book. But Jeff just came in calmly with the newspaper one morning saying, "Hey, you remember this dude, Thigpen, you met the other day? Look, they blew him away too." It made no greater impression. This is how they react to all of the violence, which really is getting to me. But still, they are afraid themselves. It is not only me who is trembling from fear here.

The nights are the worst. I'm beginning to get really down from



1971 - Detroit

the lack of sleep. Jeff and the two others sleep upstairs, while I stay down in the living room. Every night they shove the refrigerator in front of the door and put some empty bottles on top, so that any attempt to open the door will make the bottles fall and wake them up. One night the cat leaped upon the refrigerator and knocked over the bottles with a crash, so I shot upstairs to the others. I am a nervous wreck by now and constantly lie listening for footsteps outside (nobody but robbers dares to go on foot at night in Detroit as far as I can tell from here). Once in a while I hear shots outside. I have never really trembled before, but now I sometimes get the same jelly-like sensation as that night I was mugged in San Francisco. My heartbeat alone is enough to keep me awake.

In fact, I really didn't think I had closed my eyes once the entire week, until I suddenly woke up from a terrible nightmare. I almost never dream now when I am traveling, but that night I dreamed about a sunny day when I was eleven, lying on the living room floor at home in the parsonage. I was lying there eating oranges, I remember, when the radio news announced the murder of Lumumba. I didn't understand anything then, yet I remember it vividly. This scene I now saw clearly before me in the nightmare, but it kept changing to another scene somewhere in Africa, where I was lying on the ground while some Africans fired one machine-gun burst after another at me. I shouted to them to stop, but the bullets just kept on drilling into me, a terrible sensation. I woke up to this real Detroit nightmare, which I now suddenly found quite peaceful in comparison, and a bit later I managed to get a couple of hours of sleep.



1996 - Detroit

But the nightmares are not always over when day breaks. One of the first days I was there, I ventured out in the streets on foot. Scarcely half an hour had gone by before a police car with two white cops stopped short and they called me over to the car. I was almost happy to see white faces again and walked over. They asked to see my ID. You are constantly being stopped like this when you walk around in the ghetto. I often ask myself what difference there really is between being in the ghetto here and being a black in South Africa, when you must constantly show your identity papers to white policemen. So almost automatically I stuck my hand down into my shoulder bag to get out my passport. Immediately the cops' pistols jumped out right into my face: "Hold it!" It is a terrible experience to be looking into the muzzle of a gun, and I began trembling from fear. But nothing happened, they were just afraid that I had a pistol in my bag. It felt like a miracle that their guns had not gone off. How can people live in such a world where they have so little trust in each other? They gave me the usual warning: "You better get yourself or of this neighborhood quick!" I had regained my self-confidence and answered audaciously, "I live here!" The longer I live here, the more I look at the whites with the eyes of the blacks, and I can't help but harbor an ever-increasing hatred for them. It is a strange sensation to live in a city like Detroit where you never see anything but black faces around you. Little by little you undergo a slow change. The black faces become close and familiar, and therefore warm, while the white faces seem distant and unknown and therefore cold. In spite of all the horrors, I certainly have no desire to go out into the cold icy wastes out

there where the ghetto stops. So you can probably understand the shock I get each time I turn on the TV and suddenly see nothing but white faces. Yes, in a strange way the white faces become a substantial part of the Detroit nightmare. For it is not only the crime which keeps me awake at night. It's just as much the television and the radio. Everywhere in the ghettos of Detroit and Chicago it's a habit among the blacks to leave the television and the radio on throughout the night to make robbers think you are still awake. Another thing is that they have gradually become so accustomed to sleeping with the TV and radio on that it has become a kind of narcotic; many of them simply cannot fall asleep without this noise.

I discovered this one day when Denia and I wanted to take a nap in Chicago and she automatically turned on the TV so as to fall asleep. It is shocking how early some people become addicted to this noise-narcotic. When lived with Orline, this beautiful young black mother in Jackson, fifty miles outside Detroit, I discovered that it was almost impossible for us to live together. When we went to bed she always turned on the radio. I then lay there waiting for her to fall asleep, after which I slowly tried to turn down the volume, as otherwise it was absolutely impossible for me to fall asleep. But every time I got the volume down to a certain level, it made her two children, two and three years old, wake up and start crying, so I immediately had to turn, the volume again. I could only take it for two nights, after which I had to move. We were simply, as Orline said "culturally incompatible."



1973 - Jackson, MI - Orline and children





1974 - Detroit

But I think there are terrifying implications if so many blacks in the urban ghettos are equally dependent on this noise. You quite simply cannot imagine in Denmark how primitive American radio is: the constant boom-boom music interrupted every other minute by what they call “messages”. All the time you hear the soporific message, “Leave the driving to us.” It all feels like one big white conspiracy against the blacks. Just as they bombed the South Vietnamese population into “strategic villages” in order to brainwash it, so it almost seems as if in the USA they have forced the blacks away from the small villages into these big psychic concentration camps, where they can better control them with the mass media.

It is incredible how as a result of this oppression they conform almost to the letter to every view of their oppressors. In the South you could at least think, but here you are constantly bombarded with what others want you to think - or rather, you are prevented from thinking. Doesn't all this music and noise stifle a person's capacity for independent and intellectual development? Is it strange that many of these people seem like zombies, as they themselves jokingly call it?

The three I live with are some of the few politically active people in Detroit. Jeff has given me some books about Cuba that he wants me to read. But it is impossible for me to read in these surroundings, with all the noise, nervousness, trembling, and fear of something, though you don't even know what that something is. Jeff is one of the increasing number of blacks who have traveled illegally to Cuba through Canada. He tells me so many fantastic things about it, and I listen, but much of it seems so irrelevant in these cruel surroundings. He says that Cuba is the first place he has been able to breathe freely. All the Cubans are armed, just as here in Detroit, but nevertheless he was never afraid in Cuba. The only thing which disappointed him was that the Cuban blacks don't yet have Afro hairstyles.

Jeff was so happy in Cuba that he tried everything possible to avoid being sent back to the U.S., but he was not allowed



1971 - Chris, Aaron and Jerry in Detroit

to stay. Now, after the trip, he has had problems with the FBI, who twice visited his parents. His student aid was suddenly cut off and he was expelled from college. He has therefore become a taxi driver, and goes around in his own dream world reading books about Cuba in the taxi. He told me laughing one day that he “held himself up” a few weeks ago. Since taxi drivers are always being mugged he “stole” \$50 from himself, called the police, and said the robber was black, looked so and so, and ran in that direction. Then he did not have to work any more that day and drove out to Belle Isle to read his books on Cuba.

Unfortunately, he does not want to use his experiences to work politically here in Detroit; the system is so massive and oppressive that it's no use, he says. So now he is just working to get back to Cuba. He does, however, want to go to Washington in two days to demonstrate against the Vietnam war. One million are expected. We will drive down together. I can hardly wait to get out of this hell, and only hope it is more peaceful in Washington so I can get some rest. But I have to come back to Detroit. Just as in Chicago, I have met such warm people here that I simply cannot fathom their goodness toward me. I cannot understand how two such cruel and oppressive cities can contain such exceptional people. It has to be possible for me to learn to live with the ghetto, for I must come back to these people. But it will take me a long time to get used to the conditions. Just a trip to the corner store in the evening requires that we take the car. Jeff and the two others simply do not dare to walk one-and-a-half blocks!

I will remember Detroit as an endless gliding drive through a ghost-town to the sound of the car radio's newest black hit, “For god's sake, give more power to the people,” which is being pounded into my head. And then every day the newest murder statistics. Since it's Easter week, only 26 people were murdered. They expect to reach 1,000 before Christmas! More lives are lost in one year in the civil war here than in six years in Northern Ireland.



1972 - Detroit



1971 - Philadelphia, PA

Yet in the newspapers, “five people killed in yesterday's violence in Detroit” merit only a notice on page 18, while the front page headlines decry the loss of two lives in Northern Ireland's “tragic” civil war. By the way, did the Danish papers write about the stigmatized black girl, who was bleeding during Easter?

### A BLOODY RECORD FOR 'KILL CITY'

Over the years, Detroiters have dubbed their town “Kill City” and “The Murder Capital of the Nation,” and for the most part, they seemed to accept the city's staggering homicide rate as tragic but inevitable. This year, however, even the most nonchalant Detroiters have been shocked by an unprecedented tidal wave of murder. Last week the Motor City topped its 1972 total of 693 killings, and experts predicted that this year's toll would eventually hit at least 750. That would mean one murder for every 1,806 city residents—compared to ratios of one to 3,864 for Chicago, one to 4,779 for Houston and one to 4,820 for New York. And Detroit's prospects for next year are even worse. Police officials estimate that Detroiters have armed themselves with an astonishing total of some 500,000 handguns—one for every third man, woman and child in the murderous city.

Annual murder rates per 100,000 population as of June 1973	
Detroit	49.4*
Cleveland	36.8
Washington	36.5
St. Louis	36.3
New Orleans	33.7
Baltimore	28.0
Memphis	26.8
Chicago	25.9
Dallas	24.9
Philadelphia	21.3
Houston	20.9
New York City	20.7

\*annual rate as of Dec. 1, 1973

Tom Markov  
Newsweek, December 17, 1973

Anyway, I hope you have had a more peaceful Easter.

With love, Jacob.

American ghettos stretch out in thick belts, five to ten miles wide, around downtown business districts as seen here in Houston, where the rich live in the city and the poor in slums on the outskirts. The underclass is constantly being squeezed and pushed around. Urban “removal” (as blacks call it) - supposedly for the underclass’s benefit, is used to get rid of, concentrate, or hide our undesirables. This is particularly true in historic Harlem, from where most blacks today have been pushed. It often made me cry to see how historic European-looking “slum” neighborhoods were being plowed under and stood on end, as here in Baltimore’s cozy and charming ghetto.

Stacked up, you feel even more confined, and, accordingly, crime increases proportionately with the height of these vertical slums. In Philadelphia the street gangs were replaced by floor gangs who struggled floor against floor with each other—it could mean death to get off the elevator on the wrong floor. More than 100 street gang members, aged 12 to 17, were killed there every year. One of them was a local street vendor who made a living selling my book American Pictures. I had several friends who were held up at gunpoint by 10- or 11-year-old children who also shoot wildly around with Uzi submachine guns.

By giving them a sentence often twice their age, we whites hope to have removed a part of the ghetto. In the same futile way, we demolish the houses in the ghetto without removing the causes of the ghetto. Though five out of six housing-code violations in slums are proven to be from the neglect of landlords, not their despairing tenants, the blame-the-poor myth that “people cause slums” persists. A couple of slumlords I lived with in huge mansions outside the cities were certainly helpful in spreading such ideas.

Yet having lived for years in those old dilapidated apartments handed over to the poor when they are already worn out and used up, I never witnessed any tenant destruction of the type which creates a slum: leaking roofs, sagging floors and stairways, defective plumbing, sewer pipes, and wiring. But never will I forget the pain and anguish I went through with my best friends in the Fillmore ghetto, Johari and Lance, when their daughter died after falling through a rotten window their slumlord had for years refused to bring up to code. Her funeral is seen in the end of the book.



1973 - Baltimore



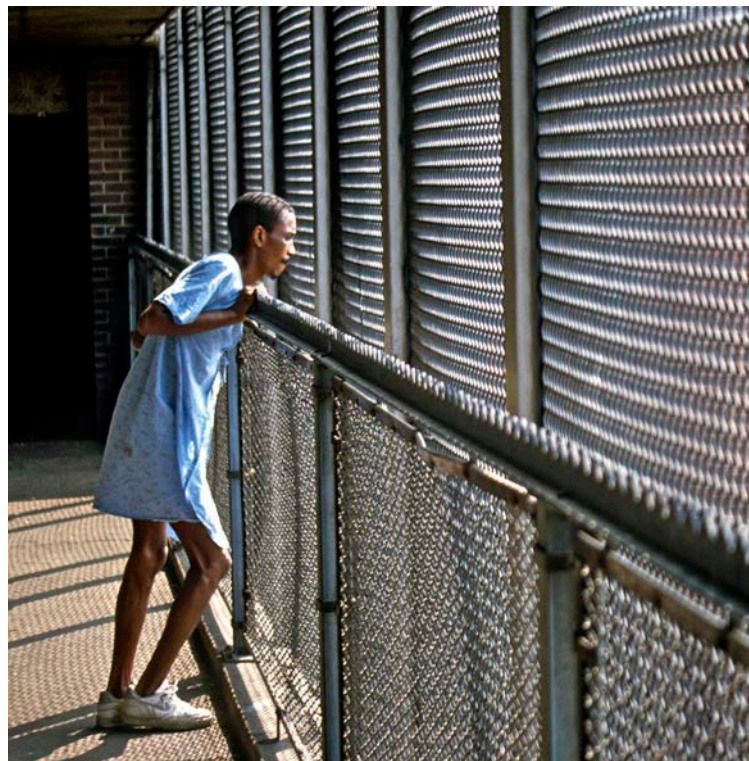
1973 - Baltimore



1974 - Philadelphia, PA



1975 - Richmond, VA



1997 - Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago



1997 - Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago



1973 - Lake Forest, IL

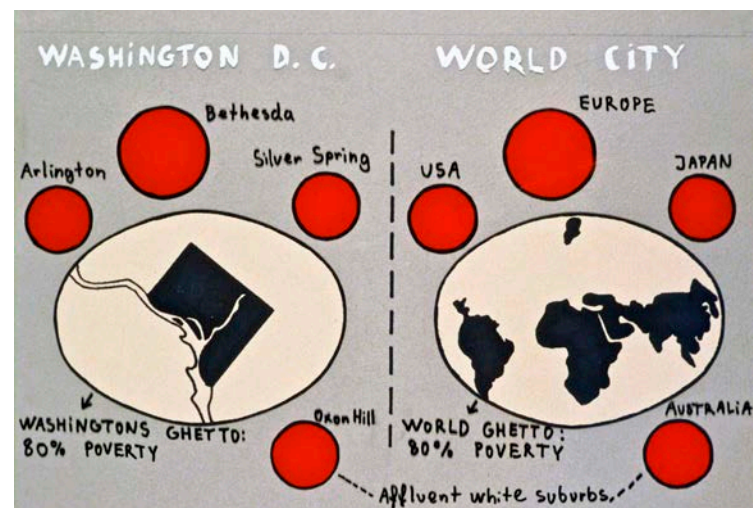
It's a paradox that we always look for the cause of the ghetto inside the ghetto itself, when it's implied in the very concept of "ghetto" that the causes are to be found outside. Especially in the affluent white suburbs encircling every city. Here we have trees, swimming pools, and every opportunity to thrive in the world. We live outside the city limits so our children won't have to go to school with undesirables, and we avoid paying taxes to the city although we get our income from it. Thus, cities have become poorer and poorer. A typical city, like Washington DC, is similar in this respect to the city we all live in—the world city. The centers of both cities are 80% slums inhabited by people of color, and around them we've put the lavish suburbs of Europe, USA, Japan, China, and Australia. Suburbanites own most of the businesses inside the ghetto and bring home huge profits but refuse to pay taxes to the city. Like the ghetto of the world, Washington is getting poorer and poorer, and we need to send developmental aid to give back a little of what we took.

Although the net flow of capital out of poor countries is greater than what we return, most of us are convinced that we're generous and so resent the rising anger and terrorism against the West in the Third World. Our ignorance is often expressed in our choice of leaders, such as Trump, who goes it alone against all other nations, refusing to recognize the need to repay some of the huge profits from unequal trade agreements, loans, underpriced raw materials, climate destruction, and tax havens.

Similarly, we're unable to understand the Black Lives Matter anger of our ghettos—we're unaware of life in our own capital just outside its beautiful cherry-blossoming tourist areas. During my first trip in the 1970s, Washington, capital of the world's richest country—was treated as a hunger-emergency district. Since the 1980s, the city has mostly resembled a civil-war zone, with drug wars in the streets unequalled outside the Third World. The crime we fear from poor countries, especially in the form of terrorism, has long since become commonplace in DC, which had over 2,000% more armed robberies a year than similar cities in Europe. The number of murders in Washington was 50% higher than in the whole of Britain (as I wrote in the 1984 edition of this book). But today, as the children of our outcasts in Europe have begun to grow up, the picture is changing. England has now overtaken the United States in robberies.



1973 - Washington DC



1973 - Washington DC

One out of ten inhabitants in black areas of the city was a drug addict (as reported one year by Washington Post). These two addicts, who attacked me but later invited me home, live only three blocks from the Capitol, whose white dome can be seen in the background. Although members of Congress dare not go on foot to their homes after work, they continue to increase military expenditures in their paranoid fear of the rest of the world while making cuts in social appropriations. Of what use is the bulletproof vest when death comes from the heart? A month before I lived with these addicts, a cop was shot in their hallway, and a woman was murdered in this very room—the last glimpse she got of this stronghold of democracy and freedom.



1973 - Washington DC



1971 - Alexandria, VA



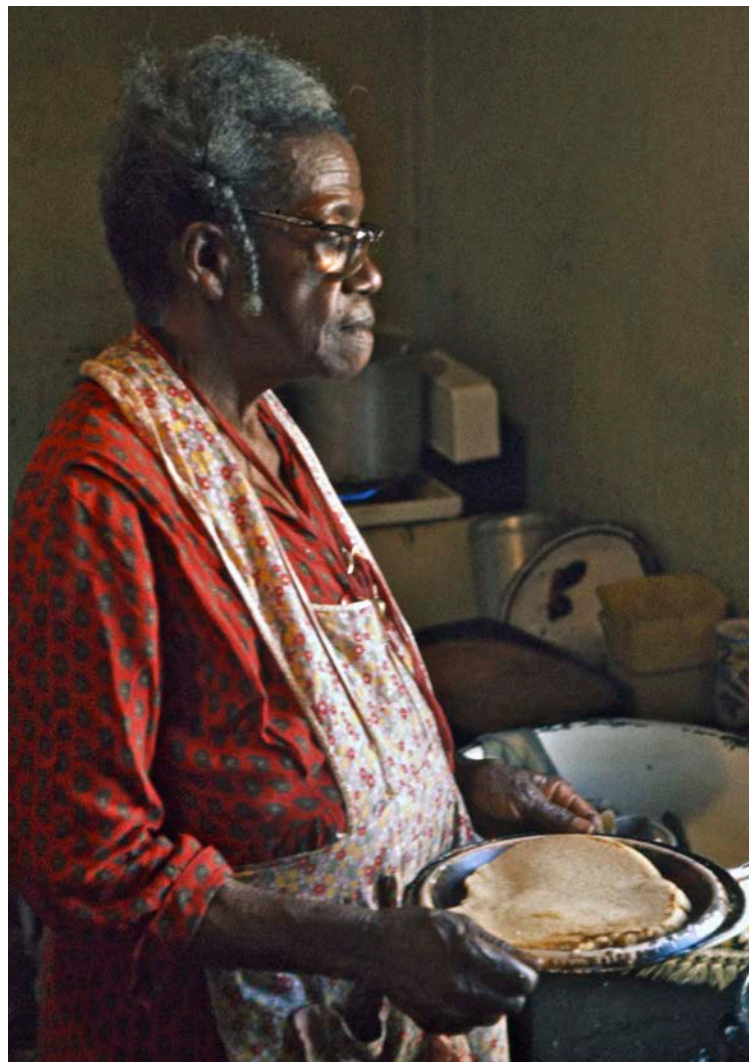
1974 - Elizabethtown, NC



1975 - "Thought for Food" San Francisco



1974- NYC



1974 - Greenville, NC

When we lock people up in a ghetto, our violence against them eventually turns on us. By comparing it with another ghetto—the “gray” ghetto of old people—I understood why those we confine find it impossible to escape. There are no visible walls around the gray ghetto either, but the dependence of the elderly on crumbs from the rich imprisons them in a psychology of powerlessness that resembles slavery’s. As with the underclass, many elderly are so handicapped they can’t hold good jobs and have no possibility of improving their economic situations. The feeling of having no power over your own life, of being utterly reliant on handouts from the wealthy, is part of the psychopathology of the ghetto, creating in many elderly minds authority figures resembling black psychology’s “The Man.”

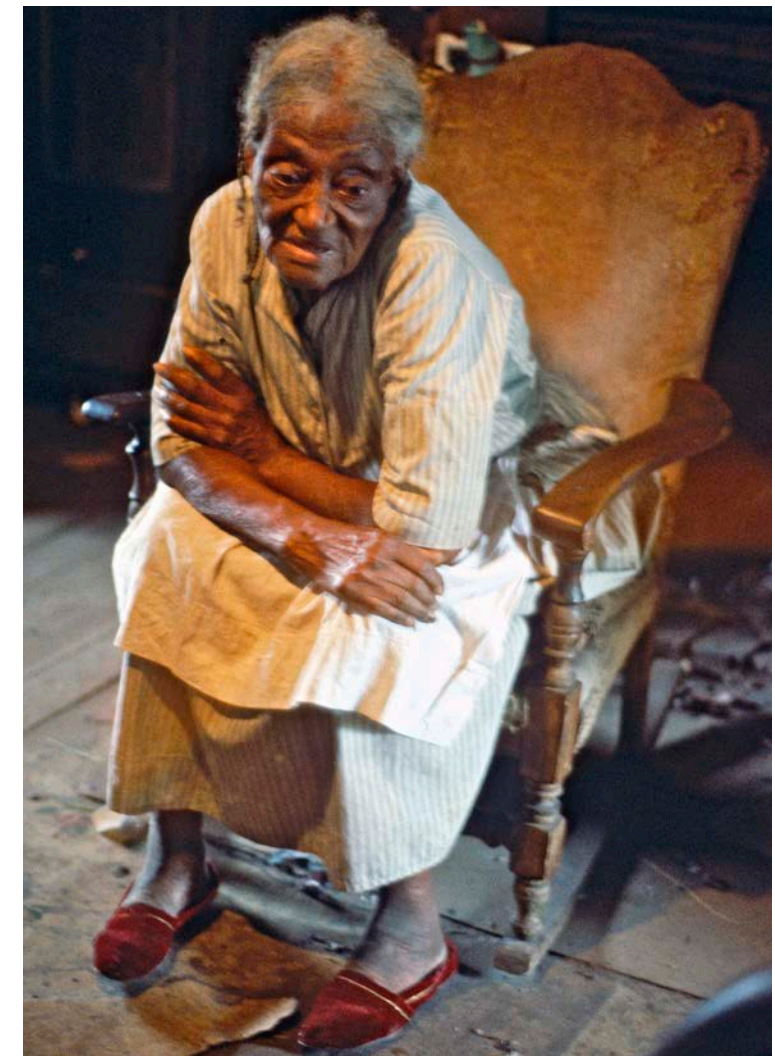
The gray ghetto is linked to our black and immigrant ghettos since poverty forces these populations into the same neighborhoods where the old are often as discriminated against and forgotten by society as blacks in general. The elderly sometimes die of hunger in their homes because they’re terrified of venturing out to buy food. I found this old woman, with the “smile” sign in the window, to be the closest neighbor to Congress, which condemned her to a pension 40% below the official poverty line. In the South, I met old people who weren’t able to get social security at all. Thousands receive less than the official minimum of \$1400 per month. Used to European welfare states, with social and health personnel who visit homes to cook, clean, and shop for the elderly or infirm, I found the neglect of the elderly in the US even more appalling.



1973 - "Smile" in Washington, DC



1973 - Baltimore



1978 - Waynesboro, GA



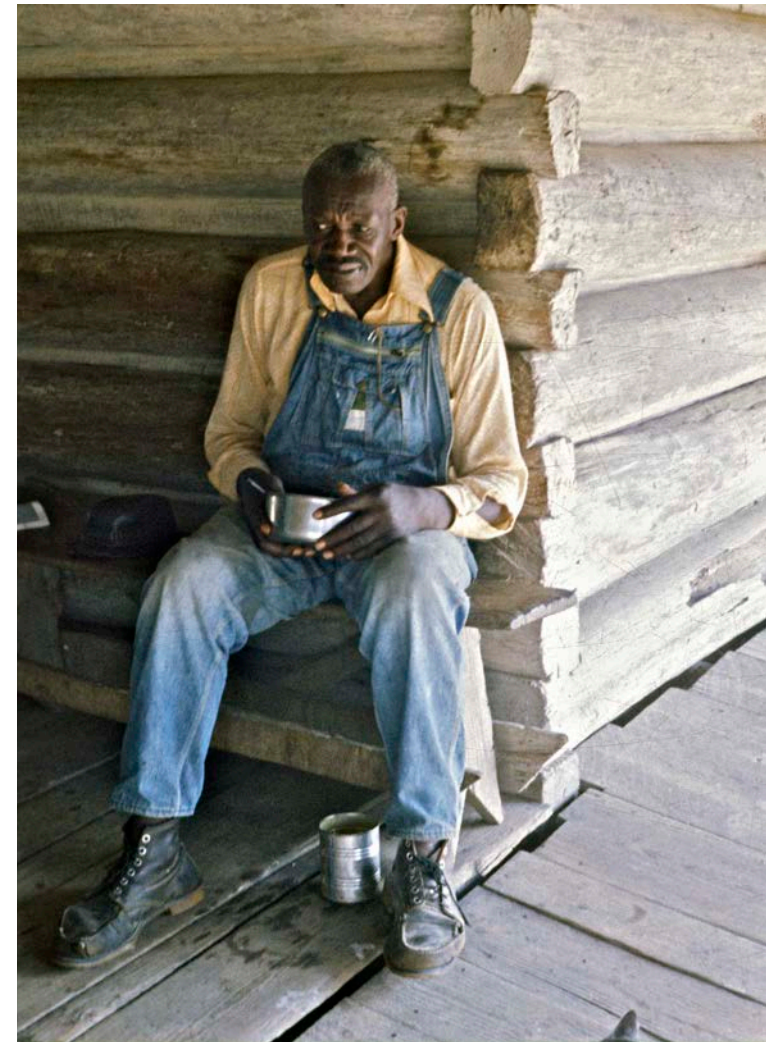
1974 - Washington, NC



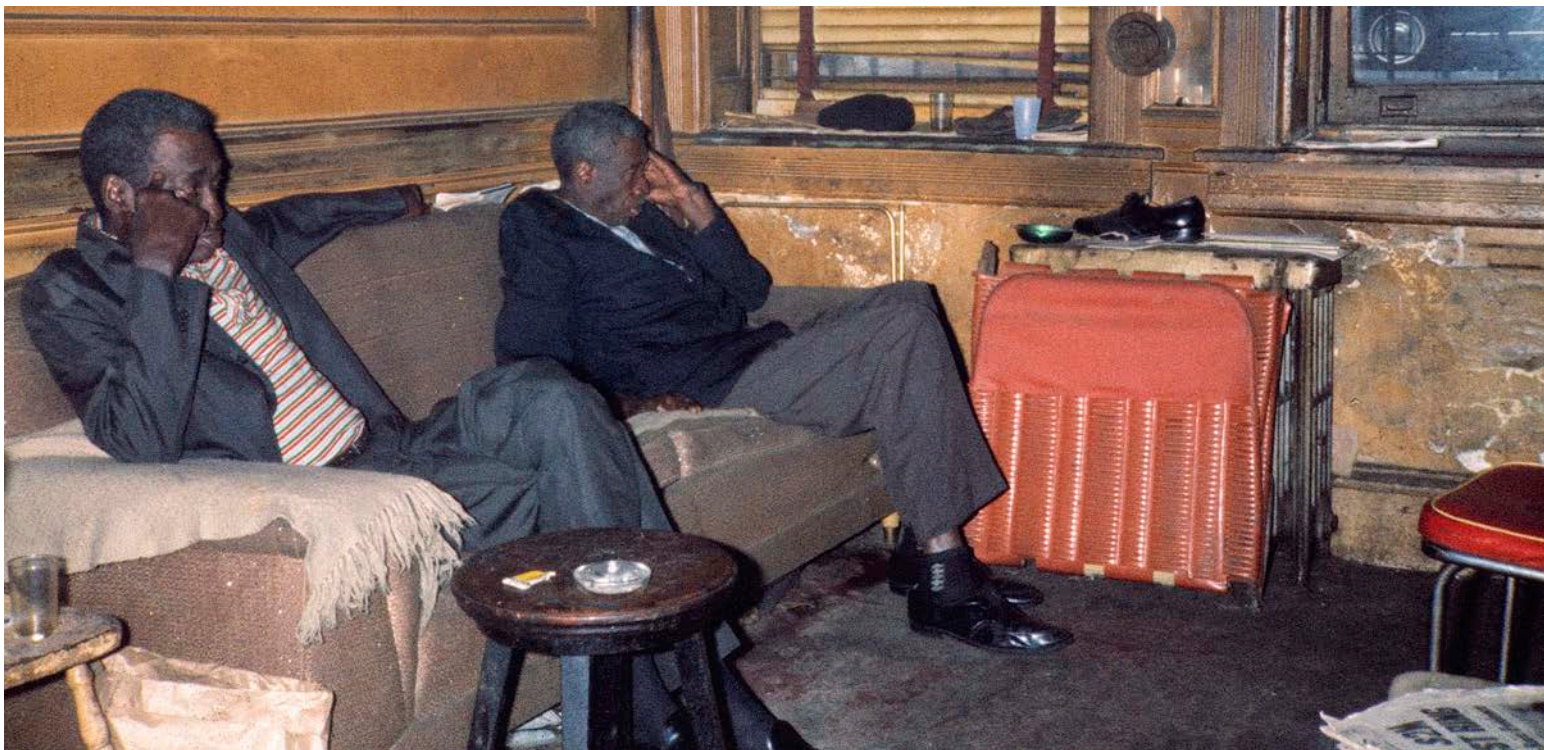
1974 - Norfolk, VA



1974 - Allendale County, SC



1975 - Notasulga, AL



1973 - Harlem, NY



1972 - NYC

This old Jewish woman, who became one of my best New York friends, had emigrated from Russia before the revolution. Her hope was that Congress would permit her to return to communist Russia so she could live her last years in "freedom from hunger and freedom from fear," as she put it in 1972. She was starving, never had meat when she had food, and was often mugged. Yet she had a deep love for the blacks in her neighborhood. With her own Eastern European ghettoization and persecution in vivid memory, she, like many American Jews, had a deep commitment to the black struggle and felt tormented because blacks had to suffer like her. A majority of whites killed during the Civil Rights Movement were in fact Jews. Similarly, most of my lectures in America are organized by this minority, with its painfully acquired insight into oppression. Their deep solidarity with other oppressed people stems from their historical need to observe the accumulation of pain among other oppressed groups. That pain has traditionally been manipulated by rulers and used against the Jews. In both black American and brown Danish ghettos, this pain manifests itself in sporadic anti-Semitism among people who don't feel they are loved and respected by society.



1974 - Tarboro, NC



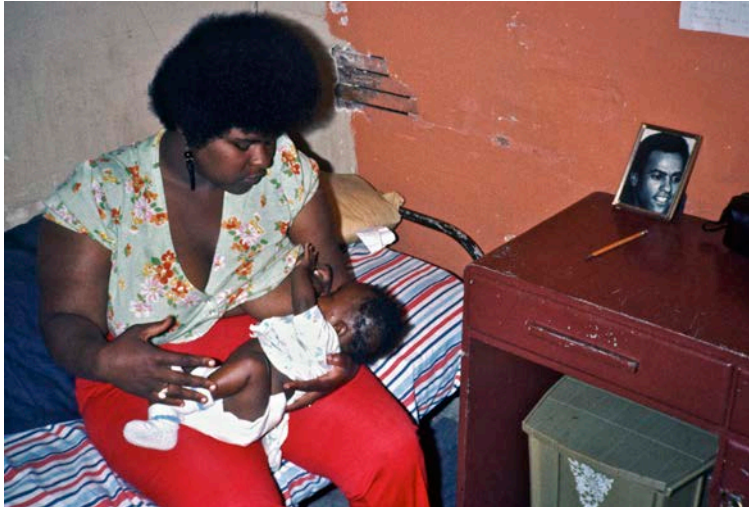
1975 - Bullock County, AL



1975 - Waynesboro, GA



1975 - Notasulga, AL



1975 - Oakland, CA. Black Panther with Huey Newton photo



1972 - Detroit



1992 - Burke County, GA



1990 - Robert Taylor Homes, Chicago



1978 - Augusta, GA

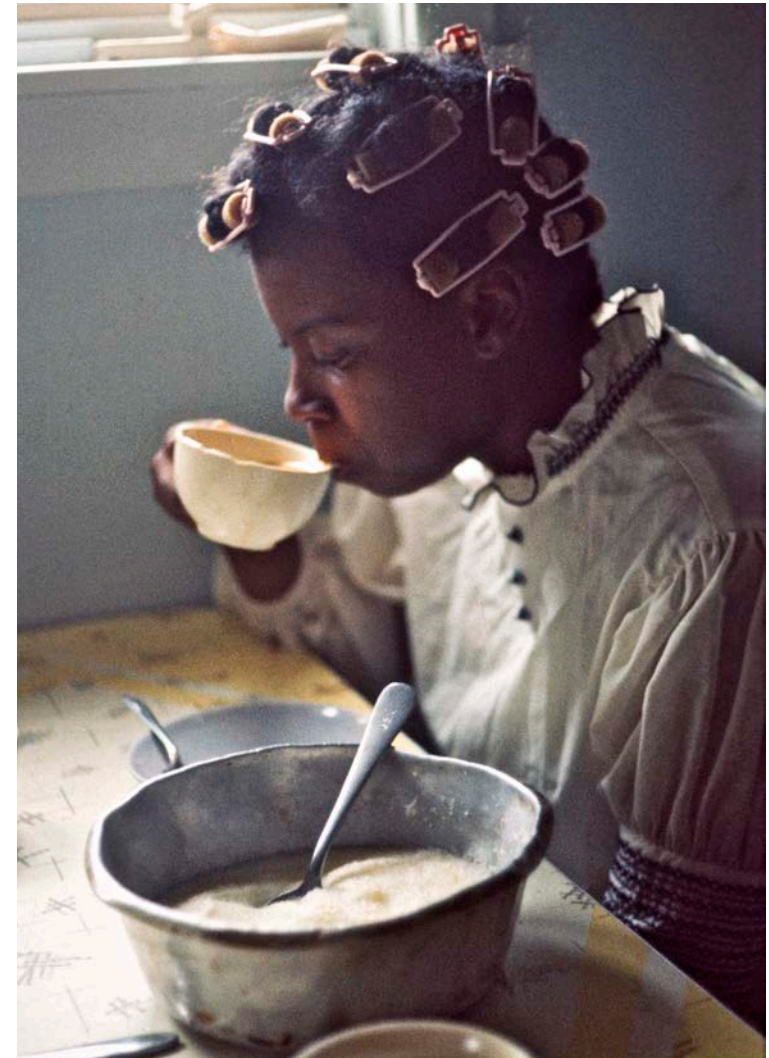
Americans are in favor of some social security in old age, but they refuse to create a safety net like the one we take for granted in Europe's welfare states. Where the welfare state respects the dignity of the individual, the American "disposable society" deliberately tries to destroy it with a network of spies who infiltrate the privacy of people who are on what Americans ironically call "welfare." The system has historically tried to destroy the black family. The slavery practice of "selling away" husbands and wives and children from each other continues, with the welfare department as both paternal caring master and infernal cruel overseer. Many black fathers have been forced to leave home so their wives can get assistance thanks to a congressional order to cut off welfare for mothers if a man is present. Millions of women thus live in loneliness and utter poverty since only one out of 20 families on assistance include men. Yet more than 50% of men in this underclass are unemployed.

This created the black "welfare mother," who fared far from well in a vicious circle of poverty, dependence, fear, and especially humiliation. Although most people on welfare are white, blacks are blamed for getting assistance by having been "promiscuous." An incredible charge since it was my clear observation as well as the conclusion of several studies that whites, among their other privileges, are far more "promiscuous" than blacks. Cruelty to these stigmatized mothers originates in politicians' hysterical speeches about "welfare loafers," speeches designed to distract voters from the way these same politicians hand out billions in welfare to billionaires for oil depletion, agribusiness subsidies, etc.

They create a climate in which the poor have to run the gauntlet of lengthy elaborate demeaning investigations and follow-up harassment to get their few crumbs. Every sadistic trick is used to dehumanize them. In many places they must stand in line from four o'clock in the morning in frost or rain then wait inside in a concentration camp atmosphere all day only to find out that "no more cases are being taken today."

If they get money from secret lovers, they rarely dare to spend it on kitchen utensils for the spies of the system are constantly checking for evidence of a man. A new toaster or iron can cause their meager support to be taken instantly away. Every time I lived with such welfare mothers, I had to hide under the bed or in the closet whenever the spies arrived without notice. Many women have never known any other existence and are slowly being destroyed by an eternal home life, enslaved by stupefying TV programs.

I don't think Americans are really aware of how cruel they are to these people, but it can be equated with the racist treatment we in Denmark offer our refugees and immigrants. The "introductory benefit" the system offers them is below the subsistence minimum in today's Denmark. Unlike the generous welfare state of the past, we have become a mirror image of America's disposable society, trying to get people out of the way as waste. In the United States, it's policy to cast people out of society by refusing help to those whose rents are too high. At least immigrants on introductory assistance in Denmark have their rent paid to help them "better to integrate" (into a society which in the same way does not want to integrate with them).



1974 - Greensboro, NC



1973 - Greensboro, NC - "The beauty and the beast" I always called this photo of Baggie and Nixon during his Watergate scandal



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1974 - Jersey City, NJ

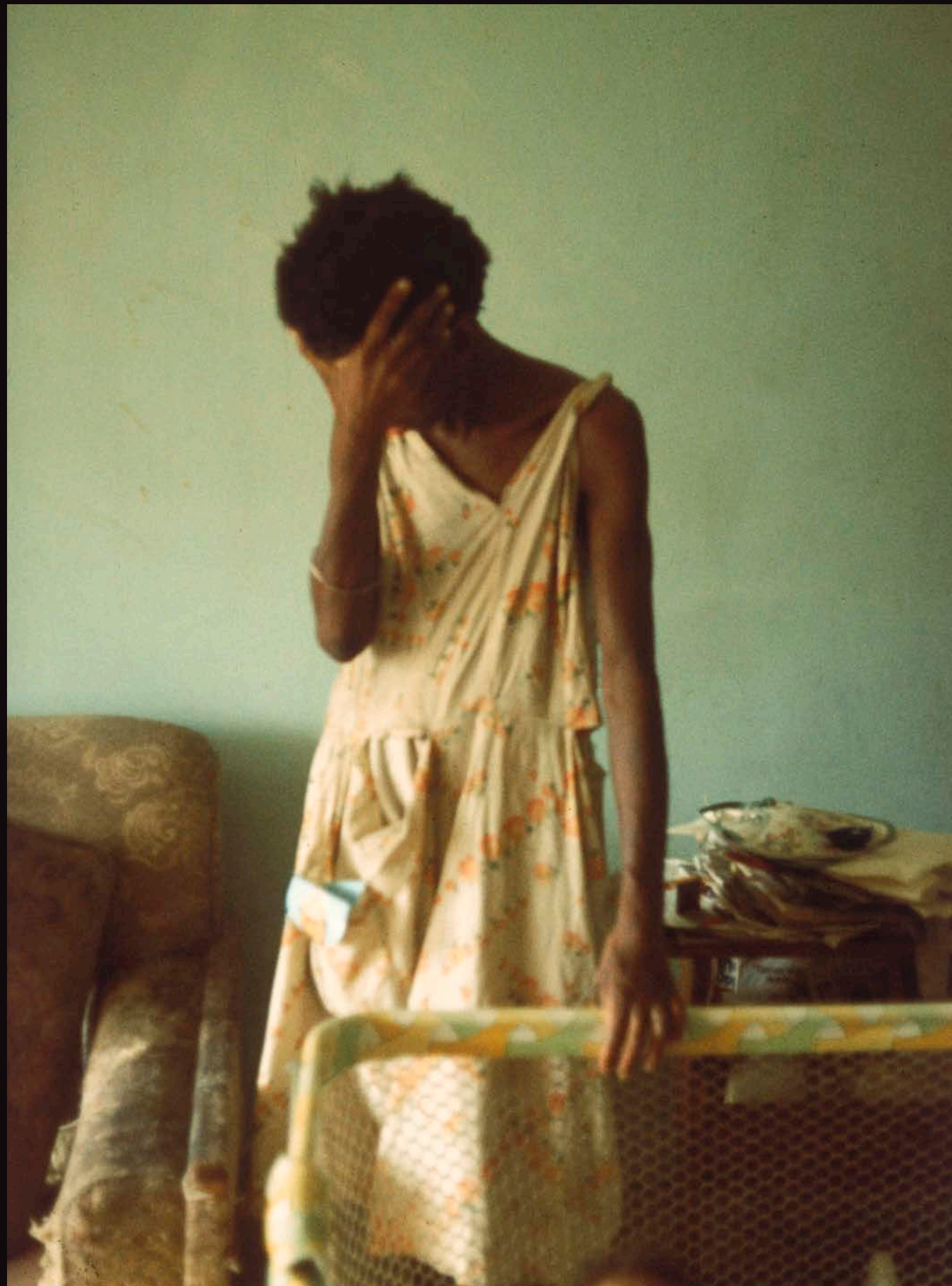
American welfare mothers are usually put in special poorhouses, often near garbage dumps or noisy freeways where land is cheap. Such "housing for the poor" is the official banishment of untouchables. Every city has such dehumanizing "projects," ostracizing people in a pariah culture so destructive that in the end they become useless to society. By sequestering the welfare mother, the population can continue blaming the victims without ever having to see what kind of suffering it is inflicting on them.

In such isolation and with a sense of being society's garbage dump, children in the projects are easily nudged into crime. When I stayed with Nell Hall [page 318], I found that she often didn't go to the welfare office or shopping for fear of having to walk through the project she lived in. The children and America are the losers, for while only 5% of children in Europe's welfare states grow up poor, 21% of American children are now so malignantly affected by poverty that they risk being useless in the high-tech world of the future. No society trying to compete in the cut-throat globalization race can afford to lose so much of its human potential.



1992 - Burke County, GA





1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1974 - Charleston, SC



1974 - Charleston, SC



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1972 - Baltimore

Those caught in the vicious circle of dependence and underclass pathology turn to crime to survive. This was the case with my friend Alphonso in Baltimore. We met when he and his street gang tried to rob me. Alphonso's wife had a job in a coffee shop, which gave the family about 1/3 of the Danish minimum wage. In America there's an underworld of millions of service workers who are mercilessly exploited because Congress won't support a decent minimum wage. Thus the US has more menial service jobs than any other developed country.

Alphonso and his wife loved each other and their six children dearly, and it hurt him immensely that he was unable to find a job to support his family. It was my first year in America, and I remember how shocked I was to learn that there was no aid available to them.

I came from a country where recent graduates were helped until they found work so they wouldn't be forced into crime. I was therefore very moved that in order to survive Alphonso had to rob in the street.

I went with him to steal shoes for the children, and he introduced me to Baltimore's criminal underworld. Stealing allowed him to maintain a nice home and even rent a car a couple of times a year to take his children on a picnic. When I returned a year later, his children were dejected but wouldn't tell me why. I found out Alphonso had been sentenced to more than six years in prison. Visiting him at the penitentiary, I discovered that his oldest son was in prison with him. When the family suddenly lost his income, the son had attempted a bank robbery.



1972 - Baltimore



1972 - Baltimore



1972 - Baltimore



1973 - Baltimore



1973 - Baltimore

Here is Alphonso's wife on a visit to the prison. For the next six years she wasn't able to touch her husband and could only hear him through noisy monitored telephones.

Thousands of black marriages have been dissolved this way. Thus, modern society has institutionalized the legacy from chattel slavery of destroying the black family. In the 1980s Alphonso made a living as a street vendor selling this book with his son Nathaniel, pictured here (Nathaniel was murdered before he got settled with me). Alphonso was also involved in American Pictures presentations in schools, entertaining my upper-class students with stories about life in a ghetto they'd never known.



