

# SPELMAN SPOTLIGHT

The Voice of African-American Womanhood

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## New Abortion Laws: What's Going On?

by Tayari A. Jones

It is now 16 years *Roe v. Wade*, the historic decision which legalized a woman's right to have an abortion. This ruling was based upon the right of privacy founded in the Constitution. This right of privacy protects the woman from interference by the law if she chooses to have an abortion during the early portion of her pregnancy. However, the court decided that the state could regulate decisions concerning the pregnancy, after the fetus had developed enough to survive outside the woman's body.

That was in 1973. In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court made a landmark decision which drove a crack into the very foundation of *Roe*. On April 26, Missouri Attorney General William L. Webster went before the Supreme Court to argue the constitutionality of a certain Missouri law. This law declares that "human life begins at conception", requires that fetuses over 20 weeks old be tested for "viability", prohibits abortions in public facilities; and bars public employees from "encouraging" a woman to have an abortion. Even though the U.S. Supreme Court has deemed this law to be constitutional, it has not overturned *Roe*. Instead, it has decided to allow each state to make its own abortion laws.

This decision has major implications. Legally, the court's decision simply upheld Missouri statutes and therefore, that state will follow the aforementioned rules. With the

*Webster* decision, the court cut back on a right it had granted.

How this decision affects each individual depends largely upon the state residence. Some proposed laws and their possible implications.

\* *Webster v. Reproductive Services - (Fetal Viability Testing)* If a fetus is viable, it is able to live outside of its mother's body. A state may choose to require a doctor to perform a viability test before performing the abortion. If the fetus is found to be viable, the doctor is prohibited from performing the abortion. The test for viability increases the average price of an abortion from \$220 to \$750 depending on the type of test.

Pro-choice advocates argue that this is an anti-abortionist ploy to make abortions hard to get. They say this because most doctors agree that a fetus is not viable before 24 weeks, and 99% of women have abortions before the 21st week. Anti-abortionists argue that this law insures that viable babies are not aborted.

\* *Webster Decision - (Tough Limits on Public Funding)* With the Webster decision, states have the right to limit public funding for abortions which will ultimately send women who can afford it to private doctors.

\* *Thornburgh v. American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists - (Informed Consent)* Anti-abortionists support the theory that fewer women will have abortions if they

know more about them. If a state chooses to require that a woman seeking an abortion give informed consent, she will be shown graphic pictures of fetuses, dramatizations of actual abortions and required to wait 24-72 hours before having the procedure.

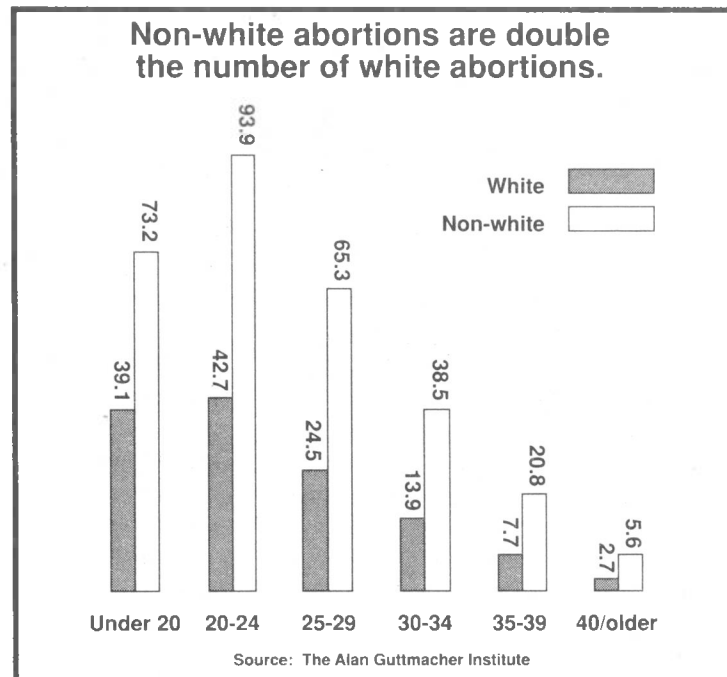
Pro-choicers argue that the dramatizations use fetuses older than 24 weeks.

\* *Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health - (Parental Consent)* A state may require minors to have their parents' consent before receiving an abortion.

Pro-choice advocates feel that this decision would force young women to turn to "back alley" methods of enduring a pregnancy rather than telling their parents. Anti-abortionists feel that this law would discourage those who are not absolutely sure about their abortion decision.

\* *Turnock v. Ragsdale* - If passed, it will require private abortion clinics to meet stan-

Non-white abortions are double the number of white abortions.



Abortion percentage by age.

dards similar to those mandated for operating rooms in hospitals. Pro-choice advocates question this because abortions only require local anesthetic and a small amount of equipment. Anti-abortionists say they are helping women to protect themselves from unsafe and unsanitary health conditions.

These are examples of the turmoil caused when the Supreme Court cuts back on a right it has granted. One cannot wonder what will be next.

## African-American Women to Suffer from New Laws

### Number of abortions in our community complicates issues.

by Jocelyn R. Coleman

The abortion cases before the U.S. Supreme Court now could bring about many restrictive laws that would make legal abortions almost unobtainable and very expensive. It is predicted that African-American women would be the hardest hit along with the poor, teenagers and otherwise disadvantaged.

Non-white women have more than twice the number of abortions attributed to white women. African-American women have the highest rate of pregnancy in the Western world and make up a disproportionate number of the poor women in America. If *Roe v. Wade* is curtailed, the only legal and government-funded reproductive service left will be complete sterilization. These issues make the abortion debate more complicated for African-American women.

On September 13, 1989, a coalition of African-American women spoke to congress about abortion and implemented a campaign to inform others about their reproductive rights. Supporters included: Jewell Jackson-McCabe, president of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women; Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry of Hartford, Connecticut; Faye Wattleton President of Planned Parenthood; former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm; and Pat Tyson of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

Byllye Avery, president of the National Black Women's Health Project (NBWHP), another supporter, stated that "historically, our bodies have been used as a battleground for the United States to fight its racist, sexist and classist war. ...As slaves we were forced to breed for slave masters; in our more recent history, we've been subjected to unnecessary

hysterectomies and sterilizations without our permission. Many of us on low incomes have already lost our right to decide whether or not to have an abortion. Our country has confused its priorities and African-American women must speak out."

The Webster decision has brought the issue of viability into the forefront. The debate concerns whether a fetus can live and survive at 20 weeks. Even though medical and scientific experts say that the earliest fetal survival age is 24 weeks, the Court backed a 1986 Missouri law that requires expensive viability testing on 20 week-old fetuses. As far as the advanced technology needed to support fetuses under 24 weeks, Dr. K.N. Siva Subramanian, director of the division of neonatology at Georgetown University Medical Center was quoted as saying that it "is not even in sight at this point."

The ultrasonography raises the price of an abortion about \$250. Amniocentesis, another testing procedure, costs about \$450 more. Since some doctors conclude that a amniocentesis is useless until the 28th week, the delay could triple the cost even before the abortion is actually performed.

The option of out-of-state abortions is also closed to many African-American and poor women because of travel expenses and lost wages. Janet McCallum, director of Administration Services at the Feminist Women's Health Center in Atlanta, says that "certainly in Atlanta there are a lot of women of color who use Grady Hospital. If Grady were not able to provide that service, there would be a lot of women trying unsafe methods. It would also limit access of doctors to low-income women by taking a training facility away from Emory and Morehouse School of Medicine that would delete people who can perform abortions."

Loretta Ross, national program director of the NBWHP, feels that statistics do not tell the whole story. "I think that the teenage pregnancy rate between black women and white women is the same. It's just that white

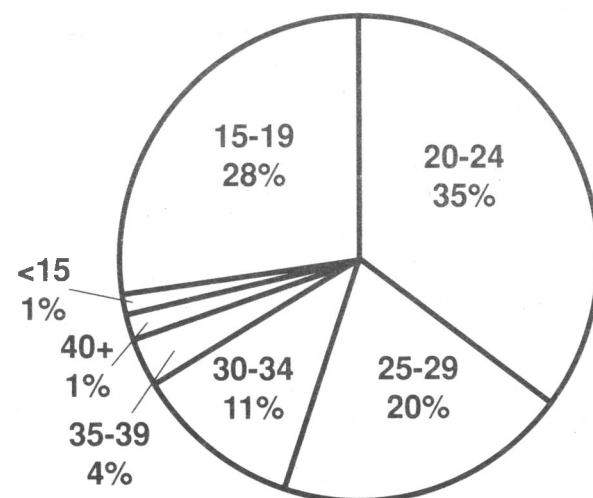
women can afford to get abortions...and so many of our kids end up having the baby so that they can keep the man."

Since the 1986 Missouri law declares that "human life begins at conception" many complicated cases have been brought up. Some include a pending case concerning whether or not a fetus carried by a female inmate is wrongfully imprisoned and the case of a 20 year-old man claiming that he was actually 21 at the time of his drunk driving arrest, since life begins at conception."

"This means that more and more black women are going to be imprisoned for what is legally defined as fetal abuse," says Ross. "One woman's doctor didn't want her to fly while pregnant and he got a court order." Ross says, that this law, "will affect the women who can least afford expensive lawyers. What if you fell down and had a miscarriage...does that become accidental homicide?"

According to McCallum, the greatest danger in Georgia is parental consent. "It is an attempt to limit access to abortion to young women. There are some young women who cannot tell their parents. The *Webster* decision gave the states a lot more power. It is very important right now to tell legislators that you are a pro-choice voter."

*Turnock and Ragsdale*, a case to be heard by the Supreme Court, requires clinics to have the same standards as hospital operation rooms. If the court upholds this Illinois law, the abortion clinics in the affected state will start to disappear if they don't have the funds to meet hospital regulations. The clinics that do stay in business would probably raise the price of abortions. The clinics that charge the least may be forced out of business. Since private facilities are not readily available, the teenagers and the poor would be affected the most.



Most of the women having abortions are under 24.

Source: National Abortion Federation

Even with all of the issues specifically affecting African-American women, our presence in the pro-choice movement is sparse.

In a *Boston Globe* article, Wattleton of said that noninvolvement is a "reflection of a larger condition of minorities in this country in general. The people who get involved in causes tend not to be the poor people. The driving force of mass movements has always tended to be middle class."

In response to the low number of African-Americans in the forefront, Ross says "we have not been full participants in the pro-choice movement and they are making the decisions for us. Their racism alienates Black women. They often want us as tokens, but not in full leadership."

Wattleton believes that African-Americans should become more active and states that it will not happen until "Blacks are freed to become more involved in these kinds of issues. The disparity that you see in people becoming activists is a creature of class and economics."

## Underground Atlanta



Photo: Kelly Wilson

by Delitha L. Morrow

Unless you've been living under a rock, you have undoubtedly heard, read about, or even visited Atlanta's newest tourist attraction, Underground Atlanta.

The seven-year, \$142-million-dollar project represents the success of affirmative action at a time when it seems most threatened.

Of the 97 retail shops, restaurants, and night clubs and the 31 street vendors, 36 are Black-owned. In addition, the major developer, The Rouse Company, formed a joint venture with two Black-owned businesses, H.J. Russell and Company and Kinley Enterprises, to handle construction and management.

Fireworks, band salutes, and speeches marked the June 15th opening of the facility with Mayor Andrew Young and other local

politicians addressing the massive lunchtime crowd.

Mayor Young's speech was almost overshadowed by hecklers who alleged that the attention surrounding construction of Underground was another way of ignoring the homeless in efforts to attract money-spending suburbanites back to downtown Atlanta.

The concept of Underground is not new to the city. Nightclubs were first opened in the same area in 1969 and thrived in the 1970's. Crime eventually decreased the number of visitors, causing the facility to close in 1982.

Underground Atlanta is back. With a variety of entertainment, eateries, and specialty shops, Underground is sure to offer something for everyone.

### For your information

Best way to get there: Take MARTA. From the West End station, take the northbound train to the Five Points station. Exit on Peachtree Street and cross the street to the Peachtree Fountains Plaza entrance. If you drive, Underground is located at Peachtree and Alabama Streets. Parking is across the street.

Hours: Retail stores are open from 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays, noon-6 p.m. Sundays. Some restaurants, night clubs, and bars are open as late as 4 a.m. You must be 21 to enter after 10:00 p.m..

## Havoc in Virginia Beach

by Tayari A. Jones

On Friday, September 1, approximately 100,000 students from historically Black colleges and universities took the annual trip to Virginia Beach, Virginia for the Greekfest. Little did anyone know that this weekend of fun in the sun would turn into a catastrophe. Between Friday and Sunday evenings, 160 people were arrested and 395 people were given citations by the Virginia Beach Police Department. Disturbances began around 2:00 a.m. on Saturday and spanned 30 blocks. One-hundred stores were looted. Students in town for the Greekfest and local people were involved.

### "I felt like I'd spent the weekend in Beirut."

Were the police unnecessarily rough when dispersing the crowds of Black college students? Virginia Beach's Mayor, Meyera E. Obender, says no. Spelman students who visited Virginia Beach that weekend say yes.

Melanie Babb, c'90, says she witnessed the police using unnecessary force. "A bunch of college students were dancing in the street...No one was rowdy. About 100 State Troopers and the National Guard came marching down the street. They ordered everyone to leave...Then they started chasing people and swinging their clubs." Babb blames the law enforcement agents for the incident. "The trouble did not start until they arrived."

Nicole Childs, c'90, agrees. "The police threw smoke bombs into crowds of people

and act surprise when they retaliate...I felt like I was spending the weekend in Beirut."

Nicole Venable, c'91, stood on Atlantic Ave, known as "the strip," and within an hour saw "at least 15 tickets given for jaywalking, using profanity in public, and playing loud music."

Many people contend that the police were over zealous because the students were Black. The NAACP is investigating complaints that many innocent bystanders were injured. Linda Byrd-Harden, Executive Director of the Virginia State NAACP, says "to some degree, the confrontation was racially motivated. However, we are still investigating and will not be able to respond conclusively until the investigation is over."

Byrd-Harden also asserts that much of the blame for the weekend's disturbance falls upon the press. She says, "the press painted a picture of as being hostile to Blacks. They also exaggerated the problems of last year's Greekfest. The newspapers set the format for violence. This is only one example of a trend of the press inciting racial confrontation..." She also advises young people to learn from this experience, saying students should be painfully aware that racism is alive and well in this country.

She suggests that in the future, students should prepare themselves for such incidents by "learning about and practicing civil disobedience."

## Alumnae Recognition: DR. BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON



Bernice Johnson Reagon

by Shennette Garrett

*I'm a stranger, a stranger here  
I'm a stranger everywhere  
Lord, I would go home  
But I'm a stranger there*  
"Stranger Blues" Sweet Honey in the Rock

Given the phenomenal international success of Sweet Honey in the Rock, it's a wonder that so few young African-Americans have heard of the group. The a capella quintet, decked in colorful, traditional African garb, is the brainchild of Spelman alumna Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, C'70.