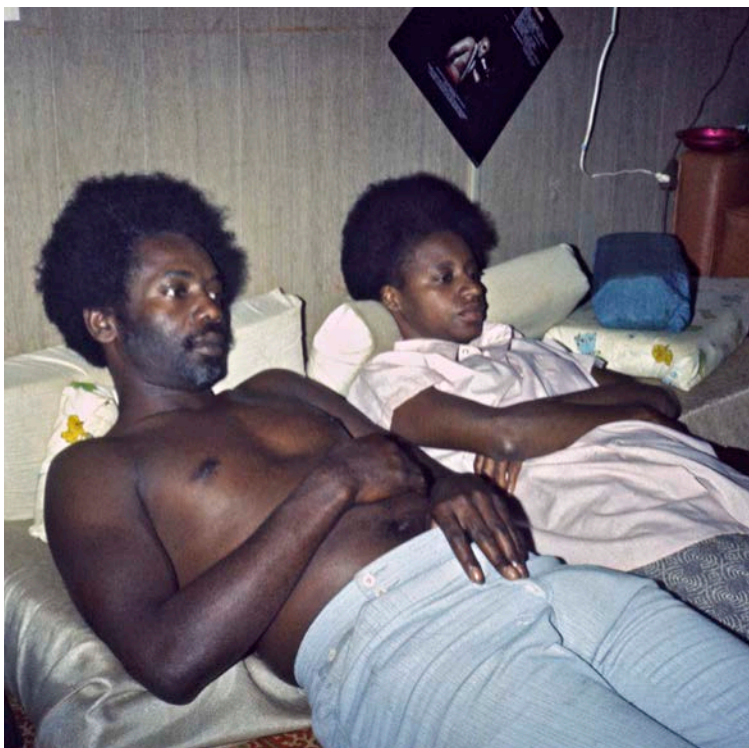
1975 - San Francisco



1973 - Baltimore



1973 - Liberty City, FL



1973 - Zebulon, NC. Hugh spent years after in Central Prison

Liberal whites constantly tried to explain away these economic attacks on the black family. The black family, according to their theory, is unstable and dysfunctional because black men were robbed of their manhood “back in slavery,” while the black woman became tough and domineering in order to survive. Black mothers bring up their children to repeat this pattern, resulting in a population unfit for success.

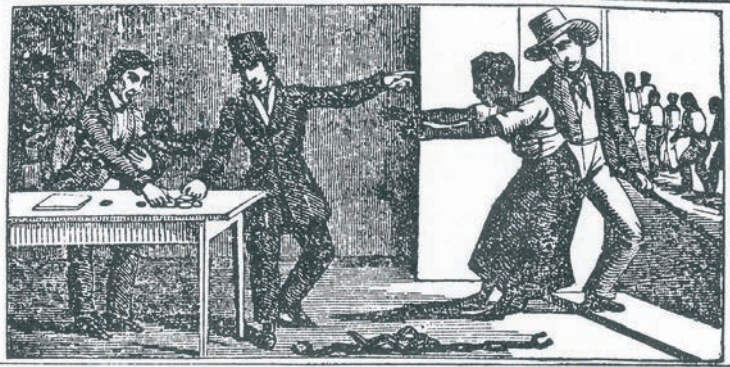
When the effects of our continued oppression seem to “confirm” this pattern, the oppressed begin to believe the myths we invented to justify our power structure. Our veiled attempts to justify ourselves by making the ghetto male look stupid, inadequate, and weak are internalized by our outcasts. Internalized racism results in lack of self-appreciation, making the underclass male invalidate almost everything he does, give up job-training programs and education, and, finally, in frustration and defense, reject his identity as breadwinner—thus further fueling our racist stereotype.

The deepening chasm we’ve created between men and women in the ghetto distracts us from a new master-slave system in which we don’t need the slave anymore. We no longer need blacks in

America or immigrants in Europe as unskilled labor since such jobs in the New World Order now belong to developing countries. Yet in our xenophobia and stubborn resistance to affirmative action, we do everything we can to prevent the underclass from getting the higher education needed to rise above that level. Highly prepared and motivated, we oppressors around the world rob the oppressed of self-worth, motivation, and *fair play* – and then scream if we can’t also rob them of a *fair share*. Thus, we manage to push them out of the labor force and even have the audacity to accuse them of seeking a last desperate livelihood as “welfare loafers.” In moments when we don’t feel good about ourselves, I think we’ve all entangled ourselves in these webs of insincerity and negative racist thinking, endlessly exploited by politicians claiming to be Christian. When we see one black spouse murdered after another and increasing marital violence among our immigrants in Denmark, we only see the tragedy for the oppressed themselves, and not the extensive damage our morbid fixation on the victim does to our own psyche. This 26-year-old woman was shot by her unemployed husband, but are we not ourselves also complicit in the murder?



1975 - Troy, AL



**SELLING A MOTHER FROM HER CHILD.**  
 “Do you often buy the wife without the husband?” “Yes, very often and frequently, too, they sell me the mother while they keep her children. I have often known them take away the infant from its mother's breast.”

While master-slave society has done its utmost to nurture a threatening sexual image of the black man, we've also spared no effort in continuing the devaluation of the black woman, which started in chattel slavery. Probably no other nation has let a whole race of women go through centuries of systematic rape, sometimes daily, and later been so successful in putting the blame on the victim herself. A puritan society did everything to dehumanize and “break” the black woman by flogging her and selling her naked. To avoid feeling guilty for abusing her to that degree, after which the white woman attacked her for “seducing” her husband, it's necessary to develop an enormous disdain for her. Along with negative myths about her loose morals and “animal” sexuality, which are always created around rape victims, this systematic devaluation of the black woman has left deep scars.

When black women in Harvard Law School objected to my nude photos, they held a meeting to decide whether I should use these photos in an American context. Unlike whites, they didn't think I'd been sexually exploiting the poor black women who, despite intense peer pressure, had had the courage to shelter me as a vagabond. They knew very well that American black women, contrary to what



1975 - Philadelphia, MS. - Leonora; daughter of my ex-wife's school friend

I later saw in Africa, have developed powerful defense mechanisms against white men in response to centuries of abuse. It was decided that I could use the pictures if I made this clear to whites. The uneasiness of these women, who later became successful lawyers and politicians, was a direct result of their having internalized ideals of white beauty to such a degree that they associated everything negative and ugly with black nakedness or, like white racists, reduced them to sexual images.

Even if the woman says yes, her family typically says no. Leslie (seen on the right) and I have always loved each other. We constantly hitchhiked all over the country to meet up with each other, and finally wanted to marry. But even though her family loved me, they were totally opposed to her marrying a white (penniless vagabond). The same kind of protective (but oppressive) social control we see in other vulnerable minority groups like Jews and European Muslims. A sexist society has always told black women to deny their feminine side. A black woman had to slave in the house for a white woman, who, for her part, was cultivated as something sublime. The black woman's main task was often to raise white children. There was no time for her own children, whom she had to harshly discipline to enable them to survive a racist society. Out of our guilt over separating black children from their mothers on the auction block and coercing self-effacing nannies to be devoted to white children, we stereotype the black woman as excessively strong, able to endure pain to the point of being inhuman (an image enhanced by watching the victim raise her own children harshly). Yet I don't find the upbringing any harsher than among ghettoized people in other countries, e.g., Denmark.



1973 - Hartford, CT - My girlfriend Leslie



1974 - Charleston, SC

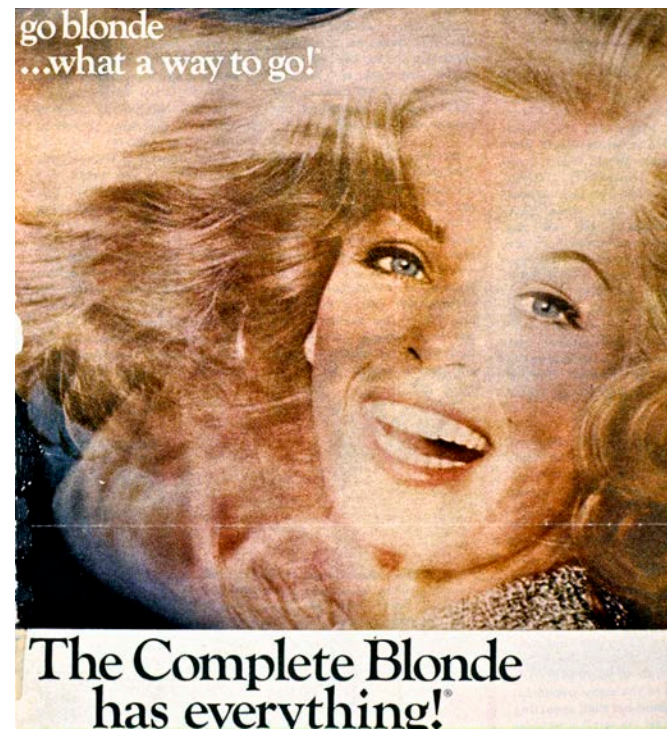


2004 - celebrating the 30 year anniversary for the wedding racism's social control had stolen from Leslie and me ..... and again in 2014 -our 40 year anniversary



The centuries-old cult of so-called pure white womanhood continues in white advertising's propaganda, which has a tremendous negative impact on the colored woman (not to mention the religiously covered woman). She's always been told that white skin and straight hair are beautiful.

To mitigate the psychological damage or to "pass" for white, black women began using skin-lightening cream and painful complicated processes of straightening their hair. Her children, who go through similar torture, reason that if they have to endure so much pain to become acceptable, they must have been really ugly to begin with. Again, internalizing our racist thinking, they blame and endlessly torment each other for having dark skin.



1990 - Chicago



1971 - Baltimore



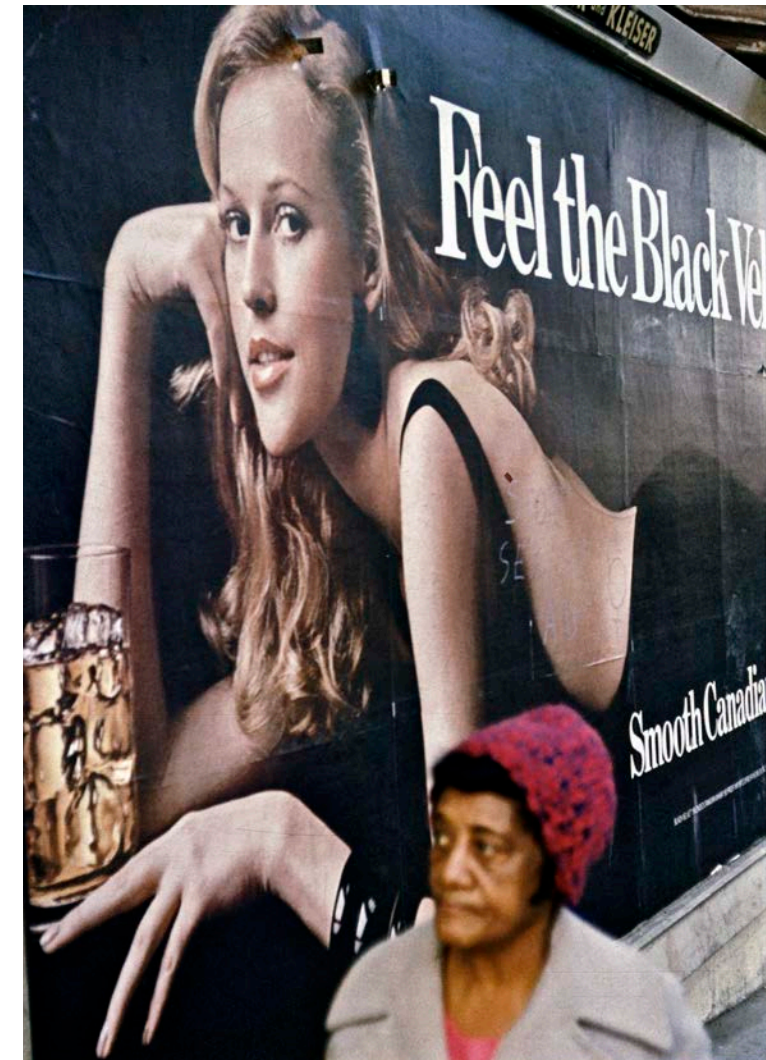
1974 - Tarboro, NC



1974 - Astoria, Queens, NY



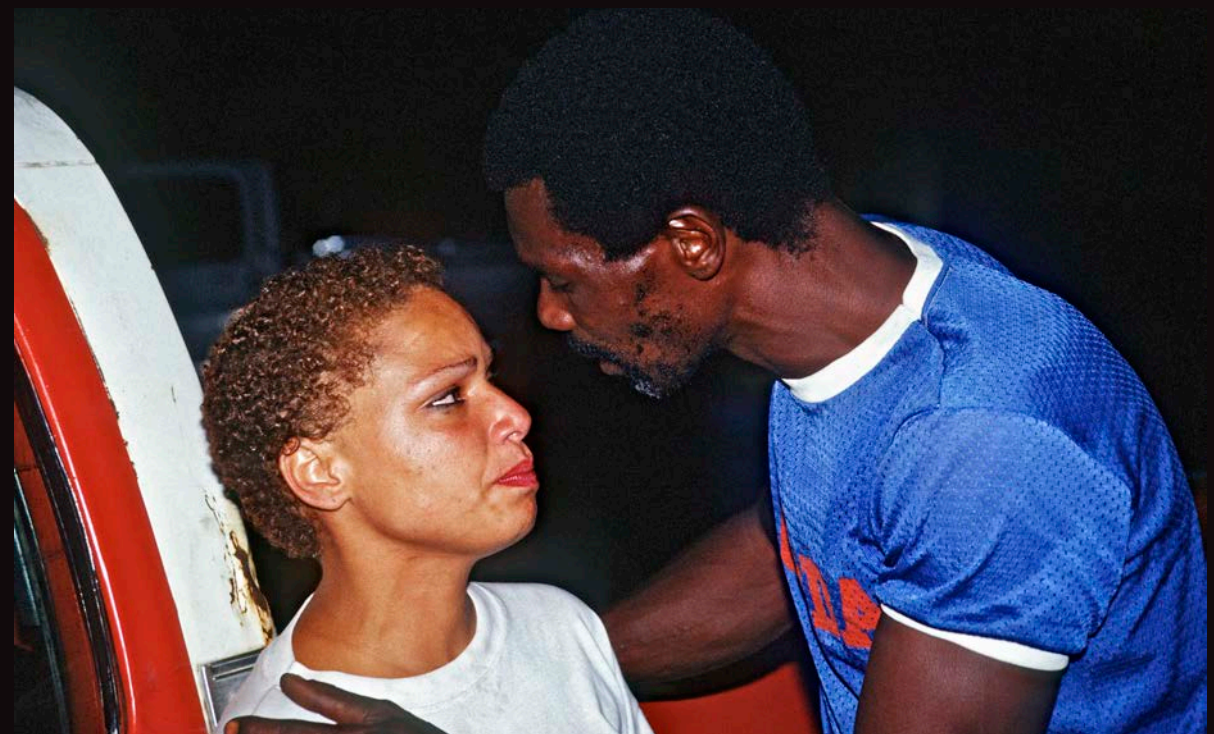
1975 - Seattle



1975 - San Francisco

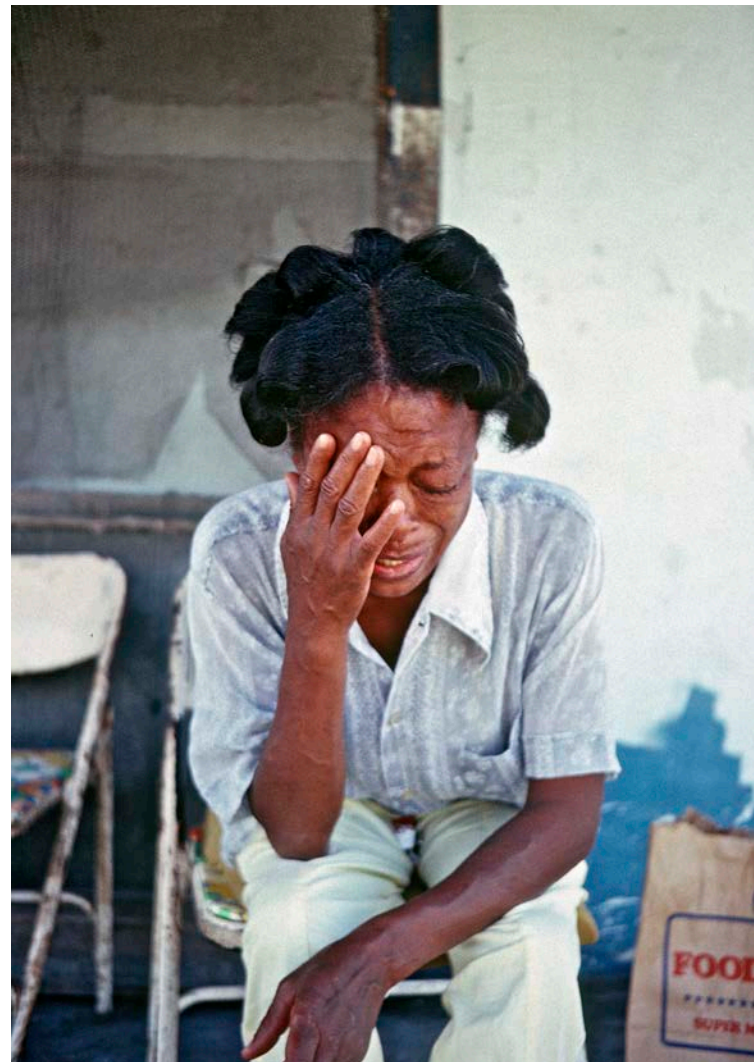


1974 - Astoria, Queens, NY



1992 - Bullock County, AL

In addition to the negative effect on the self-image of colored women, these ideals of white beauty can have a devastating impact on the family. The quarrels I so often hear in underclass homes lead me to believe that the black male view of women has been deeply influenced by the white social ideal. What depresses me most is not that almost 70% of black families now have only one parent, but what I see in families that are still intact. Nothing is more hurtful than hearing our deeply ingrained white thinking—"You ain't shit, nigger" or "ugly bitch"—echo in quarrels between these unhappy powerless partners, and seeing the children internalize it as "I'm worse than shit!" The frightening aspect of ghetto men constantly "beating up on" "their" devalued women can be seen in statistics: 1/3 of all wife murders in the US are committed by blacks, who make up only 13% of the population.



1995 - Pahokee, FL



2003 - Philadelphia, MS



1996 - Selma, AL

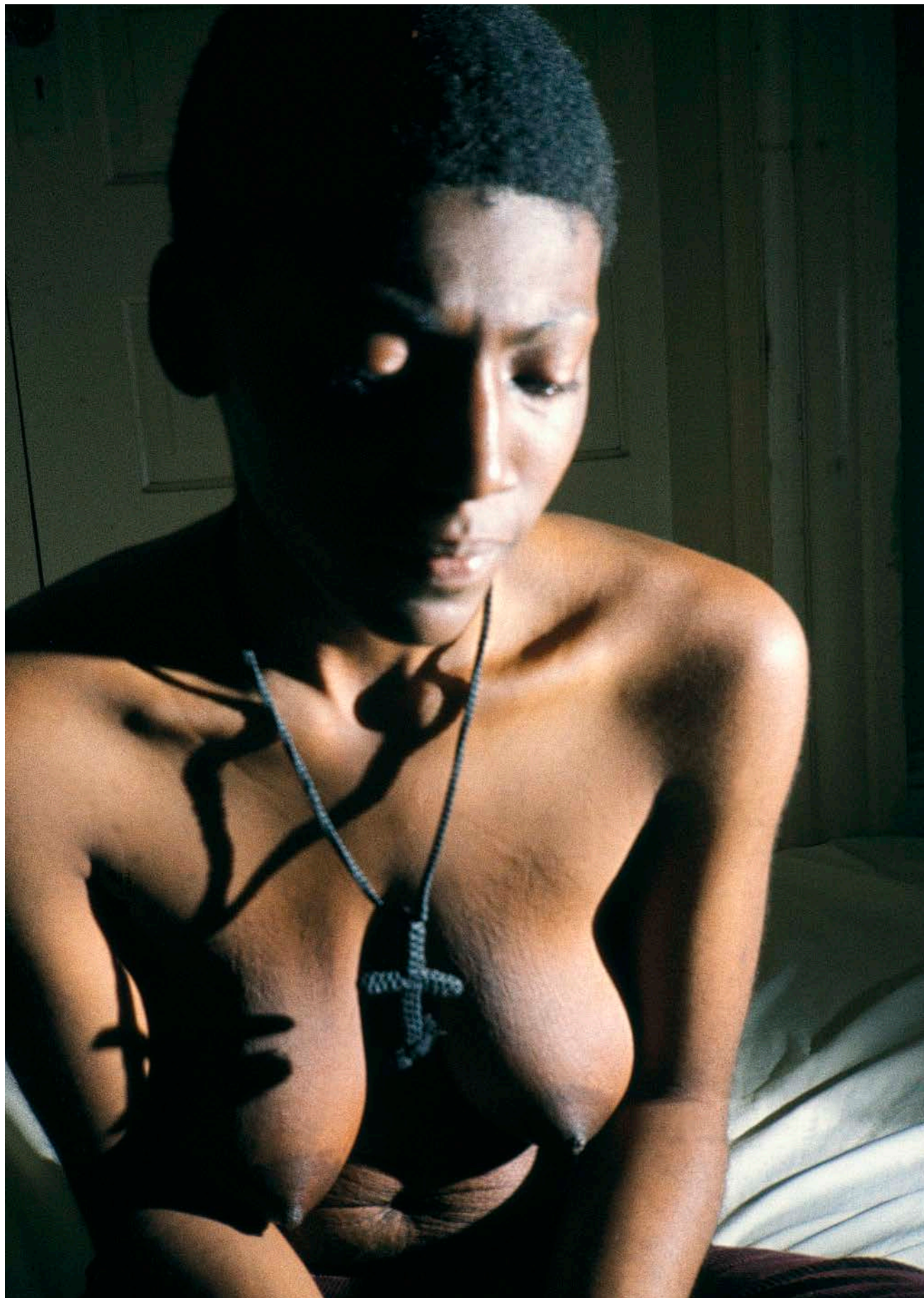


1975 - San Francisco



1974 - NYC

Violence against women is appallingly high all over the world. That it is only 35% higher in the US for black than for white women sadly may reflect the greater absence of black employed men. In Denmark violence against immigrant women is growing explosively and now accounts for 42% of the women in shelters. Here too we shift responsibility away from ourselves, attributing the numbers to the misogynistic cultures they came from rather than our marginalization of them. We forget that by distancing or ostracizing them from our social lives, we behave as do American whites toward blacks—with the same result: Our victims close in on themselves and are kept in cultures they'd hoped to escape. The violence we commit against young people by not making them feel at home in either culture eventually returns to us.



1974 - Jacksonville, FL

## Luke 7, 36-50

The only time I managed to talk somebody out of a robbery was through a strange combination of circumstances in Greensboro, North Carolina. I was living with a black social worker, Tony, whose father owned one of the worst bars in the black ghetto. I used to hang out at the bar at night. One night I met two young black women of the criminal type there and we decided that I should go home with them. First we stole some wine in a store and dashed right out into a waiting taxi. When we were in the back seat and had started off, I asked them how they intended to pay the cab, as I knew they had no money. "Don't worry," they said, "just wait. Let us take care of it. When we get there, we'll just knock him down and take all his money." This took me a bit by surprise since I had never tried mugging a taxi driver before, but I kept quiet, which is one of the first things I learned to do in America.

Then suddenly the black driver turned around to ask something, and I realized that I knew him. He was the social worker's grandfather, who owned the biggest black taxi company in town. I very rarely take matters into my own hands in America, but I certainly did then. I shouted "Stop!" to the driver and said that he could get the fare the next day through his grandson. Then I tore the purse with the gun in it from the one woman's hands and pushed them both out the car door, while they gaped at me just like the taxi driver. Out on the street I shouted at them "That was Tony's grandfather, you idiots!" Though they knew Tony, this fact would naturally not have stopped them, but when they were out of the car and the taxi had driven off, they had at least no chance of hurting him.

Often the brutality of such women shocked me. I saw them time and again do the most revolting things to both men and women. For that very reason it was such an overwhelming experience when a relationship could arise between us, and I had an opportunity to get a glimpse of the warm humanity under the hard shell of viciousness and backstabbing which this violent system had given them. Human beings who are enslaved to such a degree by violence cherish a deep longing for freedom and a more human way of dealing with each other. But this yearning is never able to bloom as it is constantly stifled by the violent responses it encounters from the other prisoners of the ghetto. This yearning never makes contact with the whites or the better-off blacks with their "culture," since these "cultured" types have only contempt

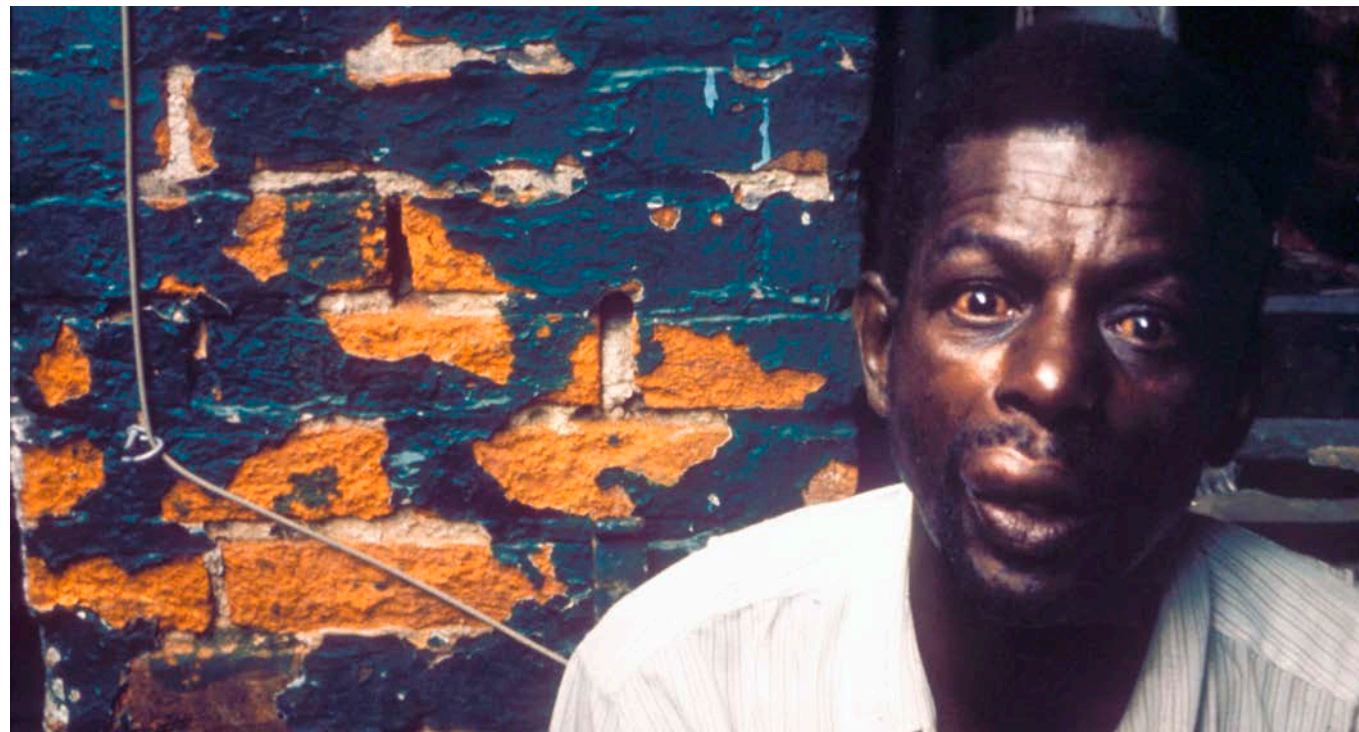
for the ghetto culture - a contempt which is constantly felt and perceived in the ghetto, and which seems to me to be directly responsible for the ghetto becoming more and more violent. That tenderness I so often found in our relationships, which could so easily have taken root under a more humane social system, had such an inexpressibly strong and painful effect on me precisely because I saw again and again how the system made it more natural for these women to behave in a pattern of viciousness rather than tenderness.

Another night in Jacksonville, Florida, I had met a nice black woman who promised to find me a place to stay. We went to see her friend who was a prostitute, but she was having problems with her boyfriend, so we couldn't stay there. We walked around all evening trying this possibility and that. The prostitute got more and more interested in trying to get us a place to stay. The two of them then agreed that she should "turn a trick" with a white taxi driver while I sat waiting in a cafe.

After a while they came running back, looking very upset, and said that I should come quick. We got a room in a motel and I discovered that they had far more than the ten dollars you usually get for a "blow job" on the street. I asked them how they got it, but they wouldn't say. Only later did they tell me about it. It turned out that one of them had lured the white man into a dark alley, where she did the "job." But then she had suddenly grabbed a big brick at her side and hit the man over the head. As he didn't fall down unconscious immediately, she had taken a steel pipe and hit him in the head again and again until apparently, he was dead. Then she took his wallet and ran back to the other woman, who had stood in the background watching the whole thing. The thing was that she had felt she might as well take a hit more than the ten dollars so she could enjoy the night with a shot of heroin. But as we all three lay there in a double bed in the motel, they were obviously in anguish; it turned out they were both very religious. For several hours they prayed, "Oh God, God, please don't let him die!" It was a nervous, stammering prayer, in between attempts to find a vein to shoot up in.

By the next morning they had already forgotten the whole thing. They worried more about having overslept so that they were late for church, where they should have been singing in the choir.

*Letter to a friend*



1973 - Baltimore

So we cripple the underclass, exclude it, stereotype it, degrade it—all to avoid the pain of confronting our own Cain-creation and the tears it's opened in the delicate fabric of our middleclass power and security.

Even though the barriers of discrimination we've built, out of fear of our outcasts, can be maintained only because these pariahs rarely have the power to threaten anyone except each other, the ghetto still makes us uncomfortable and anxious.

And so we prefer to look down on the beggar from above, paying off our conscience in coin. Most of us have become so crippled by the pattern of oppression we've created that we're unable to sit down with him in the street and listen to how we in the West once used him to build our affluence, and listen to him about how we later needed him when we sent him to Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan to fight for what we called freedom.

Dare we look him in the eye while he explains what he lost in this struggle for our freedom? The freedom to make people of color overseas as dependent as himself ... the freedom to give us the intoxication of power and self-satisfaction arising from our foreign aid or federal poverty programs ... the paternalistic freedom he'll suffer for the rest of his life ... the freedom with which we daily bombard the world's poor people without letting them enjoy its goods ... the freedom to forget our fellow man while tyrannizing him.



1973 - Baltimore

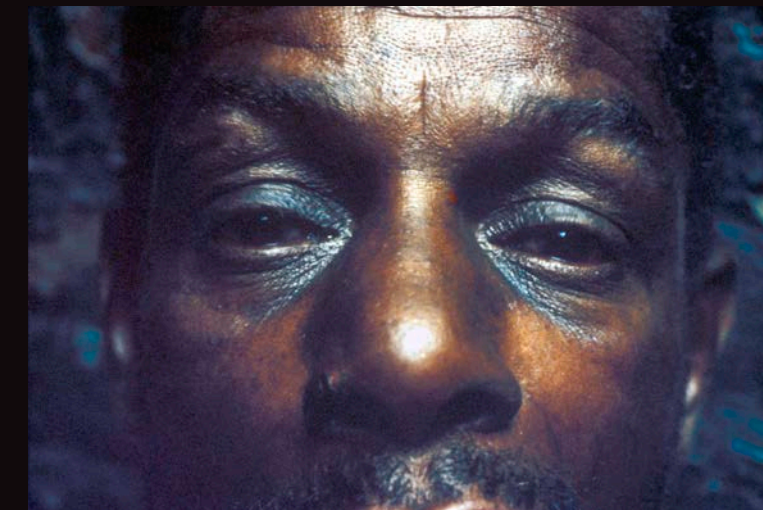


1974 - Oakland, CA

*You can get it if you really want!  
But you must try, try and try.  
You'll succeed at last.  
Persecution you must bear,  
win or lose you got to get your share  
but your mind set on a dream  
the harder it seems now.  
You can get it if you really want.  
Rome was not built in a day,  
opposition will come your way,  
but the harder the battle seems,  
the sweeter the victory.  
You can get it if you really want,  
but you must try, try and try,  
you'll succeed at last..*



1975 - Las Vegas, NV



1973 - Baltimore







1974 - Apopka, FL

When I traveled in Florida's slave camps, I discovered a great difference in the degree to which this psychological terror has oppressed the mind in different countries. One of the camps contained only blacks from Jamaica, who astonished me by, for instance, keeping their camps neat, while the Americans would throw trash all over in their camps. Liberal scholars explain these differences in character by going back to chattel slavery. Blacks in Latin America and the West Indies are more integrated in society today because the Latin form of slavery was feudalistic and, in its nature, open. The church protected slave families from being separated and there was upward mobility and freedom. In America, on the other hand, slavery was capitalistic: Even the church defined the slave as a sales item, and there was no possibility of psychological escape. The capitalist type of slavery was a closed system, while the feudal kind was an open system and therefore not as destructive to the mind. Slavery in the US has been compared with German concentration camps, where it was possible to study the effect of a totally closed system on human beings. Diaries written in concentration camps by intellectuals show how, in a short time, they were degraded to subhuman status and began to develop a psyche much like the average slave in the States, including an almost loving attitude toward the camp guards (or, in any case, not direct hatred), which led to total resignation and a sense of irresponsibility and infantilism in many prisoners.

No matter how tempting such theories are for liberals trying to explain the separate character of the American ghetto, they once

again shift the blame onto something that happened more than a hundred years ago. Indirectly, they're saying that the character blacks received "back in slavery" makes it impossible "for us" to integrate them into white (or mainstream) society. The victim is again being blamed for not being integrated. Such distinct characteristics show, on the contrary, that slavery is alive and well today. For character traits are not inherited through generations, as we can see in black West Indian immigrants who also lived in slavery but whom we usually have no problems integrating with. So if "our homegrown" blacks in America seem to have a different character, it's shocking proof that we are still confining and shaping our unwanted citizens in a closed system.



1974 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Morehead City, NC



1974 - New Bern, NC

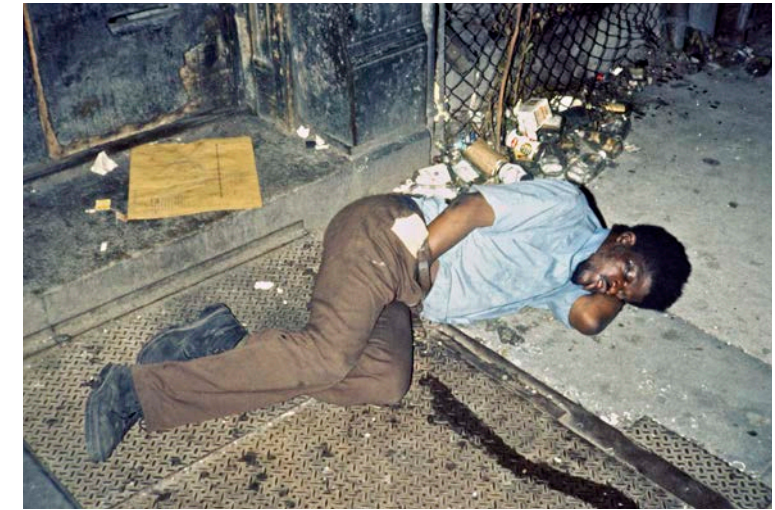


The crippling of underclass children's minds always astonished me until I became aware of the closed ghetto system. Most young black children I meet are filled with a zest for life. But later they become easily depressed and withdraw into a shell as if to protect themselves from our all-pervading oppressive thinking about them. Very early on they acquire our negative expectations of them, and, beginning around fourth grade, they begin to lose faith in themselves, their abilities and future. They become so aware of the closed system they lose motivation and fall behind whites in the school (exactly as we see with our unloved brown children in Denmark).

But the strongest indication of our oppression is without doubt self-hatred, the self-hatred that makes ghetto children tear the hair out of their black dolls or draw themselves in the corner of the paper while white kids usually place themselves in the middle. That self-hatred which makes people react violently against their surroundings, throwing trash everywhere, for example, or "backstabbing," both verbally and literally. All people suffer from a little self-loathing, but the self-disdain in the American underclass is so severe that it helps confer on the ghetto one of the world's highest rates of crime and family disintegration as well as perhaps the smallest degree of mutual trust. When we see how aggression more often turns against fellow victims rather than against the oppressor, as is always true with oppression, when we experience the uncontrollable anger in American blacks, we begin to understand the effect of the closed system we've confined them to: the ghetto, or slavery here and now!



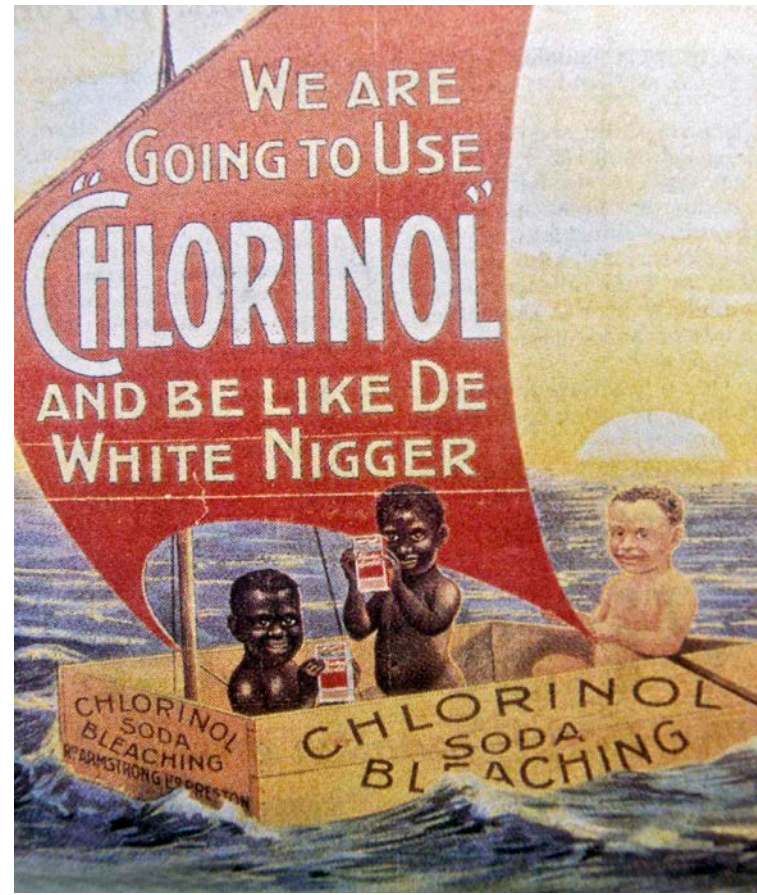
1974 - NYC



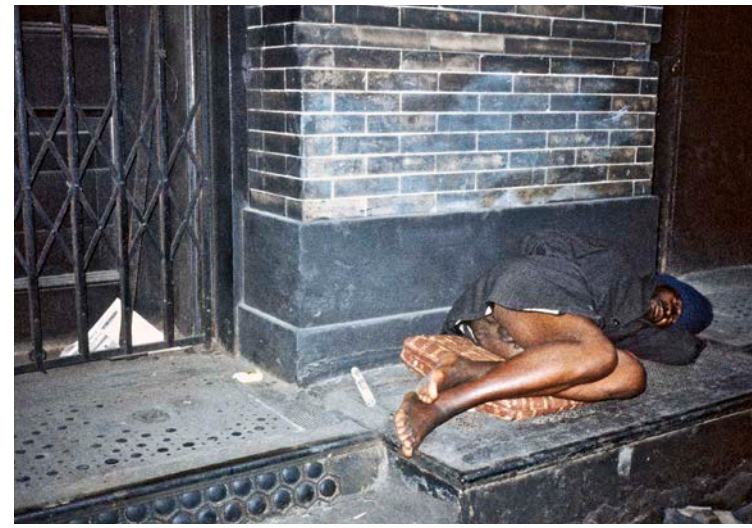
1974 - NYC



Malcolm X: "The worst crime the white has ever committed was to teach us to hate ourselves."

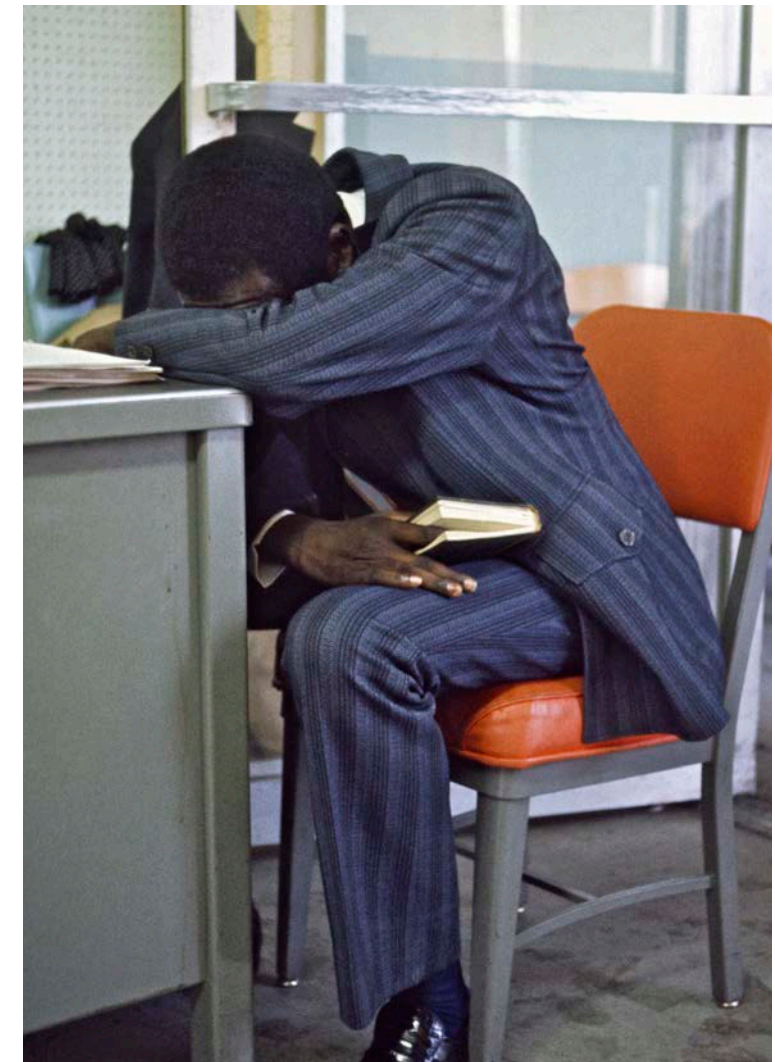


Tacitus: "It is human nature to hate the one whom you have hurt."