*Well the wicked carried us away to captivity  
They required of us a song  
How can we sing our holy song  
In a strange land?*  
"Waters of Babylon"

Sweet Honey in the Rock gets its name from an old spiritual which described "land so rich and fertile that honey poured from the stones." Five women make up the group: Evelyn Harris, Ysaye M. Barnwell, Alsha Kahlil, Nitanju Bolade, and Reagon; since

1979, Shirley Childress Johnson has provided sign language interpretation for the quintet.

Armed with only their powerful vocals, Sweet Honey in the Rock wrap their voices around some moving rhythms, pound out the beat on rhythmic sticks and African shakers (beaded hollow gourds), and deliver the word on apartheid, racism, the danger of nuclear annihilation, the plight of undocumented workers and refugees, and economic oppression. They reach into their souls and belt out a heritage of African funeral chants, classic Baptist hymns, spirituals, West African music, blues, and reggae.

Reagon conceived the group in Washington, D.C. in 1973 through her involvement in vocal workshops with the Washington D.C. Black Repertory Theater Company. She received her Ph.D. from Howard University in 1975 and is presently a curator at the Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institute.

She was recently awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in the amount of \$275,000 for her efforts in preserving African-American folk music.

With six albums to date and concert tours that have carried her and the group as far away as Ecuador, Germany, Japan, England, Kenya, and Russia; and as close as Mexico, Carnegie Hall, and countless cities across the United States, she says she has felt a lot of strength in raising consciousness through the power and message of her music. "There's a taste that I got from singing what I felt. I got the taste of fighting oppression; at the same time it was like I was affirming myself."

## Sister to Sister



Photo: Jocelyn R. Coleman

Faith (center) takes time to catch up with her supporting friends Kimara Mason (left) and Rhonda Smith (right)

by Faith Cargile

Since entering Spelman in 1986 I have undergone massive changes as a Black Woman. As a 19 year old freshman, my problems ranged from doubting my own intellectual abilities to forming standards for personal values, and last, but definitely not least, defining my role as a Black woman in a racist and sexist society. Some of these problems resulted in a lack of self-esteem which was

mirrored by the fact that I weighed 220 pounds and had a long hair weave. Don't get me wrong - I'm not inferring that all women who are overweight and have hair weaves lack self-esteem, but in my case it was definitely true. I wasn't doing that well in school and I don't even want to comment on my personal life. Fortunately, through starting the difficult process of self-realization, I began to under-

*Continued on page 4*

## ADOPT-A-GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

by Farai Ashton

This semester, through the Office of Community Service (OCS), Spelman students will have the opportunity to volunteer their services and participate in the Adopt-a-Grandparent program.

The Adopt-a-Grandparent program involves elderly persons living in retirement homes who have no immediate family in the area. According to Kimberly Woods, a junior and co-ordinator, "the C.A.R.E. (Concerned African Americans Reaching the Elderly) pro-

gram is geared towards building a relationship between the elderly around Atlanta and the students of Spelman." She went on to explain that "the Spelman students will be fostering the growth of a Granddaughter/Grandparent relationship through events such as: on site health screening and other planned social events."

Students who are interested in participating in the Adopt-a-Grandparent program can contact either Kimberly Woods or Mrs. Tamara Nash Ammons at the Office of Community Service (OCS) or call 681-3643 ext. 544.



# Prerogative

## Take Action

by Jocelyn R. Coleman

Regardless of how you feel about the abortion issue, you need to take action. Most of the women in America having abortions are the same ages as Spelman women. African-American women are having twice as many abortions as whites.

As young African-American women, we represent the exact majority of the women who are directly affected by the issues surrounding reproductive rights. Our opinions must be heard. The best thing to do is to become both informed and involved. It is also important to vote for candidates that agree with you on the abortion issue. It is not fair for a woman's reproductive freedom to be totally

denied because of poverty, absence of a spouse class structure or a brutal rape.

Knowledge is power; and the more we know about how the Supreme Court is mandating our choices the more ammunition we have to fight with.

The irony of this entire debate is that the women in the forefront are not directly affected like we are. Most of the leaders are not those getting pregnant at the highest rate or having the most abortions. Most of the leaders are white middle to upper class and appear to be at middle to upper age.

Apathy is not tolerable at this point. We need to take action. We need to start speaking for ourselves.

## And the Winner Is...

by Tayari Jones

Why is it that women represent Morehouse in their homecoming activities? Women do not attend Morehouse; so how could they possibly be qualified representatives of that college?

If, however, a woman *must* be chosen to represent a men's college, why must the competition be in the form of a pageant? (In the interest of fairness, I must note that Spelman also indulges in this lunacy.) A woman who, for some reason I can't fathom, decides to participate in a pageant should be prepared to spend countless hours of her study time and hundreds of her dollars. If she loses, her money and time are spent in vain. If she wins, her money and time are still wasted. After all, there is no prize for the lucky winner. No scholarship is offered. She receives a dozen roses; but roses die.

Even graver than the financial disadvantages are the social implications of pageants. Pageants focus on the superficial. After a woman has paraded on a stage for an hour and a half, the cat-calling audience is made

sure of one thing: what she looks like. A defender of pageants may argue that the swimsuit competition has been abolished. So what? The concept is the same. The only difference is that the audience cannot make as thorough an assessment of the contestant's body as they yell obscenities.

No, let's be fair. Her talent is evaluated. Her *performing* talent that is. If a contestant's area of aptitude is not singing, dancing or drama, she's just out of luck. When is her intellect measured? During the question and answer session, of course. ("If you could be any animal, what would you be?")

My friend, Askhari, has a brilliant idea. Why not choose the representative through an essay contest? This way the voting body can be sure that the representative it chooses is literate, logical, focused and socially conscious. There's only one catch. The voters will not know what she looks like or even her name until after the selection process. Do you think the men of Morehouse will abandon pageants, the most overt example of sexism in our community, in favor of this new idea?

Me either.

## Racism in the Media

### "To be prepared is to be informed"

By Delitha L. Morrow

With all the attention and media coverage surrounding the Virginia Beach incident, can any of us honestly say we know what really happened? What we can say is that the events in Virginia Beach, Bensonhurst, Howard Beach, etc. have a whole new topic of conversation amongst ourselves.

The media has said it's O.K. for us to talk about race issues now. Hence, everybody is talking about it.

If you're not reading about them, watching debates about them, or talking about them, you should be. Pay close attention not only to what's being said, but also to who's saying it.

In "The R.A.C.E." on NBC, the television documentary mediated by Bryant Gumbel, Donald Trump the symbol of corporate America (white, male middle-aged, successful, and wealthy) said he wished he could somehow be reincarnated as a young Black educated male. "They have the best opportunities for success now," he reasoned.

In a similar documentary, "Growing Up Black in White America", a Black corporate executive explained how it feels to walk down the street and see a white woman clutch her purse closer to her body because she spotted a Black male. The media's Black male who is always using and dealing drugs, robbing

people and raping women. Trump's statements about race illustrate the kind of ignorance many whites have about racism. Unfortunately, these same whites control what we see, hear and read in the media.

This is why we don't know what happened in Virginia Beach. The media doesn't want to tell us that the National Guard and the policemen standing in full riot gear throughout the beach area overreacted.

Instead, they point out incidents of violence from previous years to explain this year's crackdown - violence we heard little or nothing about when it happened.

Like it or not, racism will continue to be discussed in the media because it's "the thing to do." We, as Black college students (referred to as the "elite" by the media), can and must be aware of racial issues.

We should not allow ourselves to be deluded by the nurturing Black colleges that foster our sense of self-knowledge but shield us from reality. We must all someday leave the cocoon to enter the mainstream, and we must be prepared. To be prepared is to be informed.

Thirty years ago, we couldn't go to Lake Lanier. Next year, we can expect to be excluded from Virginia Beach.