1992 - NYC

*Brother, what a price I paid!  
 You stole my history,  
 destroyed my culture,  
 Cut off my tongue so I can't communicate.  
 Then you humiliate, then you separate,  
 hide my whole way of life  
 so myself I should hate!*



1974 - Liberty City, FL



Black statue National Museum



Black clock National Museum



1986 - restaurants throughout the South



1974 - Jacksonville, FL



1989 - rural VA

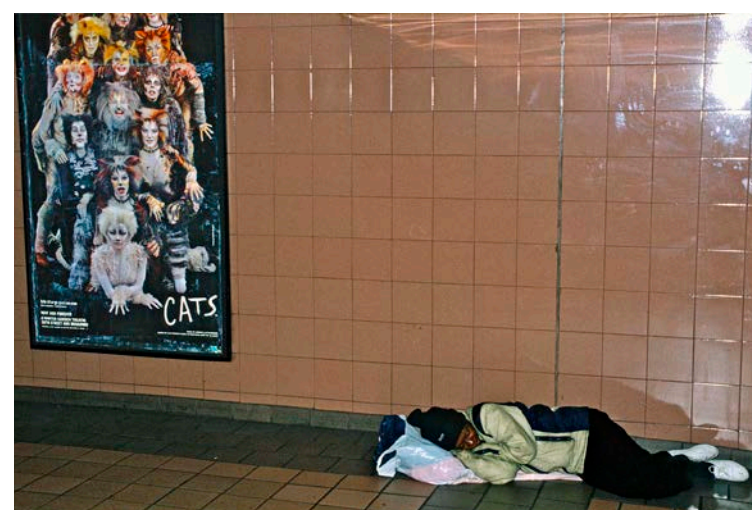
*Brother, what a price I paid!  
You took away my name,  
put me to shame,  
made me a disgrace  
the world's laughing stock.  
Made of me a show, to jeer and to mock,  
but your time is at hand  
so you better watch the clock!*



1989 - rural VA



1990 - in universities



2000 - NYC



1992 - NYC

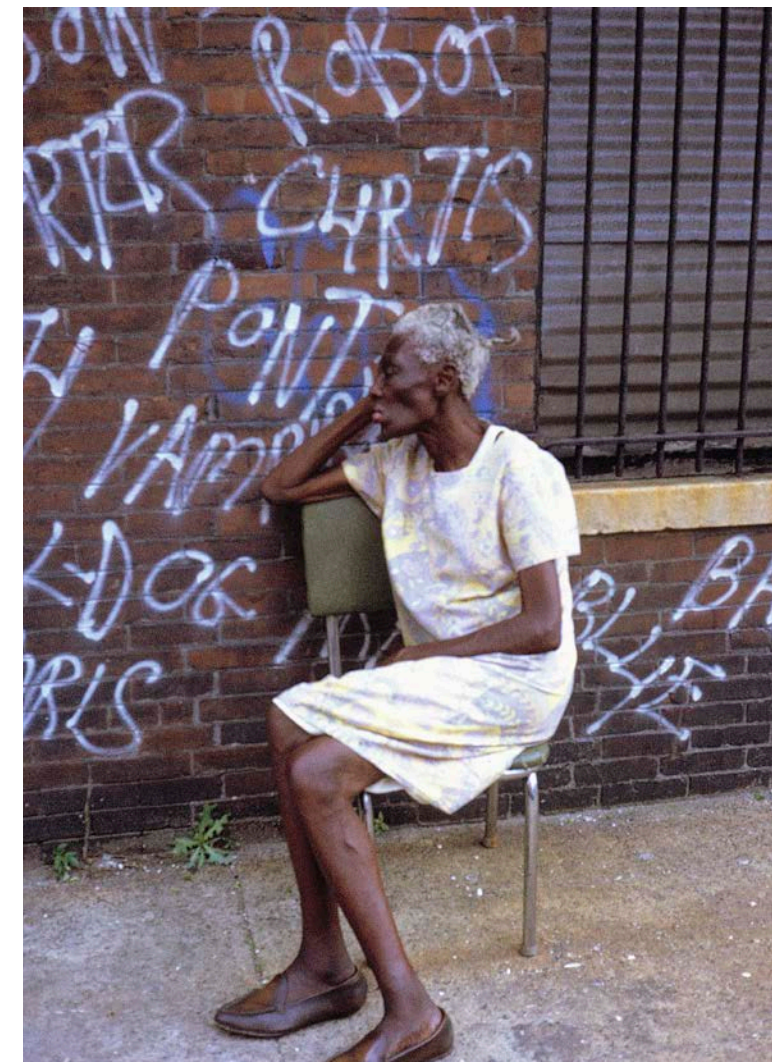


White colonizer carried by Africans



2001 - White with his black driver after seeing "Les Miserable" on Broadway, NY

*From the shores of Africa, mainland of Asia,  
The caribbean and Mississippi  
Central and South America.  
First you humiliate,  
then you separate,  
you hide my whole way of life  
so myself I should hate.  
Brother, what a price I paid!  
Sister, what a price I paid!  
Mother, what a price I paid!*



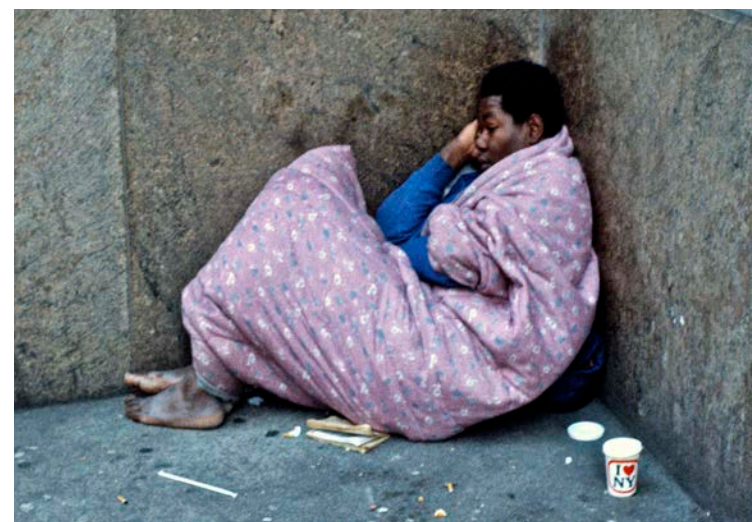
1973 - Philadelphia, PA



1973 - near Natchez, MS



1973 - New Orleans



1997 - NYC



1973 - Baltimore



1975 - NYC



1973 - NYC



1973 - NYC

During my journey in the nation with more talk about upward mobility than in any other, with its seemingly unlimited opportunities, the existence of a closed system was a recurrent paradox for me. I couldn't accept the explanation about blacks' inherent inferiority, which all white Americans carry in their innermost hearts. "Our ancestors came over dirt poor and made it. Why can't they?" A veil was, however, lifted for me when I got close to two such "poor" immigrants: Lidy Manselles from Haiti and Mrs. Pabst from Russia. It's not at all a coincidence that Lidy became my first black girlfriend. At first American-born black women seemed untouchable, locked up behind an invisible barrier. Lidy clearly belonged to another, freer world. Never did that strike me so much as one day when we stood talking to an alcoholic on a doorstep in Harlem. All of a sudden Lidy burst out with contempt: "Why don't you get a job?" Her insensitivity ended the conversation. Later she even said something like, "I hate them. I hate these lazy animals." I immediately felt that this was a clash far deeper than between two nationalities: It was the disdain of a free culture toward a slave culture. Lidy, who was jet black and Catholic, represented better than anyone the "white protestant work ethic." And she was no exception among those blacks who've arrived without chains.

Through Lidy I gained access to the tightly knit West Indian community in Brooklyn. Like earlier immigrants, they worked fanatically hard, saved money, took pride in education and owning their own homes, and universally spoke of the importance of a strong family. With their sacrifice and fierce determination, they were staunchly opposed to welfare in direct contrast to the surrounding black communities, 40% of whose members are on welfare. Their neighborhoods are as clean and racist toward native blacks as Italian and Irish neighborhoods. In less than one generation, faster than most white immigrants, their income has reached a staggering 94% of the average American family income, even including the many poor still arriving. Since 1% of the American population own or control more than 40% of the wealth, we may find that West Indian immigrants are doing better than the majority of whites even though they come from much poorer and less literate countries than most Europeans came from. In contrast, native blacks make only 56% of white income. Under Kennedy and Johnson, they were allowed a rate of progress that, perhaps in 500 years, would have given them equality, but under the conservative policies of Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, they are rapidly slipping backward. Until the 1960s 1/3 of all black



1974 - Apopka, FL

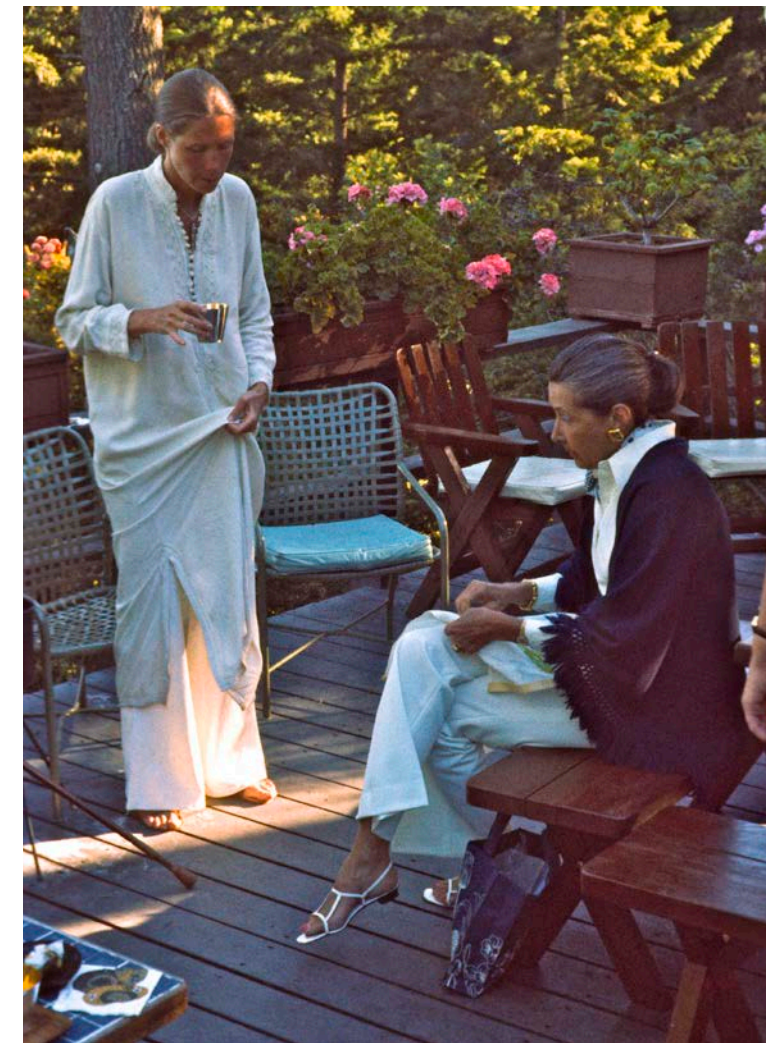
professionals were in fact immigrants. In many elite universities, their descendants represent up to 85% of black students although they make up only 6% of blacks in the United States.

So why is it so hard for America's own blacks to get into Harvard or Yale? Whatever the reason, the fact that these low-income islands, with far fewer blacks than the United States, can produce such a wealth of talent is strong evidence of the impact of American racism. Their historical slavery was basically as cruel as the American variety, and they descended from the same tribes in Africa. So what makes black immigrants twice as successful as native blacks? Why do travelers to post-slavery countries usually conclude that West Indian and Latin American blacks seem "proud and fiercely independent" in comparison with the "crushed," "broken," and "dependent" blacks in the American underclass? Why are fear and hatred still the basic ingredients of the relationship between blacks and whites in America, while lynchings, cross burnings, and race riots, as well as organizations such as the NAACP and the Black Panthers, are totally unknown in Brazil?



1975 - Palo Alto, CA on mountain ranch of the Pabst family

My explanation is that whites disappeared from the West Indies after slavery, after which blacks there were surrounded by black role models, allowing them to rebuild the self-confidence that had been shattered by slavery. But in the US, blacks continue to live in a majority-white society where we have the power to define them and continue to crush their self-esteem. Therefore, black American parents cannot convincingly, like the West Indians and Jews, encourage their children with: "Yes, my child, it's a racist society, but you can still make it by working twice as hard as others!" Only people who believe in themselves can do that. The initiative and ingenuity of black immigrants aren't crushed by our double-edged sword of condescending liberal generosity and reactionary racist cruelty, which defines effective slavery. Black immigrants are too proud to accept the first and, for more than a century, haven't been forced to deal with the second. Since their psychology isn't shaped by racism, they resist and prosper in the same way the Jews of Europe often did despite anti-Semitism. Not surprising that my native black friends in Hartford, CT call the West Indians for "go getters" or "black Jews."



1975 - Palo Alto, CA on their mountain ranch

Mrs. Pabst had arrived just like Lidy—broke but not broken—with a background that sent her directly to the upper class. A member of the old Russian aristocracy, she lost everything in the revolution except the most important thing: her upper-class acculturation. She could therefore marry into money (Pabst Brewing Company) like the rest of the 2/3 of the richest 1% who were born into their wealth. Today they own several mansions around the world, and I vacationed with them on a \$3 million farm in California. I liked Mrs. Pabst, intensely interested as she was in art and culture, and hoped she'd give me some money to buy more film. So I showed her my photos, such as this little boy in the muddy ditch. His world is so different from that of Mrs. Pabst's granddaughter, whom the maid is serving, that if it didn't say Pabst on the beer cans we wouldn't know that they belong to the same world and that their lives are in some way connected with each other. But when Mrs. Pabst saw these photos of people defeated by apathy and alcoholism, she shouted, "I hate them! I hate these lazy animals! Why don't they want to work? Why don't they take a job?" But where does Mrs. Pabst actually get all that gold in her ears, and why do these "animals" not work?



1972 - Chicago

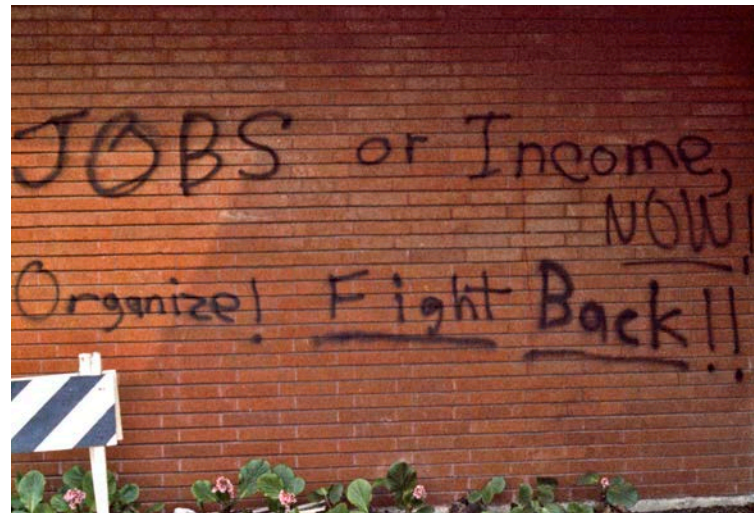


1975 - San Francisco



1975 - San Francisco

*Sing a song of sad young men,  
glasses full of rye.  
All the news is bad again  
kiss your dreams goodbye.  
All the sad young men  
sitting in the bars  
drinking up the night  
and missing all the stars.  
All the sad young men  
drifting through the town  
drinking up the night  
trying not to frown.  
All the sad young men,  
singing in the cold  
trying to forget that they are growing old.  
All the sad young men  
choking on their youth,  
trying to be gay  
running from the truth.  
Autumn turns the leaves to gold  
slowly dies the heart.  
Sad young men  
are growing old,  
that's the cruelest part.  
Misbegotten moon  
shines for a sad young man,  
let your gentle light  
guide them all again.  
All the sad, sad, sad young men.*



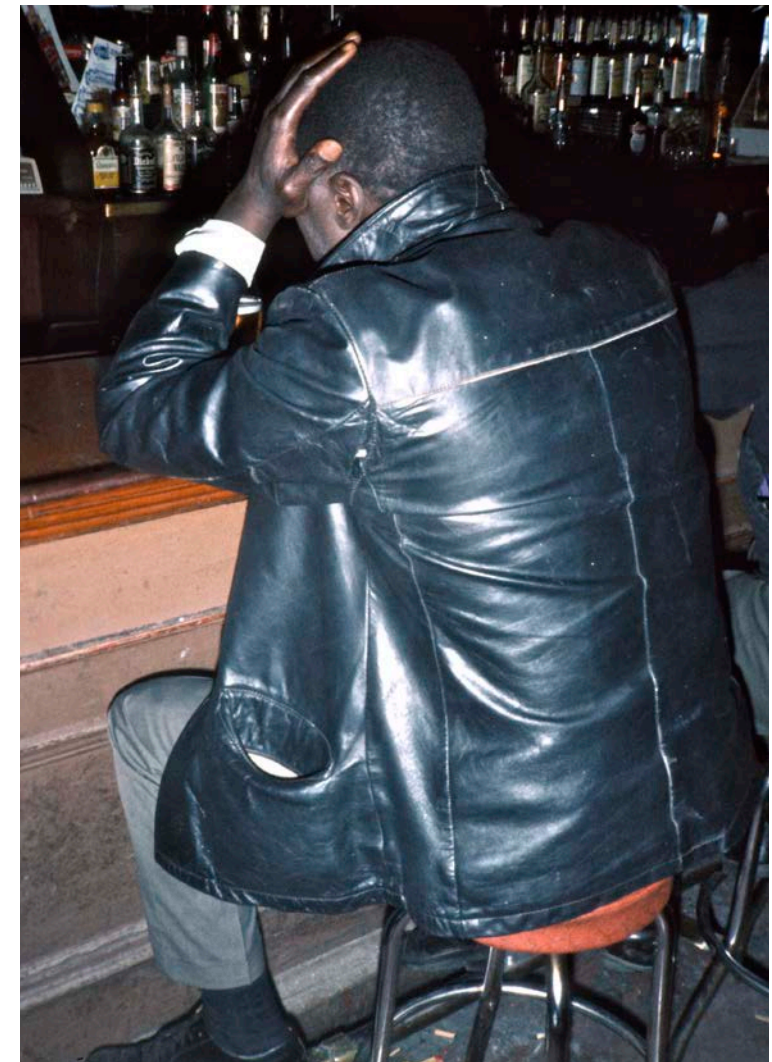
1975 - San Francisco



1975 - San Francisco



1975 - San Francisco



1973 - New Orleans



1975 - San Francisco



1974 - Raleigh, NC



1974 - Raleigh, NC



1975 - Seattle, WA

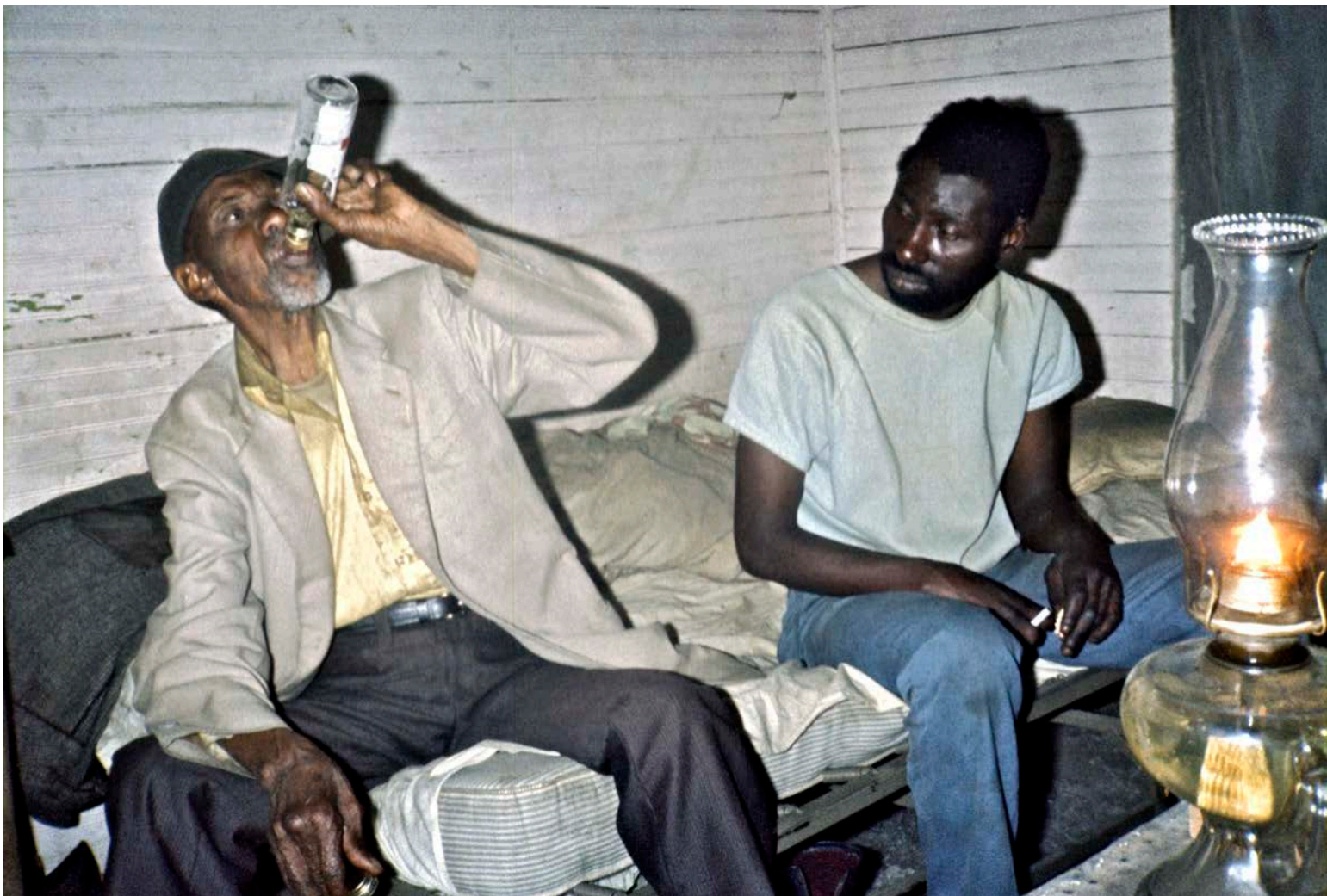


1975 - Seattle, WA



1974 - Raleigh, NC





1974 - Washington, NC

I'm often asked how I got to stay with the Rockefellers—and why. Here's my story. I left Washington, DC one spring morning in 1974 with the aim of seeing poor coal miners in West Virginia. Since it was warm, I took off in shirtsleeves, not knowing that spring comes three weeks later in the mountains. I soon found myself in a snowstorm at the intersection of Rt 50 and I-79. Mountain people generally don't pick up hitchhikers—"even if it was my own son," insisted one man. But when drivers see someone in a snowstorm without so much as a windbreaker, they assume he's an escaped convict and zoom by without another thought. I stood there the entire day so cold that I couldn't even put out my frozen thumb. But the more I suffered, the more I felt that something fantastic would happen that day. As a vagabond I'd acquired an almost religious fatalism about suffering—that only through suffering can you enter heaven. Moreover, through that very conviction you're capable of melting the mountains, or cold hearts, around you.

Finally, after it got dark, my hand-held Danish sign got me picked up by two lawyers. Seeing my miserable condition, one said I could stay with him in Charleston for the night. So I was

all set although staying with a labor attorney didn't sound quite like "heaven." Barely half an hour down the interstate, one of them said, "In there is Buckhannon, where Rockefeller lives..." and I immediately knew why I'd endured so much that day. To their surprise I asked them to let me off there. Then I started the 13-mile walk down a dark deserted mountain road—still in a terrible snowstorm and still in shirtsleeves. In town I asked where Rockefeller lived. He was now president of West Virginia Wesleyan College and soon I found his house on Pocahontas St close to the school.

To explain this, I must briefly go back to my protests against the Vietnam War (before I came to America). Morally outraged by the US's use of napalm bombs, which incinerated or wounded thousands of Vietnamese—including children—I designed and printed a poster at my own expense; it read ESSO makes napalm. (Esso is now known as Exxon.) I ran around pasting them up all over Copenhagen, often with the police in hot pursuit. One cold December night, I climbed a tall tree to avoid being captured by the police, who, as I discovered, usually were also opposed to the



1974 - Buckhannon, WV - Jay Rockefeller

Vietnam War. To toy with me, two smiling cops parked their car beside the tree. "You can sit up there all night and freeze while we relax in the warm car and drink coffee until you come down." Although I was freezing in my lofty haven, I was determined to win over my tormentors. I didn't come down and by morning they gave up. Every day I could see how I was winning my moral war. Esso, for example, had to hire a whole army of workers to go around and paint the Esso logo over with black paint to stop the spreading boycott of their gas stations. Thus, the power of advertising—this was my first advertisement—made me both hate and love the Esso logo. In the process I built up overwhelmingly hostile images of the monster behind Esso: the Rockefeller family. I also learned that they'd been responsible for the deaths of 51 striking men, women, and children in Colorado in 1914. With CIA help, they'd overthrown governments, including Iran's, and installed the murdering, torturing Shah to prevent Iran from nationalizing its oil wells (this later led to the Islamic Revolution). And so, experiencing déjà vu (my freezing night in a tree) and overcome with righteous anger, I felt I was entitled to face the monster himself—and knocked on the door.



1971 - NYC



1969 - My campaign to boycott ESSO



1974 - Valerie Rockefeller

And what happened? The same thing that always happens when I move in with the monsters in my head: A beautiful young woman opened the door. I assumed it was one of many servants and asked, in the most natural way—I had a right to be there after all—“May I see Mr. Rockefeller?” She said he wasn’t home, but I could come in and wait for him. Although I myself looked like a monster of sorts (a snow monster), she probably thought I was a student from his university. She handed me towels to dry myself off and asked whether I was hungry. If I was, she’d start cooking since she didn’t know when her “husband” be home. Husband? I thought. All the hateful caricatures I’d seen of “Rockefeller” had been of old men. Certainly this was the case after Rockefeller’s massacre of prisoners in Attica, when they rioted to demand prison reform. I’d been at the funeral and knew some of the widowed black women (page 406). But Sharon Rockefeller was almost my own age and her husband, Jay, only 10 years older. While she cooked for me, I started playing with her adorable 3-year-old daughter, Valerie. Seeing how well we got along, Sharon suggested that perhaps I could stay and take care of her; she was going to Europe in a few days and hadn’t yet found a babysitter. A little later a family friend dropped by, and while we were chatting, she whispered that Valerie was named after Sharon’s twin sister, who’d been murdered. “Murdered? How?” I asked in disbelief. I was used to murders in the underclass, not among the wealthy. After Sharon, whose maiden name is Percy, and Valerie had graduated from college, the family gathered in their lakefront mansion in a Chicago suburb. Sharon went to Valerie’s bedroom to say goodnight to her sister, and the next morning her identical twin was found beaten



Boy showing where his family member was killed - 1975 SF

and stabbed to death. The crime, which was never solved, left Sharon traumatized, and cast over the family a dark shadow that never dissipated. At the time I wasn’t surprised about Sharon’s babysitting remark since I was used to people instantly trusting me, but over the years I’ve often reflected on this remarkable woman. How many other women would, such a short time after a beloved sister had been murdered by an intruder, have the guts to invite into their homes a stranger who looked like Charles Manson? (Right after the killing of another Sharon during the Tate-Labianca murders.) How many would ask this stranger to babysit for her daughter (named for the greatest loss of her life)? Sharon shared my own trusting outlook. When Jay Rockefeller finally came home, I completely lost my heart to this warm-hearted family. Since I was immersed in conversation with his wife, he assumed I was a friend of hers and never asked why I was there (just as I myself had forgotten why I was there). If I’d expected to meet a monster, it was my own projection since to my surprise and joy we had the same opinions on almost everything. He was also opposed to the Vietnam War, later criticizing war hero John McCain for dropping napalm bombs on Vietnamese civilians. After college he’d traveled the same road as had I, working with poor coal miners who lived in shacks as miserable as the ones I’d photographed. Working to improve their conditions in the VISTA program, started by John F. Kennedy, he lost his heart to these miners, stayed there, and has been a powerful advocate for them ever since, first as their governor, later as a senator in Washington. I felt right away that he was “my man.” After we’d drunk quite a few bottles and he’d shown great interest



1974 - Charleston, SC

in my photos of shacks and poverty, I felt so uplifted that I told him I had in vain tried to get support to buy a professional Nikon camera and film so I could complete my job. I’ll never forget his answer: “Are you talking to me as a person or to the foundation? Well, come up to my office tomorrow and show me your grant proposal.” I could hardly sleep that night. For the first time I had real hope of getting a little support for my photography (if only some babysitter money). But when I looked over the application I always carried with me, I saw a sentence about “the Rockefeller clan’s brutal slaughter of 41 prisoners in Attica.” I’d completely forgotten about it. I was so embarrassed after having met with so much warmth, hospitality, and trust from the Rockefellers that I couldn’t bring myself to knock on his door. Instead, I turned around and continued my vagabonding with the slogan of the old Rockefeller: neither “a dime for the bank nor a penny to spend.” Angry with myself over my self-defeating prejudice, I phrased my new insight: The underclass syndrome of murder and alcoholism is just a mirror of the ruling class. Admittedly, the alcoholism part of it referred to what I’d seen in other upper-class families rather than to this family, who’d shown me, intruder though I was, so much generosity.

Two days later I stayed with this woman in a shack smack up against an Exxon refinery. Apart from my love/hate affair with the Exxon logo, I think there was another reason I ended up with her. During my first year in America, President Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act to eliminate lead from gasoline. Leaded gasoline had been introduced by Standard Oil (Exxon) for its “anti-knock effect,” and Exxon had fought previous attempts to outlaw it. Just before breaking my “anti-knock” vagabond principle in Jay and Sharon’s house—I always waited passively for people to invite me home—I’d heard about new studies showing the destructive effects of lead on children. I thought of all the lead that black children were exposed to in ghetto homes, often build next to inner city highways. (Page 299). This gave me the answer



Sharon Rockefeller with Valerie in 1974

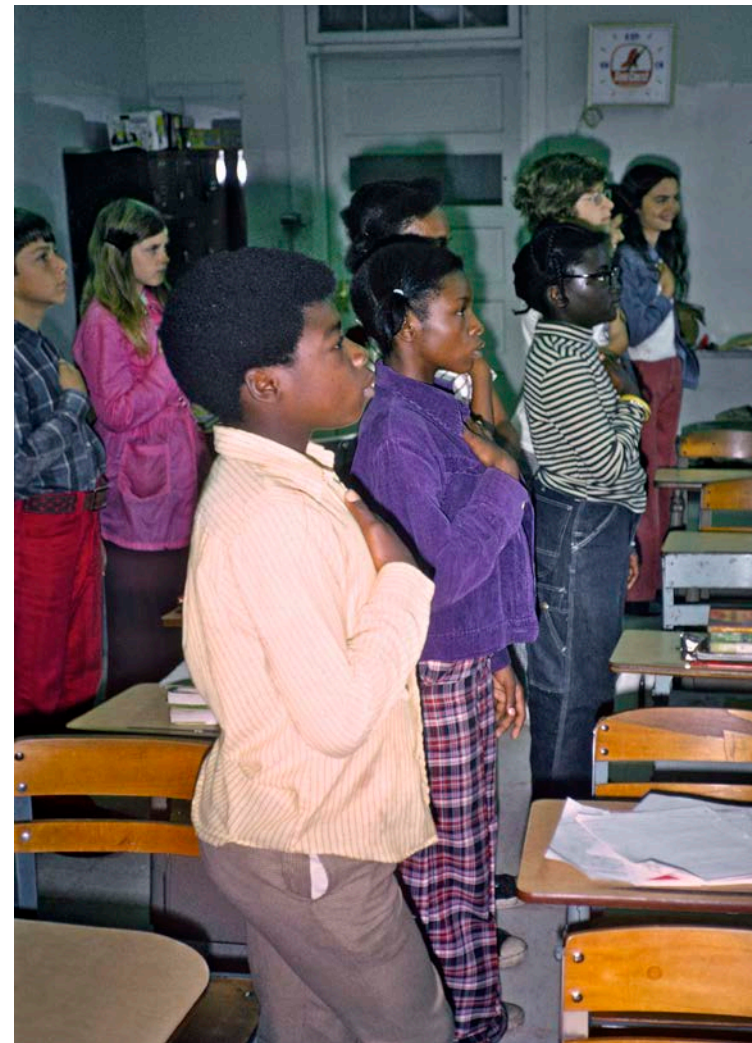
to why violence and murder had exploded about 20 years after leaded gas became common. (This boy is showing me the blood from someone in his family who’d just been murdered.) Lead also plays an important role in the learning disabilities of many ghetto children and explains why many whites, like Valerie, did better in school. 17 years later, after one of my shows in Stanford, a white woman came up to me and asked whether we could talk in private. She seemed a bit angry when she said, “I’m in your book.” I was totally confused since there were hardly any whites in the book. When she found the page, I realized she was Valerie Rockefeller. “Last year,” she continued, “when my roommate came home after your show and told me you portrayed my father as an alcoholic and mass murderer, I was very angry with you. But now that I’ve seen the show myself, I have to give you a big hug. And here’s my business card. If ever you need my help, just call me.” Wow. Again I was struck by guilt because I hadn’t sufficiently distinguished in the book between Exxon, a symbol of oppression, and the loving family who’d once taken me in. I encountered exactly the same overwhelming reaction from three other Rockefeller children at other universities. They even asked for my advice on how they could best serve the poor. So I wasn’t surprised to see Valerie, whose weighty baggage was both negative and positive, end up as a special education teacher for adolescents with learning and emotional disabilities in East Harlem. Somehow I saw a direct line going from our first meeting in her house when she was a child to her social commitment as an adult in Harlem. First and foremost, she was molded by the long social commitment of her parents. Perhaps reinforced by the inherited trauma from her mother (paralleling the inherited trauma among black children). In any case I was, as with her father, astonished by how much we agreed on everything when we last communicated in 2015. “I’m still hypercritically judgmental of people with money!” she wrote to me. She’s also part of the Rockefeller family’s effort to stop Exxon/Mobil’s climate denial. “As descendants, we have an extra burden to fight climate change,” Valerie says.



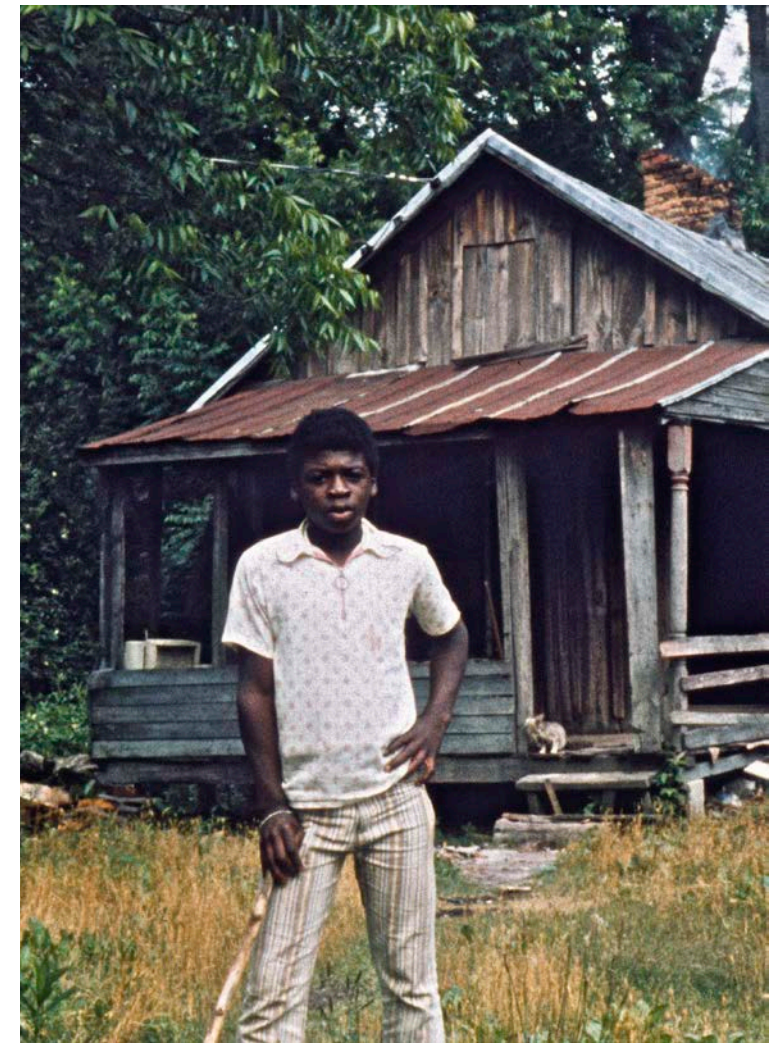
1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC



1974 - Washington, NC. Robert in school



1974 - Washington, NC. Robert at home



1974 - Jersey City, NJ

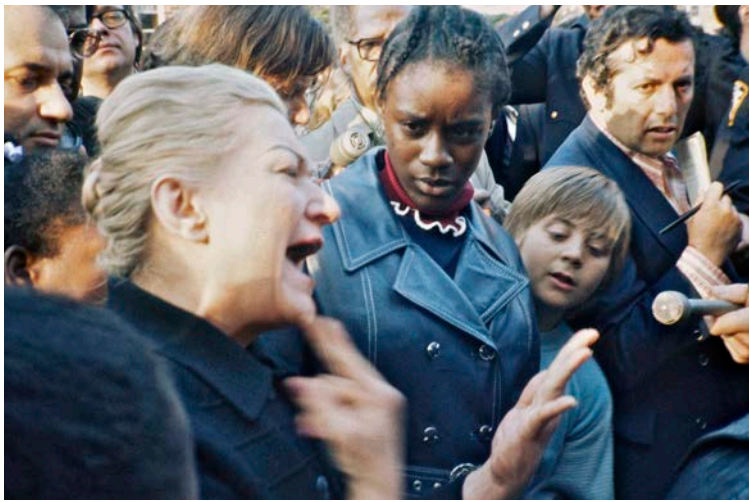


1973 - Tunica, LA



1974 - Washington, NC

The integration of black and white school children was one of the most significant results of the civil rights struggle. That many better-off liberals didn't allow their children to integrate helped sabotage integration and create resentment among poor whites, who couldn't afford private schools. Seeing the conditions of American schools was perhaps the most shocking aspect of my journey. Never had I heard so many brainwashing phrases, such as "Men treasure freedom above all else," combined with an almost total omission of black history. Today many schools even prohibit books by blacks such as Nobel prize winner Toni Morrison. This totalitarian regimentation is like the "pledge of allegiance" to "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all". It stands in glaring contrast to the state of slavery being hammered into black children in these dilapidated plywood-windowed "ghetto schools." In theory we gladly grant freedom and justice to Robert, seen here pledging allegiance in Washington, NC, for afterwards to walk home to his shack with more rats than books. At least covering the windows with the stars-and-stripes helps keep the cold—and his American Dream—out.



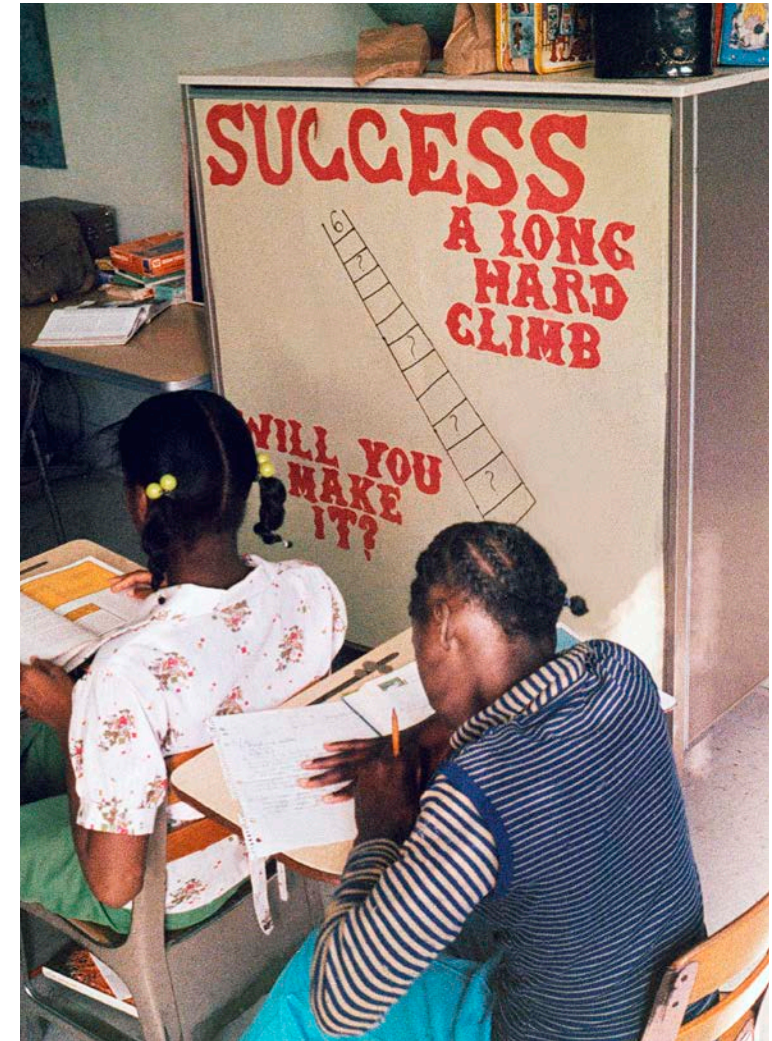
1972 - Canarsie, NY



1972 - Canarsie, NY



1972 - Canarsie, NY



1974 - Washington, NC



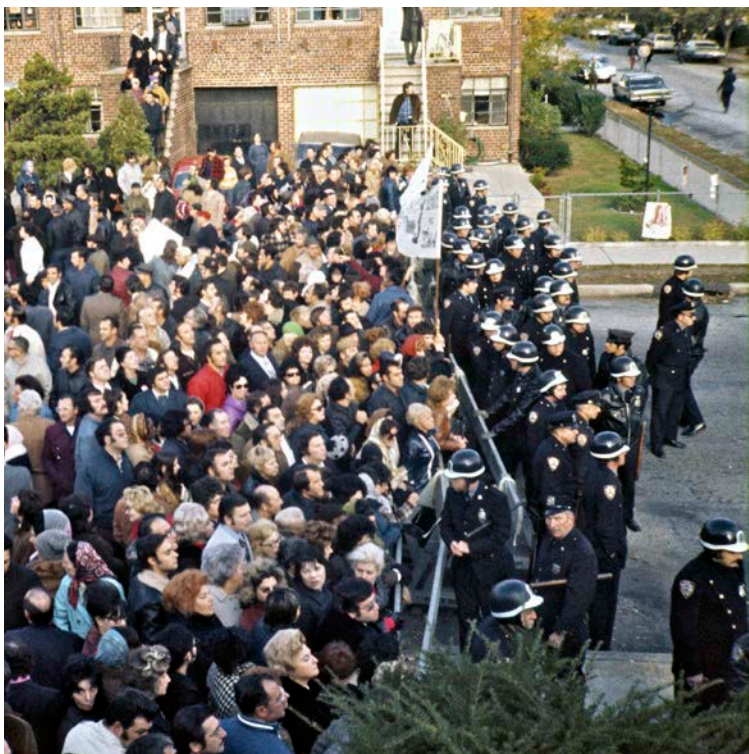
1972 - NYC



1973 - Louisville, KY



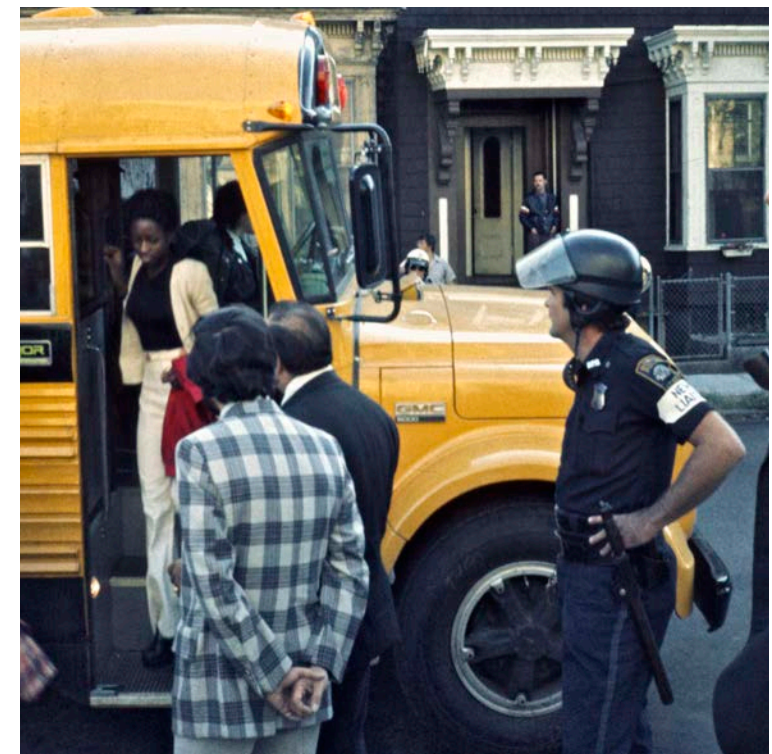
1974 - San Francisco



1972 - Canarsie, NY



1974 - South Boston



1974 - South Boston, MA

I saw violent struggles in cities everywhere as blacks, desperate to break free of segregation and to give their children a shot at an equal education, bussing them to schools in white neighborhoods.

When police and soldiers have to escort children on every bus and furious stone-throwing whites have to be kept behind barricades to protect black children, we teach them on their first day in the white world that the Ku Klux Klan is at the heart of every white ... as I erroneously wrote back then. In my work with the KKK since then, I learned that the children of the KKK are often the only whites in all-black schools since they're too poor to move away from black neighborhoods.

Also, "black schools" are precisely what many Danish parents today flee from although as self-righteous youths in the '70s they loudly condemned American racism when they saw my slideshow.



1971 - East St Louis, IL



1989 - Harlem, NY



1974 - Jersey City, NJ

These are black schoolchildren in an American ghetto recorded on tape, but the conversation could just as easily have been recorded today among brown ghetto children in Europe:

- *We should be friends to white people, like Mary. She's my friend and she's white.*
- *Wait until you grow up and she'll be out of this world!*
- *How do you know she'll be out of this world?*
- *She won't be out of the world, but out of this country.*
- *Out of this country or out of this ghetto?*
- *Out of this country, ghetto, or anything ...*
- *She will still be my friend.*
- *She might turn against you. They might brainwash her.*
- *A white person is still a human being!*
- *But why ... how come they treat a black person as if he an animal?*
- *We must've done something wrong!*

When listening to such conversations, of 7- and 8-year-old children, I could only conclude that many of them see not only their ghetto but even their country as a closed system and—worse—blame themselves for it. When asked “Where are you from?”, brown children born in Denmark will, for example, say “Turkey.” Like blacks, they’ve internalized the message of our divisive rhetoric: “You’re unwanted and not part of our values.” When they’re constantly told that they don’t belong, it’s not surprising that many ghetto parents are opposed to integrated schooling despite their knowledge that ghetto schools don’t work.



1974 - Washington, NC

Being deprived of a good education in your own ghetto school is preferable to the illusion of belonging to mainstream society with the deprivation you also must suffer here. It’s a sad fact that even in integrated schools we kill the spirit and motivation of the children we’ve marginalized. Everywhere in the world teachers are creating pupils to fit the image and expectations they already have of them. If you take a random sample of a class and tell the teachers that these pupils are “potential academic spurters,” these kids will, after a year or two, live up to that expectation thanks to the special treatment the teacher unconsciously devotes to them. In a master-slave society, the one expected to become the slave (useless) will thus be given an inferior education, with black or white teachers, segregation or integration making no great difference.