## Beverly's Boots

by Pearl Cleage

*Reprinted with permission from author, Pearl Cleage C'72, lecturer of English at Spelman, artistic director of Club Zebra, editor of Catalyst Magazine and freelance writer. "Beverly" is our own Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Director of the Spelman College Women's Center and recent recipient of the Coalition of 100 Black Women Candace Award.*

Sisterhood is a funny thing. It's easy to recognize, but it's hard to define. It's an embracing circle and a 100-yard dash. It's as familiar as a favorite pair of sneakers and as mysterious as a cat's eye stone. It is a lifeline to the future and a tangible link to the past. It's easier to say what it feels like than to say what it is. It's also safer to be as specific as possible. Last month is as good a place to start as any.

Now I know March was supposed to come in like a lion and go out like a lamb, but nothing prepared me for what happened in between the two. It started off like any other month. Bills to pay. Groceries to buy. Midterms to monitor. But somewhere near the end of the second week, I got a notice telling me that Spelman College was hosting a speaker's series featuring Essence Editor Susan Taylor, writer and scholar Mary Helen Washington and poet Nikki Giovanni. Around the same time, Sister Sue Ross, Atlanta documentary photographer extraordinaire, invited me to a 50th birthday party for writer Toni Cade Bambara at the Hammonds House, the vibrant West End cultural center that had just celebrated its own first birthday.

I was delighted and I tacked the invitations to my bulletin board, savoring the sight of them as if they were Sunday School sweets. I was ready to be immersed in sisterhood; surrounded by sisterhood; consumed by sisterhood! It had, after all, been a long, hard winter. The election of George Bush and Dan Quayle, after a seemingly endless campaign, had filled D.C. with the same crowd of evilly posturing white men who had been in charge for the last eight years. The election had depressed me more than I had expected it to. I felt adrift, frightened, marooned in a country that was making it clear with depressing regularity that it had little interest in, or time for, me and mine.

I saw the same confused look in the eyes of many of my sisters, and I became aware of our unspoken but undeniable movement inward. Looking out was a little too dangerous right now, and it was getting harder and harder to feel like anything we did made any difference. I felt like we should all start wearing whatever camouflage we could find and bunker down to wait out the storm.

But in the Spelman invitation to a week rich in sisterspeak, and in the joyful celebration that I had no doubt would greet Toni's birthday, I saw an antidote, however temporary, to the Bush-Quayle blues. Help, as they

say, was on the way, and I was more than ready for it.

What I wasn't ready for was my reaction to that concentrated dose of sisterhood. I didn't know how hungry I was for a dose of black female reality. Within a space of four days, I listened to Mary Helen Washington talk about the triumphant struggles of black foremothers, and I was inspired by her scholarship and energy. I heard Susan Taylor make all the right connections between our lack of group identity and our group's current problems, and I was energized by her commitment. I felt Nikki Giovanni's wildly individual spirit on the campus, and I laughed at her continuing outspoken specificity. I stood in a circle of black women in Spelman President Johnetta Cole's campus living room listening to writer Sonia Sanchez invoke the blessings of whatever gods may be for our private and collective journeys, and I felt comforted and loved and challenged and strong. And I stood in a crowded room and cheered the triumphant genius of sisterwriter Toni Cade Bambara, and I wept and laughed and wondered if I was finally losing my mind for real. Presidential politics aside, I cautioned myself, you're out of control, a dangerous stage for a Black woman in America. Was I crazy, I wondered, to be feeling this free? Was I forgetting who was really in charge? All of a sudden, I felt my blues coming back strong, and that's when I saw Beverly's boots.

Right there in the middle of the party, in the midst of the sisters serving fried potatoes and caviar and the brothers trying to navigate the intricacies of being outnumbered 25 to 1 in a room full of strong black women, Beverly was wearing a pair of wildly fringed cowboy boots. They were silver and black or silver and white—I don't remember. What I do remember is that they were funny and outrageous and silly and stylish and absolutely free. Those boots didn't give a damn about George Bush. They were too busy studying. They refused to even acknowledge Dan Quayle. They were too busy planning. And they didn't even know the meaning of the word cynical. They were too busy dancing.

And suddenly, I stopped worrying. About the Big Boys in D.C. About the home boys in Atlanta. About insanity and politics and things that go bump in the night. I looked at Beverly's boots, and I understood that nothing they do means we can't go out and celebrate our existence and confirm our struggles and evaluate our progress and believe in our future and laugh together at our continuing survival and wear our cowboy boots whenever we please.

So thanks, Beverly and Toni and Mary Helen and Sonia and Johnetta and Susan and Wild Nikki. I needed that. I think I've got a trip to the shoe store coming.

# Chinosole Lives

by Jocelyn R. Coleman

The visiting professor living and learning among us has had three to four obituaries and five memorial services. Detained as a prisoner in the Angolan civil war in 1975, Dr. Chinosole was presumed dead with one obituary appearing in *The New York Times*. She is convinced that some people still do not know that she survived.

Nevertheless, Chinosole is living vividly among us this year as a woman who brings to Spelman not only her expertise in the teaching process and themes of the Black autobiography but a life that captivates and exemplifies how the "I" also stands for the "we" in the Black experience.

## Prisoner of War

There were two contemporary wars fought in Angola between 1958-1989. The War of Independence against the Portuguese lasted the first 14 years. More Angolans died in the Civil War than the War of Independence. The Civil War occurred between three groups who wanted to rule the country.

Chinosole's husband, Samuel Chitunda, was commander of the armed forces in one of these movements - The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, (UNITA), (Chinosole cut her political ties to UNITA in 1976.) She remained in Lusa, Angola after her husband's death in 1974 teaching in UNITA schools. She was captured by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) during the summer of 1975.

Chinosole spent her first two nights in captivity with about 25 other female UNITA prisoners. Before Chinosole arrived each woman had been raped individually at gunpoint by 5-6 MPLA soldiers at one time. After Chinosole protested she says the "rampant rape subsided. A few conscientious officers warned the soldiers against it. But the two men guarding us (from the other soldiers) in the tiny room...were bent on getting their due. I was kicked first and I mumbled in Portuguese that I had VD. Every other woman approached gave the same reply. The guards grew angry and began kicking more violently. Finally the last woman got up from the floor and went outside with them. Remembering her resigned but insolent exit still fills me with guilt."

The fact that Chinosole was a writer with a U.S. passport saved her from further mistreatment. After being released into the custody of the Minister of State for Labor, she became close to the entire family. A white woman who was the wife of an MPLA commander, who was British accused Chinosole of being a racist, a Black Panther and a CIA agent. Taking her word for it, the minister tried to beat a confession out of her and sent her back to prison with a bloated face and



Chinosole explains the dynamics of the autobiography  
bruises.

Photo: Jocelyn R. Coleman

When Chinosole was close to death she had to "reassess herself not only politically but in terms of the most personal and subjective" parts of herself. "In the 1960s, we [women] did a lot of sidestepping of ourselves on a subjective level...in order to sacrifice for the larger cause. Ignoring our personal selves has cost us. Taking time to analyze yourself personally makes you better able to take political risks."

After being cleared of all MPLA charges Chinosole was released from prison and sent to Portugal to contact the American Embassy. Before she boarded the plane Chinosole realized that she was not ready to go back to the United States after talking to American officials. She asked to be sent back to Africa because she had no assets in America. After refusing her request one official said: "Oh don't worry about that; you can join the welfare rolls like the rest of your people." When the plane landed in Lisbon Chinosole did not contact the embassy and returned to Africa.

## The Road to Spelman

Back in the United States and on leave from San Francisco State where she is Chair of Women Studies and a tenured professor, Chinosole teaches "The Centrality of African-American Autobiography". The small load allows Chinosole to complete a manuscript that intricately analyzes and compares works from Angola, Barbados, England, South Africa and the United States.