This “innocent” discrimination has disastrous consequences wherever we divide up pupils into “slow” and “bright” tracks, which are naturally a reflection of class society outside. Just how damaging such discrimination is to a child’s self-esteem was shown when a computer mistakenly put all the so-called “slow” children into the “bright” class and vice versa. A year later, when the mistake was discovered, educators found that the slow pupils were behaving as though they were bright and the bright pupils were behaving as though they were stupid—the beginning of ghettoization. I constantly met teachers and even principals who referred to their ghetto pupils as “animals.” To the point where I saw even young children thinking of themselves as rats.

In my own school, I learned firsthand that the image the teacher had of a child became the image the child tried to live up to. I spoke a rural dialect, which sounded “dumb” to the ears of teachers in the city, where they spoke “correct” Danish. As a result, they unconsciously avoided me, and little by little I became introverted with occasional explosions of “dumb” behavior. I lost all desire for learning and consistently scored 30% to 50% lower than the other pupils. Finally, I was forced to drop out, which eventually made me into a streetwise vagabond. Had I, in addition to my ADHD, been black or brown in a racist society, where we unconsciously try to keep such “unteachables” out of sight till they became “behavioral untouchables,” I could easily have ended up not only “streetwise,” but also a “criminal,” “addict,” “prostitute,” “welfare loafer” or filled any of the other roles a society of disposable humans finds it fitting to mold its undesirables into.

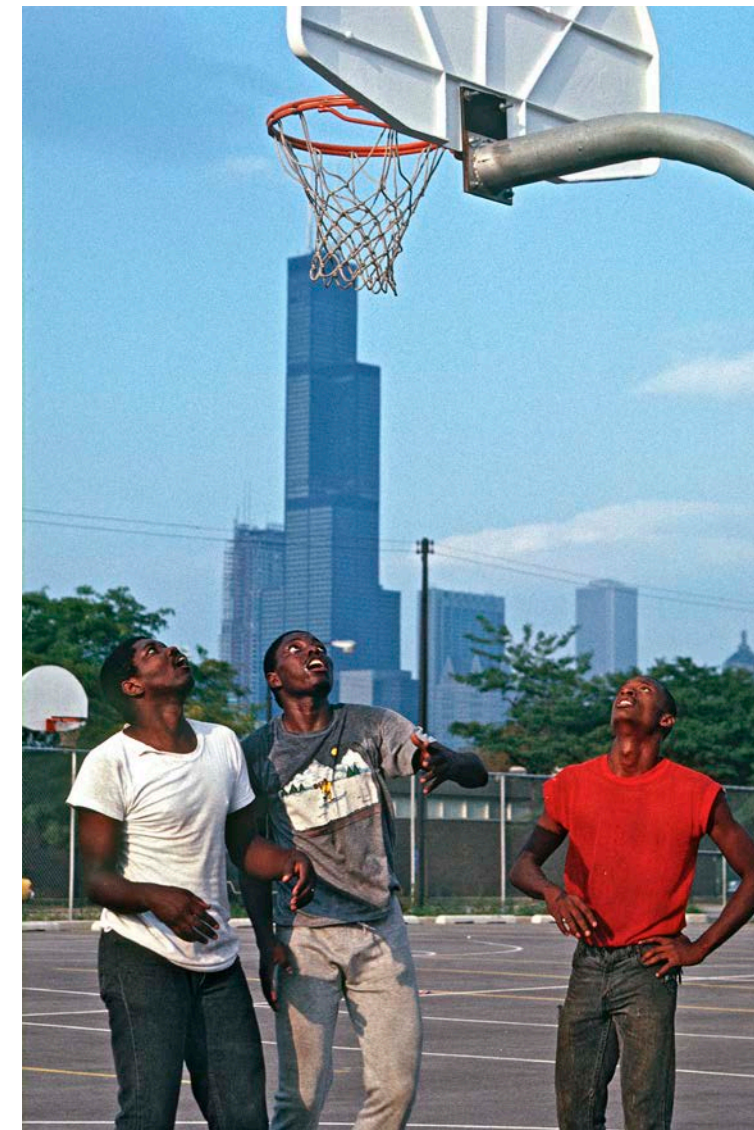
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To avoid the accusation of being the master-slave society's whip-hand, teachers often find new ways of putting the blame on their pupils. Liberals insist the ghetto child's "lack of motivation" and "impaired learning ability" is due to being "culturally deprived" since they come from homes with no more books than could be found in slave cabins (or in a Turkish or Arab peasant's home). Could it be that the teachers themselves have been trapped in a closed system and have become excellent oppressors with their "Our schools aren't bad, but we get bad students" or "Poor little things," judgments crushing to children? If there's any doubt left, it's worth remembering that highly motivated, politically and socially aware teachers in schools run by the Black Panthers and black Muslims brought their ghetto kids up to national (white) standards. Private Muslim schools in Denmark can do it in the same way. In other words, by excelling academically, not solely through athletic scholarships.

This expectational deterrent to learning can also be seen in societies permeated by oppressive thinking toward other vulnerable groups. American women, for example, who attended girls' schools, where they're protected from society's sexism, do better after graduating than women who went to integrated schools. If some of us find it difficult facing our own racism, let's not forget how few men 50 years ago saw themselves as sexists.

Yet the fact that we crushed girls with our attitudes is revealed by the statistics from those years, which show how many women we "forced" away from higher education with emotional blocks that prevented them from becoming doctors, lawyers, and scientists. When we see the 4th grade syndrome in our marginalized black and brown children in both the US and Europe, we must conclude: Either we need help processing our racism, or children of color must be protected from us in non-integrated schools with highly committed and conscientious teachers, "saving angels" who can restore the sense of self-worth and identity that we so early on steal from them.

Unfortunately, I find myself an active part of this racism. After months of teaching in mostly white universities, for example, I've internalized the students' thinking. I frequently catch myself thinking in racist terms about "blacks." When I'm similarly isolated in Denmark, my thinking about those whom Danes label "Muslims" becomes skewed in the same way. With the racist's reproachful and distancing perspective as well as his penchant for finding fault with "the other," I thus help our outcasts form a defeatist hostile attitude—again, in the blindness of my white privilege. For blindness it is when we outwardly demand integration, but in our inner thinking "distance ourselves from," fear, and consequently crush those we should integrate with.



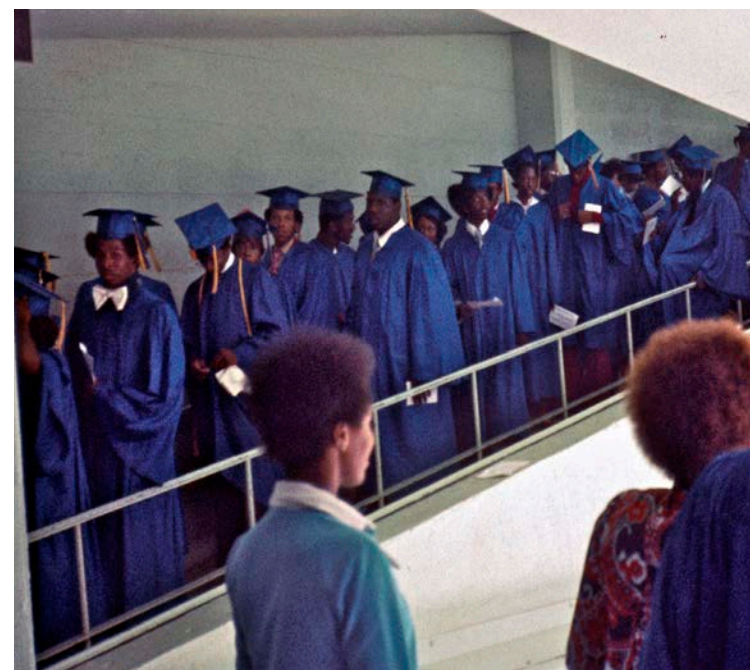
1990 - Chicago



1990 - Chicago



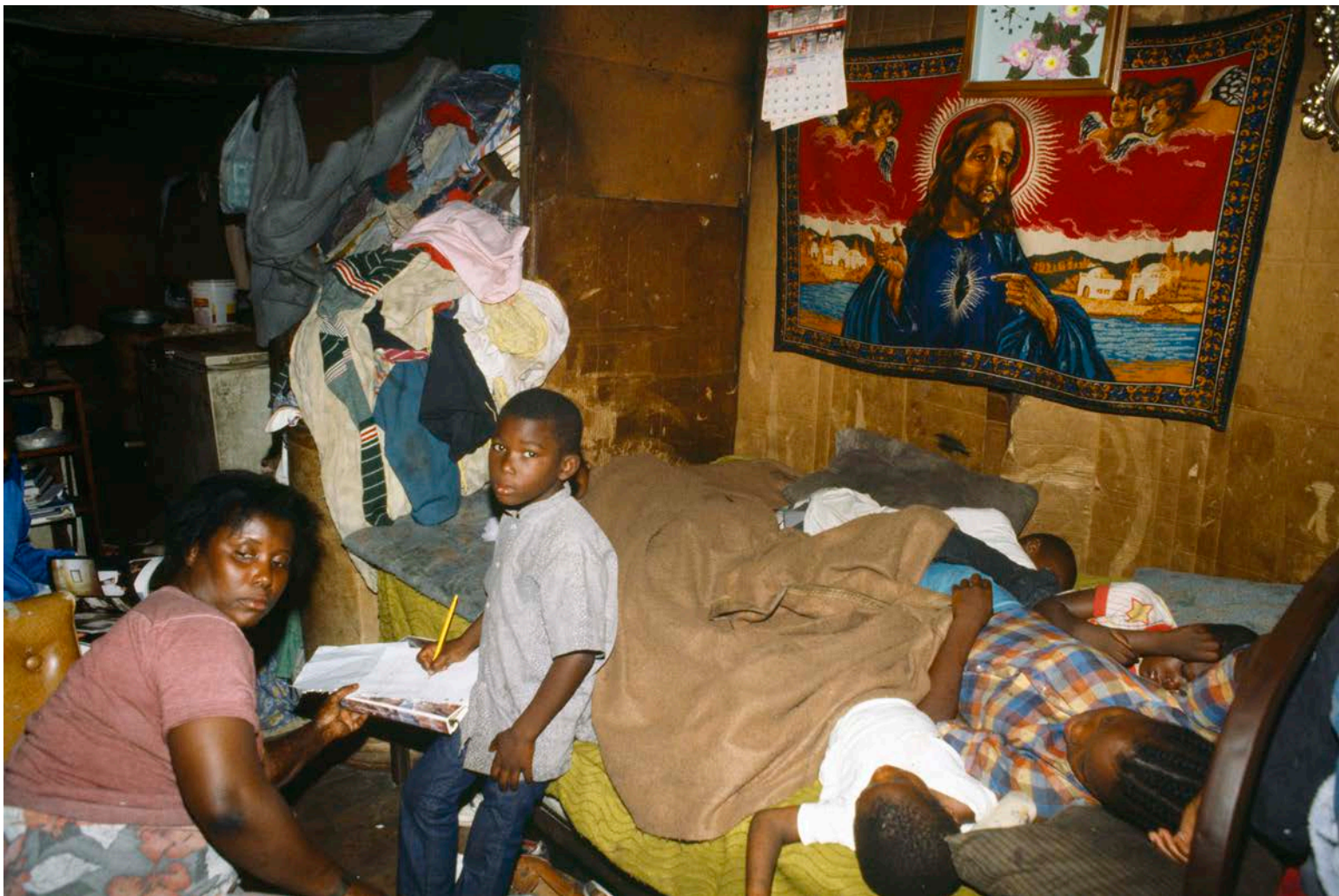
1974 - Greensboro, NC



1972 - Detroit



1989 - NYC



1990 - Burke County, GA

In Los Angeles I saw a beautiful case of racial solidarity when West Indian immigrant students formed an organization to motivate native blacks not to drop out of high school and college—a sort of historical repetition of the underground railroad, where free blacks helped people out of slavery.

The extent to which we're all victims of this oppression is shown in this picture of a group of black teenagers. The girl was adopted as a baby by blacks in the ghetto and has been brought up to be black: to behave black, to think black, and to dress black. She has hardly anything in common with whites; she can't even speak "our language". In white homes I see the opposite. Black and white, Palestinian and Jew, native and immigrant, male and female, heterosexual and gay suffer severe injury when parents early on recreate the patterns of oppression they themselves received from their parents. Both parties are eventually robbed of the ability, as well as the desire, to treat the other side humanely. We give up deep down, deciding it's an absurd ethnic alchemy to try to integrate elements that repel each other like oil and water.



1973 - Baltimore

The frantic efforts of liberals to shake these two elements so much that they fragment into smaller particles for a short time is just a futile attempt to give oppression a human face—like voting for Obama while trapped in the massive apartheid of black and white hearts. So is there any hope at all?



2009 - High school prom in Natchez, MS

Yes, I often hear even the worst racists say, "I wish we could adopt all black children so they could become like us." Although in typical racist fashion they look for the fault in "the others," it's not an expression of racial hatred. Just as Europeans rejoice when "Muslims" convert to Christianity, forgetting that it's the different culture to which they react negatively. I see this awkward hope most clearly in white students in American universities when they relate how, out of liberal guilt, they try to reach out to black students. But all the time they're held back by reactionary guilt: they recall all the warnings of their parents in childhood; usually not verbally, but in their eyes or in the clicks of the car door locks when they drove too close to a black neighborhood.

It's frightening to betray the love of our parents, whom we can feel in the back of our minds pulling the opposite way. So when they reach out to blacks out of love, they are pulled backward out of love. They become clumsy and patronizing toward blacks, who react with deep-rooted anger and hostility since they've gone through a similar, but reverse oppression. This revives the white fear—now the fear of being rejected.

Thus, the oppressor and the oppressed constantly "create" each other since none of us is free. For what defines all systems of oppression is the loss of "freedom"; the freedom to act in a way an outsider of such a system would see as "normal" and "human." This cocktail of white guilt and fear creates the anger and hostility of internalized racism among blacks, which in turn creates more white fear and guilt, etc.

The worst racism today is thus not created by hate, but in the name of love—in the desire to protect our children from what we ourselves were taught to fear. When I take whites to black parties in the US or to brown parties in Denmark, I often see them burst into tears in guilt: after having for so long unconsciously demonized them, they suddenly experience "the others" as real human beings. Our tears reveal that we're all victims of racism.



1975 - San Francisco



1974 - Palm Beach, FL



1973 - Indianapolis, IN



1974 - Brownsville, NY





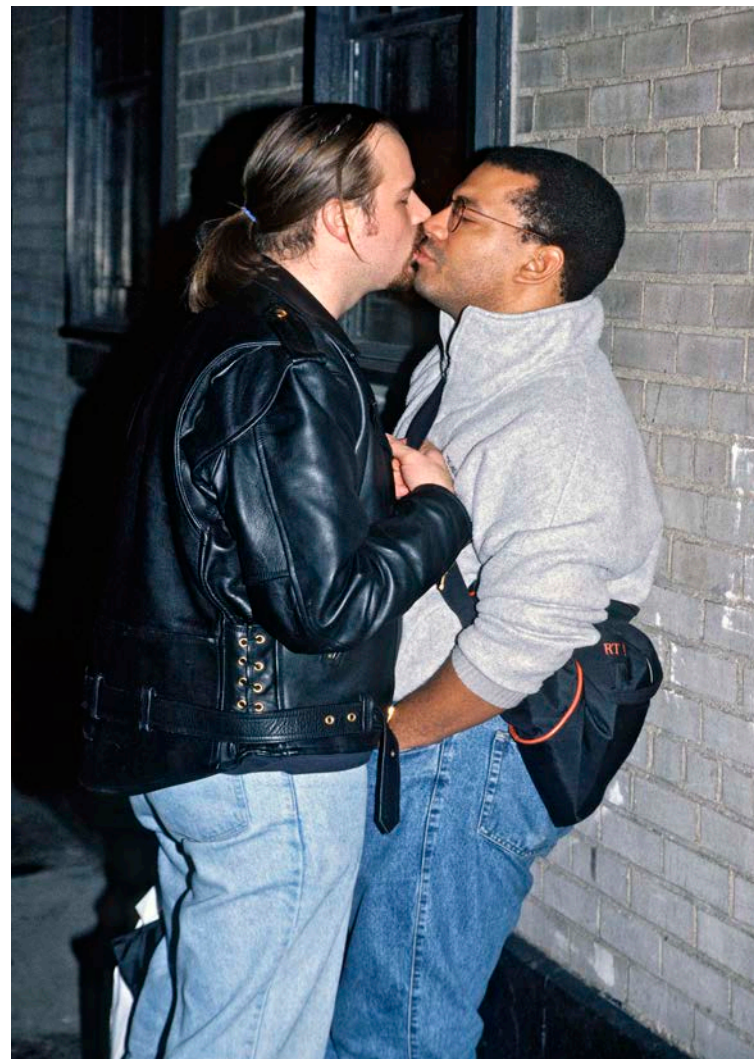
1982 - San Francisco



1989 - Washington, DC

The more I learned about the crippling and self-perpetuating effect of being ostracized, the harder it was for me to condemn whites for our racism. Even for me, and African and Caribbean immigrants, who were not molded by our master-culture, it was not always possible to respond in a human way towards those who are trapped in a pariah culture. The clumsy behavior of whites towards blacks in the US, and since towards “Muslims” in Europe, became especially understandable when I compared it to my own difficulties in being fully human towards those locked up in the homosexual ghetto by my heterosexual society.

My attitude toward gays had been basically “liberal”. Although I had subconsciously forced them as effectively underground in my rural Danish childhood as they are in Saudi Arabia, I had not been shaped by overtly hateful attitudes towards them. Thus, I did not have to meet many self-hating gays in the closet on the American highways to realize that I felt it as a moral duty for me to become active in the world’s first open gay movement in San Francisco. There I soon learned from more “liberated” gays that liberals are true liberation’s most insidious enemy. Our deep sense of heterosexual superiority remains untouched by our concern for the “plight” of gay people. We appear to concede so much with our condescending “we must accept homosexuals” while the liberal “we” invariably excludes the very minority whose integration is being urged. We leave the oppressed to struggle not only against genuinely expressed bigotry and hatred, but also “sympathy” and “understanding” - “tolerance” extended to something regrettable rather than normal.



1992 - NYC



1984 - Swarthmore, PA



2012 - Washington, DC

After such indoctrination “we” feel as insecure, uneasy, and threatened by “them” as whites feel threatened by the blacks / browns, and it becomes more convenient for us to keep them in ghettos. Some Americans saw gay ghettos like San Francisco and New Orleans as expressions of a tolerant and free society. As with the old Jewish ghettos in Europe, it is just the opposite. When we for centuries prevented gays from responding freely, kissing and holding hands in an open atmosphere without fear, made laws against them in most states, make them loathe homosexuality before reaching adulthood so that they adopt and internalize straight people’s definition of good and bad, when we forced gays and lesbians throughout their lives into painful, futile attempts to straighten their lives with the same crippling effect on their self-image as when blacks straightened their hair to “pass” or merely survive, - then we will eventually force them into similar segregated ghettos, complete with riots and subcultures. Being an early advocate for gays was noticed and it was black gays such as SF Film Festival director Albert Johnson and theater director Burial Clay (murdered a week after setting up my show) who first invited American Pictures to America. When I lived with black gay activist, Lawrence Andrews while he helped set up my American Pictures Theater in San Francisco he invited me to make workshops for his group “Black and white men together” to help combat the racism he saw among the members. “The whites can go to bed with us, but afterwards want nothing to do with us.” The split between gays and lesbians was even greater then, but in the 80’es I saw lesbians come out of their justified male anger to unite with our movement.



1973 - Baltimore. Ms. Willie after our Thanksgiving dinner



2021 - rural NC. Ms. Willie 72 years old.



1995 - NYC



1973 - Baltimore. Ms. Willie in her living room

Hitchhiking with my Danish sign in Baltimore's ghetto on Thanksgiving night, 1973, and hoping to find a place to stay, I was astonished to be picked up by a beautiful black woman, as black women never picked me up. She invited me to her neatly polished suburban home and having read Danish literature, we got involved in a deep intellectual conversation after which she invited me to share her silk bed upstairs. Not until she started kissing me did her beard stubble tell me she was not a woman. When I later told the story to American men they would usually burst out with nausea: "What did you do? Jump out the window?" Indeed, soon afterward two men, believing they had picked up a female prostitute, killed such a transsexual. For me Ms. Willie instead became a dear friend, who introduced me to the world of transgenders. He admired Denmark for first allowing sex-change operations and told me about Christina Jorgensen's book about it. I was amazed hearing how Willie growing up in the tobacco fields in North Carolina had felt attracted to female clothes since she was 5, but since escaped north to better live out her real identity. How times have changed is be seen by how she today - now age 72 - has moved back to her roots in North Carolina. After Willie's loving introduction to the exciting trans- and drag world I felt completely at home when I later moved into a building full of transgenders in the Tenderloin in San Francisco. Especially since I saw many of their identity problems during their transitions, I loved their joy filled parties and drag show competitions. So when in old age I opened Denmark's first female mosque I did it on the condition that our many LGBTQ-refugees could wear high-heeled shoes in the mosque for their drag shows.



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



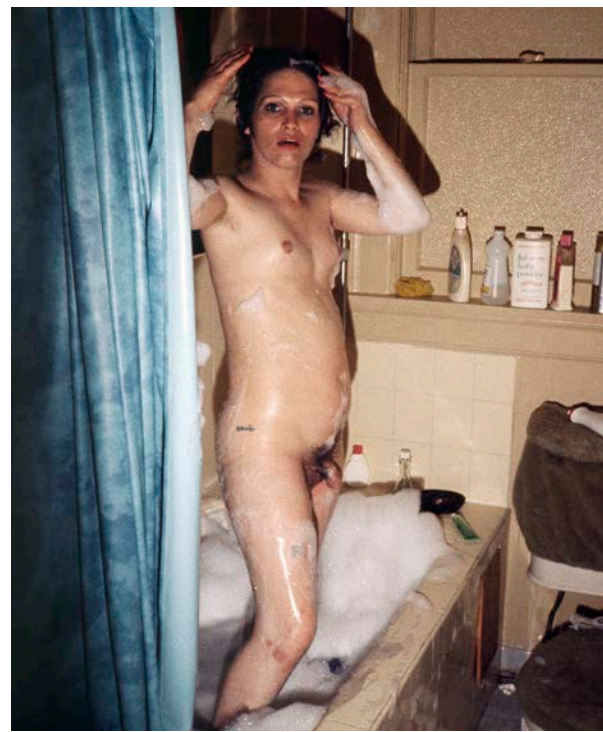
1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



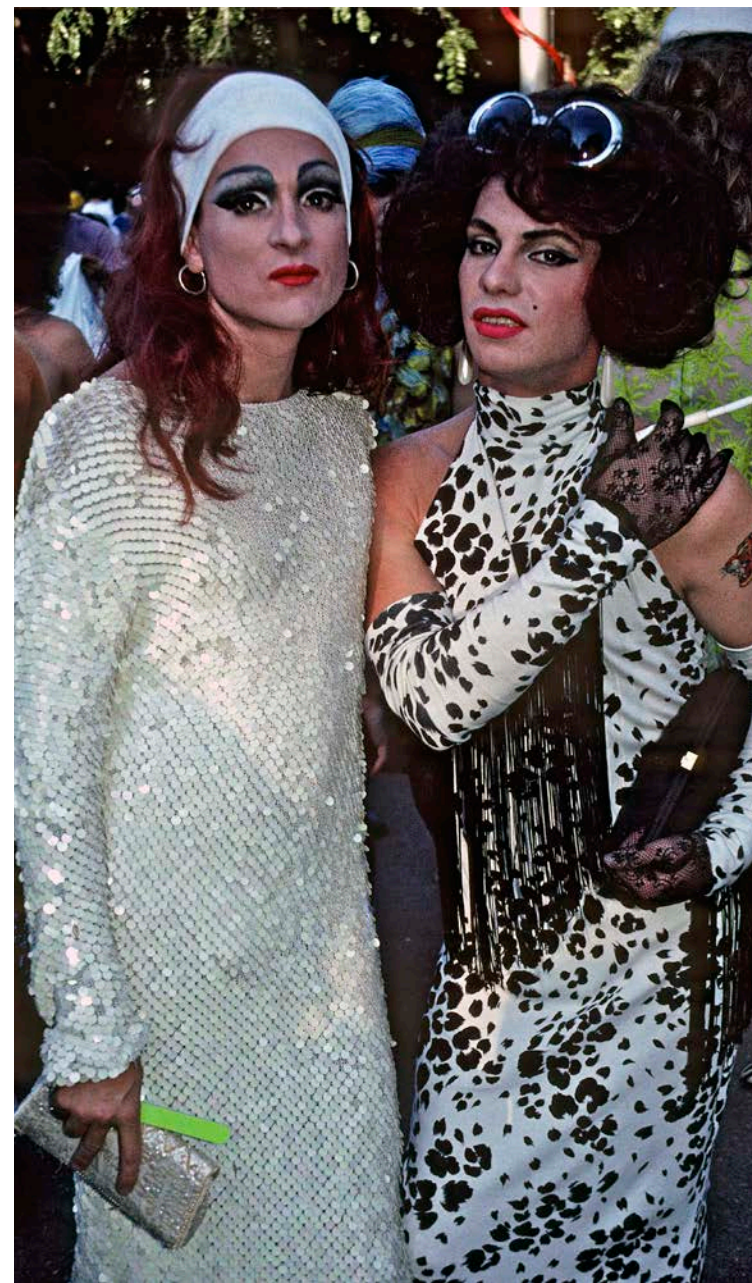
1975 - Tenderloin, SF - Transgender party



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



2001 - NYC



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, SF. Transgender party



1975 - SF. Transgender father's birthday for her son

For liberation was not easy. I saw early on how the outside oppression drove many transgenders into drugs and prostitution, thus mirroring the most obvious end result of black oppression. So most of my friends I lost touch with. When a social system treats a minority with contempt and hostility, in the end those within this ghetto become so conscious of its closed system that they go one further and exaggerate their perceived "difference."

And so the vicious circle of oppression is completed as the sub-culture now visibly seems to "justify" society's contempt for it. In this way the "ghetto of the ghetto" is created as the "nice", conformist gays and lesbians often feel that the drag, transsexual, and other special LGBTQ sub-cultures spoil it for them in their relationship to the straight world.



1975 - San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



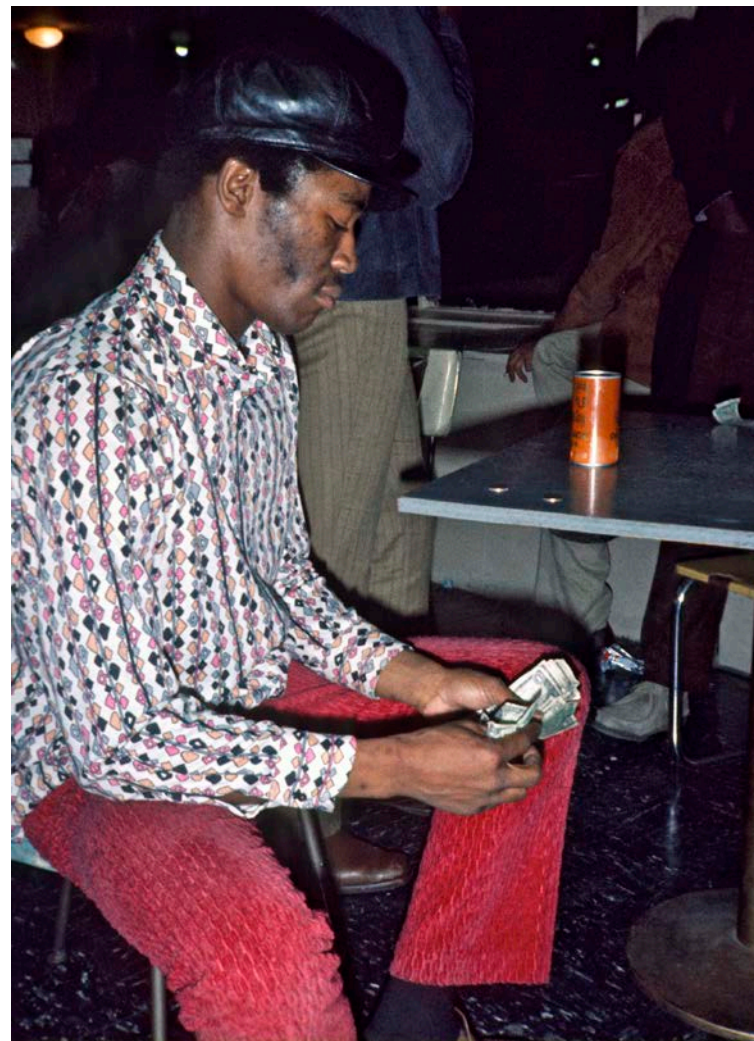
1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1991 - NYC



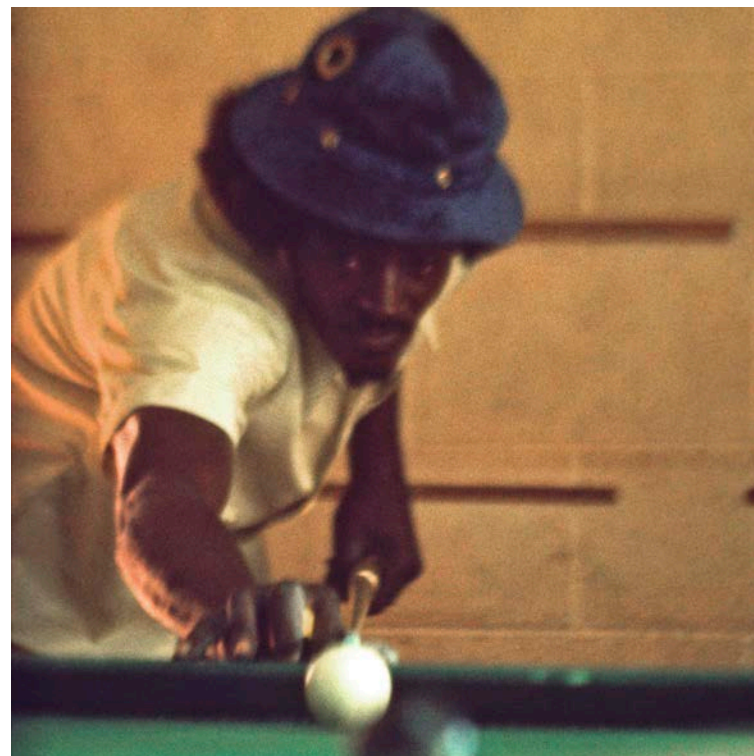
1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

A strong subculture in the black ghetto is a thorn in the side of better-off blacks (and better-off browns in Europe). Both minorities try to make themselves “deserving” of integration, but the whole time we’re using a pathological image of this subculture to stereotype them. Sensitive to this aspect, the upper ghetto tends to view the lower ghetto with a sense of shame rather than as proof of their common oppression.

So strong are tensions between the upper and the lower ghetto that I often had to choose sides, which wasn’t difficult after I’d seen the suffering in the lower ghetto and the resulting contempt from both the upper ghetto and whites. The more I began to understand the lower ghetto, the more I understood the dynamics of oppression in our system. For many whites the lower ghetto is an incomprehensible world of criminals, pimps, gang members, traffickers, prostitutes, and addicts. Since they live in a closed system, their acts are desperate and disclose a pattern of absolute contempt for the rest of society, which they know they’ll never become a part of. Pool halls are their meeting place, luxury cars their status symbol, black/brown cultural nationalism or Islamism their inflammatory community and identity, the



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



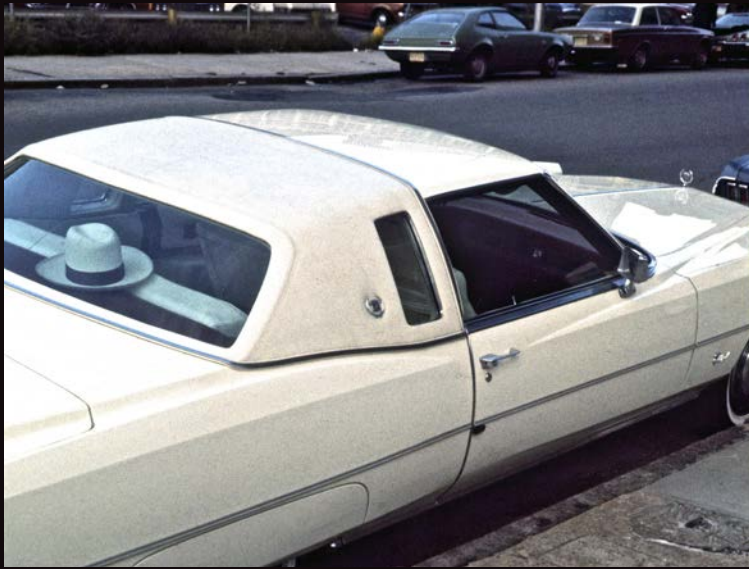
1973 - Greensboro, NC

brotherly handshake and the sophisticated “jive” or “walla” talk their communication. “Backstabbing” may be as common as the brotherly handshake. But when you’ve learned these rules and a certain technique for survival, you can’t help coming to love these outcasts, our children of pain, more than any other social group. For to meet humaneness in the midst of brutal surroundings will always be more overwhelming and encouraging than finding it among people protected from adversity.

When this underworld provokes us, it’s not least because it constitutes an enormously exaggerated mirror image of ourselves. Without understanding and respecting this frightening culture, we’re incapable of acknowledging the oppressive and violent aspects of ourselves, which we see reflected in these uncomfortable images here. For they do not show any “black” or “brown” culture, but our own state of mind in all its present brutality. Here are all the tendencies of our system stripped down to a ghastly parody: the competitive spirit, the race for status symbols, sexism, and (not least) the master-slave relationship.



1974 - Daytona Beach, FL



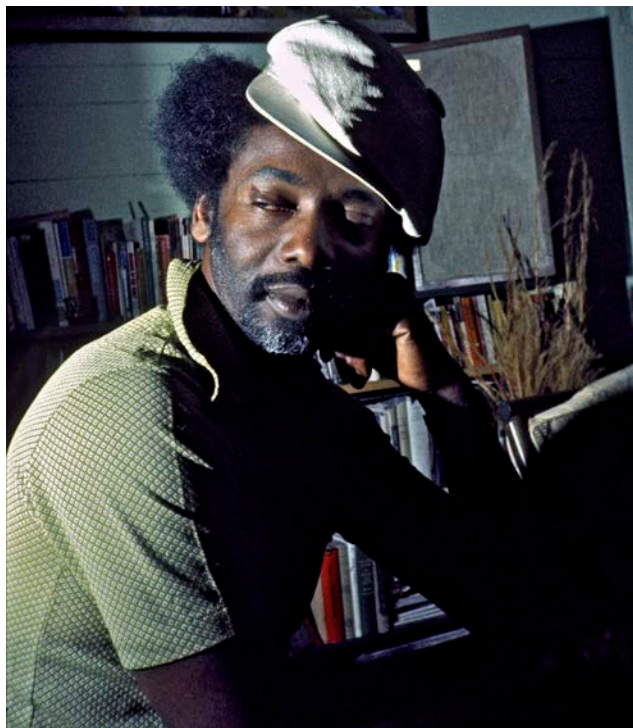
1972 - Detroit



1972 - Jackson, MI



1975 - Richmond, VA



1973 - Zebulon, NC



1974 - NYC

Wherever in the world the master-slave relationship exists, there will be, within the slave culture, further divisions into new master-slave relationships. Where any such relationship exists between people, you'll know that these people aren't free since such a relationship can only exist in a closed system. In the underclass such slavery is seen most clearly in the relationship between pimp and prostitute. The black prostitute is totally subjugated by the pimp and cringes mentally at his feet in deep veneration.

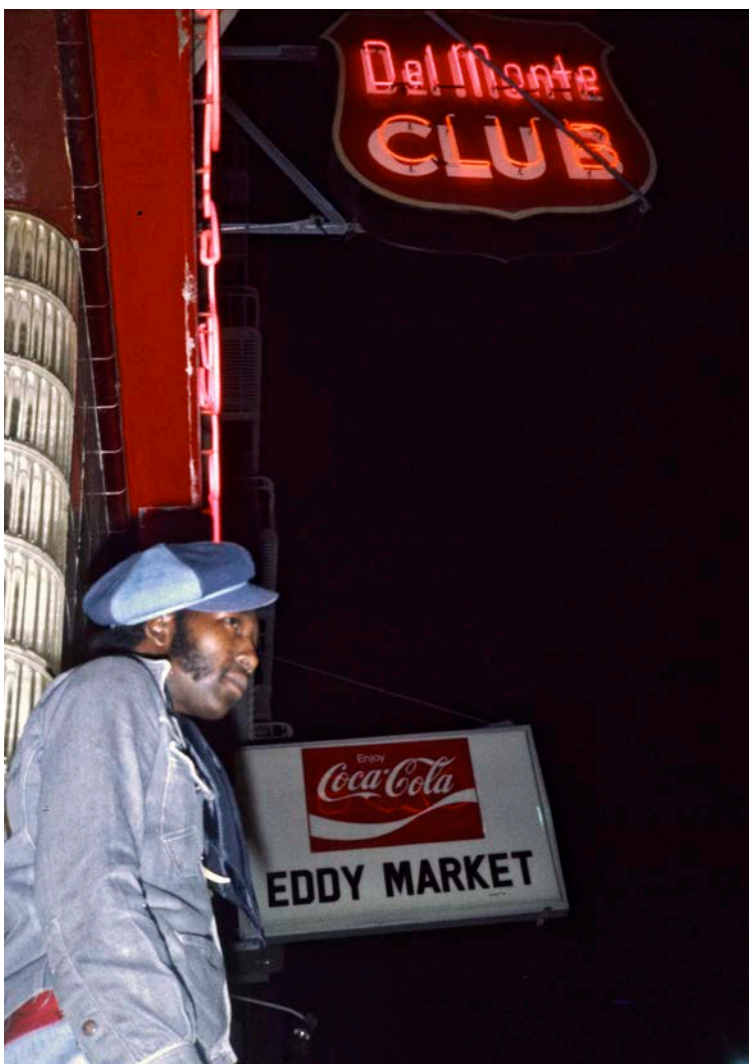
The pimp, however, is not only executioner, but also a victim in the greater system, in which he becomes the new slave driver who sees to it that the merchandise is delivered to the slave master, the white man. His tool is no longer the whip but the pimp stick made from twisted coat hangers. Even though pimps, like businesspeople in the larger society, can behave quite inhumanly, it's important to remember that they, like capitalists, do business according to well-defined rules and laws beyond their control.

These laws are laid down in The Book, an unwritten Adam Smith or business manual that's been passed down from pimp to pimp for generations and which can be seen almost as an extension of capitalist treatises since it describes the under-system in the larger economic system. Woe to the pimp who doesn't follow the regulations! Just like the larger capitalists, they have their daily board meetings with other pimps, where they not only discuss how to keep wages down, but also exchange technical details concerning the manipulation of their "ho's." They establish their employees' working hours, which they call "git down-time," the same way. You can usually tell which ho's belong to a "mack-man" and which are "outlaws" since all the organized ho's get out on the street at exactly the same time every night, while the "outlaws" come and go as they choose.

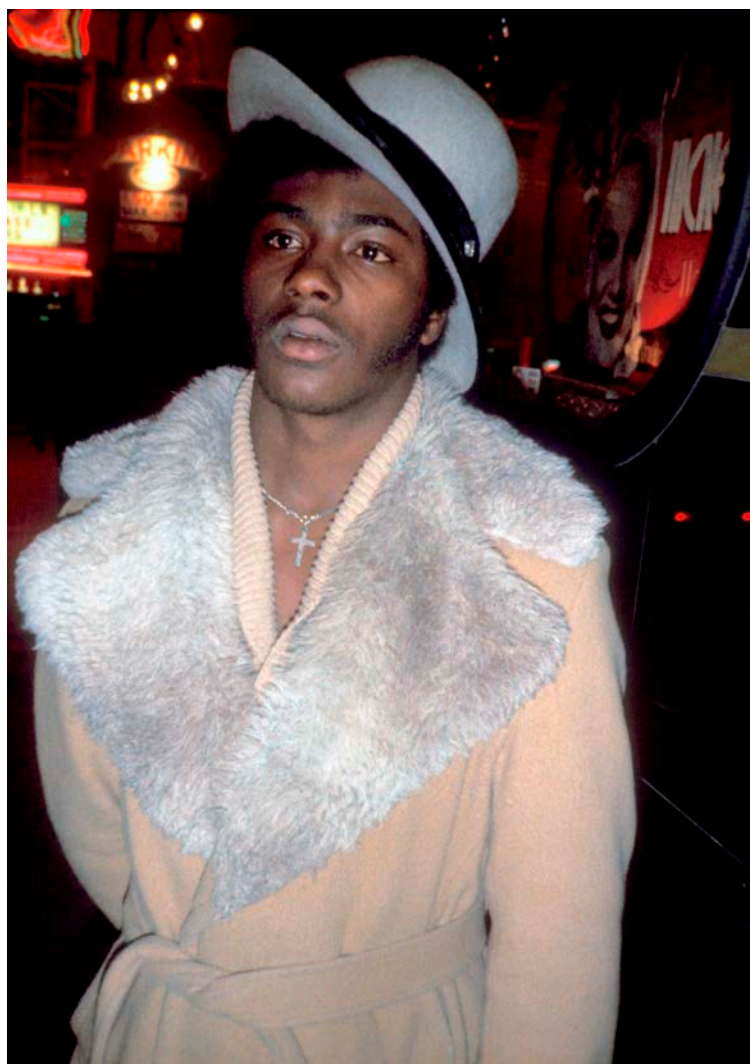
Since they were the ultimate losers in multiple layers of exploitation, I always felt exceptionally close to black prostitutes, who often offered me hospitality (although naturally these were the "outlaws"). Because I was one of the few men in their lives with whom they didn't have either a sexual or business relationship, they could express toward me the humanity that hadn't yet been destroyed by their harsh exploitation.



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



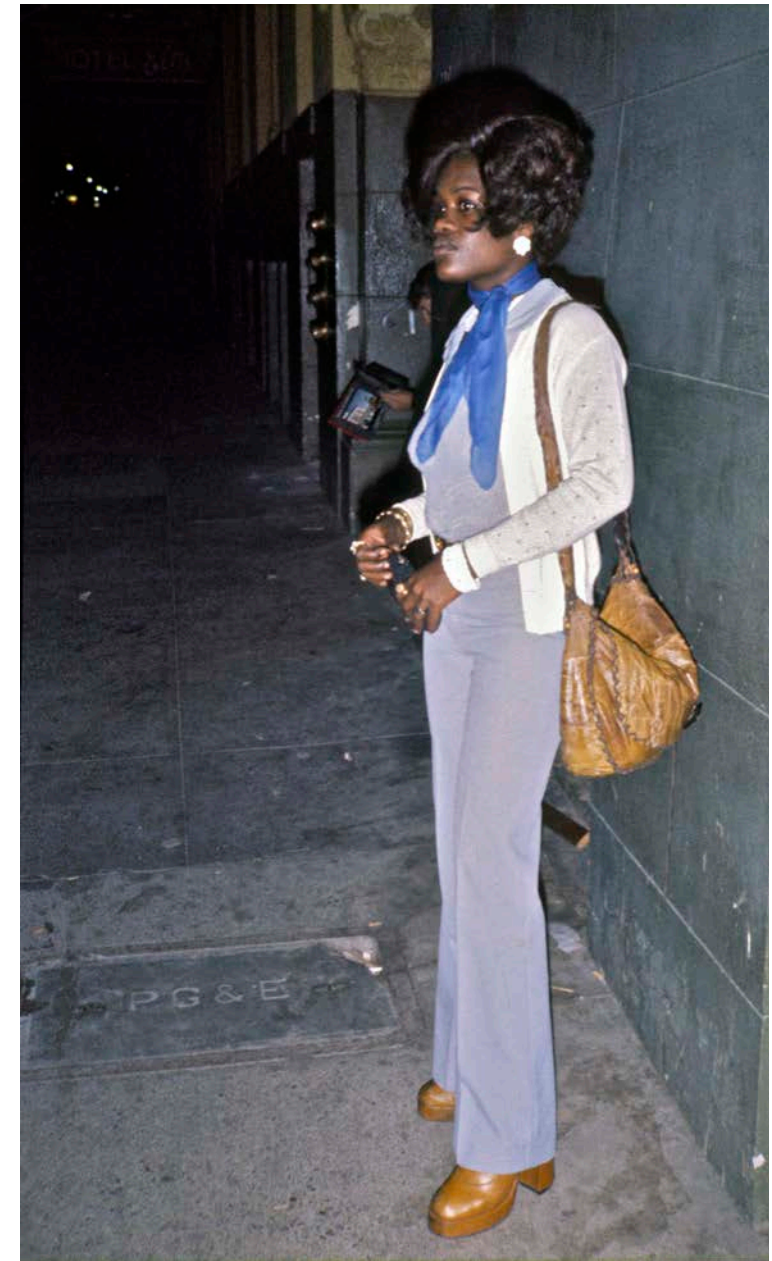
1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1996 - Astoria, NY



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

One reason we got along so well was no doubt that they were compelled to know every detail of “the system” in the lower ghetto to stay free of pimps, while I, as an outlaw (vagabond) in the greater society, had gradually acquired a certain knowledge about it in order to survive. We’d arrived in very different ways at a common outlook. Since the parallel between the superstructure and the substructure was evident, it was easy for these women to see the inner dynamics of the combined system that caused their double oppression: racism and sexism.

The relationship between pimp and prostitute is in many ways just a wild exaggeration of the relationship between man and woman in the lower ghetto, or even in society as a whole, in which one of the man’s many “hustles” consists of obtaining “broad money” from desperate women in return for protection against her being “hit on” by sexually aggressive men. In such a society, a woman sees a man, to a horrifying degree, as at best an object for obtaining money and luxury. She’s often very straightforward about her desire to “marry a rich man.”

This quick ghetto escape was shocking to me since I’d rarely seen such selfish traits in Danish women, perhaps because in a more egalitarian welfare state such exploitation between the sexes doesn’t make the same sense. The prostitution involved in buying women with status and wealth shows especially clearly in the American upper class and underclass.

Within its closed system, the underclass has been instilled with the same admiration for “sharp” pimps and “righteous hustlers” in fine “threads” as people in the larger society are taught to have for maverick capitalists. Such flashy pimps and hustlers “making it” are dangerous role models for ghetto children, attracting them to the street institution at the age of 8 or 9, but, like the nouveau riche capitalist, they’re also pitiful erratic figures continuously manipulating everyone—they can never become lax or their empire will collapse.

I learned this when I spent a year working in a church that tried to organize prostitutes into a union that would protect them from both brutal police raids and pimps.





1973 - Greensboro, NC



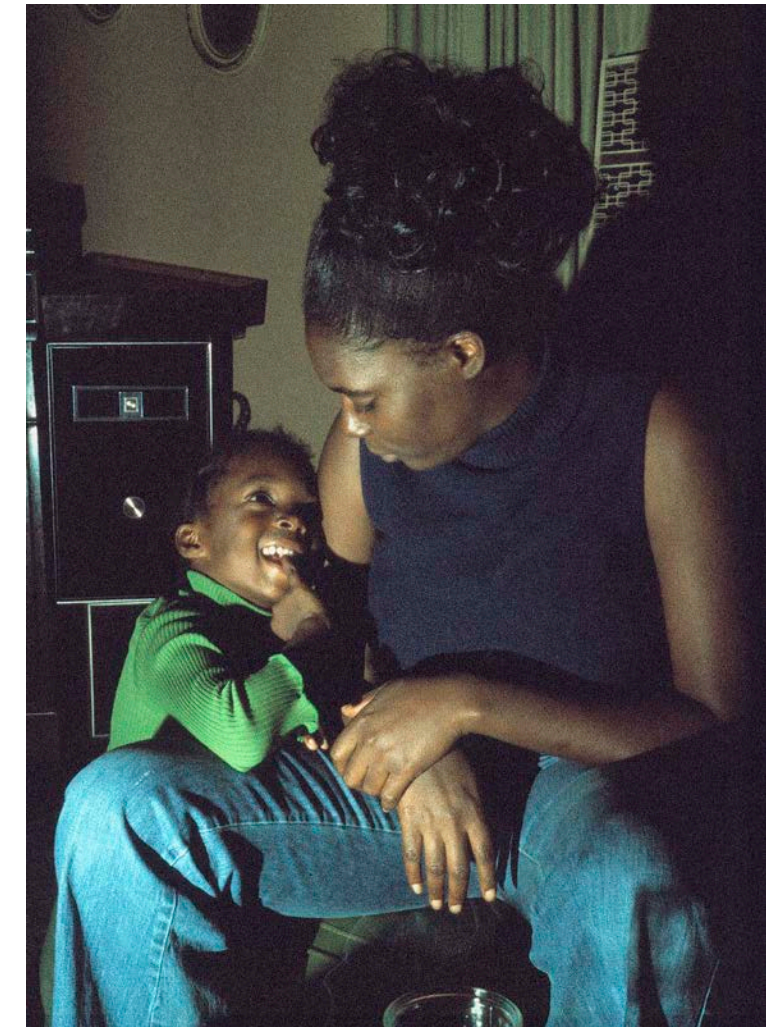
1973 - With Geegurtha in Greensboro, NC



2003 - With Geegurtha in Atlanta

Among the prostitutes who made the strongest impressions on me was Geegurtha, who was struggling to get out of this slavery. When I first met her, she'd just been in prison and been almost totally destroyed by drugs and violence. Her daughter was born an addict but was saved through blood transfusions. During the five years Geegurtha was a prostitute, she saw nothing of her daughter Natasha. But through an enormous effort, Geegurtha became "uphabilitated." The motherly love she gave since then—expressed in this photo—is deeply moving and even miraculous to me when I recall her from the days when she was a wreck. She became manager of the clinic that had helped her, went to college, and majored in psychology.

I'd met Geegurtha when Tony Harris, a social worker, invited me to speak to the hardcore convicts in his drug rehabilitation program. Gee was so impressed with my analysis of their criminal background and the prostitutes I had lived with that she invited me home one day. She was living with her deeply religious family, who was afraid she'd fall back into drugs and prostitution. So her sister Georgia, employed by a church, asked me to move in with them and even to share a bed with Geegurtha and Natasha for a week. She felt it would be helpful for Gee's healing to develop an intimate and trusting relationship with a man not based on sex, money, or violence. Her religiously supervised healing was so successful that she never regressed, and 30 years later Tony took this picture of us replicating the picture Georgia had taken of us on a Sunday morning before church in 1973.



1973 - With daughter Natasha in Greensboro, NC



1973 - Greensboro, NC



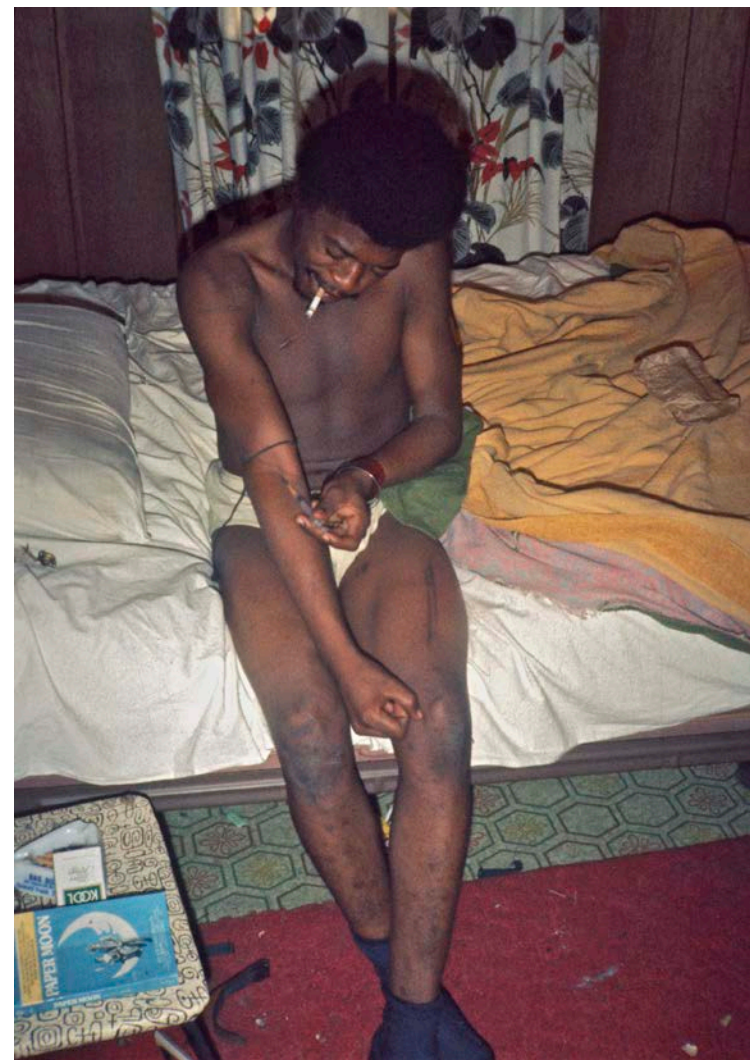
1974 - Greensboro, NC



1974 - NYC

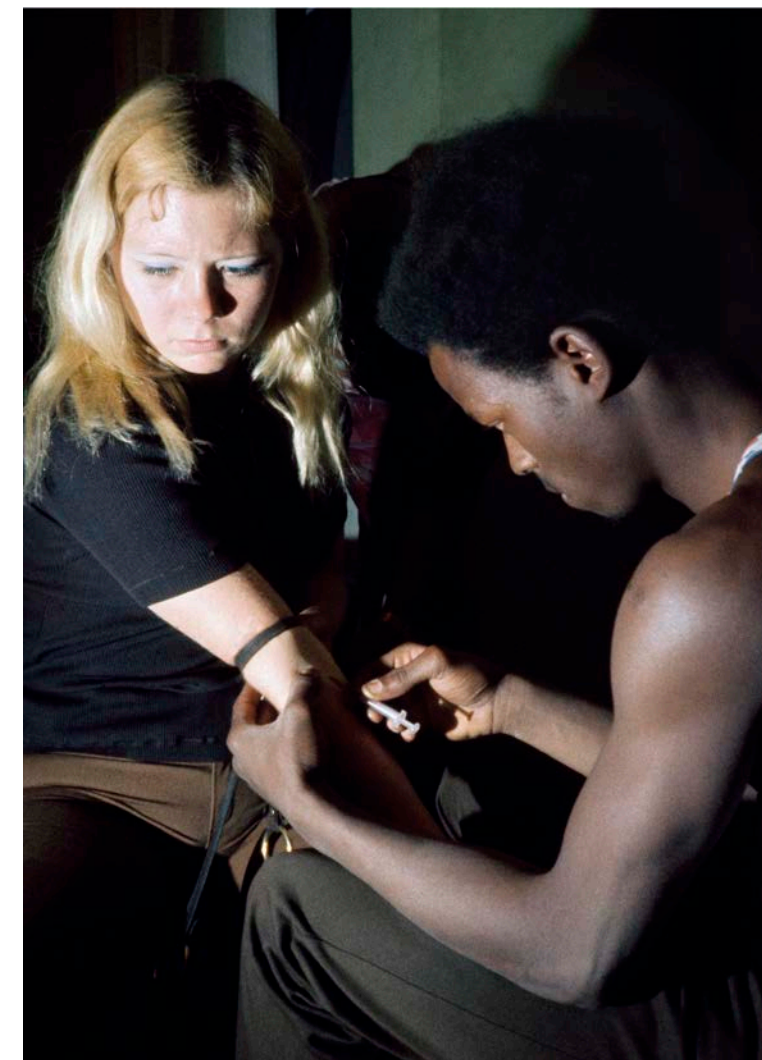


1974 - Jacksonville, FL



1974 - Daytona Beach, FL

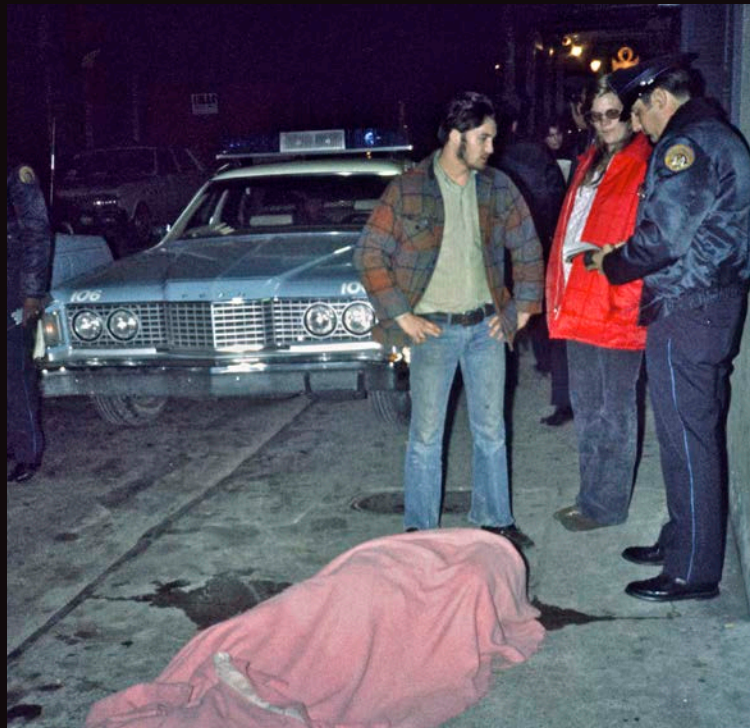
With the way I'd seen the odds stacked against black motherly love, I was deeply moved by this sunshine story. The odds are just as bad for fatherly love. This man, who let me share his bed in a one-room shack in Florida, was shooting up first thing in the morning. Unable to kick his habit, his family life had deteriorated, and he was deeply pained by not being allowed to be with his child. When I lived with Baggie, the mother with these three children, she'd also been an addict but had gotten "clean" and put all her love into giving her children a good religious upbringing. But when I came back a year later, she'd been sentenced to 25 years in prison for armed robbery. The American platitude that "the family that prays together stays together" didn't hold true. People we confine to a closed system usually take the fastest way out—often minutes before they're about to make it. They've so completely internalized our white racist expectations of them they have no faith in their ability to succeed in ordinary ways. Most people somehow understand why a prisoner with seven years left to a sentence takes the chance and escapes instead of patiently waiting to exit hell legally. Not until I myself nearly became ghettoized—rather than merely living the privileged vagabond life in ghettos—was I able to feel how the closed system functions exactly like a prison in which you have neither the psychic surplus nor the means to invest in a seven-year education that might get you out of that stifling oppression the conventional way. All ghetto acts are therefore desperate, guided by short-term goals that are determined by the fact that you already live in a prison. For such people no prison or any kind of punishment will be a sufficient deterrent.



1974 - Jacksonville, FL



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1974 - New Orleans



1975 - San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1974 - New Orleans

Criminal escapes, such as robbery and fraud, are no more typical of shortsightedness than the more lawful escape attempts constantly referred to in racist stereotyping. The climate of death and fear kills long-term trust in the future and in 1970 made it easier to buy a Cadillac than to save money to someday move out of a rotten shack. Coming from a welfare state, I found it ironic that contemptuous white Americans constantly referred to a “low gratification threshold” among blacks while their own lives were tied up in a shortsighted tax revolt, trying to heap BMWs, yachts, and unnecessary gadgets over their own threshold. When you refuse to pay for the common good, you invite criminals to your house. A country deserves the criminals it produces.

The ghetto criminal directly challenging these inequalities is the most misunderstood and unduly feared person in white America. He’s actually of little danger to whites; more than 95% of US crime is white on white or black on black. In Africa, criminals impressed me by working together in highly organized groups. They would go for the wealthiest homes, regardless of color, spend days researching when guards were off duty, poison the dogs earlier in the day and at night, blow “witch powder” into the house (so it was said), putting the whole family to sleep and thereby avoiding violence. With the family in deep sleep, the thieves would empty the entire house and even have a party in it.

In contrast, the disorganized state of the black American criminal indicates a state of slavery as much as the futile American slave rebellions did.



1973 - New Orleans



1974 - NYC



1973 - Baltimore

I can take dubious pride in having participated in several muggings. This happened because my friends didn’t let me know about them beforehand and in fact hadn’t even had any plans themselves. When they saw prey, they acted on the spur of the moment in a vicious cocktail of deep-seated hate and self-hatred rather than actual need. Just as colonized children everywhere will steal from you when you show them “master” kindness, I found that the adult “rip-offs,” “stealers,” and even “strong-arm studs” were driven by Shakespearean motives:

*“I am one, my liege, whom the vile blows and buffets of the world have so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.”*  
(*Macbeth*, Act 3)



1974 - NYC



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1974 - Brooklyn, NY



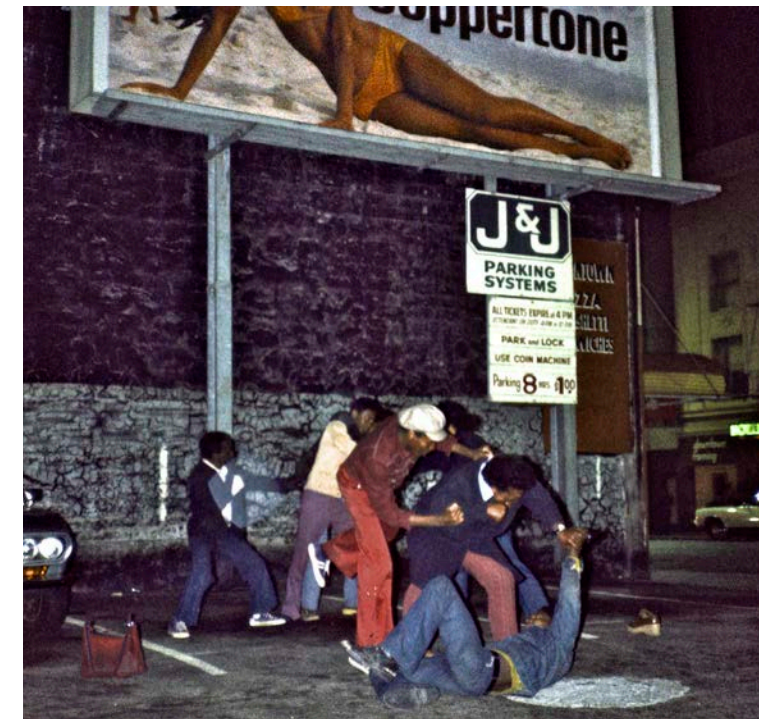
1975 - Richmond, VA (Willie Hurt)

left him blind. I followed Willie Hurt on street expeditions two days after the tragedy. Many of these gangs were once destroyed by heroin; the press disclosed that the police had sold heroin and flooded the ghetto with it at a time when some gangs had become politicized. It's again the divide-and-conquer policy being used against a colonized people.

Yet I know whites well enough to believe that, except for a few FBI "Cointelpro" actions, there's no conspiracy against blacks. There's no need for it since our daily "innocent" racism, our daily activities, and master-race vibrations function as effectively as the most well-plotted conspiracy. When I visited the world's richest man, Paul Getty, in his luxurious home, I saw among his favorite motifs an artistic depiction of the oppressed fighting themselves.



1975 - Malibu, CA



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

*Freddy's dead, that's what I said.  
Let the Man rap a plan,  
say he would send him home,  
but his hope was a rope  
and he should have known.  
Why can't we brothers protect one another?  
No one's serious and it makes me furious.  
Everybody misused him,  
ripped him off and abused him  
another junkie plan, pushing dope for the man...*

When you live long enough in these surroundings, you feel the conspiracy against the ghetto our prisoners are talking about. As with oppressors all over the world, our racism manifests itself psychologically in a "divide and conquer" need. All my life I've heard black American children pick on each other with "you act white" or "you're not really black"—almost the same hateful words I hear today in brown children in Denmark: "you're too Danish," "you're not really a Muslim," "whore" (about girls who dresses "too Danish" or just differently than the excluded group). Just as the blacks demean each other with "Oreo" and "coconut," Muslim eighth-graders test each other with "you smell of pork" or "your sister is a Dane fucker." Upper ghetto is pitted against lower ghetto, gang against gang, family against family, even brother against brother.

When I lived with this 15-year-old boy, Willie Hurt, and his mother in Richmond, VA, his 13-year-old brother lay in the hospital, hit by the brother's bullet in a gang fight. The wound



1988 - NYC



1988 - NYC



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

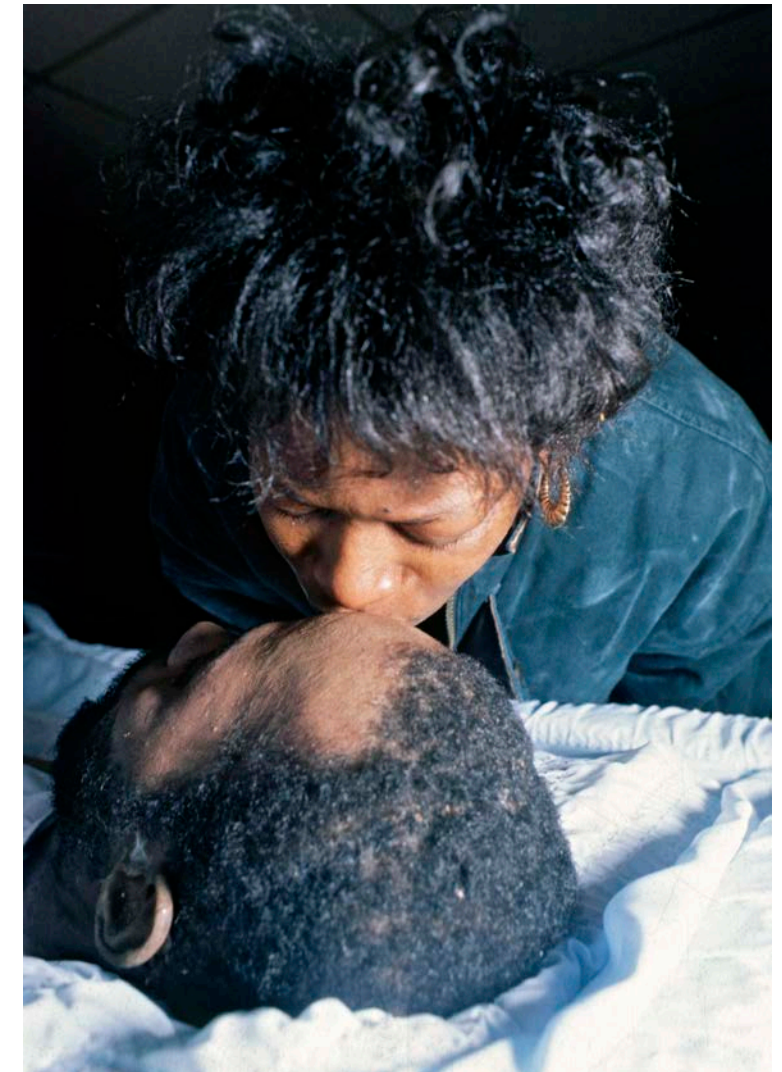


1989 - Harlem, NY



1995 - Queens, NY

By the early 80's I had counted 22 friends who had been murdered. Since then I lost track. Simon Williams, whom my 6 years old son had played with in the Astoria ghetto in 1986, was the fourth person I had known in the same family to be murdered. At his funeral in 1995 the minister who was quite a comedian started out with "We have reached the darkness where we can't cry our pain out any longer. Let's laugh it out." And then he started cracking jokes so in the end all the 150 guests in the funeral home were roaring in the laughter, even Simon's sister Cathrine seen here below. Yet, when I came back a few months later to give her my pictures, she too had been murdered, hit by stray bullets along with several others in a grocery store. Cathrine was the fifth murder victim in Lela Taylors family.



1995 - Queens, NY



1995 - Queens, NY - Cathrine and husband

# Among Eloi and Morlocks

(Luke 9: 3-5)

In North Carolina a millionaire I often stayed with loaned me one of his cars, a big Buick, so that I could get out to the most deserted back roads where it is impossible to hitchhike. After having seen much poverty throughout the day, I got to Wilmington that evening. I had heard that there had been racial disturbances in the town, so I felt like getting to know it a bit better. As always when I come to a new town, I started from the bottom by going into the worst neighborhoods. I parked the car far away since you cannot communicate with people if you roll up in a car. I grabbed my shoulder bag and walked down the street as if I had just hitchhiked into town, and then went over to one of the worst black bars on one of the main streets. I love these dingy combination bar-and-grills with the small jars of pickled pigs' feet and pepper, and often sit in such a bar for hours. There is always something happening. But this evening things went wrong.

It was around eleven o'clock and completely dark when I got to the place. There was the usual crowd of half-criminal types outside: the hustlers. They often look mean and dangerous in their sunglasses, but they are not that bad if you treat them right. I really love them, because it is such a challenge for me to find the human being behind the sunglasses. It's either win or lose; if you

make a wrong move it can mean death. Like all criminals, they are actually extremely timid and therefore react spontaneously and nervously. I use as a rule of thumb that the darker their sunglasses, the more afraid they are of me and of each other. But as soon as you gain their trust and the sunglasses are removed over a glass of beer or a joint, they show themselves to be fantastic people and will do anything for you. That's why I always seek them out first when I come into a new town since they have lots of contacts. I am always completely honest with them and don't pretend to be anything but what I am, never trying, for example, to imitate their language or to use the common white sentimentality about "we are brothers" and all that crap they have heard so often from whites. One must remember how paranoid they are and that they have no faith in whites in general, or their own people, or themselves. They have been trampled on all their lives and that oppression can not be overcome through any phony "brother" talk. But by speaking absolutely honestly you can show them in various ways who you really are, and what you want, you can overcome their suspicion. They need to know who they are dealing with. It is, for instance, this strong desire that makes many blacks prefer the Southern racist over the Northern liberal, for with the racist they know where they stand and can respect him for his honesty,

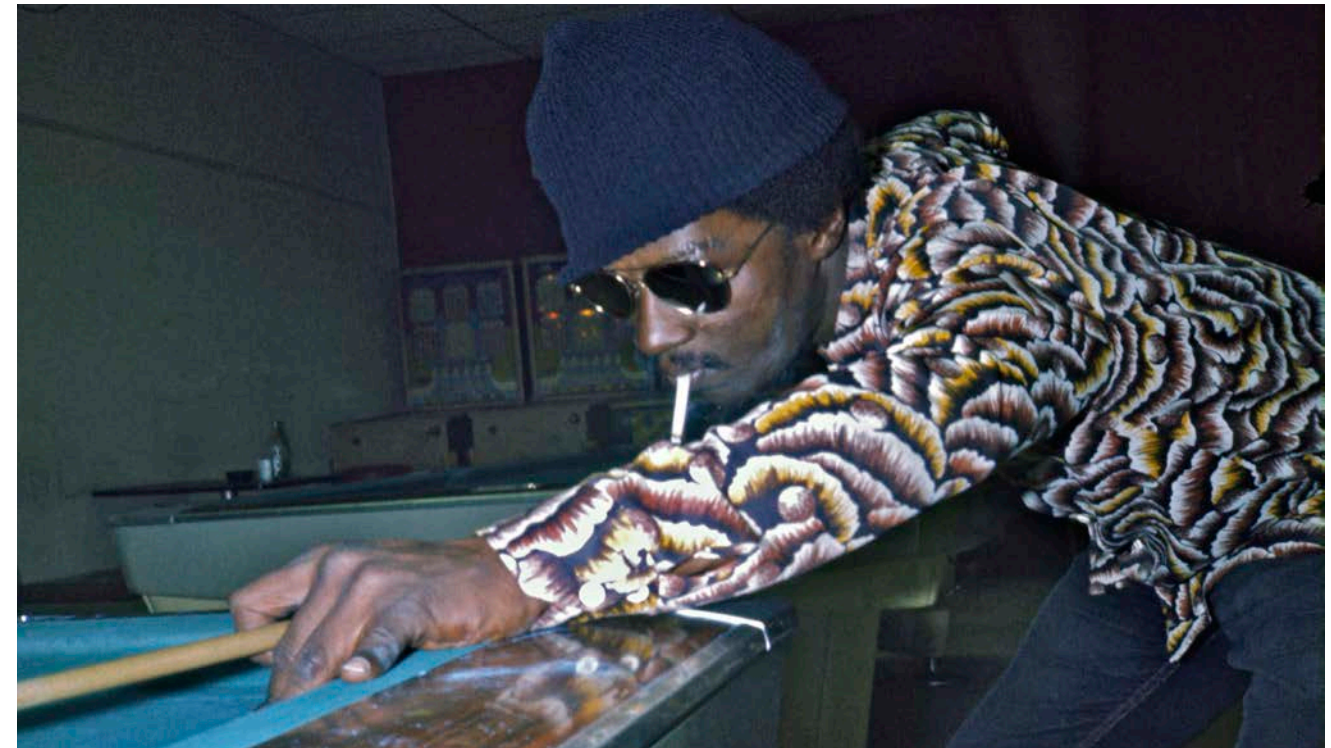
while the liberal always says one thing and does another. With my pictures and my detailed descriptions of what I have done in other ghettos, it is usually not difficult to convince them of my identity (whenever I know myself what my identity is). They are never totally convinced that I am not an undercover cop, yet they almost always take the chance. Every person has a need to be human in this social system and there is always a risk involved in that. If you let the mask fall, you risk being hurt. Both the capitalist and the criminal are in their everyday life so strongly deformed by the roles dictated for them by the system that they have an unspeakable urge toward human kindness. This urge they have a chance to express with the vagabond, who stands completely outside the system. In order to get something to eat or a place to stay, the vagabond must always talk to the "good" (the humane) in the capitalist or the criminal and when he first realizes that this is always possible, then he can no longer condemn them as "capitalists" or "criminals," but concludes that they all have possibilities for acting in accordance with a system other than the one that usually directs them. Thus, the vagabond instead begins to condemn the system he always has to struggle against in order to survive. Therefore, even the worst criminals usually take that chance with me, and gradually, as the worst distrust subsides, and

some beers go down, we can fall quite in love with each other in mutual admiration of the roles we usually play. They are always interested in what I have learned from other criminals, and the more "hustles" I describe, the closer we are bound to each other. But in the exchange of ways to "cop" (the word that covers everything the criminal needs, whether it is a bag of heroin, a car, a gun, a woman, or wine), I always emphasize putting it in a political context. Often the events we are exposed to in the course of such a night become increasingly criminal. I know that in order to get a place to sleep toward morning, I have to convince them that I am with them all the way. So the first night in a new town I usually don't get much sleep; but in this way I gain a foothold in other social circles of the ghetto, since the criminal's sisters, brothers, parents, and friends are not necessarily criminals themselves.

But this night in Wilmington something went wrong. I received the same hostile vibrations from the people outside the bar as I always get, but there was no possibility of breaking the ice. No matter what I said, it didn't get through. They started making threats and said, "We're militants, get your ass out of here or you're a dead man." I was so stunned that my survival philosophy



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

didn't work that I went all weak in the knees. I felt suddenly that I had no control over events and gave up. I walked a bit farther down the main street, but to get back to the car without passing them again, I turned off to the right through an unlit "project" - as these municipal poorhouses are called. But just as I turned in there, I noticed that they had started after me. Apparently they perceived this to be their territory. I made the mistake of running further in in order to hide from them. I hid under a bush and saw that they were suddenly all over, about a dozen of them. I started shaking, I was so shocked at this development. I realized that I didn't stand a chance and ran out into a dark alley to surrender. I was immediately surrounded, knives and guns pointing at me from all sides. From that moment I don't remember exactly what happened, just that I began rattling off a lot of words. I said, among other things, something like that they should wait just two minutes, look at my pictures and hear why I was there, and if they didn't like it, they could kill me then. I don't know if that was what tipped the balance, but after much yelling and screaming about what they should do with me, what finally happened was that they led me out to the main street with guns and knives in my hack. I was shaking at the thought that someone might pull the trigger by accident. They said that I should walk straight up the road until I was out of town. In order to get back to town, I now had to walk two miles out and then two miles back on a parallel street. I thought about calling a taxi or the police, but gave up the idea. I had no money for a taxi and felt it was wrong to use the police. If I was seen with the cops, they would really be convinced that I was not on their side. So in the darkness I ran from tree to tree down the parallel street to avoid being seen from cars, as it could be my attackers in the cars. The scene was exactly like the movie "In the Heat of the Night" - only racially reversed. I got back without a scratch and roared out of town at full speed. I had had enough of staying in the ghetto for that night.

I have since tried to analyze what I did wrong that evening. There is no doubt that I failed because I was dishonest with the criminals. I pretended to be a poor vagabond who needed a place to sleep, but in fact I was not poor, as the car was hidden nearby and I knew all along that if necessary I could sleep in the car that night. I had not been completely honest with them and therefore could not make the positive impression that would open them up. I had made the same mistake as the feudal lord who comes riding along in his comfortable coach with shining lanterns and



1975 - Tenderloin, San Francisco

thus carries with him his own light and his own darkness. He enjoys his security and the light which is cast on the immediate surroundings, but he does not understand that the strong glare dazzles him and prevents him from seeing the stars, which the poor peasant wandering on foot and without a lamp is able to see perfectly clearly and to use as a guide.

I then drove out to a white community nearby. After this grim experience I began to feel that something fantastic would happen that night. That's how it almost always goes when you travel: when you are the most down, you will be the highest up right afterward. So fatalistic have I become on this point that when two weeks earlier I stood in shirt sleeves freezing in a snowstorm for hours on a back road in West Virginia, unable to get a lift, I became completely convinced that something good would come out of it, and sure enough, that same evening I landed at the Rockefellers'. If as a vagabond you are not possessed of this fatalism you are lost, for just by virtue of your conviction you are able to communicate such strong positive energy that you yourself are actually helping to create a favorable situation. Anyhow, when I stepped into a bar on Wrightsville Beach that night, I was not totally taken by surprise by what happened. I had been standing there alone for some time when a very sweet young woman came over and pulled my beard and wanted to know who I was. Then things happened pretty fast and she began pouring a lot of wine into me. When, as a vagabond, you stand completely alone in the world, you are very weak in such situations and fall in love incredibly easily. But when only an hour earlier you have been closer to death than ever before, then this falling in love takes on such violent dimensions that it becomes totally overwhelming. Any human being who had shown me warmth that night, I would have bound myself to forever. One of the first things she asked me was if I had a place to live. When I said no, she immediately said that I should move in with her. She would give me all the money I needed and a gasoline credit card for the car. It turned

out that she belonged to one of America's richest families, who own the Schlitz brewery. I will never forget that night. Usually I am impotent the first night with a new woman, but the violent experience was still so much with me that I was thinking more about that, and therefore everything went as it should. It was exactly the same as that time in New Orleans when a woman and I witnessed one of our friends kill another while we played pool, and afterward went home and made love all night long. Sex and violence are probably very intimately connected. On the whole, I feel that many of my love affairs in the U.S.A. have been brought about by a violent experience - or have resulted in one. My love for this country could be of the same nature. That night we fell so much in love with each other that she started talking right away about getting married. When we got married we would receive \$50,000, and thereafter \$30,000 a year. "I want to have a child with you," she said. During the first days I myself was so convinced that I was getting married that I started writing to all my friends that "now I had finally found the right one."

I was fascinated by her and her upperclass nature. She spent money as if it were water. The first week we spent hundreds of dollars and she had to telegraph her father in Europe for more money. I enjoyed going to the finest restaurants, eating lobster and steak, which felt good after several months of "soul food." But I still insisted on continuing my exploring and drove out in the car in the daytime to photograph the poverty and hunger in eastern North Carolina. An expert on geophagy (dirt eating) had told me about the hunger in the area. During the day I photographed hunger, and at night I gorged myself on steaks. Every other day I spent with my fiancée on a nearby island, which was only for rich people. There was a guard on the bridge to prevent blacks and other poor outcasts from getting out there. We lived in a lovely big villa and lay on the beach all day loafing. It was here I first began to lose interest in her, as I was simply bored to death. In the beginning she took a certain interest in my "hobby," but gradually it became clear that she perceived blacks as subhuman. I have often fallen in love with Southern racists because of their exoticism and charming dialect and my own fascination with the person behind the master/slave relationship, but it slowly dawned on me that you cannot base a marriage on such a fascination. I began to feel that our child would be more the product of violence than of love. When I asked what she would do if we drifted apart, she said, "Don't worry, I've got enough money, I can get



1974 - Charleston, SC

an abortion any time." She was still madly in love with me, but I was starting to get my feet hack on the ground. So when shortly afterward she had to travel to the Galapagos Islands to look at turtles and wanted to take me with her, I at first felt very tempted, but nevertheless said no. It would be good to get her at a little distance and cool off. She asked me to come hack for her birthday, which I promised to do.

I hitchhiked a couple of thousand miles to get back on that day and arrived just around noon and thought she would be happy. But she just lay on her bed and was totally cold. She had had a good vacation with the turtles, but had begun to feel that we weren't suited for each other. In the end she had gone to Ecuador to get an abortion. It had been very expensive and difficult "in that primitive, Catholic country." Now she had no feelings left for me, she said. I was both deeply hurt and very relieved at the same time, said farewell and went back into the ghetto in Wilmington to have another try at getting to live there. I went into the same bar, but this time in the daytime and bought a round of Schlitz for the people there with the money I had left from my days of luxury. And this time I succeeded in being accepted and there was chatter and talk and a warmth without equal. It was at that time that Schlitz started their new ad campaign with the slogan "Only love is better than Schlitz." Every time I saw it around the country I thought of Wilmington, and its violent racial hatred.

*Summary of letters*

*Afternote. I am not here mentioning the Schlitz woman's name nor bringing photos of her since her parents sometime in the 80'es told me she had just committed suicide. I found it strange that the only two of my old "girl friends" who later committed suicide, both were millionaires.*

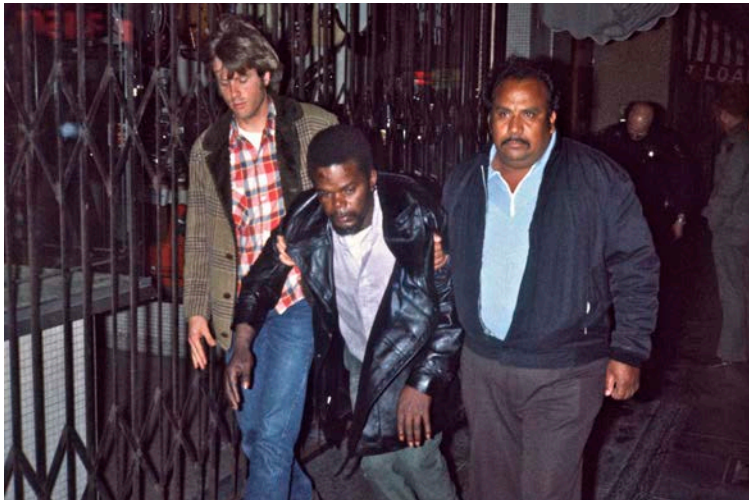




1974 - Harlem, NY



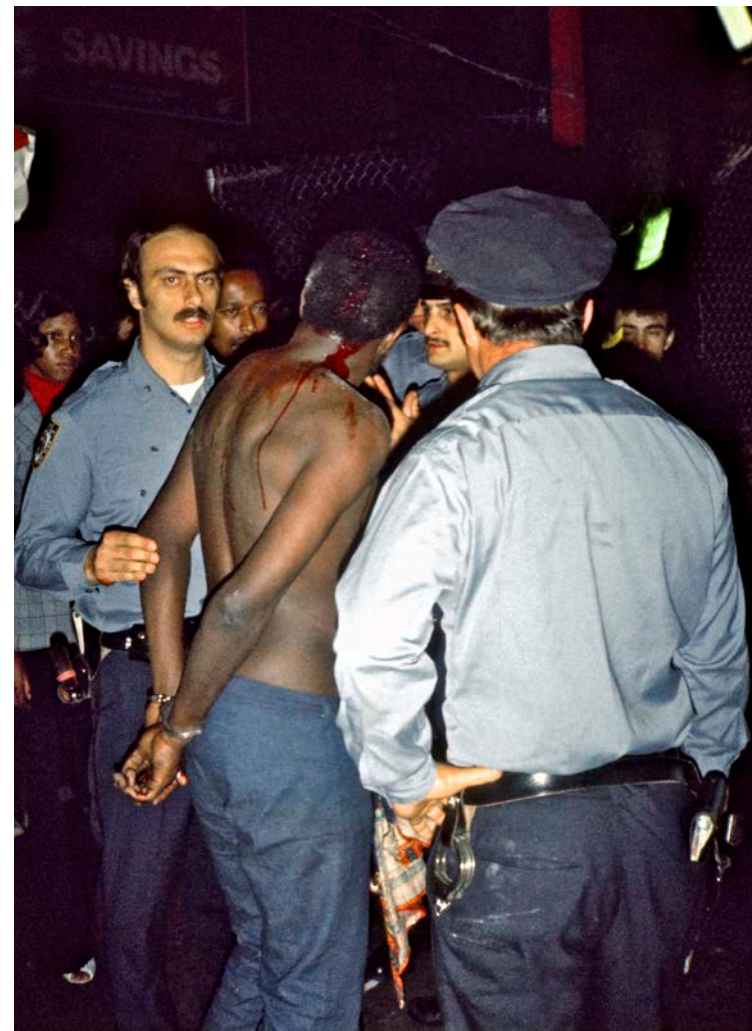
1974 - Harlem, NY



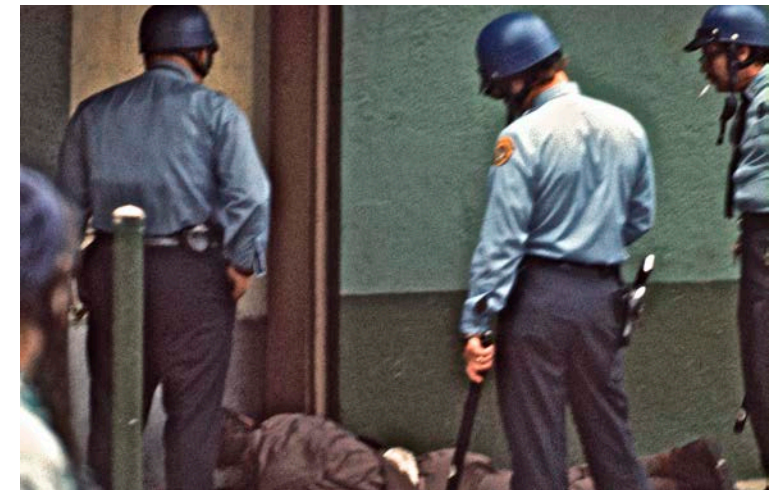
1975 - San Francisco



1973 - Wilmington, NC



1974 - NYC



1973 - New Orleans

*You explained it to me, I must admit,  
a long rap about "no knock" being legislated for the people  
you've always hated in this hell-hole you/we call home.  
NO KNOCK the man will say to protect people from themselves.  
Who's going to protect me from you ?  
No knocking, head rocking, enter shocking, shooting, cursing,  
killing, crying, lying and being white.  
NO KNOCK told my brother Fred Hampton  
bullet holes all over the place.  
But if you're a wise no knocker you'll tell your  
knocking' lackeys no knock on my brother's head  
no knock on in my sisters head  
and double lock your door  
because someone may be NO KNOCKING... For you!*

The crime of the poor, like the exploitation by the rich, is almost impossible to photograph. You can take pictures of the result, but rarely of the process itself. Usually I'd be with criminals for days before photographing them. In order to survive among them, it was a necessity that I always had faith in the inner goodness of these children of anger, directing myself toward the human being inside and away from the role the system had forced them to model their lives on. By photographing their shady activities, I was relating more to their environmental side and thus in a way betrayed the trust they'd given me. I always wanted to photograph crime as seen from the point of view of the criminal, but to do that I had to set myself at a distance and so was no longer "one of them." Recording the system's violence was easier than photographing its counter-violence.

Here I was caught in a shootout between police and criminals in Harlem. A policeman rushed over and used my doorway as a firing position, and I suddenly found myself (photographically) on the side of the police. On such occasions I began to understand the brutal but all-too-human reactions of the police. Their racist attitudes and lack of understanding of the ghetto's reactions

are among the reasons for the angry charges of police brutality. Society has trained the police to expect the worst instead of communicating with the good in people. Therefore, they shoot before they question. In general, I find it to be an act of violence to carry weapons into a ghetto since this shows that you have no faith in the people of the ghetto, which breeds counter-violence. In my first two years in America, I still harbored internalized white fear—the main ingredient of all racism. So until I learned nonviolent communication and positive inner thinking about fellow human beings, I was constantly beaten down by blacks. The police build on the negative in people and thereby encourage it. If they instead arrived unarmed, with open faces, they'd have a chance to foster the positive sides I always managed to find in even the worst types, those "who'd kill for a dollar" – or for a camera. Instead, the police build a climate of fear on both sides, which makes brutality inevitable. Until today's tell-tale video revelations put a stop to it, most of it was sanctioned by white authorities. Many states allow the police to break into people's homes without knocking. Many innocent people have been killed in this way.