Chinosole finds that "the quest for identity is something that we pursue fully. Who we are is always under fire by white racism. It is always under attack by history itself, because we have not been able to choose where we, as a group, would live."

Chinosole says she has always wanted to teach in a Black institution and contacted Spelman five years ago to no avail. When Dr. Johnetta B. Cole was in San Francisco for the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Annual Convention, Chinosole called her at the hotel and expressed her interest of teaching at Spelman. Even though Chinosole's duties at San Francisco State limit her stay at Spelman to one

year, she says, "there is a possible long-term relationship."

Spelman is "one of the most fertile institutions for Black people in the country in terms of its possibilities for research, teaching, community work and networking throughout the country. The spirit of the campus seems to be an effort to create a sense of community and sisterhood."

## The Early Years

Born in Harlem as Patricia Thornton, Chinosole grew up in South Bronx. She was one of the first Blacks to integrate Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin and the only one to return the next year. After spending her sophomore year as the only Black in the school, her junior year, another young Black woman arrived and they helped each other with their studies and remain best friends to this day. "That experience, being in an isolated environment made us bond even more closely."

At the age of seven, Chinosole had decided that she wanted to go to Africa, at first, as a missionary. It was not until she was 19 that this dream became a reality as a member of Operation Crossroads. Through Operation Crossroads, she had "that kinetic experience of living in the majority" and saw "the nature of racism as an international phenomenon."

That summer in Zimbabwe, Chinosole built a school and had her first sit-in demonstration. "I guess I never really felt at home in the United States."

I feel that I have a right to it as a home...the U.S. is a place where you wage battles and Africa is a place where I lived my life."

In 1970, Chinosole returned to Africa as the chair of the English Department at Nkrumah Teacher's College and trained Zambians to control the teaching of English in the secondary schools. Her African name was given to her by her husband whom she met two days after arrival. The name Chinosole means "that thing which we aspire towards that is very difficult to achieve."

It is the Angolans' way of indirectly naming their children "freedom" during the

War of Independence against the Portuguese.

The African tradition that stands out the most in Chinosole's mind is the elaborate and deliberate way that Africans have of showing respect for human beings. "You take a long time to greet someone and you greet them respectfully. The Black power handshake is really done in many parts of Africa. It is a carry-over of these systems of respect."

Chinosole also appreciated the solidarity among women. They bathe together and play together and were "less competitive than women can sometimes be in the United States."

During the 1950s and 1960s, Chinosole feels that African-Americans, "spent a lot of energy locked in a reflexive pattern with white people. In Africa I got a sense of being African as central. They [Africans] are less worried about Europeans. They are not so important to Africans. They are not as obsessed with Black vs. White as we have to be as a means of survival."

Chinosole says she finds Afrocentric thinking as a "freedom that I got in Africa and brought back to the United States."

The fight for independence in Africa directly parallels to the fight for human dignity in the United States.

"The conditions we experienced of enslavement, then segregation and now continuing discrimination are an outgrowth of the expansion of European power - the take over of Africa and the dislodgement of our people." Chinosole has written two critical essays on autobiographical writing that appeared in scholarly anthologies entitled - "The Art of Slave Narrative" and "Wild Women in a Whirlwind."

The Angolan war story appeared in *The Washington Post* in 1976. Chinosole still has family ties in Angola.

## Back to Africa With OCA

Operation Crossroads Africa, (OCA), is a non-profit cultural exchange organization that enables young Americans to live and work in an African country for eight weeks in the summer. Founded in 1957, by the late Dr. James M. Robinson, OCA strives to increase international cooperation and understanding.

The participants, usually students, serve as volunteers in a work project. The chosen projects, address the need of the local community and vary from tutoring, to building bricks, to aiding in medical services.

Spelman students have been active in OCA programs since the early 1960's. Williette Robertson, a 1988 participant went to Sierra Leone says, "Crossroads made me aware of who I am, it made me appreciate what I have, and gave me a better understanding of my heritage."

Sonja Gerald, a 1989 participant to Namibia, finds it a "life-changing experience, that taught me to expect and prepare for the unexpected."

The program fee is \$3250.00, and includes transportation to and from New York City, to the host country in Africa, food and living accommodations, and travel expenses. Spelman offers assistance to its participants. For more college information, contact Rev. Norman Rates at 681-3643 ext. 626, or write:

Operation Crossroads Africa, Inc.  
150 5th Avenue  
New York, NY 10011 (212) 242-8550

## Sister To Sister

stand what I wanted and deserved for myself. The next step was change.

We have all heard the phrase—"there's nothing to it, but to do it"; this became my motto during my sophomore year. A blessing in disguise came when I was forced off campus. Due to the fact I didn't have a car, once I got home I had to stay there. This isolation forced me to face my problems head on. To tell the truth, because I was so insecure, I didn't want to spend anytime by myself. I didn't like me. I started a process of self-love which encompassed taking time to do things I enjoy like reading books that helped me understand more about me and my history to taking time to do things for others like volunteering. As a result, I began to appreciate my uniqueness and take pride in being a Black

continued from page 2

female. After that, losing weight was easy. I lost 60-65 pounds in nine months; and finally having the nerve to do my own thing. I had my hair cut into a natural style. Believe me, all of my problems have not been solved, but you have to start somewhere.

I told my story to say this sisters: we need each other. The process of self-realization is very difficult, and we all need support. I never would have been able to lose weight without my friends support. They listened to me when I called to talk about all the food I was missing out on. They helped me make it through the rough times.

Whether your problem is alcohol, drugs, personal problems, or health concerns, we all need someone to lean on sometimes. I initially had the idea to start a support group for sisters

who approached me about helping them lose weight. After thinking about it, I realized that being overweight, like being an alcoholic is not the problem, but a symptom of greater problems. I have addressed these problems by starting a support group on Spelman's campus. We also address our triumphs. One sister's success story might be able to help another sister. I thought an appropriate name would be "Sisters to Sisters". I will start another group next semester. Come and give us your stories, your questions, insecurities and strengths. Please give us yourself. This should be a celebration.

Interested readers can reach Faith Cargile through The Spotlight at 525-1743.



# BREAKIN' IT DOWN

## "The Illusion of Inclusion:"

### A Response to the Miss America Pageant 1989

by Gloria Wade-Gayles

*This article was written at the request of the editorial staff of The Spelman Spotlight.*

I must confess that I did not watch the Miss America Pageant this year. I simply didn't have time to sit through the long parade of bodies wearing swimsuits and high-heels (I have never understood the combination!); and, later, white gowns and pearls, symbolizing innocence and sweetness (I have never understood the contrast!). I couldn't wait until midnight for the final vote, the crowning, the expected tears, the rehearsed walk, and the simple song always sung by a man who can't sing. I was busy grading papers, preparing discussions for the exciting classes I teach at Spelman and trying to find a few minutes for my own writing.