#399

1973 - NYC

## Black Lives Matter: James’ and Barbara’s love

One day I saw in the New York times a picture of Mayor Lindsay presenting a bouquet of flowers to a “heroic” police officer in a hospital bed. It said that he had been shot down while “entering an apartment.” I decided to find out what was actually behind this incident and nosed around the Bronx for several days to find the relatives and the apartment where it all took place. Little by little I found out what had happened. James and Barbara were a young black couple who lived in the worst neighborhood in the U.S.A. around Fox Street in the South Bronx. One day they heard burglars on the roof and called the police. Two plain-clothes officers arrived at the apartment and kicked in the door without knocking. James thought it was the burglars who were breaking in, and he shot at the door, but was then himself killed by the police. Barbara ran screaming into the neighbor’s apartment. When I went to the 41st Precinct police station they confirmed the story and admitted that “there had been a little mistake,” but James of course “was asking for it, being in possession of an unregistered gun.”

I was by now so used to this kind of American logic that I did not feel any particular indignation toward the officer. I just felt that he was wrong. Since I had spent so much time finding out the facts of the case. I might as well go to the funeral, too. I rushed around town trying to borrow a nice shirt and arrived at the funeral home in the morning about an hour before the services. I took some pictures of James in the coffin. He was very handsome. I admired the fine job the undertaker had done with plastic to plug up the bullet holes. Black undertakers are sheer artists in this field; even people who have had their eyes torn out they can get to look perfectly normal. Since black bodies arrive in all possible colors and conditions, they use almost the entire color spectrum in plastic materials. James did not make any particular impression on me; I had already seen so many young black corpses. The only thing I wondered about was that there wasn’t any floral wreath from the police. I waited about an hour, which was to be the last normal hour that day. Not more than ten people came to the funeral, all of them surprised at seeing a white man there. A young guy whispered to me that he thought it was a little unbecoming for a white man to be present at this particular funeral. Then suddenly I heard terrible screams from the front hall and saw three men bringing Barbara in. Her legs were dragging along the floor. She was incapable of walking. I could not see her face, but she was a tall, beautiful, light-skinned young woman. Her screams

made me shudder. Never before had I heard such excruciating and pain-filled screams. When she reached the coffin, it became unbearable. It was the first and only time in America I was unable to photograph. I had taken pictures with tears running down my cheeks, but had always kept myself at such a great distance from the suffering that I was able to record it. When Barbara came up to the coffin, she threw herself down into it. She lay on top of James and screamed so it cut through marrow and bone. I could only make out the words, “James, wake up, wake up!” again and again. The others tried to pull her away, but Barbara didn’t notice anything but James. I was at this point completely convinced that James would rise up in the coffin. I have seen much suffering in America, but I have often perceived in the midst of the suffering a certain hypocrisy or even shallowness, which enabled me to distance myself from it. Barbara knocked my feet completely out from under me. Everything began to spin before my eyes. It must have been at that point that I suddenly rushed weeping out of the funeral home. I ran for blocks just to get away. My crying was completely uncontrollable. I staggered down through Simpson and Prospect Streets, where nine out of ten die an unnatural death. Robbers and the usual street criminals stood in the doorways, but I just staggered on without noticing them, stumbling over garbage cans and broken bottles. It was a wonder that no one mugged me, but they must have thought I had just been mugged.

When I got to James’ and Barbara’s apartment building, still crying, I asked some children if there was anyone up in the apartment “of the man who was shot the other day.” They asked if I didn’t mean the man who was shot in the building across the street last night. No, it was in this building, I said. But they had not heard that anyone had been shot in their building. They lived on the third floor and James and Barbara lived on the sixth floor. I went up to the apartment, which now stood empty.

Robbers had already ransacked it, and there were only bits of paper and small things scattered around on the floor. The emptiness of the apartment made me sob even harder. There were bullet holes all over in the living room wall where James had been sitting, but there were only two in the door which the police had kicked open.

There were three locks on the door like everywhere in New York, as well as a thick iron bar set fast in the floor - a safety precaution the police themselves recommend that people use to avoid having



1974 - Bronx, NY

their doors sprung open by criminals. James and Barbara had been so scared of criminals that they had put double steel bars on their windows although it was six stories up and there was no fire escape outside. Down in the courtyard there was a three-foot pile of garbage people had thrown out of their windows.

Here James and Barbara had lived since they were sixteen with their now four-year-old daughter. After a couple of hours I ventured out of the apartment. I had cried so much that I had a splitting headache, and all the way into Manhattan the weeping kept coming back in waves. When I came to a movie theater on the West Side, I wandered in without really knowing what I was doing. It was at that time that movies directed by blacks were being produced for the first time in history. The film was called “Sounder” and was about a poor family in Louisiana in the 1930’s. There was an overwhelming sense of love and togetherness in the family, but in the end the father was taken away by the white authorities and sent to a work camp for having stolen a piece of meat. The film was made in Hollywood and romanticized the poverty; after several years in a work camp, the father came back

to the family, so the film would have a happy ending.

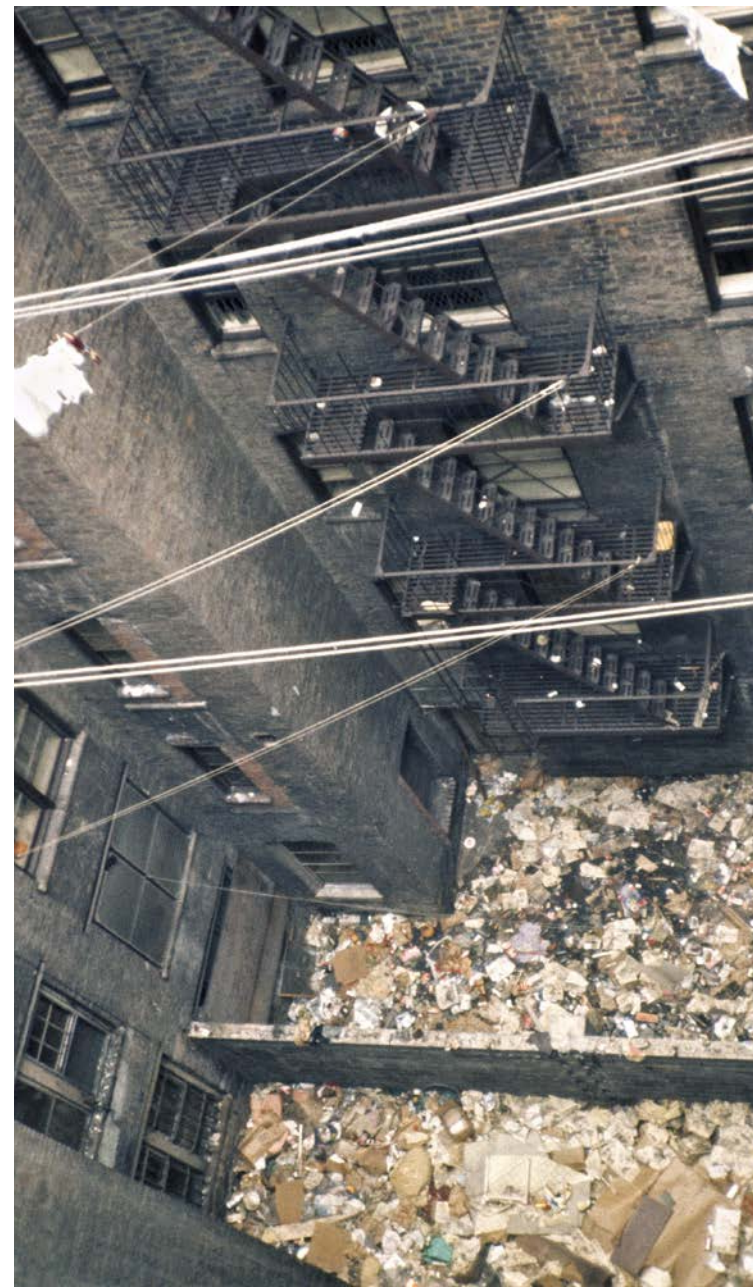
This wasn’t the kind of poverty I had met up with in the South. The only time I cried in the movie was when I saw things that reminded me all too much of James and Barbara. Afterward I wandered over in the direction of Broadway. An old black woman whom I had stayed with in the North Bronx the night before had given me ten dollars so I could get some nice clothes for the funeral. She had at first not trusted me and had spent several hours calling various police stations asking them what was the idea of sending an undercover cop to her house. But when after half a day she had assured herself that I was not a police agent, she was so happy that she gave me the ten dollars, and I had to promise to come stay with her again, and she telephoned to Alaska so I could talk with her daughter who lived up there. Now I still had a little money left over and went in my strange state of mind straight into another movie theater on Broadway and saw “Farewell, Uncle Tom.” It was a harrowing film about slavery. It was made by non-Americans (in Italy), so it didn’t romanticize slavery. You saw how the slaves were sold at auction, the instruments of

torture that were used, and you saw how men were sold away from their wives and children. It was frightful. How could all this have been allowed to happen only a hundred years ago? At some points in the film I almost threw up. I looked around the cinema repeatedly, as I was afraid that there would be blacks in there, but there were only two people in the whole theater besides me. When I got outside, there was a young black guy hanging around with sunglasses on. I stood for a long time looking him in the eyes, and I couldn't understand why he didn't knock me down.

For days afterward I was a wreck. I will never forget that day. It stands completely blank in my diary. A whole year went by before I pulled myself together and sought Barbara out. But when I came to the kitchen at the veterans' hospital where she worked, an old black woman was sent out to talk to me. She told me that she was Barbara's guardian, since Barbara had not been normal since the funeral. She had become very withdrawn and never spoke any more. I asked her what Barbara had been like before James' death. She went into deep thought for a moment and then told me with tears in her eyes about the four years when James and Barbara had worked together there in the kitchen. They had always been happy, singing, and a real joy to the kitchen personnel. They had never missed a day of work, always came in together and always left together at the end of the day. But she wouldn't let me see Barbara, for Barbara did not wish to see anyone.

Another year went by before I sent a letter to Barbara from somewhere in the South. I assumed that by now Barbara had gotten over her husband's murder. When I again went to the kitchen, the same elderly woman met me. It was as if time had not passed at all, and we just continued where we left off. She sighed deeply and looked into my eyes. "Barbara has gone insane," she said.

Barbara kept coming up in my thoughts wherever I traveled. But another event came to make just as strong an impression on me. Somewhere in Florida an unhappy white woman had climbed up a water tower and stood on the edge, about to commit suicide. But she couldn't make herself jump. It was in a ghetto area and a large crowd of people, most of them black, gathered at the foot of the tower. The police and fire department were trying to persuade the woman not to jump, while the crowd shouted for her to jump. I was totally unable to comprehend it. I shouted as loud



1974 - Bronx, NY

as I could: "Stop it, stop it, please, let the poor woman live." But their shouts grew louder. It was the worst and most sickening mass hysteria I had ever experienced. Then suddenly it hit me that the screams sounded like Barbara's on that unforgettable morning. I started getting weak in the knees and rushed off, just as fast as at the funeral home. In five years I will try to contact Barbara once more. I must see her face again some day!

*Summary of letters*



1973 - Jersey City, NJ



1975 - San Francisco, CA

On the day I became one with the suffering, I could no longer depict it. The screams from people in the closed system drown in a vacuum for the world outside. A white policeman beating a black woman was shot down in anger by a young man on a roof. In retaliation, 5,000 officers are marching through the ghetto to intimidate our oppressed. Every time a policeman is killed by a black sniper, the entire apparatus of colonial power is set in motion in this way.

But there's a deeper tragedy underlying these sad police murders. The 26-year-old widow of the deceased officer comes, as did he, from the poorest white stratum of society. Although it doesn't excuse the brutality, one can very well understand it.



1973 - Jersey City, NJ with World Trade Center behind

These whites have themselves often been downtrodden and exploited. Facing grim prospects in life, they had no choice but to join the ranks of the old slave-drivers. The racism and lack of trust that a poor under-stimulated upbringing has instilled in them is exacerbated by their nervousness about being part of an occupying force in a culture to which they don't belong.

It's become common to attack the police, but we forget that they're just as much the victims of the system as they are its representatives. We look at their tight lips and hardened faces and despair. One can only infer that they will forever be marked with bitterness, hatred, and apprehension. But did they deliberately create these faces?

Or were they forced to live a life which tightened their faces into a perverted distortion of humanity?  
 Yes, it's difficult to create a more just society since even to see the possibility of change means to have enough faith in the inherent goodness of humanity and in your everyday life to be able to look beyond the distress patterns that everywhere paralyze us. Our duty is to change this system, which is based on our shared accumulated pain, so people can become fully human all over the world. In so doing we'll also save the planet from the worst of all our oppressions: the destruction of our environment, the climate, and our children's future. I know that I couldn't have survived among all the strange people in America if I hadn't had strong faith in the best in people. Without that faith, the worst would've gotten the upper hand, and I would've been obliterated.



1972 - Miami Beach, FL



1973 - Jersey City, NJ



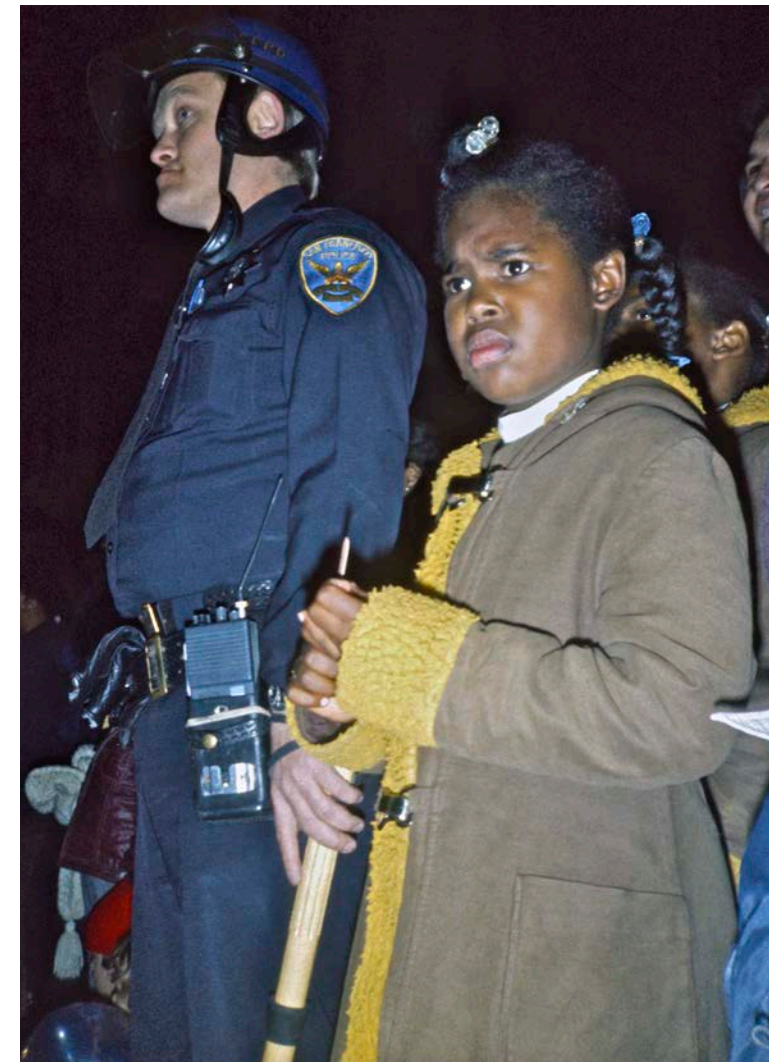
1972 - Miami



1975 - San Francisco



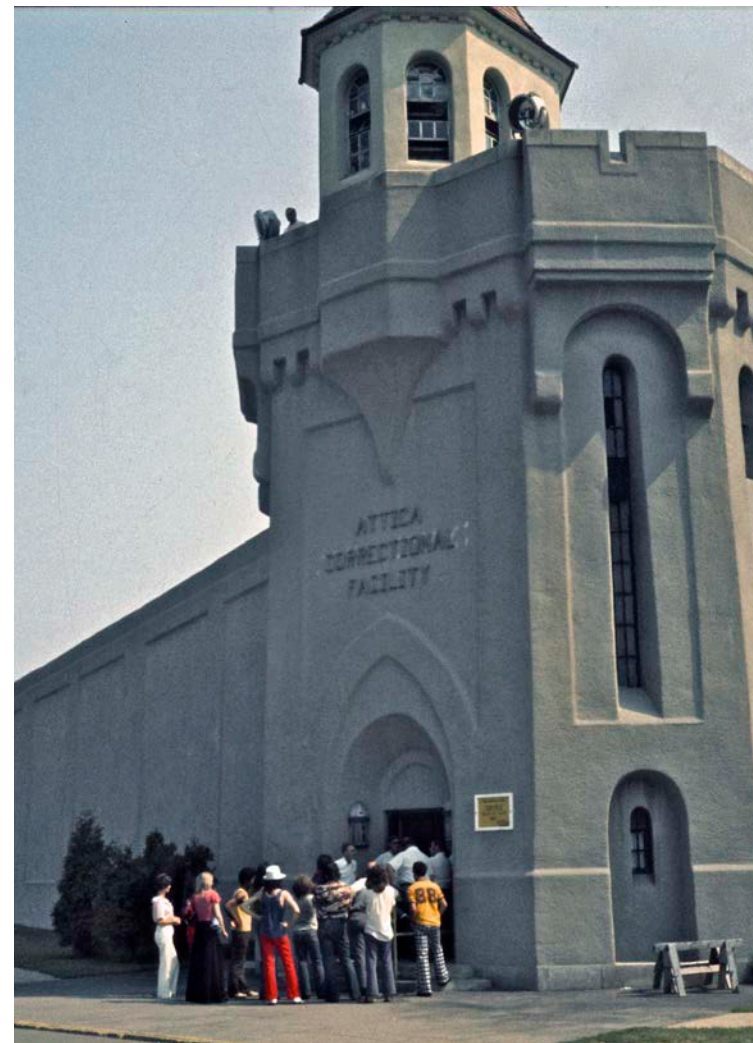
1972 - Miami



1975 - San Francisco

My journey has taught me that I can no longer hate any single person or group or even class of people, not even the worst exploiters. If I said that I hated the Rockefeller family, I'd quite simply be lying. Certainly it's true that Nelson Rockefeller ordered the massacre at Attica and murdered 41 inmates who were only demanding prison reform. But even though I was present at the mass funeral and heard the armed Black Panthers in the church shout "Death to Rockefeller! Jail the rich, free the poor!", and even though I knew several relatives among the weeping families, and even though I once again saw the color of blood in the African-American flag ... yes, even then I was not capable of hating Rockefeller.

For I know that behind the role he was brought up to perform and believe in within the system is a human being who under other conditions wouldn't have become a murderer in a desperate attempt to keep inmates of the ghetto in place. If we understand that the underclass is murdering and robbing because of its environment, we must also logically acknowledge that the upper class, in its actions, thinking, and tradition, is slave-bound by its milieu. The more I let myself be brainwashed into the upper class, the more its actions started to seem valid.



1974 - Attica prison, NY



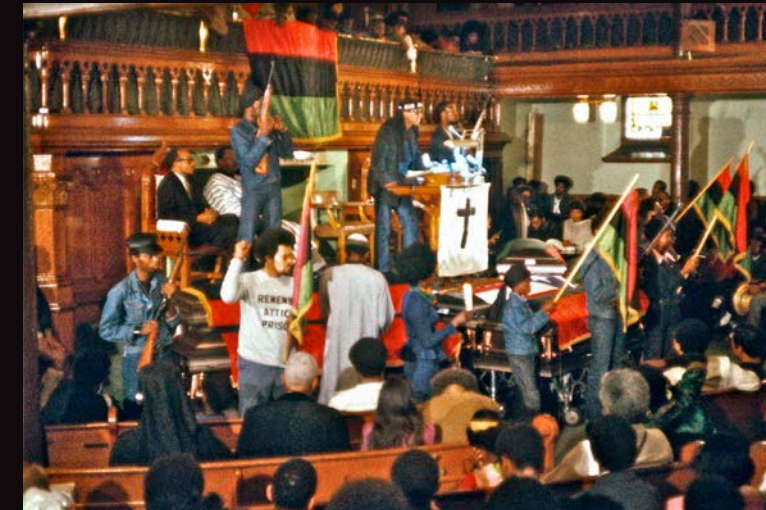
1971 - NYC



1971 - NYC



The survivors in Attica: (Photo: New York State Police)



1971 - Brooklyn, NY



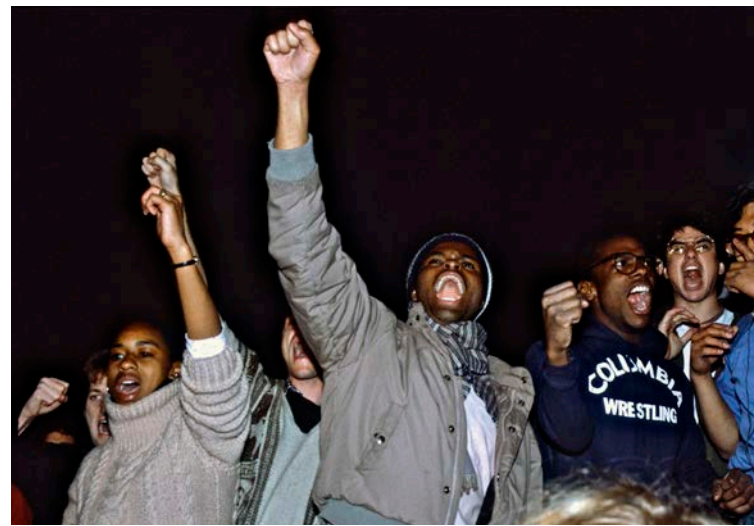
1971 - NYC



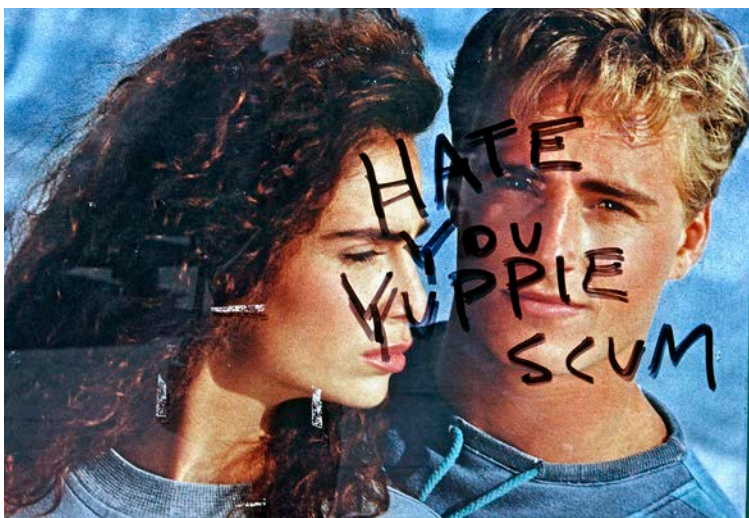
1971 - Brooklyn, NY



1991 - Washington, DC



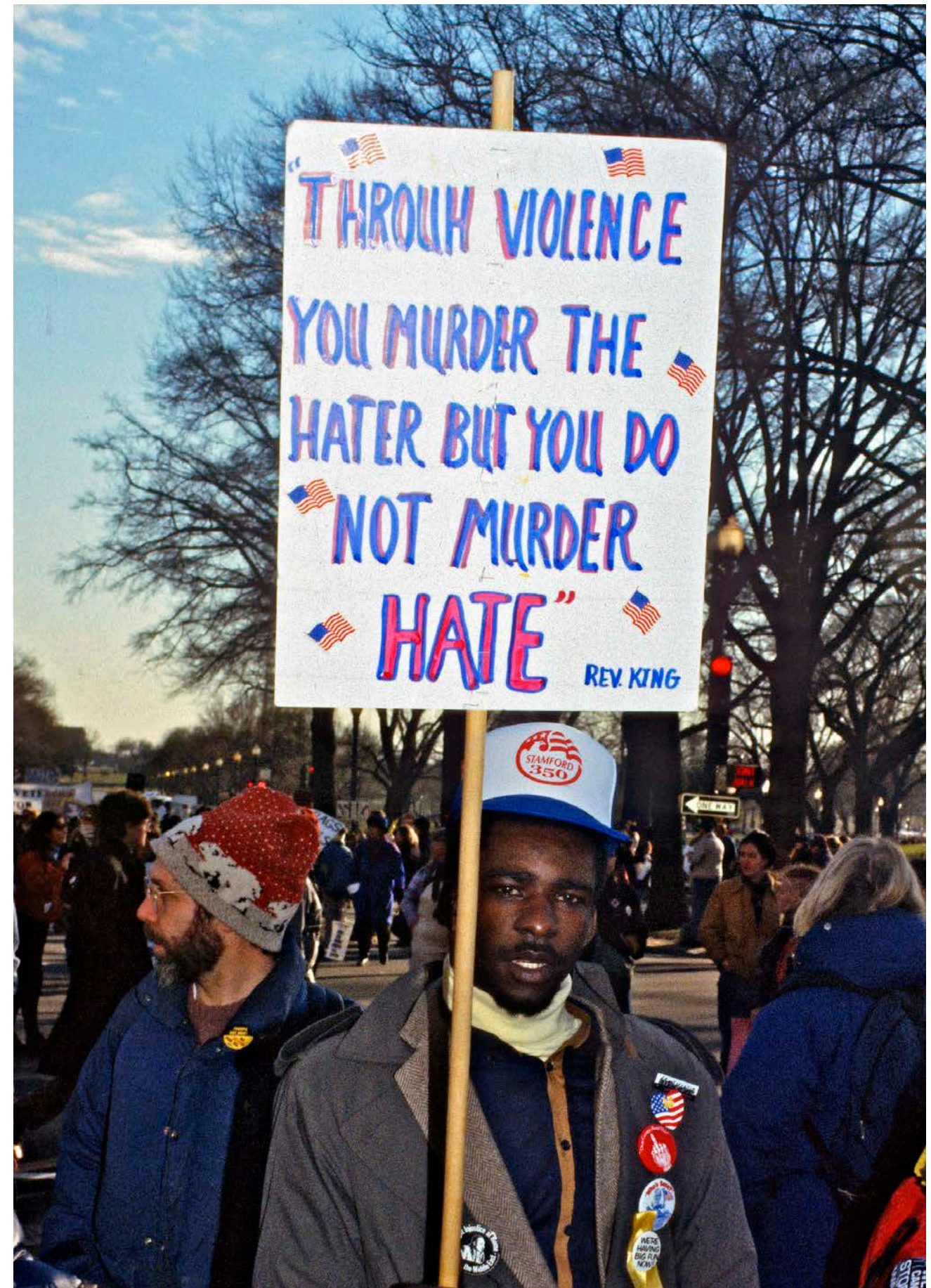
1985 - NYC



1989 - NYC



1990 - NYC



1991 - Washington, DC

I'd also be dishonest if I tried to conceal the fact, that I've come to like the people I've met from America's upper class. When I condemn the upper class, it's really a condemnation of the system that created these classes and teaches its members to rob and murder not only in the US, but also in the Third World—an inhuman system so strong it can't be changed by merely attacking its symbols. If I had hated the Rockefellers as symbols, I would've denied them the human warmth and hospitality they'd shown me as a vagabond under conditions not dictated by the system.

The longer I wandered as a vagabond in this system, the more I lost the desire to ever again become a part of it. Everywhere the system had given people a false face. The more distinctly these deformed masks outlined themselves for me, the stronger was my urge to get behind them and look out through the eye slits. It was never a beautiful sight—just hatred, fear, and mistrust. I had no desire to become a part of that hatred. I learned it's much easier to hate and condemn than to understand.

Hatred is based on simplified one-sided considerations and most people are so absorbed in the pain of not being able to live up to the norms of their milieu that it's easier for them to reduce reality to symbols rather than understand it. It's far easier when reading a book like this one to hate whites than to try and comprehend us because that way you avoid fighting that part of the system in yourself. Not until we realize how we ourselves are a part of the oppression can we understand, condemn, and change the forces that dehumanize us all.

I was able to survive outside the system because I always sought the human being behind the false façade. But behind these façades I always saw the defeat of love. The fewer the threads connecting people in a wholesome society, the more petrified and impenetrable seemed the masks I had to penetrate to survive. But even within this oppression, it's possible to find many shades of humanity. Even if love between people has been killed in this system, we all know love can still shoot up through the asphalt whenever ... wherever ...



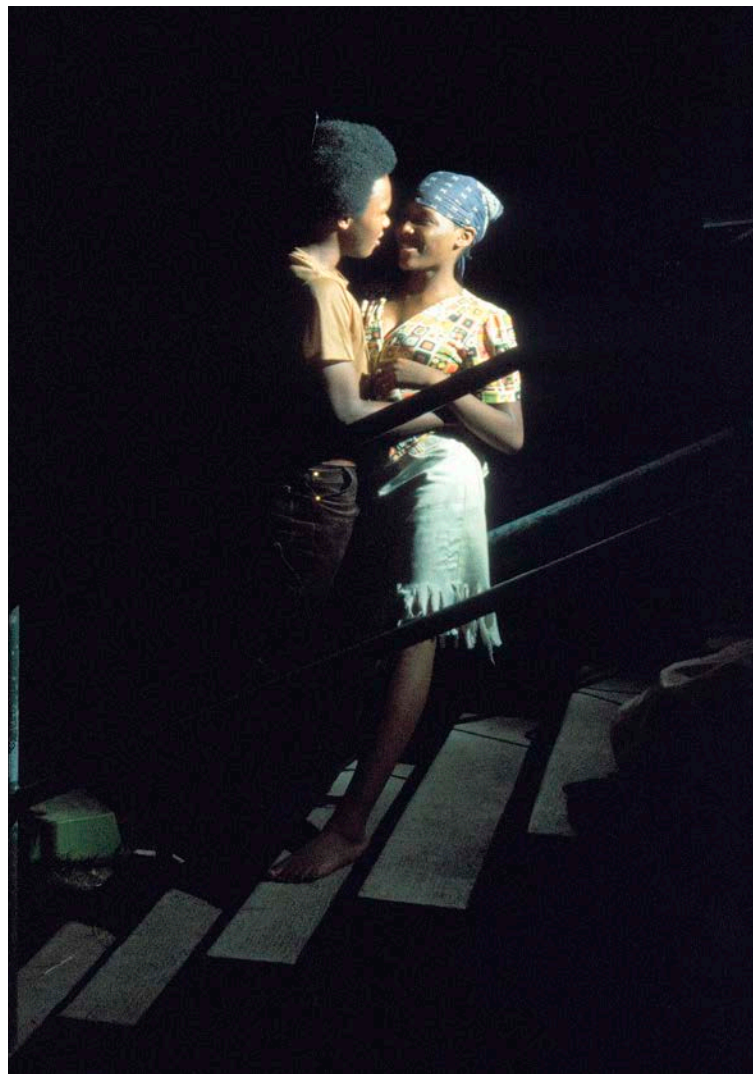
1991 - Bullock County, AL



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1975 - Bullock County, AL



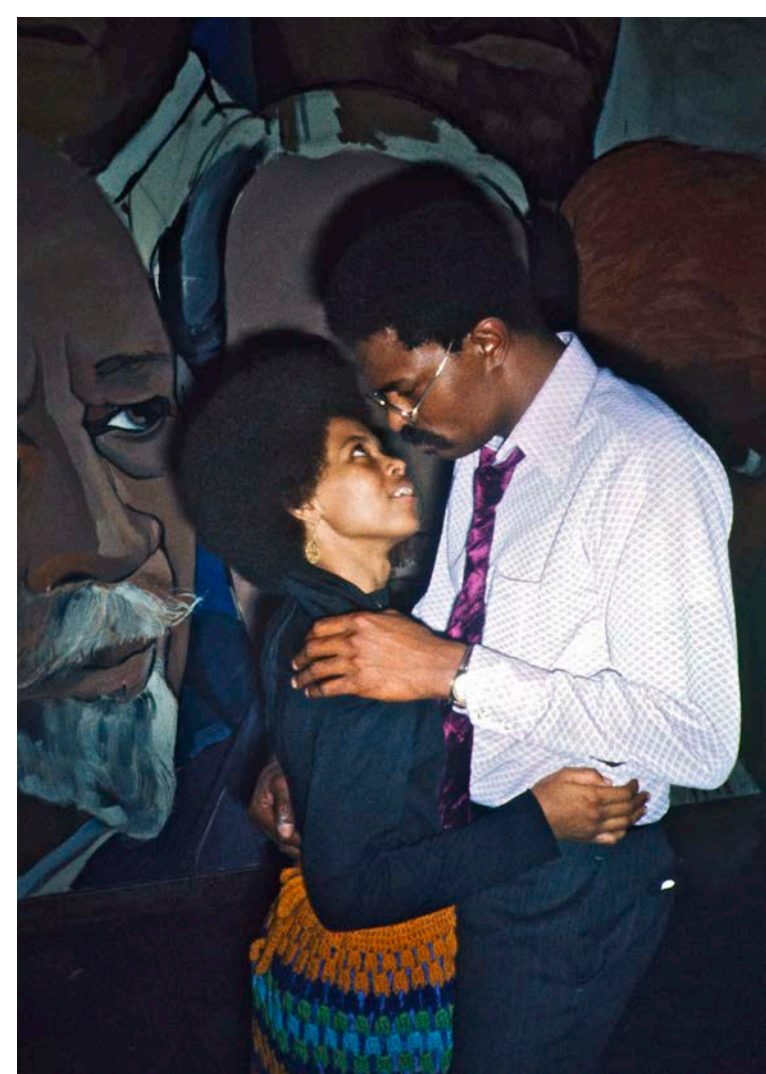
1975 - Richmond, VA



1974 - Norfolk, VA



2009 - Gainesville, FL



1973 - Harlem, NY. Communist Party Vice President candidate Jarvis Tyner



1975 - Philadelphia, PA



1975 - San Francisco



1975 - San Francisco



1985 - Harlem, NY



2012 - St. Francisville, LA

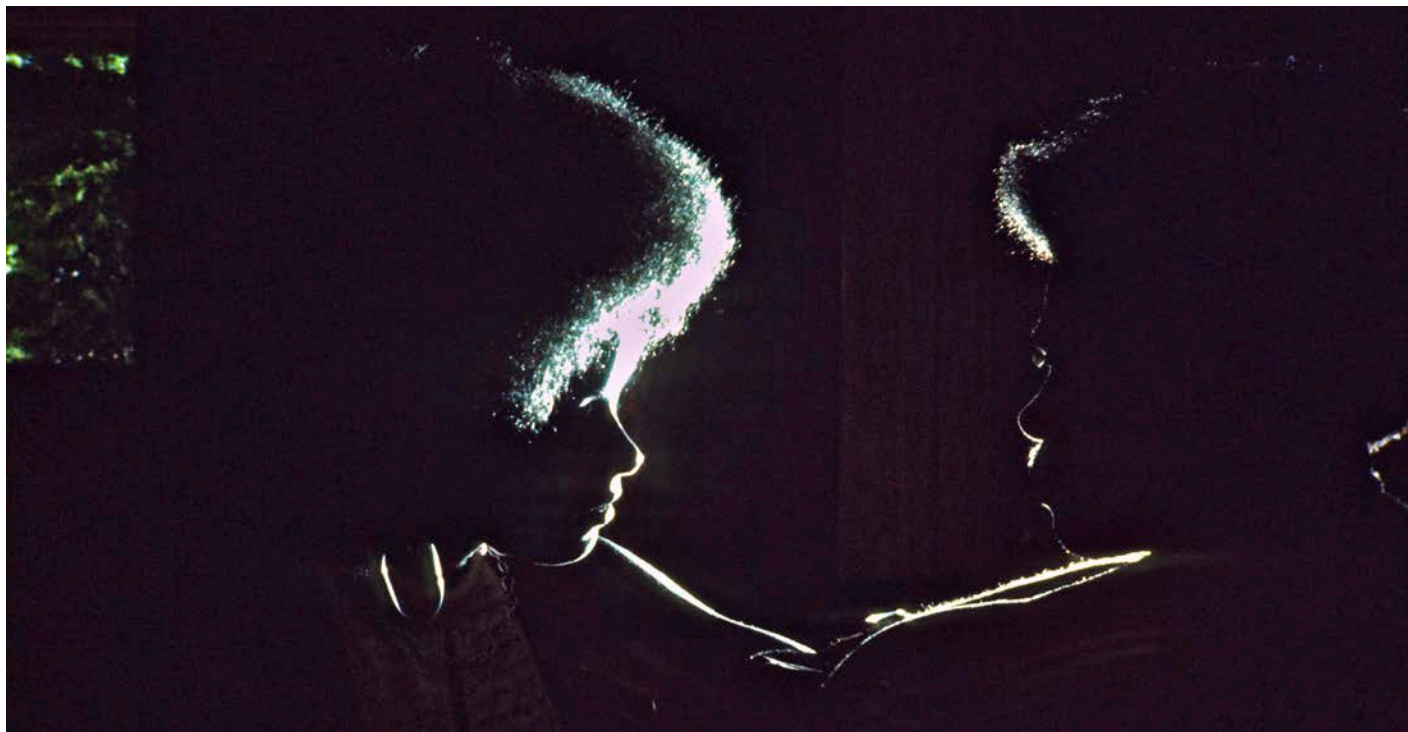


1973 - Greensboro, NC

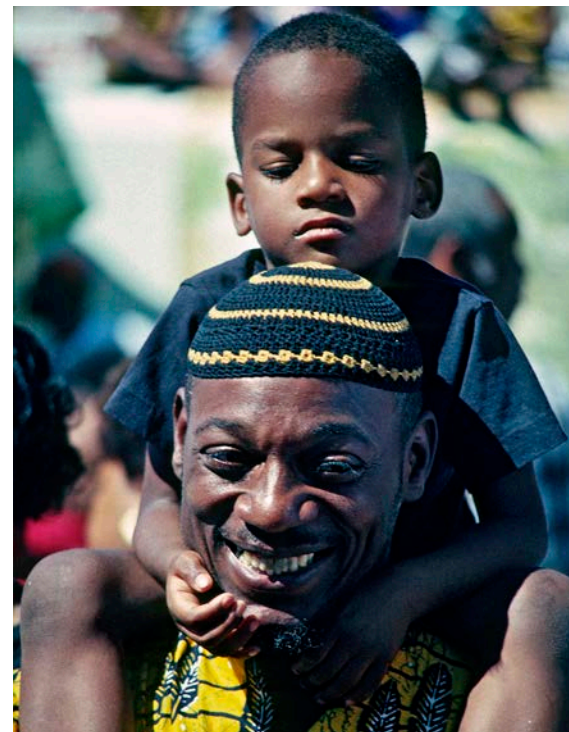


1973 - Zebulon, NC. Caroline was later murdered.





1974 - Abilene, TX



1993 - Brooklyn, NY



1985 - Harlem, NY



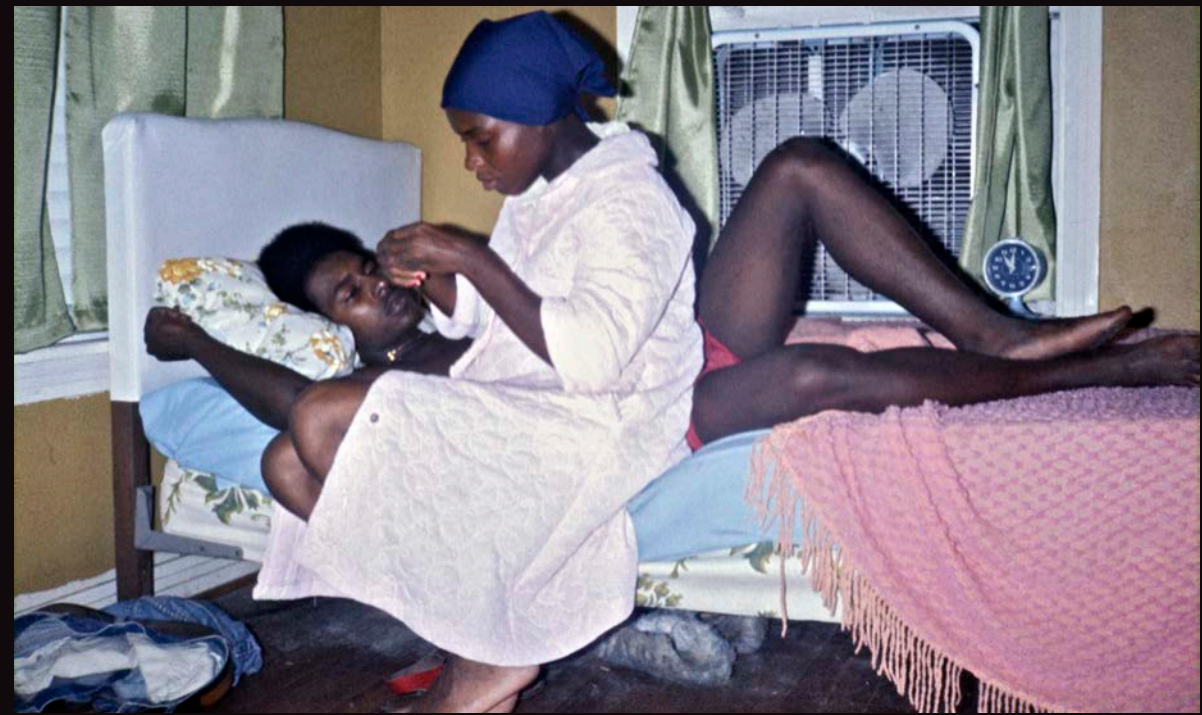
2004 - NYC



1996 - Chicago



1991 - Houston, TX



1975 - Baumont, TX



1975 - Philadelphia, PA



1978 - Jacksonville, FL



1996 - Tunica, LA



1973 - Baltimore



1975 - Fillmore ghetto, San Francisco



1973 - rural LA



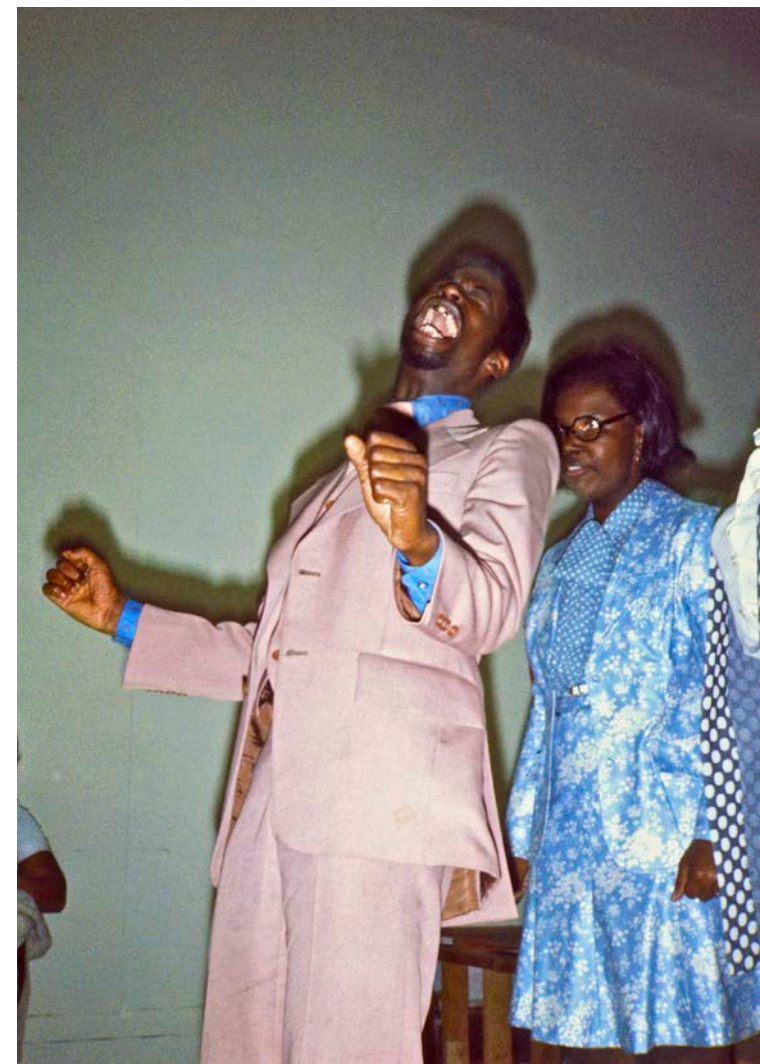
1975 - San Francisco



1975 - Fillmore ghetto, San Francisco



1975 - Fillmore ghetto, San Francisco



1975 - Fillmore ghetto, San Francisco



1975 - Philadelphia, MS. Hands of my father-in-law, Rev. Jake Rush



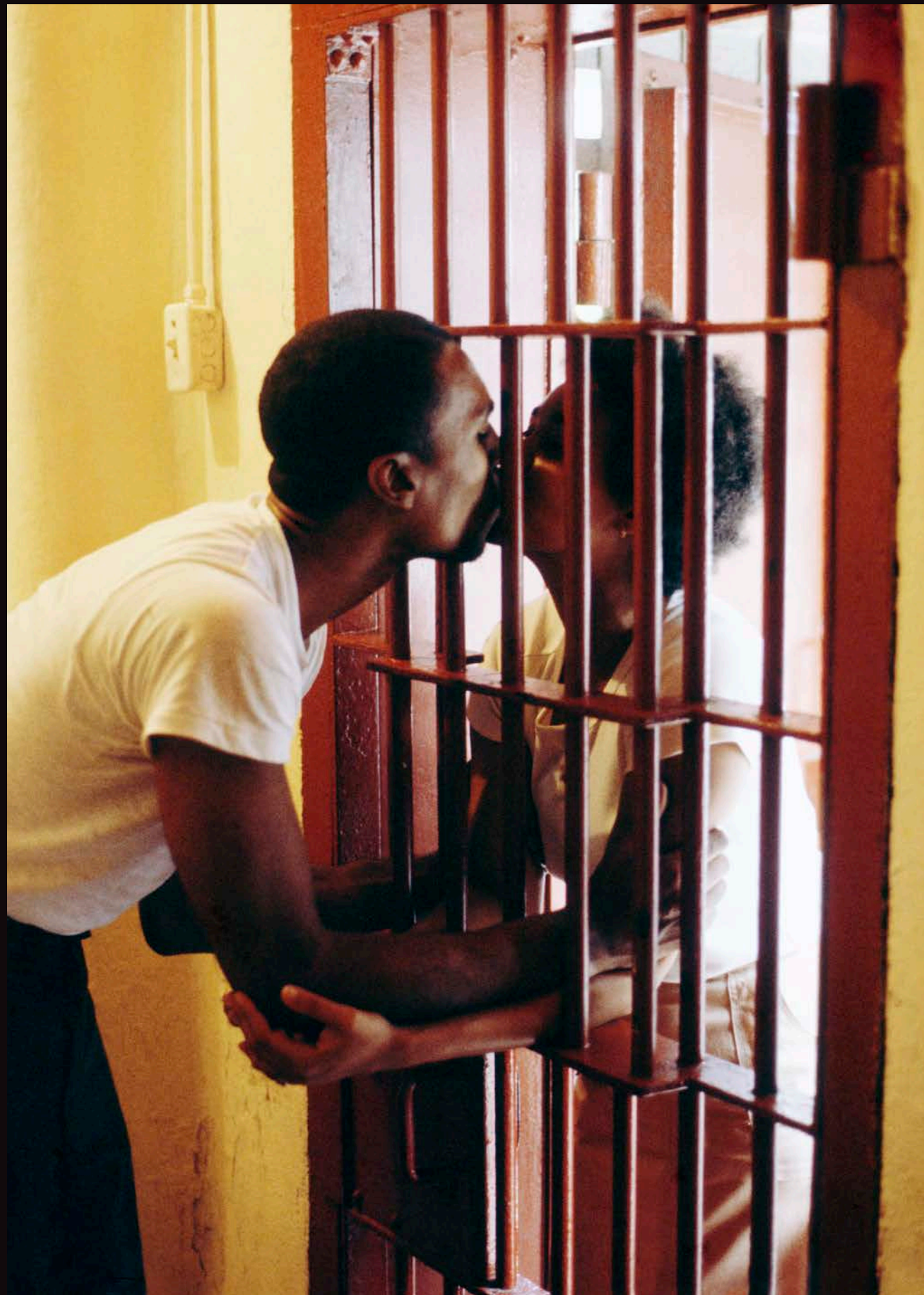
2009 - Harlem, NY



1975 - Meridian, MS



2003 - Church of my father-in-law, Rev. Jake Rush



1978 - Washington, GA

## Ghetto love

*“There is no love like ghetto love”.*

After four years of vagabonding in the ghetto I ended up getting married to it. Annie is the only woman I recall having taken an initiative with. As she was sitting there in a restaurant in New York - irresistibly beautiful - it was evident from our first glances that we needed each other. Both easy victims: she knew nobody, having just returned from ten years of exile in England to attend her mother’s funeral, and I was in one of my depressed periods of vagabonding. We were both children of ministers and had in different ways rebelled against our backgrounds. She was deeply moved by my photos and wanted to help me publicize them. She had a strong literary bent and a far greater intellectual breadth of view than I, so I soon became very dependent on her to make the pieces in my puzzle fall into place.

Annie had to a large degree freed herself in her exile from the master-slave mentality which makes marriage almost insupportable for those few unfortunate Americans who fall in love athwart the realities of the closed system. For “intermarriage” is indeed a subversive act. Even liberals grope for an answer when the question comes: “Would you want your daughter to marry one’?” I usually found common segregationists starting conversations with, “I don’t care whether people are white, black, purple, or green...” Ten sentences later they would be sworn enemies of “intermarriage.” Yet until it was prohibited in 1691, there were plenty of intermarriages between white and black indentured servants, and prior to the reduction of blacks to slavery the “poor white” hatred of them was unknown. In most other countries, even post-slavery countries like Cuba and Brazil, there is nothing resembling the fanaticism of Americans towards intermarriage. Although I come from a conservative rural area I cannot recall having heard a single negative remark in my childhood about the frequent international marriages of Danes to African students. On the contrary I sensed a strong solidarity and even envy towards those moving to distant lands. But in America no interracial marriage can be viewed as simply a natural union. In Hollywood, black promoters wanted to invest a lot of money to publicize my slideshow, but first they wanted me to take out the section on my wife: “It destroys your message, makes you look like just another liberal.” Many blacks and liberals will for the same reason fall away in this chapter. A black woman was furious after seeing my slideshow with photos of several naked black women (unaware as she was of my Danish culture in which

nudity is highly cultivated: family beaches and inner city parks are packed with nudes barely minutes after the sun breaks through). “Aren’t you aware of how irresponsible you have been having had relationships with all these mentally unbalanced women? Aren’t you aware that slavery makes us all mentally ill?” She hit the core question: How can I interfere as a neutral in a master-slave society without becoming a part of the problem? And yet she made the same mistake as most Americans of automatically assuming that a photo of a naked woman equals a sexual relationship with her. She need not really worry, for unlike what I found among black women in most of Africa, the black American woman has developed enormous defense mechanisms against the white man in response to centuries of abuse. Although I spent most of my time in black communities, more than 90% of the women who invited me to share their beds were white. But the suspicion of the white male sexual exploiter naturally always hung over me in my journey. Walking at night in ghettos in the deep South young men would ask, “Sir, you want me to get you a woman?” I am fairly convinced that most women would not have offered me hospitality if they had not sensed the non-aggressive component in me. Since I always saw my vagabonding as a passive role and thus neither avoided nor initiated sexual relations I think it is interesting to analyze what actually happened when I came close to women. After a few days, if we got along well together, white women would express sexual aggression. But even if we became intimate and embraced each other, usually nothing more would happen with the black underclass woman, especially in the South. It was as if something misfired in us both - a shared acknowledgement that this was too big a historical abscess to puncture. She could not avoid consciously or unconsciously signaling that this was a relationship between a free and an unfree person, which immediately gave me the feeling of being just another in the row of white sexual exploiters. Most of my sexual and long-lasting relationships with black women were therefore with women from the middle class or the West Indies who, although more conservative than white and underclass women I met, had nevertheless freed themselves from this slavery to a higher degree. Some Americans would say that if you are aware that certain people live in slavery you should not as a privileged white get yourself into such intimate situations where a sexual relationship or “intermarriage” could arise. But slavery is a product of not associating with a group completely freely as equals, thereby isolating and crippling it.

Annie was one of my exceptions with the underclass. For although her surface seemed very “middle class” after her long leave, she was in her fundamental outlook marked by her underclass upbringing. Such a relationship could probably have worked with much trust and effort by both partners, but because of my racism, sexism, and above all that unseeing “innocence” which will always be the ultimate privilege of the ruling class, this wasn’t what happened. Instead it became such a painful crushing defeat for me that I for instance couldn’t reconcile it with my original book. Even the beginning went wrong. We got married Friday the 13th of September, with no place to live.

A maid let us spend our honeymoon in the luxury apartment of the South African consul who had been called home by his apartheid regime. Afterwards we ended up in the worst area of the ghetto. We had hardly paid the first month’s rent before all Annie’s savings were stolen. We lived on the fifth floor of a building with only prostitutes, destitutes, addicts and welfare mothers. Annie had not lived in underclass culture since her childhood and it was a terrible shock for her to end up here. Due to her looks and the place we lived she was constantly “hit on” by pimps and hustlers, who tried to recruit her. When I had to hitchhike away for some days Annie was kidnapped by a prostitution ring who forced her at gun point to strip naked while they played Russian roulette with her “to break her in.” At night she managed to flee through a bathroom window without clothes out into the city streets. When I came home she was lying dissolved in tears and pain.

The attacks of the pimps continued, and it didn’t help matters that I was white. One day a pimp scornfully threw a handful of money at Annie on the bus. With my old vagabond habits I picked it up. Annie was furious with me and wouldn’t talk to me for a week. There were violence and screams and frantic pain in the building day and night. Several times in the beginning I tried to intervene between pimps and the ho’s they were beating. There was also a pyromaniac. Almost every night during the first months we were woken up by the fire alarm and saw flames burst out from the adjoining apartments. We were so prepared that we had everything packed all the time. The first thing I would grab was a suitcase with all the thousands of slides for this book. One night when we were all standing half-naked in nightclothes on the street I asked Annie to keep an eye on the suitcase while I photographed the fire, but she didn’t hear me in the noise and when we got back to the



1974 - Our wedding in City Hall, NY

apartment. it had been left behind. I rushed down to the street and found the suitcase still standing there. Everyone in the building called it a true miracle as nobody had ever seen any valuables left on the street for even one minute without being snatched.

The psychological pressure was at first worse on Annie than on me. We tried to get welfare in order to move, but got only \$7. Almost every night she lay in tears and despair. In the first months when I still had some psychic surplus left I tried to penetrate into the world which had so evidently disintegrated for her. Like most of my other relationships in America, this one was due to violence. We had met each other as a result of the murder of her mother; and a few months afterward her stepfather was found staggering down the street mortally wounded by a knife. A horrifying pattern from her childhood began to appear for me in these tear-filled nights. When her 16-year-old mother had given birth to her and a twin sister it was seen as such a sin in the minister’s family that the mother had been sent up North and Annie down to an aunt in Biloxi, Mississippi. All Annie recalls from these first four years was the drunken aunt always lying in her shack, while Annie sat alone outside in the sand. One day she almost choked to death on a chicken bone and struggled desperate and alone. Nobody came to help her. The grandparents discovered the neglect and took her back to Philadelphia, Mississippi, where she received a rigorous fundamentalist upbringing. All display of joy, dance, and play was punished. Often she was hung by leather straps around her wrists in the outhouse and whipped to a jelly. On the way home from school there was almost daily rock-throwing between the black and the white kids. One day the white kids turned German shepherds on them and Annie was severely bitten. Two of these white children later joined the Ku Klux Klan, and one of them, Jim Bailey from Annie’s street, was the one who later murdered three civil rights workers in 1964.



1975 - Annie in the Tenderloin, San Francisco

After this Klan violence, with parades of burning crosses through Annie’s street, she fled up North and later went into exile. Since she was the first black to integrate the town’s library, she never dared to return. The more these tearful nights revealed, the more shocked I was. She was incredibly sensitive and one night I recall her crying at the thought of “the white conspiracy” which had kept her and the other black school kids ignorant about the murder of six million Jews.

Finally Annie managed to get a temporary office job in the Bureau of Architecture where she took care of bills from construction companies. She caused great turmoil by discovering one swindle and fraud after another. With her unusual flypaper memory she could detect how the construction companies had months before sent bills for the same job but in different wording. For years these Mafiosi had ripped off the city. Every day she came home and told me about how she had just saved the city \$90,000 or the like. When her job ended, her boss told her she could write any recommendation she desired: he would sign it. But we ourselves still had no money and it was as if this corrupt atmosphere helped to further break down our morale. When the rich steal, why shouldn’t we? When we one day found a purse with \$80 in it in the hallway, it took us a long time to decide to give it back to the owner a welfare mother. When she opened her door she grabbed the purse without a word, with a contemptuous look as if to say, “You must be fools, trying to be better than others here.” From that moment everything slipped more and more in a criminal direction. It had been our idea that I should use the time to write a book. Annie and others felt that I ought to write about my ghetto experiences with the eyes of a foreigner. In the beginning I sat day after day in front of a blank sheet of paper, but it was impossible for me to get a word down in that violent and nerve-wracking atmosphere.

Gradually we both lost our self-confidence and I gave up. The less surplus we had, the less hope, the more violent did the atmosphere become between us. Little by little Annie started to drink in response to my increasing insensitivity. She began to nag me for being nothing but a naive liberal. These endless nights are more than anything the reason for attacks on liberals (or myself) in this book. For the first time in my journey I began to lose faith in blacks - to look at their actuality rather than potential. I was becoming Americanized, had become a victim of the master-slave mentality. The more I lost faith in people (and my own future), the more I seethed with hatred and anger. To avoid the unendurable atmosphere with Annie, I began to spend most of my time on the street. The more powerless I became, the more dismal my prospect, the more she lost faith in me. One night she shouted, “You can’t even provide! You hear, blue-eyed nigger, provide!” What was even worse was that although I constantly tried to get work I started blaming myself. I did nothing but stand in line. In the mornings I sat and lay in line in the blood bank to get \$5. Every day at 11:00 for eight months I stood in an hour-long soup line and at night I would often eat in a church. The rest of the day I would stand in line to get work, which was impossible as I had no skills. If I got there at four in the morning I sometimes succeeded in being hired for a day to throw advertisements in the affluent suburbs for \$2 an hour.

After a while I gave up and spent more and more time with the criminals in the street. I was never involved in any large-scale criminal activity, but it was clearly moving in that direction. One night when a guy was telling me shakenly that his brother had just been murdered in Chicago I just replied coldly, “What caliber pistol?” Only afterwards did it dawn on me how deep I had slipped down. During the time I lived with Annie eight people had been murdered on our block, some of them acquaintances. Theresa, who had so often given me free food in her coffee shop, was murdered one day by a customer who couldn’t pay his bill of \$1.41. Sometimes even the walls in our hallway were smeared with blood. When I came home late at night Annie would often be lying in a fog of tears and booze. I hardly cared any more. In the end for fear of the destructive quarrels I would not come home until she was asleep. Our sex life, like everything else, disintegrated.

Finally I harbored such hatred for both blacks and whites around me that I became afraid of myself. One night when Annie had been drinking I became so desperate that I aimed a blow at her in the darkness. The next morning she had a black eye like everyone else in the building had had. Having never before laid a hand on a person, I was shaken. I had a sudden fear that I would end up killing her one day. The only way I could break the ghettoization was flight. We managed to get a tiny room for Annie in a white home outside the ghetto. After that I went straight for the highway. The highway I knew meant security and safety, recreation and freedom. For four years I had lived an escapist privileged vagabond life in ghettos without being affected. When I became a part of the ghetto, I was destroyed in less than a year, had ended up hating blacks, had lost faith in everything, and had seen the worst parts of my character begin to control my behavior. One of these was an increasing selfishness and aggressive callousness in my relationship to women. It was no coincidence that I immediately entered a period of conspicuous consumption of “girls” with my friend Tony in North Carolina. I had no inhibitions left. And yet I was not exactly a horn seducer. Time and again Tony whispered to me, “Hey, why don’t you make a move?” and time and again he ended up having to drive my date home prematurely. And then every night there were disturbing obstacles. One night I couldn’t get home with my date because of a shootout in the street. Another night we all went to see Earth, Wind and Fire in Chapel Hill and I used my white privilege to “con” my way in for free as I never had money. This so irritated Bob, who drove the car, that on the way home he suddenly stopped and said, “Hey, man, you gotta get out, understand?” Since Bob was a double murderer, having killed both his wife and her lover, and everybody knew he boiled inside, nobody tried to intervene and I had to get out in the frosty night in the middle of nowhere.

An essential tool in dating is the car. Since I couldn’t take my dates for a ride I instead invited them for what I loved most of all in the world: hitchhiking. It was these trips more than anything else which made me aware of my sex-ploitative frame of mind. I had lived with blacks so often that I paid hardly any heed to being “on the wrong side of the tracks,” but to hitchhike with a black woman quickly shakes one into “place” again, especially if one is as ignorant as I had managed to remain about the additional master-slave relationship of men to women. Because of my vagabond attitude that the driver should be “entertained,” if the



2004 - Phil. MS - Revisiting Annie's family throughout my life.

driver was a woman or a gay man, I would sit in front to make conversation, whereas if it was a straight man I would make the woman sit next to him, even if she didn’t want to. The reactions from the white male drivers were terrifying. If they didn’t content themselves with psychological torture of the women, they would use direct physical encroachment. Although most of those I hitchhiked with were well-dressed daughters of professors and doctors in the North and had the education and trust in their surroundings which made them - unlike ghetto women - even dare to go on such a trip with a white, they were considered as nothing but easy sexual prey or even whores. Several times lustful drivers violently tried to push me out. For some of these women it was their first chance to see their country. Most didn’t even last to the state line. One lasted 4,000 miles through Canada and the Grand Canyon - then broke down in a hysterical fit which almost had us both arrested.

I was still enormously out of balance after my ghettoization and I decided I needed to recreate myself in a calm family atmosphere. After having lived in a couple of white homes I searched back to the most harmonious and stable married couple I could recall having seen in the underclass: Leon and Cheryl in Augusta, Georgia. Their love and devotion to each other had been so enriching and contagious that I often thought of them in the course of my own abortive ghetto love as living proof to myself that real ghetto love could thrive. While I had lived in their home I had had peace and support, enabling me day after day to hitchhike out to explore the poverty in the area. But when I came to their house I immediately felt something had changed. Leon asked me in, but he was not happy. He seemed to be in a trance as he told me his wife had died from a disease which was curable but which they had not had money to get under proper treatment before it was too late. Leon had not recovered from the loss. He never went out of his house which stood right next to the elite



1975 - Annie in the Tenderloin, San Francisco

medical school in Augusta. All day long he sat on the blue shag carpet in front of his little stereo as if it were an altar, listening to music while staring at a photo of Cheryl above. Some days he sang love songs throughout the day, putting her name in them. Once in a while he would scream out in the room: “I want you! I want to hold you. I want to be with you again ... We must unite, be one... I want to die... die...” “ Never have I seen a man’s love for a woman so intense. At most once a day would he turn around and communicate with me, and then only to tell me about how he wanted to join Cheryl in heaven. Sometimes when he stared directly at me with this empty look as if I were not there my eyes would fill with tears. I felt a deep understanding for him, yet couldn’t express it. In the evenings he lay in his room. His mother or another woman would bring us cooked food in the two weeks I stayed there. This depressing experience made me look deeper into myself. I became determined to go back to Annie, and later she returned with me to Denmark. Our relationship had suffered too much, so after a while we separated. We achieved a good working relationship and she helped translate parts of this book and all of the film.

Three years later I traveled all over America to give or show this book to all those friends who made it possible. One of them was naturally Leon, who had helped me so much and was one of those I had in mind to come and help run the show in Europe. But when I came to his screen door with the book under my arm, a strange woman answered my knock. No, Leon didn’t live there any more. He was shot three years ago - by a white man. All afternoon his mother showed me the photo album with Leon and Cheryl’s pictures and told me tearfully about their three happy years together. We sat sobbing in each other’s arms on the front porch. I know that Leon and Cheryl are united again. “There is no love like ghetto love.”

*Written with the help of my ex-wife in her hospital bed. Annie died after a long period of health problems in 2002 in Denmark.*



1973 - NYC

A society in which love and mutual connections have been killed is not a beautiful sight. Even the church escapes the social ethics of Christ and betrays the outcasts. That these outcasts then betray the church is no wonder. Angry ghetto youngsters often arrive in white churches just before the collection plate is passed round and force the churchgoers at gunpoint to give to the truly love-hungry.

Wherever we cast out our fellow citizens through ghettoization and the perdition of white flight our towering symbols of charity are left empty alongside their smashed mosaic windows. The Danish Seamen's Church in Baltimore, in which I often found some peace of mind, had to close because Alphonso and my other friends in the neighboring houses were constantly robbing it.



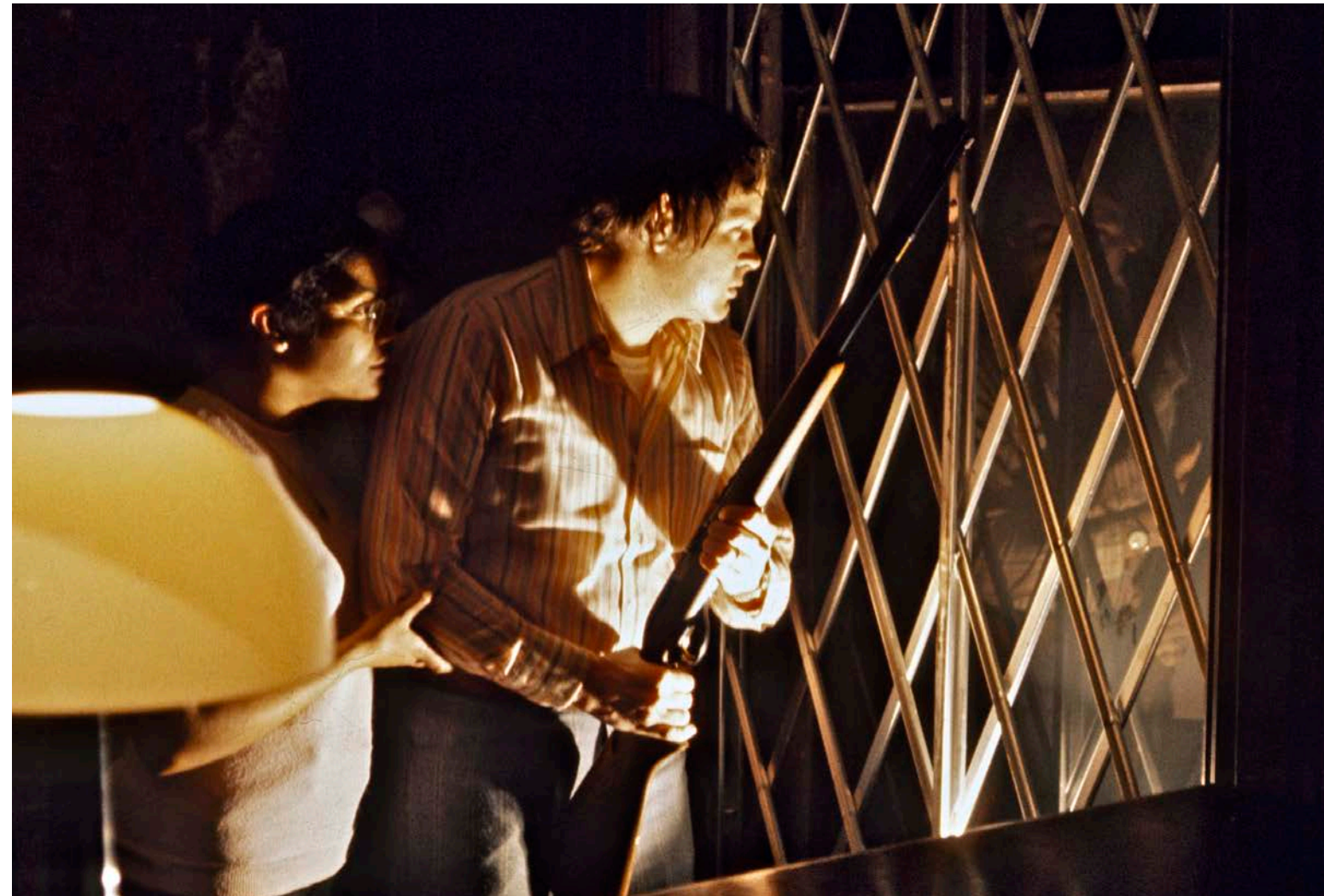
1973 - Bronx, NY



1973 - Baltimore



1975 - Richmond, VA



1973 - Queens, NY, Christmas Eve

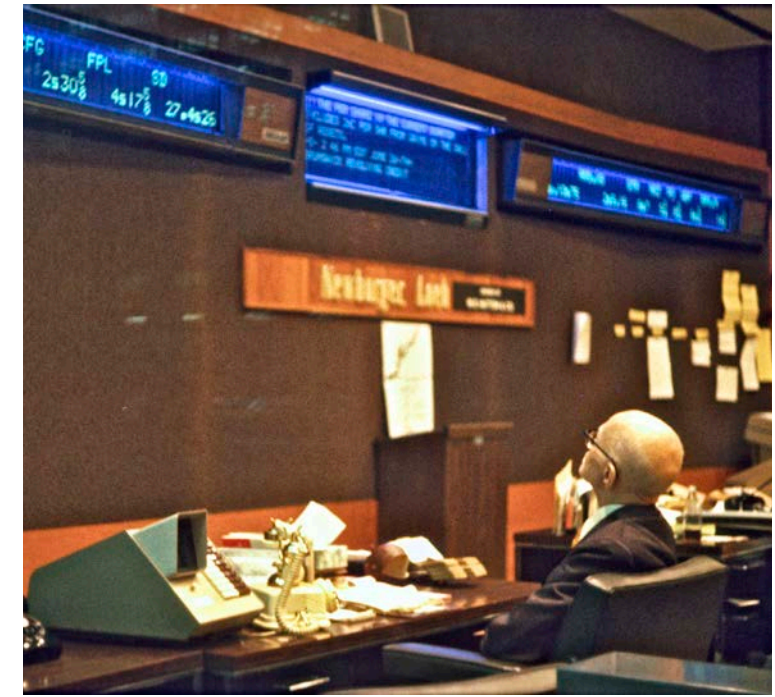




1974 - NYC. Homeless outside church



1974 - NYC. Homeless outside church



1974 - NYC

The more cars, the more weapons, the more fortresses, the more military buildup ... the more private industry enriches itself on this systematic subversion of society. The higher the barriers Big Business constructs between people, the more it manages to kill the love between people—and the higher stock prices rise on Wall Street.

In the process, we become insensitive to, for example, this hungry woman on the street outside the stock exchange ...

A despairing minister in Chicago told me that his church was closing because the congregation was robbed every Sunday. According to the biased media, a “Christian priest was forced away from his church (in a Denmark ghetto) by Muslim thugs” when our brown youths expressed, in exactly the same way, the pain and anger of feeling rejected by white flight. When I did a reconciliation workshop for them and for the few remaining whites in the ghetto, I found that the only difference between them and their American counterparts is how exemplary their behavior (still) is in Europe.

In some American cities there are armed guards or police to protect guests on every floor of hotels. Subway trains in New York and Chicago carry both uniformed and plainclothes cops—and still people are murdered and raped before the eyes of panic-stricken passengers. Tourists return to Europe with “American neck” from continually sending anxious glances back over their shoulders. A Nigerian student I met in Philadelphia’s ghetto was so panic-stricken over conditions there that she tried to be sent home, “to safety,” before her studies were over. Her statement wouldn’t have surprised me if it weren’t for the fact that she’d just lived through the civil war in Biafra.

The confinement of the underclass is dehumanizing for all. In five of the homes I lived in, there were twice armed robberies while I was there. Society spends billions to cure the ill instead of educating us about the suffering our racism inflicts on ourselves. We intuitively feel that we’re digging our own graves, but, unable to do anything about it, we turn it into a trench. A manufacturer I lived with had made a fortune making military equipment but

turned to producing alarms and teargas guns, perhaps because the country wasted so many resources exporting war that the “war on poverty” at home had to be abandoned. The more we struggle for “freedom” without mutual respect, the more we cut ourselves off from it. Thus, many now live behind steel-bar fortifications. Slowly but steadily the iron curtain is closing in on America. You walk into a store and find yourself inside a steel cage. The wealthy can afford to invest billions in invisible electronic fortifications between themselves and the ghetto. The more electronic rays replace trust, the more the system closes itself. People, many of whom are trained from childhood in the use of weapons, are paralyzed with fear. Many arm themselves to death to “defend themselves against the niggers,” as a suburban Michigan family told me. I don’t know what is most shocking: that our children of anger feel so psychologically marginalized that they can kill for a dollar or that millions of Americans are prepared to take a human life just to defend a TV.

Even teachers are often assaulted in front of their students. My friend Jerry, mentioned in the Detroit letter on page 183, had learned not to interfere when his students sat and polished their guns in his classes. As a lecturer, I often came to support his efforts to be a saving angel for these bleeding ghetto children. But when, after years of trying, the only student he managed to get into Harvard was killed in class by stray bullets from a gang fight—just before graduation—Jerry gave up. In 2005 he fled the US and came to me in Copenhagen. Only three years later, however, gang wars broke out among our own marginalized people, forcing Danes into the same flight from their own creations.



1974 - Wall St, NY



2006 - NYC



2007 - NYC



2003 - Portland, OR



2010 - NYC



2002 - NYC - 9/11 Memorial in Harlem



1975 - San Diego, CA



1972 - Miami Beach, FL - Republican convention



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1974 - Jersey City, NJ



1973 - NYC

When we fail to fortify justice, it becomes necessary to justify force. The more we try to shoot out a shortcut to freedom and security, the more our actions in flight and desperation resemble those typical of the ghetto. Just as ghetto inmates look for quick escapes into awe-inspiring luxury cars and violence, we escape through the use of even more awe-inspiring armored personnel carriers and military violence, which are directed at the ghetto, instead of changing the attitudes we espouse that create ghettos. How free are we really in God's own country when thousands of people must view the Statue of Liberty from behind windows with steel grates? Her watchful gaze, which is always turned away from even the most vicious acts of racism, is increasingly being replaced by Big Brother's ever-present eye.

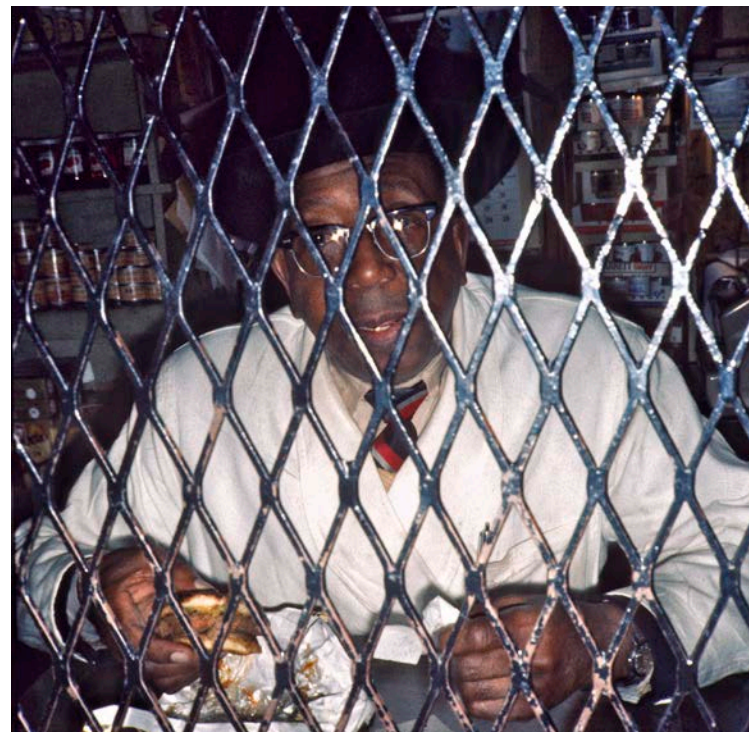
Out of fear and alienation, we continually violate the Constitution under the pretext of fighting crime and terrorism. In Denmark, too, we repeatedly restrict our own freedom with new and harsher terrorist legislation out of fear of those we've marginalized. In one respect America is dangerously close to totalitarianism: the country is swarming with secret police. Nobody, absolutely nobody, except those who, like me, have hitchhiked around in big and small American towns, has any idea how many of these plainclothes cops there really are. They were always frisking me. Even in small sleepy towns in the South, I might discover up to twenty officers in a single night. The more the system closes, the more trust in the actions and values of society as a whole disappears. Superseding reason, fear stifles our concern and compassion for fellow human beings.

Our (black) criminal and (white) repressive escape acts are poisoning the entire population, which is gradually being corrupted by the violence it perpetrates against the black ghetto. A ghetto is created and perpetuated by outside forces; it can't be dismantled from the inside. Paralyzed by fear and violence, our entire society begins to assume the character of a ghetto. The population becomes increasingly aware that it's operating in a closed system—a system in which we've lost even our imagined freedom of action. A system whose prolonged confinement of (our) undesirables in enormous ghettos has long since become so institutionalized that it seems quite natural to us. For generations our "systemic racism" has shaped and crippled us to such an extent that we can neither imagine alternatives, nor in the short run would we be able to live with them if we could.

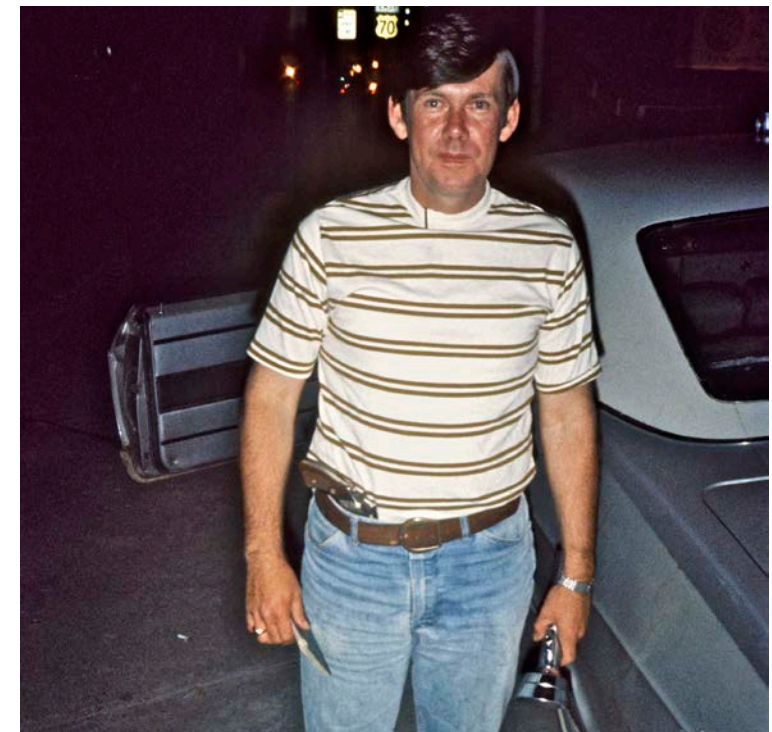
And so the entire society becomes a closed system in the same way the South was before 1865 and before 1954—a system that, in spite of the efforts of liberals and activists, was unable to change from within. Northern interference in the Southern closed system didn't break the circle; it only found a new higher level of balance, raising the median black income in the South from 45% to 55% of white income. We whites have the power to eliminate the ghettos through a change of attitude, but as long as we passively allow ourselves to be captured by the enslaving pattern of well-coordinated oppression, I see no possibility of this happening. We don't understand the underclass monster we continuously create, and so we turn our backs to it, destroying our society in the process.



1974 - Harlem, NY



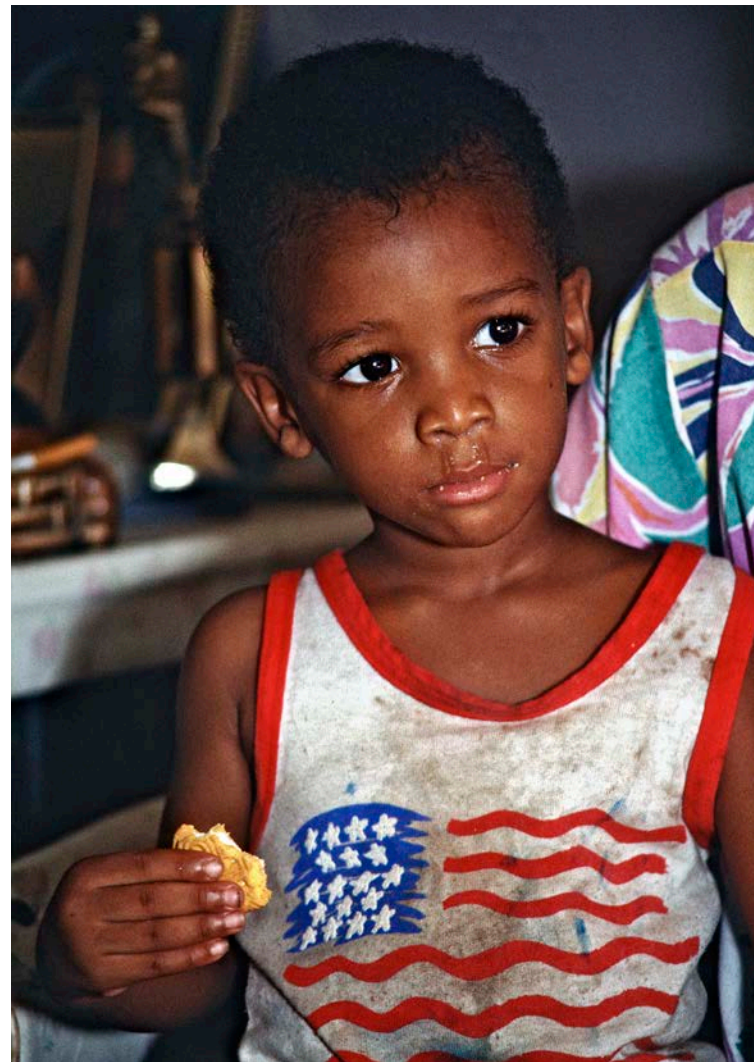
1973 - Baltimore



1974 - Richmond, VA. Plain clothes cop checking me



1986 - Amherst, MA



1975 - Philadelphia, MS



1972 - Jackson, MI



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA



1973 - NYC



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA

My journey through this social jungle had automatically led me into the ultimate closed system, the prison, in which I ran into three underclass robbers who'd attacked me on my arrival in America five years earlier. While society had closed slowly around me, like a vise, these people had opened up to me and had, through my own ghettoization, become a part of myself. I now understood that they'd had no real choice: their freedom was one-dimensional. Their choice then, of whether or not to victimize me, is indicative of the white choice: Should we stop oppressing an unredeemed people in order not to risk ending up in a kind of prison ourselves? Or, locked into a system where "life's design is already made," have we lost the freedom to choose?

Even if we allocated billions of dollars to rebuild the slums, to provide better schools and jobs, those imprisoned in the ghetto would see it as just one more case of humiliating crumbs from above. It would only aggravate the self-image of those we disposed of and are half-heartedly trying to reclaim—and they'd bite the hands that feed them. Our great liberal open hand would suffer a quick conservative pullback.

No, we can't just pay off our racism! Even in the best years of liberal tokenism, 1960-67, \$348 billion was spent on war and \$27 billion on space exploration but only \$2 billion on aid to ghettos. It's no surprise the underclass burned down the ghettos in contempt!

Such a helping hand from above unintentionally functions just as the American penal system does. Here, 95% of the money is used to dispose of the unwanted and brutalize them, while only

5% is spent on paternalistic "rehabilitation" of the waste product (which took years to produce). Most inmates are so wrecked by the prison system they never adjust to life on the outside and wind up back in prison. Millions of people who need psychiatric treatment as a result of the ghetto's institutionalized, chronic, and self-perpetuating pathology are instead locked up. Some 25% of prison inmates are mentally retarded because of their impoverished backgrounds and lead poisoning. Almost half of the inmates are black although they make up only 13% of the country. When, in addition, blacks on average receive sentences twice as long as whites for the same offense (as reported by the New York Times), you begin to understand why many blacks see themselves as political prisoners.

It may seem that I present blacks as helpless victims, but how else will we see the executioner in ourselves? While reading this book, your unconscious racism has tried to deny responsibility by insisting that the problem, after all, is probably due to the innate inferiority of blacks. But recall that black West Indian immigrants, who weren't forced to internalize our racism, are doing just as well as whites in America. So when native blacks, deeply shaped by our racism, have only half the income of whites and make up more than half of all prison inmates, then yes, many of them are helpless victims of our racism. The images of broken and apathetic people in this book are not the images that our oppressed, struggling to maintain a little dignity, like to see of themselves.



1974 - Baltimore



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA



1972 - Miami Beach, FL



1971 - Oakland, CA. Chairman Huey P. Newton



Later BPP Chairman Elaine Brown who sings the last song in this book



Henry and Ilane at poster of Huey P. Newton



1975 - Seattle, WA



1973 - Baltimore. BPP Free Breakfast Program



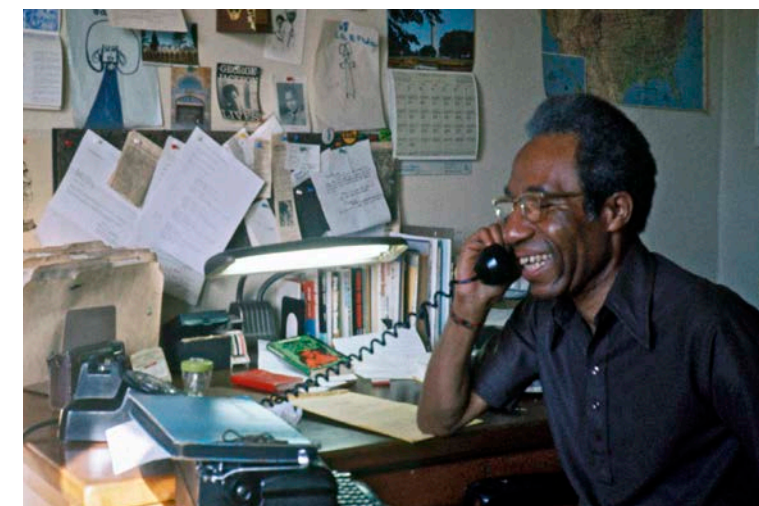
1973 - Baltimore. BPP Free Breakfast Program

But oppression always produce more broken humans than pattern breakers, and if we don't understand those who are too weak to resist, how will we ever realize how destructive our racism is? These prisoners did resist. What made them choose our ultimate punishment wasn't actual need or hunger but uncontrollable anger—a vicious cocktail of hatred and self-hatred that made them despise everything. They're merely the visible symptoms of our oppression; their anger is shared by all black Americans. Their anger constantly defeats them, makes them stumble where others easily succeed. Instead of examining the cause of their rage, we blame them for not succeeding. We don't understand the ghetto monster we've created. Instead, we turn our backs to it, "mass incarcerate" it—one day, perhaps, it will be "concentration camps"—and destroy our own society in the process.

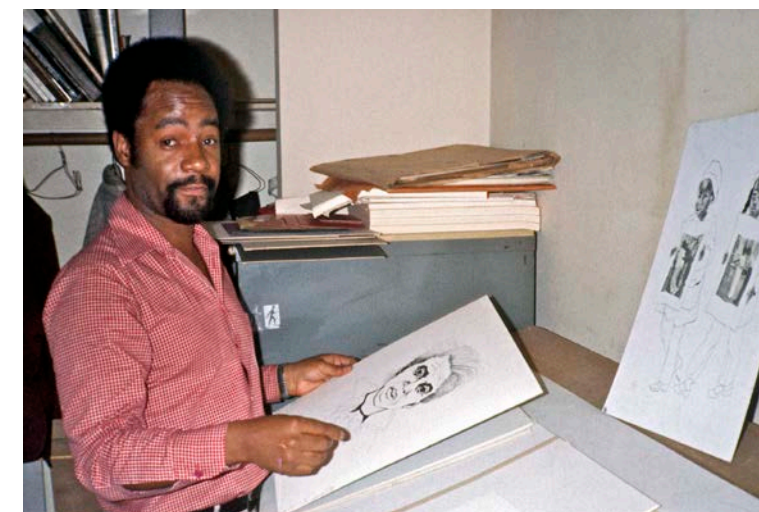
Yet no matter how formidable the oppression seems, there's always been an active movement to oppose it, from Nat Turner to Black Lives Matter. I couldn't passively watch all this destruction, so I joined the movement of my generation, the Black Panthers. They'd already used the power of political theater at some courageous events, exercising their Second Amendment rights to carry arms while protesting the endless police killings of blacks. Whites were so scared by blacks with guns that Governor Reagan, with the support of the NRA (believe it or not), tightened gun laws in California. And even though the Panthers were otherwise nonviolent, the FBI started a secret COINTELPRO operation to smash the group, assassinating countless Panthers, some in their sleep like Fred Hampton. I was especially impressed by the Free Breakfast for Children program they set up in many

ghettos, and I hitchhiked around to support them. In Baltimore I usually stayed with my Panther friends Henry and Ilane (seen here with their baby under the poster of Huey Newton). I helped them feed the local children and saw these kids, dressed in rags, walk long distances in the morning to get a meal. I felt this was more meaningful than joining the cult around the mercurial leader Huey Newton (top left), whom I'd often met in Oakland, along with other leaders, such as Elaine Brown, who sings "There is a Man" at the end of my show. But when David Dubois became chief editor of the Panther paper, he convinced me that my real role was as a photographer for the paper. I was incredibly proud of working for the son of the great W. E. B. Du Bois, seen here in the BPP headquarters in Oakland along with famous cartoonist Emory Douglass. And so the photos in this book were first published in The Black Panther.