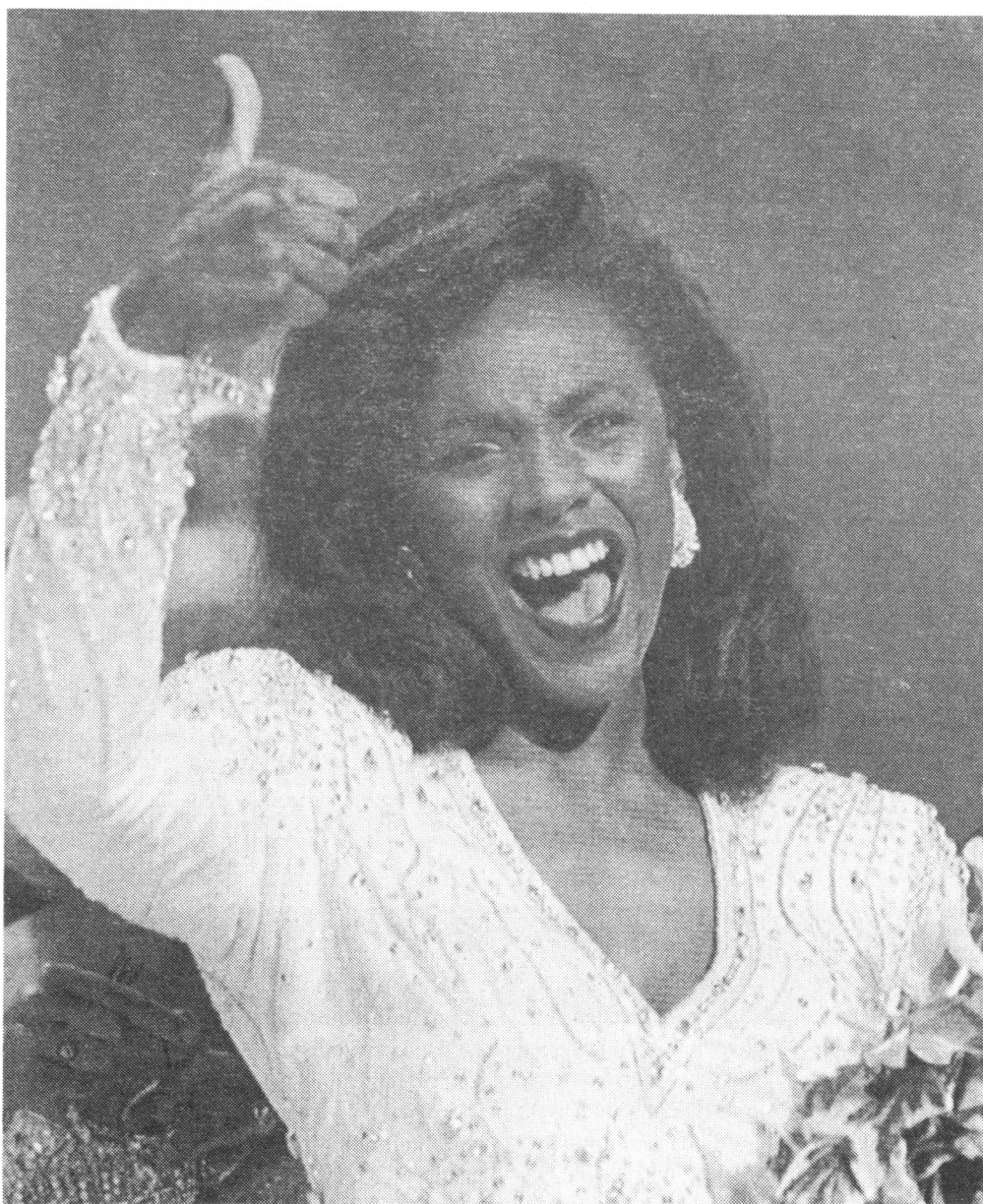
I remember hearing above the sound of clicking computer keys a message of screams on my answering machine. The voices were women's voices, but I could not make out the message. I returned to my work. The next morning (or later that same morning), I put the news about the new Miss America and the screams on my answering machine together. Spelman women were excited that one of us was Miss America 1989. According to several reports, women were literally crying and literally dancing in the dorms.

Of course! We are always proud when one of our own wins a coveted prize—becomes a first or a second or even a third in a national competition. It is that way, and understandably so, with being on the outside trying to get inside where the programming says we should want to be. All across the country, my people are claiming a victory because Debbie Turner, an African-American woman, has been crowned Miss America.

I knew students would want to discuss the new queen; I knew I would have to ask about the victory they were celebrating. What is the nature of the victory and what what effect, if any, will it have on the lives of women in general and African-American women in particular in this country. That's an unfair question, but in an academic community where learning is about asking questions and searching for answers, I was obligated to ask it. I would do so at the risk of being asked, in return, a number of questions which would not be questions really, but interpretations, judgements, of my politics. Among them would be the following: "Did you burn your bra during the 1970's?" I knew that if I were to disrobe and show my Maidenform—even the cup size—some of my sisters would take a quantum leap from the question, "Why is it a victory?" to "You're envious of beautiful women" or "You're a radical, bra-burning feminist." I am neither.

I decided to ask the question and accept the consequences because between my students and me there has to be unconditional honesty. I expect honesty from them on exams and papers; they have a right to expect honesty from me in our intellectual dialogues. If fear of labels prevents me from being honest about my politics, then my students can argue that fear of failure prevents them from being honest on exams. The foundation of our relationship, which is one of respect for each other's integrity, has to be honesty—even risky honesty. So, I decided, adjusting my bra on the expressway, to ask the question, "What is the nature of the victory?"

I received predictable answers: "She's one of us." "I mean, she's not light-skinned" (as if we are not the most beautiful of rainbows). "Just think what this says to little dark-



Miss America 1990, Debbie Turner of Missouri gives a thumbs up.

skinned girls in this country. 'You're beautiful, too'." (The too bothered me.)

I'm not sure Debbie Turner was thinking about little dark-skinned girls when she took her walk. "Being Black," she said in an interview following the crowning, "is the *least* of who I am [italics mine]." There are acceptable ways, I suppose, of saying that you don't want to be a token. Who does? Using least is not one of them. Debbie Turner would not say being female is the least of who she is. Certainly not. That would be absurd for someone who now symbolizes the ideal beautiful woman in America. So, too, is it absurd for her to say that being Black is the *least* of who she is, for we live in a society that excludes people from the inner circles of power on the basis of race.

Only robots have no race and no gender. For the time being I wish our own Debbie Turner had done some homework on race and gender before she was interviewed. I wish she had talked to Vanessa Williams! Remember our first African-American Miss America? Like Debbie Turner (and the ice-skating Debbie who should have won the gold medal), Vanessa Williams identified with a raceless America and learned the hard way that it does not exist. Now she says with pride, "My people stood by me?"

I guess I am asking too much of Debbie Turner. I know I am because in the process of becoming winners, we are often programmed to disconnect from "losers," the masses of our people. Indeed, doing so might well be an implicit prerequisite for winning.

And so, she won, but did women win? Did African-Americans win? If so, what? A paradox of an answer: We won lost ground. Since the Women's Movement of the seventies, women and sensitive men in partnership have struggled against sexism in all arenas, even the glittering ones. The Miss America Pageant, which Ellen Goodman describes as "hype and hair spray" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, September 19) does not help that struggle.

Not because it celebrates the beauty of women, mind you, but because it makes

beauty, a narrow definition of beauty, woman's major asset, the number one requirement for her success. Those contestants who don't have it can get it surgically. What are women contestants saying to little girls, regardless of race, when they make themselves over to look like the woman in a picture of the ideal woman (physically, that is) somebody drew a long, long time ago? Silicon breasts often harden and have to be replaced. Liposuction can cause infection and has caused at least eleven deaths (Goodman, *The Atlanta Constitution*). New noses, capped teeth, rounded cheek bones, straightened backs—all of the "essentials" of physical beauty—cost a great deal of money and pain. That women endure all of this for one night of glitter which amasses millions for the profit-makers sends the wrong message to women, to little girls and to men. Self-esteem, one of the keys to a little African-American girl's success in this world of madness, was not hidden in the roses Debbie Turner carried on her walk.

Women parading their bodies (Please don't tell me about answers in the interview which demonstrate their intelligence!) before the nation reminds me of auction blocks. Our people were forced to bare their bodies—teeth and genitals—before bidders who had power and were adding to their profits. Women do a similar thing by choice, with music, under lights, for a title which gives them neither power nor profit. I know the analogy is a harsh one, but sometimes only when we take an idea to the ridiculous extreme are we able to bring it back to the logical center. (After that analogy, I will have to show you a hundred worn bras, none of them padded.)