There's a sad afterword to this story: When I had to review the movie The Butler on Danish TV in 2013, I broke down in tears during the part in which, for the first time, the Black Panthers were portrayed positively—as a natural stage in the black resistance. I realized how I myself had suppressed my Panther involvement, which was part of my original Danish book. When I was starting up my show in Reagan's America in 1984, I erased all traces of it, afraid I'd be accused of being a terrorist. America and I had changed since I met Reagan in 1972, when I'd brazenly accused him of oppressing blacks. I was right. He was the first candidate using "coded" racism and dog whistling ("jungle"=ghetto, "monkeys"=Africans) to win the presidency since the Civil Rights Movement.



1974 -David Dubois in BPP headquarter in Oakland



1974 -Emory Douglass in BPP headquarter in Oakland



1971 - Washington, DC

I joined blacks in countless demonstrations, from Black Panther-sponsored events up to the Black Lives Matter protests, but never saw as many blacks involved as when they arrayed themselves against Reagan's double-edged racism: He used the color-coded Southern strategy against blacks at home and supported the South African apartheid regime. He even oppressed women when advocating dictator Zia to install Sharia law in Pakistan. I realized that blacks had always tried to appeal to their oppressors' consciences, but during the Reagan years felt that the oppressors were one big joint conspiracy of whites, Jews, Muslims, and immigrants (even black immigrants, at least in universities) against our crucified victims. Thus I shared the black frustration about demonstrating against people who, like Reagan, were basically good at heart (as his epitaph avers).



1987 - Ann Arbor, MI



1971 - Washington, DC



1972 - Ronald Reagan, Miami Beach, FL



1991 - Philadelphia, PA



I am photographing a Black Lives Matter demo in 2016



2013 - At his memorial grave I finally found something Reagan and I could agree on - and reconciled with him.





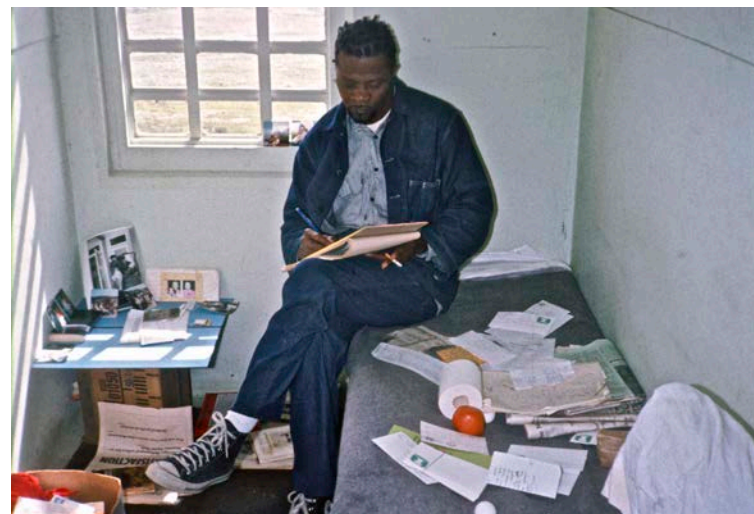
1975 - Popeye in San Bruno Jail, CA



1975 - Popeye in San Bruno Jail, CA



1975 - Popeye in visiting room



1975 - Popeye writing for the Prisoners Union Paper



1975 - San Francisco

But let's not forget that those who can adjust to this gulag system can experience our society, with its barred windows and deserted fear-ridden streets, as the freest in the world. A book like this will be greeted with open arms because the system is so massive in its oppression that all criticism is lost upon it, and it becomes entertainment or religious escape.

Only when the system meets organized resistance does it come down on you hard, as I saw with my best friend in California, Popeye Jackson.

By the time I met Popeye, I'd reached the end of my journey. As a vagabond I loved the freedom to lose myself in the individual person and naively believed I could keep myself free of racism. But now I began to feel that my vagabonding had been a privileged white flight—like so many others. The conceptual framework I'm using here had become a necessary hope as well as a means of survival in a world of oppression, but I now realized that there were other truths and more spiritual ways of perceiving human life. I felt that I was exploiting the suffering with my camera, and, sensing my own growing racism, it was beginning to make me sick. It's not pleasant to discover you've become what you're struggling against, but racism isn't a voluntary matter in a racist society, and I knew I was more than just a racist. So rather than feeling ashamed, my racism made me feel part of America, and I had to take responsibility for it by becoming an active antiracist and helping to change the country I'd come to love. The more I loved America, the harder it was just to silently observe its self-destruction. While I'd taken photos, dozens of my friends

had gone off to prison—friends who'd protested the system, many without thinking about it—while I'd been thinking and snapping away with my camera without acting. So I put my camera away and began to work with Popeye. He proved to me that the victim, far from being helpless, is capable of resisting. He was proud of his lower ghetto background and always dressed like a hustler. He was the personification of the underclass, with all its openness, violence, sexism, beautiful culture, generosity—all the things we in Europe consider stereotypically American. Popeye had himself been on a long journey. He was only 10 years old when he first went to jail and spent a total of 19 years in prison. During his long confinement, his political consciousness matured, and he felt that through

Marxism he could free himself of the intensified self-hatred imprisonment usually induces. He didn't want Marxism to be just an individual psychological escape or a purely analytical system, as it is for so many European students, so he began organizing the other inmates into the United Prisoners Union (UPU), later becoming its president. He felt it was possible to escape the ghetto only by collectively changing the entire system. He quickly became a well-known figure and was, for instance, chosen as a mediator between the Hearst family and the Symbionese Liberation Army, the terrorist group who kidnapped Patricia Hearst. Popeye's influence on prison inmates increased, and I was told the police had tried to get him back in prison by planting dope in his

car (on occasion they'd also threatened him with death). Working together in the UPU, we became more and more closely bound to each other. Noticing the big holes in my shoes, he gave me a pair of boots without a word. Though I'd stopped taking photos, he persuaded me to take these pictures for the prison newspaper. I promised never to tell how I smuggled the camera in, but since Sheriff Hongisto, a closet gay, is now dead, I feel free to reveal it was Hongisto who "jailed" me out of appreciation for my work in the gay movement.

Popeye constantly tried to organize the inmates under inhuman conditions that stifled all private life in a place where the system used almost any means to break people down. Precisely because I myself was totally paralyzed in these surroundings, seeing how Popeye got the other inmates to read political literature, even though it was impossible to imagine how anyone could read amid the ominous noise and ever-present fear, made an indelible impression on me. Many inmates told me that Popeye had had a similar effect on them—he wasn't a "fake intellectual revolutionary"; he was one of their own.

Although an extremely promising organizer, Popeye was naturally not without severe human failings that disturbed many of the volunteers in our group, particularly the women. They'd learned a lesson from the naive Left of the '60's, which had romantically embraced a number of rapists as the "avant-garde of the revolution." Some of them left our group because of Popeye's sexism. I clashed intensely with them because I felt their views were just another form of racism—an up-to-date radical way of saying: I don't like the underclass.

"If you think a man can come out of 300 years of slavery and 19 years of prison as an angel, you are fools. Even Martin Luther King was sexist," Coretta King says today." Back then, I said, "If you think a man should be denied a powerful leadership role until he lives up to white liberal norms in every respect, then you're as dangerous an enemy of affirmative action as the worst Southern racist. If you turn your backs on Popeye now, then it's not their racism forcing him back into a ghetto, but yours." Having myself ended up in the sexist trap (page 274), I was a great defender of Popeye. But I was also betraying him at the same time: Just as whites don't put enough pressure on each other's racism, I and the other men in the group didn't try to change Popeye's sexism, if only to allow him to be a more successful organizer.



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA



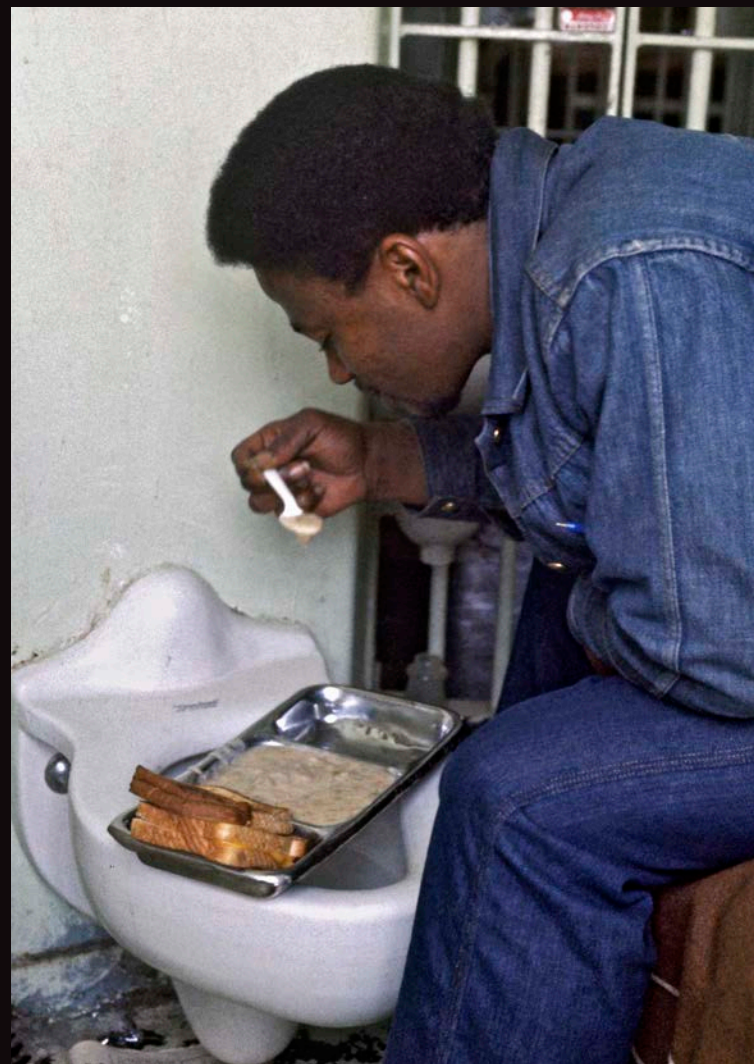
1975 - Popeye at our "back in the world" release party



1975 - Local TV News



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA



1975 - San Bruno Jail, CA

Outside the prison an effective campaign was started to get Popeye released, and at long last he was freed. We threw a big "back in the world" party for him. Popeye had often warned me about FBI infiltrators posing as members of the UPU. Having always trusted everybody I met in my vagabonding, I took his warnings as normal ghetto paranoia. I had difficulty imagining anybody I knew being secret police, so I was knocked completely out when I experienced the terror the system used against Popeye's union: One of my friends—indeed, the one in whom I had the most faith—was an FBI informant.

Her name was Sara Jane Moore. She was a bit older than the others, and we thought she was a nice, sympathetic, though slightly confused, housewife from the suburbs. It shocked us when she confessed to the newspapers that she was a spy for the FBI but now had pangs of conscience—during our work she'd been converted to Popeye's views.

Two months later she almost changed world history when she attempted to shoot President Ford in Union Square. She experienced such terrible torment over what she'd brought about with her FBI work that she wanted to take revenge on the FBI by assassinating the head of the system, as she said.

Billy, a neighbor in the building where I lived with transvestites, knocked the gun out of Sara Jane's hand and saved the president's life. This got him invited to the White House. But Billy was dating the leader of the gay movement, Harvey Milk's lover, Joe, and the White House rescinded the invitation when Milk made him openly confess he was gay. (After 32 years in prison, Sara Jane was released in 2007, and I was contacted by film and TV companies that wanted to use my pictures of her).

What had happened between these two episodes that could throw her so off balance? Saturday night, a couple of days after our party, Popeye was supposed to come over to select the prison pictures for our paper. He called up, however, and said he didn't have time; he had a meeting to go to. I said I'd come to the

meeting later and drive home with him. Only two hours before I was set to leave, I got a phone call from Annie, crying in fear and begging me not to go home with Popeye. If I hadn't received that call, I wouldn't have been watching the news the next evening:

*"This is the Sunday edition of the eleven o'clock Eyewitness News. The San Francisco Police continue their investigation into the execution-style slaying of prison reformer Popeye Jackson, who was head of the United Prisoners Union. Jackson was sitting in a car with Sally Voye, a school teacher from Vallejo, when the shooting took place at 2:45 Sunday morning. Police say they died immediately.*

*- Now, like many of you, I love dogs. I am concerned about them. That's why I feed my dogs Alpo. Because meat is a dog's natural food. That's what they love most. And Alpo's meat dinner has beef products that are really good for them. Not a speck of cereal. Not a better dog food in the world.*

*(Police): Reports indicate that the killer first fired a shot that smashed a window of the car. The first bullet hit Miss Voye and then Jackson. The gunman was not there to rob the people. Wallets were intact.*

*This sounds like an execution-style slaying ...*

*- You could call it that. We're working on that as a possible theory. We have to rule out robbery.*

*- Police say a number of people went to their windows when they heard the shots. Police will begin questioning them tomorrow to find the killer.*

*- Here's how it starts. You see someone take that first mouth-watering bite and you've just got to get a taste for yourself. In this world there's only one fried chicken that always tastes so finger lickin' good, and you've got to say "HEY! It's a Kentucky Fried Chicken day!"*

Although it was my best friend I saw lying in a pool of blood on TV only a few hours after I myself had planned to drive home with him on that disastrous night, I was unable to cry the first four days—it all seemed so unreal to me, presented, as it was, in this strange American mix of dogfood and fried-chicken commercials. The system, with the media at its disposal, can get away with just about anything since it's capable of making us forget in the next instant what we saw in the previous one.

What had happened didn't dawn on me until the funeral, and I broke down totally in tears. I'd also come to realize that Sally, who'd worked with prisoners and ghetto kids though she lived in the safety of a suburb, who'd even tried to work on Popeye's sexism, and whom I'd liked, this fantastic woman had also been murdered—simply because she would've been a witness to the assassination. My destiny would've been no different had I been with them that night.

Here's Sally with Popeye a few days before their murder. The assassin has never been established. But since Sara Jane Moore, sentenced to life in prison, gave Playboy a harrowing account of her undercover work for the FBI, including how the FBI threatened her life when they realized she was being won over by Popeye's ideas, few of us have any doubts. Popeye had often warned me of ex-convicts who might've struck early-release deals with the police. He himself was never afraid of dying in spite of the fact that, as the San Francisco Chronicle later revealed, police had threatened to kill him. In his last article, which he wrote while I was with him in prison, he said: "We ought not to fear death. We are the convicted class and only through revolution can we win our freedom and the freedom of all oppressed people in the world."

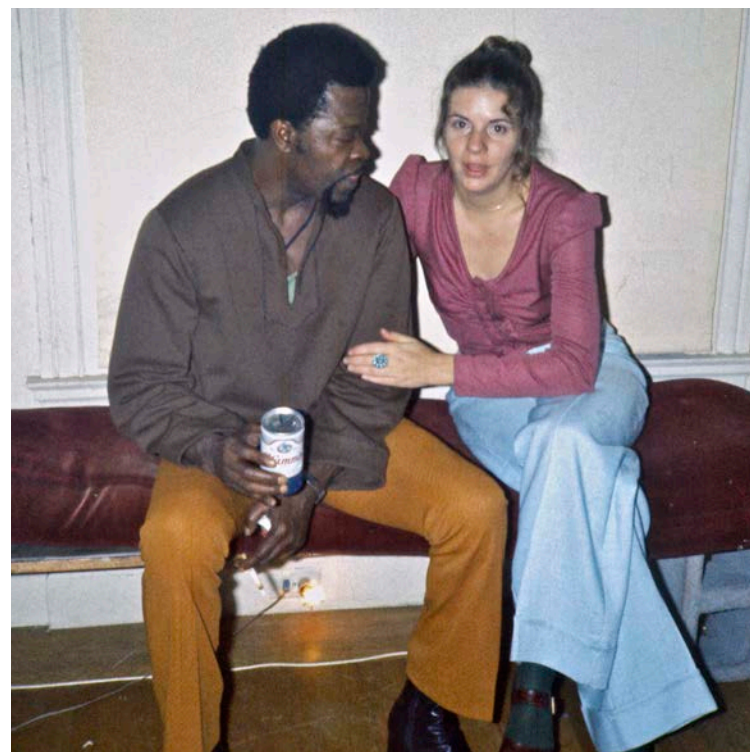
At the funeral, where I was the only photographer invited by his family, many of his union workers and prison friends—Indians, blacks, Chicanos and whites—kissed him farewell. Many others wouldn't be able to get "back in the world" and see his tomb until a generation later. His mother, who'd brought him cake in prison every single week for 19 years, suffered a total breakdown in front of the coffin.



1975 - San Francisco Examiner



1975 - S F Chronicle



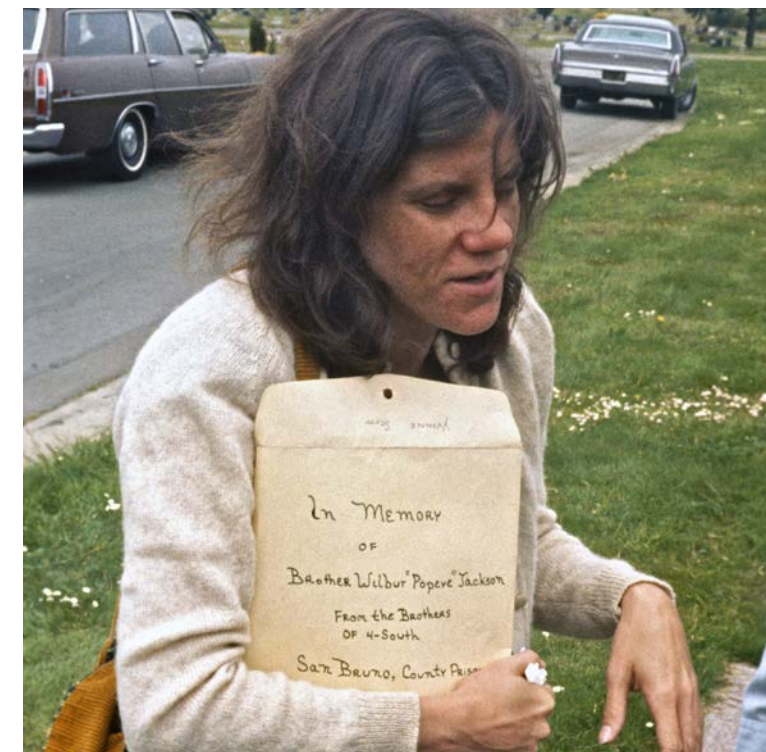
1975 - Popeye and Sally Voyer at party



1975 - Popeye at party



1975 - UPU member "Sleepy" at funeral



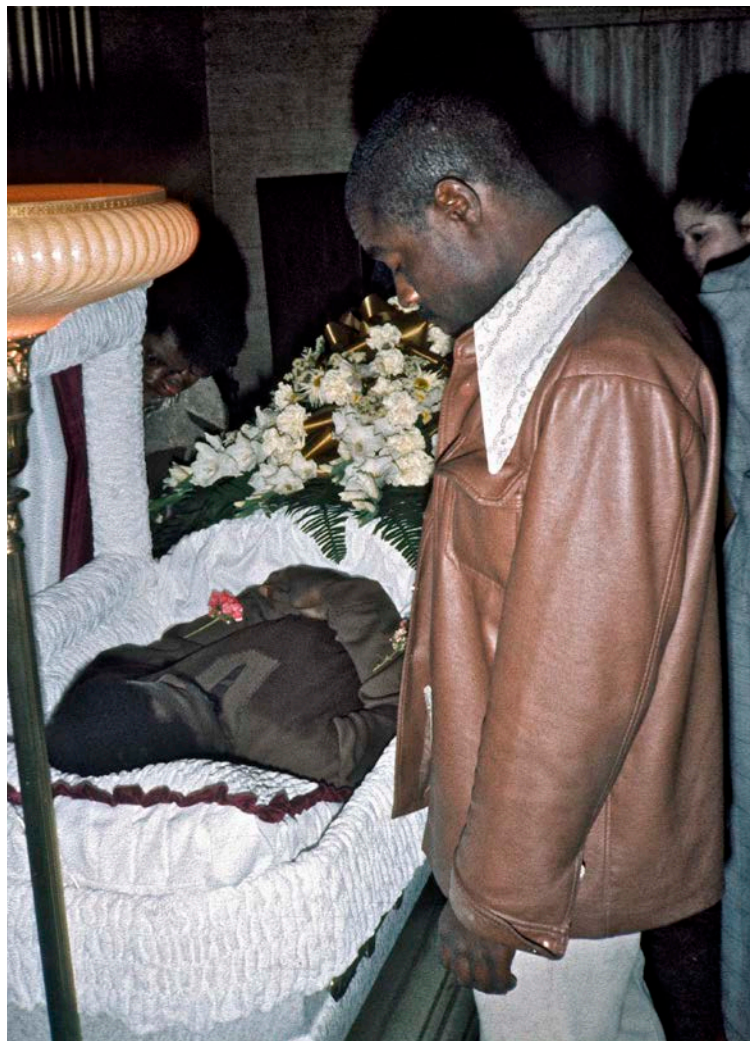
1975 - Popeye's pregnant wife Pat Singer at funeral



1975 - guests at 5000\$ a plate fundraising dinner for President Ford

*There is a man  
who stands in all our way.  
And his greedy hands  
reach out across the world.  
But if we slay this man  
we will have peace in this land  
and this glorious struggle  
will be done.*

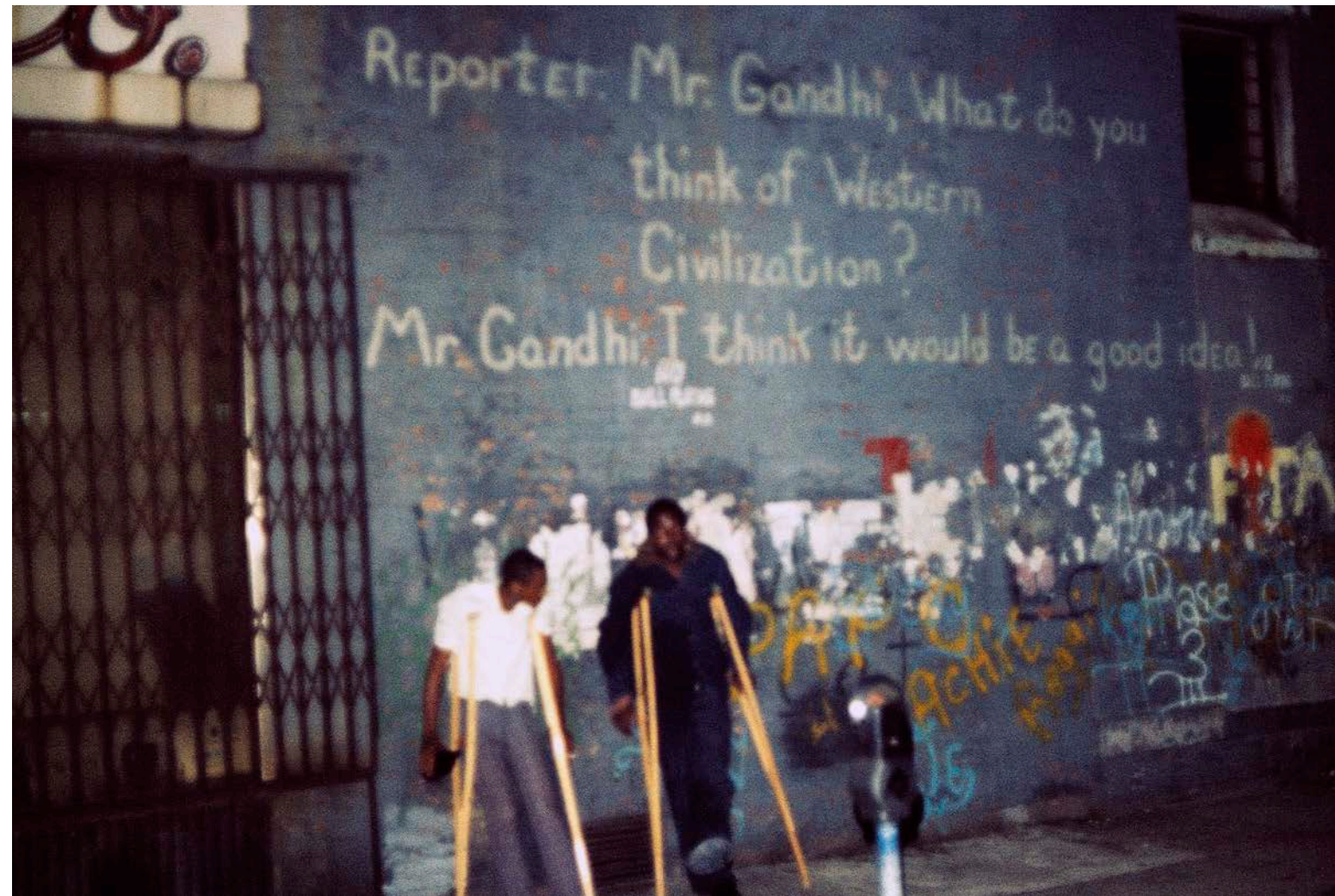
*And what we want is just to have  
what we need  
and to live in peace with dignity.  
But these few old men,  
no they won't break or bend  
so it's only through their death  
that we'll be free.*



1975 - Ex-convict saying goodbye

*And if we dare to fight  
for what, for what we want  
sparing none  
who are standing in our way:  
The fight is hard  
and long  
but we can't, we can't go wrong,  
for our liberation will be won.*

*And we can meet again  
if we do not die  
for that is the price  
that might be paid,  
But if we pass this way  
we shall meet some day,  
we shall meet again  
if we do not die...*



1971 - Two Veterans at Gandhi memorial, Lower Eastside, NY

But how long ... how long ...?

Popeye was the last friend I wanted to say goodbye to in this way. With the murders of Sally and Popeye, all my feelings and senses had been killed. I couldn't take it any longer and fled the country. I'd lost 12 of my best friends to this senseless American violence, and numerous others had disappeared into prison for life.

This man was murdered in New York near where I lived, right across from a ghetto mural (behind the shroud), which he perhaps never paid attention to, perhaps was unable to read. Late one evening, at the same wall, we find two crippled veterans who've been out defending "Western civilization" and now have to beg in the streets.

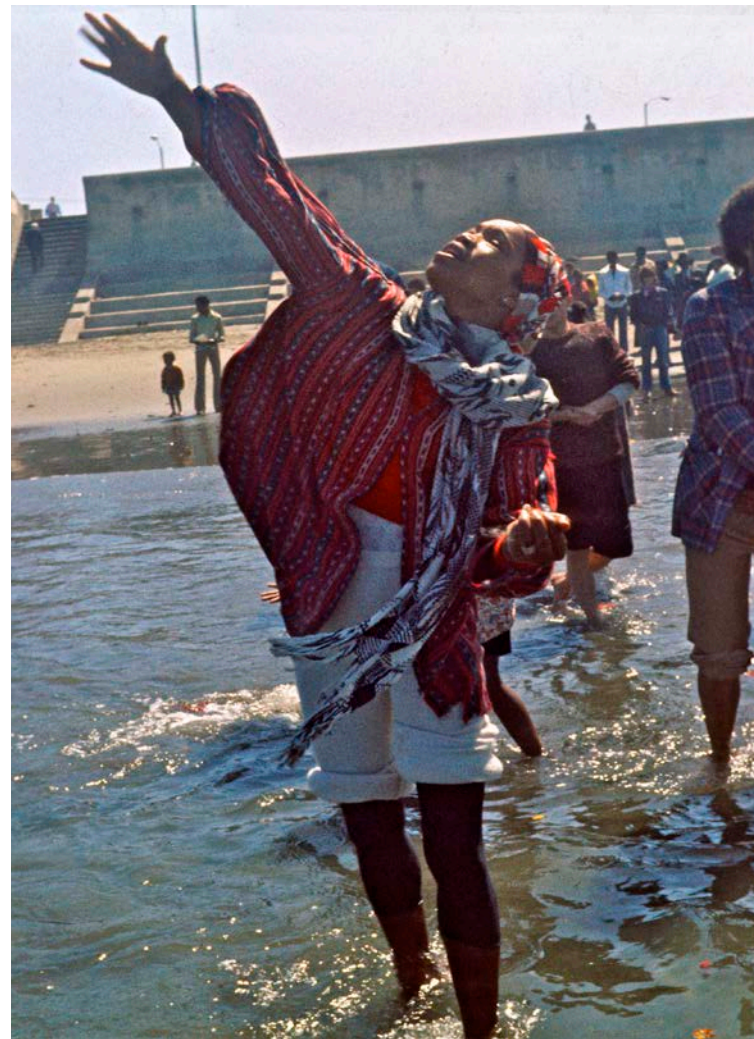


1971 - dead body across from Gandhi memorial



The human warmth I'd everywhere encountered—the same warmth with which other immigrants had been welcomed with open arms—was a fresh breeze in my life after the detachment and reticence I'd known in Europe. But the warmth and openness of Americans stood in glaring contrast to the cruel and inhuman ghetto system that had grown out of their own intense pain. I'd been on the highest peaks, and I'd been in the deepest shadowy depths with one foot in the grave of America. Everywhere it hurt me to see the increasing fossilization and fortification this warmth and openness is subject to—a warmth from which I could still benefit as a foreigner but which had long ago petrified into fear, hatred, and bitterness toward other Americans. Americans live in greater isolation and alienation from each other than any other people I know of.

And the violence against oppressed peoples everywhere goes on. Between our ghettoization of the world's poorest, most exposed people and our climate racism—coupled with unfair trade policies—we kill more human beings each year than did World



War II and will drive millions to our shores as refugees. Are we ready to cover up yet another body? And just how many are we prepared to dispose of because we fear a deeper personal change that would benefit the world as a whole?

The scene is changing. The colonized peoples, their backs to the wall, now must serve as colonizers and oppressors. They're sent out over the ocean their ancestors traversed to come here. Our inhumanity has come full circle. We've finally managed to create them in our civilization's own bloody image. Yet another child has been killed in ghetto violence (five years old). The ring is closing. Once again a black mother must throw her child in the ocean, as she did from one of the slave ships of 400 years ago ... the lifetime of our system ...

The ocean shall lead her back to the shores her ancestors came from when we needed them. How much more suffering are we going to witness—or cause? We don't know. We throw our uncertainty in the ocean with the ashes of our victims ...

*Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy!  
Can't you feel the motion of the ocean,  
can't you feel the cold wind blowing by?  
There's so many fish in the sea,  
we're just, we're just, we're just  
riding on the waves...*



1975 - San Francisco

# A personal afterword

(here is one possibility, but to be written later after consultation with a publisher)

## THE END?

Having been oppressed throughout this book you may now feel: Guilty, paranoid, frustrated, drained, upset, numb, tense, angry, pissed, silenced, dumb, confused, unworthy, cautious, inferior, powerless, fearful, meek, passive..... Further oppression could also have made you... protective, inattentive, hostile, turned off, shrewd, playing games, deceitful, plotting, manipulative, retaliatory, superior, observant (of the oppressor), crafty, destructive, detached, cagy.... and finally, perhaps violent!

These emotions are like those experienced by ghettoized blacks living under the oppressive patterns in the USA and South Africa, by immigrants in Europe, Palestinians under Israel and in varying degrees by many other oppressed peoples. The hurt accompanying these emotions forces people into paralysis, hopeless and self consuming anger. The irrational and powerless behavior that results in turn fuels white racism. Being aware of how this vicious circle works gives us the power to work together to free ourselves from these oppressive patterns...

...for the love of humanity and our own selves!

But we should not forget one important thing. Having been "oppressed" ourselves through this book we now run the risk of ending up in the other end of the oppression pattern:

Without an appropriate or constructive outlet for our pain, we may end up using our new knowledge to become even more sophisticated racists than before.

The pain, compassion, anger, guilt or sadness you may feel now demonstrates the human caring in each of us and our deep longing to see things made right. Many will feel the need to cry or laugh or let someone near you know what you are feeling. Sharing our feelings and deep concerns about racism is a meaningful first step toward breaking out of the fear and inhibition that keeps us stuck in hurtful patterns.

I will leave it to others to present viable governmental solutions on how to tackle our crushing institutional racism - the sum total of all our individual racism. I witnessed and personally benefitted from the progressive government policies which Gunnar Myrdal's "An American Dilemma" once inspired. For years after the Civil Rights movement the government tried to change the oppressive white thinking since - as Myrdal rightly pointed out - only a

lessening of white prejudice would lead to upward mobility of the oppressed. At the same time, I was depressed seeing how the European tendency in sharp contrast insists that the minorities first must change in order to become acceptable for the white majority – a view I fear has since taken over in America and plowed the way for Trumps divisive and destructive influence. One beneficiary of the progressive government programs was my mentor, Dr. Charles King, whom the government employed in his "White people must change" seminars for employees in the military, CIA, FBI and many other government institutions and large corporations such as IBM, Federal Express etc. The idea was that only through a deprogramming of their divisive racism could their combined unified power "make America strong again". After having seen my show Charles King invited me to participate in his seminars as a neutral observer, "I will not treat you like the others", he said beforehand and placed me at his side without telling me anything about what was going to happen. Then he started abusing, dividing, scolding, accusing, oppressing, and pitting his participants against each other for two days while showing them how this was similar to what happens to blacks. As a white I felt he went too far and felt pity for these highly educated and fair-minded participants who had agreed with their employer not to escape his program – although we all at times felt tempted to do that. With his formidable insight in black and white psychology I saw him gradually break down these powerful leaders, so they ended up behaving and answering almost "like children". He knew exactly what he was doing. He started the first day by just asking their names - nothing more – and then wrote something on a small piece of paper with their names on and put it in a box. After two days of oppression, he asked each of them to come up and read aloud the predictions he had written about how each of them would react to his oppressive behavior, how some of them would withdraw into a shell, how others, "the militants", would fight back at first, and all the other escape roles people under oppression typically end up in. In the end he asked them all individually to write down the feelings they now had, and I was amazed how similar they all were – also to mine (if only because I had not been prepared for his oppression). Then he ended by saying that "those are the exact same feelings we blacks go around with every day because of white racism. ....But now I will stop oppressing you, I promise. ....Do you trust me?" In our brokenness after many such short-lived moments of seeing light at the end of the tunnel, of course none of us trusted that our



1986 - With Dr. Charles King after one of his workshops

great oppressor would ever chance, even if he "withdrew his knife from 4 to only 2 inches into our backs." But he finally did change and ended the two hectic days by throwing a true liberation party afterwards with plenty of Black and white Scotch blended whisky during which I have never seen such gratitude pouring out toward a human being. Everyone felt that he had lifted them into a new and freer thinking. I myself had felt miserably lonesome during the whole emotional trial since the others now admitted that they had felt I was a spy or ally of Charles King even though in so many ways I was shocked experiencing how my inner emotional reactions had been similar to theirs – both those of the white and the black participants. As an outsider I was therefore incredibly proud when in the end he introduced me as "the only modern-day John Brown." So in the years after I often took my students with me on excursions to Harper's Ferry where John Brown had started his abolitionist insurrection.

Charles King was the first to make me realize that the emotions people had after his oppression were the same as those of people going through American Pictures and one reason, I therefore ended up stretching it over two days. His powerful approach, however, was unsuccessful on college campuses since students contrary to his normal government employees were not forced to be "locked up" during his oppression and would soon seek escapes and walk out. Luckily the mixture of powerful images and music made my students "captive" and "shell shocked" for five oppressive hours after which they were committed to a second day of healing liberation – during which they usually were



1991 - With my mentor on his deathbed in Atlanta a few days before his death

totally quiet during the first couple of hours, but then – especially under the impact of my black assistant, Tony Harris, would start opening up and end in the first deep black-white dialogue they had ever had on campus. Soon they would be in such happy exchange of feelings with each other that they did not need us there any longer – and Tony and I would quietly sneak out and go to the next campus the same evening to start the whole program again. Usually, they would bring us back within a year to their "American Pictures Unlearning Racism" groups, but often I didn't hear about what came out of our oppression/healing programs until 20 years later when these students met again to evaluate how American Pictures had changed their lives and they wanted us to come again.

So "oppressing" people to confront their deeper oppressive thinking about each other and bring them together in dialogue – eye to eye – is the only effective way I have seen for healing and combatting racism. The process is used in various forms by countless other anti-racism counselors whose workshops I have experienced over the years. Only one method I think is more effective; that is to move in with those you feel prejudice against. That I saw whenever I brought students or foreigners or even KKK members with me to stay with the people trapped in our ghettos and meet them on their own terms. Soon they would unlearn their fear and guilt patterns which is difficult in the safe surroundings of an intellectual university setting. And in the process, they likewise helped the ghetto dwellers unlearn many of their deep-rooted anger and hostility patterns.

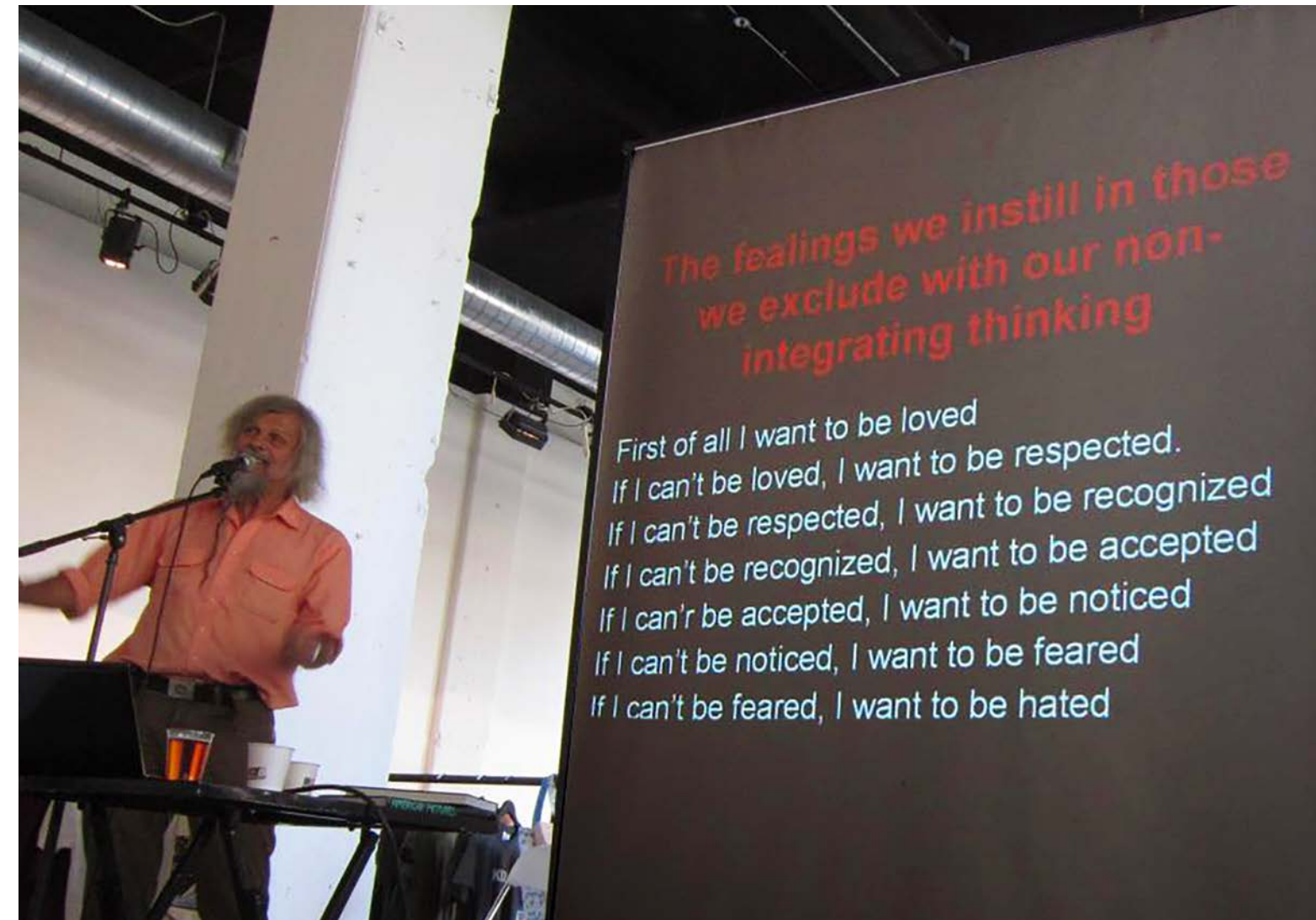
**Please note. An afterword will eventually be written after consultation with my eventual American publisher. These are just some ideas....**

.....For I do not have the necessary academic background to come up with great institutional solutions to the problem. From my limited experiences I can at most give readers some ideas how to tackle their own individual racism. Each reader must of course translate my “vagabond methods” of “moving in with those you feel prejudice against” according to his or her own abilities. Though it sounds so easy, from my workshops I know full well that “love” is not something people can easily learn or effectively “clothe yourself in” (Colossians 3:12-14) – at least not before they in healing groups have tried to free themselves from the various oppressions, traumas, and unhealed anger they each have been exposed to. Which literally includes all of us. So this is only my way to illustrate how we cannot achieve integration without a redeeming love for fellow citizens.

Well, since I’ve seen so many of my students over the years being motivated by “Christian guilt” to want to do something about their racism, let me just point out that I am not the first one to advocate such an approach. For without St. Paul, they would not even have been able to call themselves Christians. How did Paul and the other apostles succeed in preaching this bonding fellowship in a hostile and violent multicultural world speaking in so many tongues? Just think of the task that was given the apostles to go out and communicate with all the “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Jews, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Pamphlies, etc.” about God’s love in their own tongues, - that is in thousands of local languages. Obviously only through speaking the language of the heart - the common language that melts all stone hearts. For again, all people are influenced by loving thoughts regardless of language or cultural barriers. Only through the convincing love that flowed through the disciples from above could they in a world of unloved people - deeply scarred from endless childhood mistreatment and wars - in a few decades reach so many with their weird message that all people are loved. For all people want to feel loved and included and something Paul and all the other missionaries quickly learned - to avoid being stoned to death - as Stephen had become by the same Saul (Paul’s former name as a “racist” Jew) - yes, it was that if they thought condescendingly and hostile about those to whom they wanted to pass on their values, then the audience closed in on themselves and became

hostile themselves. For the language of love also includes “enemy love.” It is no art to love those who have so much surplus that they can reciprocate the love. So listen for a moment to the words, where Paul openly reveals his effective method of integration: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” His disciples gradually growing to thousands of followers could learn to “clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.” And so can we today. When after a couple of years through the loving help of others I learned to overcome my fear and distrust of fellow citizens and saw how as a result they now opened up to me, I one day found this poem by Nis Petersen and felt challenged by it to further try to open up and trust those who still fueled my aversive fear of people. I illustrated it with my photos and carried it with me everywhere as an inspiration and years later it became the introduction to all my lectures,” On saying yes to those we shun”.

***With love Jacob Holdt***



2012 NYC. My lecture “On saying yes to those we shun”

***Lovest Thou Man ?***

*Man came towards me  
– heavily - painfully –  
behind him the path  
with slimy tracks  
of lies and festering sores -.  
A voice boomed: Lovest thou Man?  
No! I said – I can't.  
Love! Said the voice.  
Man came –  
nearer – crawling –  
drooling of lust –  
with flies and vermin  
in the sores of his belly.  
Hammered the voice :  
- Lovest thou Man ?  
No ! I said.  
Love! said the voice.  
Nearer – and slowly nearer –*

*inch by inch –  
the stench was heavy  
from Lie's thousands of diseases –  
and the voice threatened:  
- Lovest thou Man ?  
- No – I don't love !  
- Love! Said the voice.  
Then he rose to his feet –  
and he stretched his hands towards me,  
and lo: the spike wounds oozed red –  
the naked arms were covered to the shoulders  
with black sores of sin –  
and the man laughed :  
- Thus did God love !  
A blindfold fell from my eyes –  
And I shouted :  
- Mand – I love you !  
And my mouth was full of blood –  
the blood of Man.*



**Jacob Holdt writing about the first "Black Lives Matter" killing he experienced in his journey:**

.... James and Barbara were a young black couple who lived in the worst neighborhood in the U.S.A. around Fox Street in the South Bronx. One day they heard burglars on the roof and called the police. Two plain-clothes officers arrived at the apartment and kicked in the door without knocking. James thought it was the burglars who were breaking in, and he shot at the door, but was then himself killed by the police. Barbara ran screaming into the neighbor's apartment. When I went to the 41st Precinct police station they confirmed the story and admitted that "there had been a little mistake," but James of course "was asking for it, being in possession of an unregistered gun.".....

Then suddenly I heard terrible screams from the front hall of the funeral home and saw three men bringing Barbara in. Her legs were dragging along the floor. She was incapable of walking. I could not see her face, but she was a tall, beautiful, light-skinned young woman. Her screams made me shudder. Never before had I heard such excruciating and pain-filled screams. When she reached the coffin, it became unbearable. It was the first and only time in America I was unable to photograph.....