Without taking anything away from Debbie Turner, I must confess that I am a bit concerned about the timing of her selection as Miss America. I believe those in power know the power of timing. Andree Nicola-McLaughlin, in "White Power, Black Despair: Vanessa Williams in Babylon, which Dr. Phillips shared with me and uses in one of her classes" (*The Black Scholar*, March-April 1985), writes that Vanessa's title occurred at a time when "new conservatism [was] embracing the nation

aimed at keeping oppressed groups locked out and powerless in American society." Naming an African-American woman Miss America, according to Nicola-McLaughlin, was supposed to renew our faith in the American Dream and (lest the natives become restless) take our attention away from a resurgence of racism. It gave African-Americans "the illusion of inclusion" in the mainstream.

If you watched the network documentaries on race in white America and listened closely to the brilliance of our Sister President, you know that too many of us are excluded from, not included in, the picture of health in America. We do not enjoy full employment, adequate health care, decent housing and other "inalienable rights" in this democracy. Seeing an African-American woman walking queenly to the singing of "There she is, *Miss America*" gives us the illusion that we are progressing rather than regressing, surviving rather than dying. Of course we are going to dance in the dorms because Debbie Turner is Miss America 1989, but we shouldn't dance too long. That would be too easy, too much like what we are supposed to do.

What I am suggesting is that we must match the excitement we feel when a few of us excel in a given arena with concern for the many of us who never have an opportunity to demonstrate that they *can* excel. I am suggesting that we remember in our moments of celebration, those who are hungry, unemployed, homeless, illiterate—oppressed in various ways. These are the people the Community Service Program at Spelman College asks you to remember and to serve. African-American women are disproportionately represented among them. So are African-American men.

I have been uncomfortable writing this article. Believe me. I have been. You see, when we tell the truth as we see it (or as it forces itself upon us), we run the risk of attacking our own, or seeming to attack our own. I do not want to attack Debbie Turner. She's only a face and a name in a billion-dollar industry she has not yet entered, even with her crown and American beauty roses. She is not the problem. She is an ambitious, bright and probably personable young woman who knows how to use the system to "milk" it for her own goals. I think she read Ellison's *Invisible Man* and she intends to "play the game and raise the ante." That's smart, and I guess I'm pleased that she understands that a game is being played. My problem is that I have a fear of games.

Having gone through the sixties expecting more than we gained and seeing the ground slip away from us in the eighties, I just want more. Now! Perhaps unfairly, my greed and my impatience are standing in the way of the pride I should feel and wilting the roses I should send to my sister Debbie.

I wish Debbie Turner, Miss America 1989, had been inspired by the courage of the gold medalists who surprised the nation and the world by raising black-gloved fists when the national anthem was played. If the cameras did not show their racial identity, the men made certain that the fists would. They made a political statement, and I danced.

Women, even those in beauty pageants, can make political statements. It's not too late for a statement from Debbie Turner. As my mother used to say, "Only a very short road has no curves;" and she would add, "Just keep on living." The road from the beginning of Debbie's reign to the end is hardly a short one. There will be many interviews, many appearances, and many opportunities for her to say something to all of us about the plight of our people and the plight of women in this country. What I have learned from the study of our history suggests that she will.

I think she will.

# Q&A

## Aunt Jemima receives makeover

by Kimara Mason



Aunt Jemima: Before and after makeover

If you make a trip to the cereal aisle in your local supermarket, you will notice that Aunt Jemima has undergone a major change of appearance. Her friendly smile is still intact but her bandana is gone allowing her hair to fall into a graceful style. Her image is more professional and sophisticated. How did this change come about? "We felt that it was time for a new look; we wanted to modernize it," according to Laura Johnson, coordinator of Corporate Communications for Quaker Oats. "We received outside service. The packaging department came up with various drawings and there was an independent company that did a research test. From a media standpoint, most of the responses (in regards to her new look) have been positive and matter-of-fact. Her current look has not affected sales," she adds.



### Student Response - What do you think of Aunt Jemima's makeover?

Sayyida Martin - Freshman, Baltimore, Md.  
"She doesn't look like a housewife anymore. I think it is very derogative. I think it imposes a lot of stereotypes."



Kwanza Clay - Sophomore, Houston, Tex:  
"I think it is a more positive image of Black women. Blacks are always portrayed with the scarf on the head cooking and cleaning. I can't say that it reflects an overall change but it reflects new thinking."



Kimberly Felder - Junior, Queens, N.Y.:  
"She still looks the same but now they are trying to say Black women are trying to act like white women with the perm. I don't like it. It still has the same purpose of stereotyping all Black women of cooking and taking care of white families and their children."

## Expressions

### NOT ANYMORE

This was yours  
But now it's gone  
You had problems  
Holding on.

This was yours  
And as I write  
Images of you  
Flash burning bright.

This was yours  
But that's no more.  
I wish I knew  
The thoughts you stored.

This was yours  
You understand.  
Now someone else  
Holds my hand.

Kimara Mason

### AUDACITY

Audacity  
What is it  
About my presence  
That unnerves you?  
I stride these streets  
Like a proud Black Woman should.  
I keep my eyes looking straight ahead  
As one would while walking on the path of  
righteousness  
And men leer and call me out of my name.  
I hold myself in too high a regard  
to acknowledge their disrespect.  
I dare to dream  
To aspire to something more  
Does that anger you?  
I smile at a world  
That conspires to destroy me  
But I hear you berate me under your breath...  
Are you not  
Black like me?  
Are we not all victims of the same evils?  
Why don't you give me praise  
Instead of hatred?  
Is it my audacity  
To be  
or your lack of courage  
To do so  
Carla M. Cherry



Photo: Karen Neely

### THE PROCESS OF A FRIENDSHIP

Restrain me from my ill-bred ways;  
Guide me through my faults -  
Support me when I've given up -  
By aiding with your thoughts -  
Surround me with your fondness -  
Yet give me room to breathe!  
Stand by me when I need you -  
If not just simply leave -  
Have heart in all desires -  
that with you I've ever shared -  
Don't smother me with comfort -  
Yet let me know you care.  
Be patient when my heart has failed  
From me do not demand -  
Supply me with the trust I need.  
Take time to hold my hand.  
Deny me of no secrets.  
That you think I should know.  
Treat me as you'd treat yourself -  
then watch our friendship grow!

Kalia Spears

### SUDDENLY

Suddenly my life begun,  
I am christened with confusion.  
My dreams seem to be illusions of my mind.  
Suddenly  
Suddenly I am a child  
Fearful and tearful to what The World has to offer.  
I ask myself, What is The World?  
Whose is it? I decide it's mine.  
I must control it before it controls me.  
Suddenly  
Suddenly I am a teen  
Asking, Why is the World?  
I decide it's for me to own.  
The World will condone my rebellions;  
It will be my heart of stone.  
Suddenly  
Suddenly I am grown.  
How is The World?  
The World is reserving time  
While my chimes of time are racing and  
I am angrily pacing my life away.  
The World is the same for only one day  
Today.  
Suddenly my life has ended or  
Have I just pretended?

Kimani Norrington

### THE HUMAN MANIFESTO

I am  
A paradox  
Materialism is the negative side  
Of human Nature.  
But  
I desire.  
Serenity nurtures the soul.  
Nevertheless  
I anger.  
Love is the zenith  
Of human emotion  
Still  
I hate.  
I expect  
The highest standards  
Of morality from mankind...  
I  
Can't  
Comply

Carla M. Cherry  
February, 1989



# Jomandi Launches "Fraternity" in Upcoming Season

by Raye John Belcher



Thomas W. Jones II, co-artistic director of Jomandi Productions

Now that you have seen "Sisters," sponsored by the SSGA in September, you gotta see the brothers in "Fraternity," a new Jomandi production at the Academy Theater October 20 - November 5. "Fraternity" will kick off Jomandi's 1989-90 season entitled "New Voices."

"Fraternity," a political drama, written by Jeff Stetson is set in an elite social club in an urban southern metropolis. Seven men, all friends, who convene in this place to make decisions on important and powerful issues that affect the world.

"Decision-making does not happen in the office. It happens in these elite social clubs. This is where major politicians decide the fate of the country," says Dr. Thomas W. Jones, co-founder and co-artistic director of Jomandi

Productions.

The play revolves around an established politician's disappointment when his young protege considers running against him after concluding that the elder has lost touch with the Black community.

Jones admits that that the play poses several questions including: "Can you strive for power without losing your integrity?" and "When I get into the 'real world,' am I going to be part of the problem or part of the solution?"

"Jomandi," an amalgamation of the names of four members of Jones' family, means "people gathered together in celebration." Because of its familiar roots, the company considers themselves, and their audiences, an extended family gathered to celebrate the human experience. Jomandi has employed many students from the AUC including several students from Spelman alumni like Andrea Frye, who co-starred as Cassie in "Sisters."

Marsha Jackson, Co-artistic director,

author and co-star of "Sisters" says she hopes that the Black theatre goes "enjoy themselves while learning about things relevant to them, their history, their past and things as they are happening now."

Jomandi, the largest Black professional theater in the Southeast, has taken its true unique interpretations of the human experience to 35 states, including New York and California, 75 cities, and 4 countries.

Recognized locally and nationally Jomandi reaches an average of 20,000 people per year in Atlanta. It has received numerous community service and arts awards. According to Jones, Jomandi Productions Inc., chartered in October 1978, has two objectives - to entertain and to provoke thought.

Now is the time to celebrate your race. Experience the celebration with "Fraternity." Student discount night is every Wednesday for \$6.00. For ticket, parking and other information call 892-0880.

## "Shakin" at the Horizon

by Crystal I. Drake



Daughter with Big Mama in "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery"

"Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery" returned to the Horizon Theatre, September 15. The play written by Columbus, Georgia's Shay Youngblood, is a semi-autobiographical piece that depicts a young Black girl of the early sixties being raised by seven different women. Youngblood's (and the character called Daughter's) birth mother died when she was two, and in a series of vignettes, a story unfolds about the wisdom, character and common sense these multi-dimensional women impart upon the young innocent, Daughter.

The play opens as Daughter, now 22 and a mother herself, stands in the old house where she was raised and remembers some of

the many "gifts" her Big Mamas gave her. There was Big Mama (Georgia Allen), the oldest and wisest of the group; Aunt Mae (Kathy Hawkins) a flashy, street-wise liquor store proprietor and Big Mama's sister; Miss Corine (Mary Holloway) a docile beautician, owner of Miss Corine's "Curl Up and Dye", with fingers "that could braid the wind"; Miss LaMama, a woman with flamboyant style who married an African at age 17 (only to soon divorce him after "wife number two came around") who wears exotic African garb; Miss Mary, a believer in voodoo who "sees the signs"; Miss Rosa, the eccentric owner of the town funeral home; and Miss Tom, a homosexual.

The action is centered around Daughter's trip to the river, a coming of age ceremony that a girl must go through "when her blood comes". With a smooth and believable performance, Daughter transposes from the woman to the child as she and the characters create scenes from their past.

The play flows smoothly from scene to scene and the small stage becomes a bus, a funeral home, and even a fishing dock, all without requiring a big mental stretch from the audience. The lighting was especially effective, as it moved subtly about the stage.

In one of the more riveting vignettes, Big Mama recounts an episode when Miss Corine's snuff habit was the cause for some terrible results. The women had loaded Bus No. 99 on

their way home from their jobs. Miss Corine had a swallow of snuff in the cheek and needed to discard it. Having left her cup elsewhere, she was forced to spit it out of the window. As a long, white car, with its White passengers, passed the bus, the ill-fated snuff hit the White woman in the car in the face. The bus was soon stopped by a police officer and the passengers ordered off. After none of the women would reveal the guilty party, each of the women was spit on in the face and given a ticket. Without the use of and props or actors for the other roles, the "Big Mamas" were most convincing as they portrayed the humiliation and embarrassment of Black women being victimized by the Jim Crow south. In the cozy, intimate theatre, the audience was unable to ignore the passion in the eyes of these actresses.

The play contains ghostly appearances and an initiation into womanhood. LaMama sums up the meaning of motherhood when she tells Daughter, "Always remember, any woman can have a baby, but it takes a real woman to be a Mama."

Shay Youngblood, a 1970 graduate of Clark College, has a real hit on her hands. Due to receive a major production at Capitol Repertory Theatre in Albany, New York, this October, "Shakin' The Mess Outta Misery" is an honest, sentimental, and funny portrait of seven Southern, Black women who live and love with passion and zest.

## Film Review "A Dry White Season"

By Tracey Lewis

Few directors are daring or talented enough to create a forceful and discordant film that represents a multifaceted issue. Fewer still are afforded the opportunity to make that step, and those that do are usually white males. But there is always that person who has bucked all the odds and created their own cinematic vision. Euzhan Palcy, the award winning director of "Sugar Cane Alley", is that maverick, as this is her second film. The film, due to be released October 22, is based on the novel by an Afrikaner Andre Brink. "A Dry White Season" details how an Afrikaner's life is changed when he finally is forced, through the death of two blacks, to notice the atrocities of apartheid.

In the film, Palcy shifted the focus from being entirely on the white man, Ben du Toit (Donald Sutherland), to the black characters. In the October issue of Essence magazine, Palcy told how she managed to even get the story to the screen. "I wanted to make a black story about South Africa. Unfortunately, no producer in the States would put one penny into a black story. I still wanted to talk about apartheid, so I had to find a way to circumvent the problem." Palcy deftly managed to avoid the pitfalls that felled the disappointing Richard Attenborough film "Cry Freedom" two

years ago.

"A Dry White Season" is the account of two families, black and white, and how the insidious system of apartheid slowly shreds the very fabric of their being. The destruction of the Ngubene family begins when Gordon and his young son Jonathan die while in police custody during the Soweto uprising in 1976. For the accepting and blind du Toit family, the dirty truth is left at their front door when Ben du Toit investigates the mysterious death of his gardener and eventually the death of humanity in his beloved country.

Palcy does not subvert the story of the Ngubenes for the white du Toit's, although more screen time is devoted to them. At a sneak preview in New York on August 18th, Ms. Palcy stressed that it is the ignorance and racism of whites that maintain the status quo to which the du Toit's belong. Henceforth, the focus of her film. The black characters are not the flat, helpless and hopeless people of "Cry Freedom" or "Mississippi Burning". Emily Ngubene (Thoko Ntshinga) does not sit idly by while her family is torn from her, but Palcy conveys the complete sense of anguish and powerlessness that Emily feels in her inability to prevent it.

The movie had one of the most interna-



Euzhan Palcy Director on the set of MGM's "A Dry White Season." Photo: David James

tionally acclaimed casts to grace the screen in ages, which includes Marlon Brando, Donald Sutherland, Zakes Mokae and Susan Sarandon. Marlon Brando makes his first appearance in almost 10 years as the jaded civil rights lawyer, Ian McKenzie, tries to convince Ben du Toit that there are no rights left to fight for, especially for blacks. Brando's courtroom scene is one of the most scathing and riveting ever filmed. Palcy's camera lingers on the rotund Brando, who surprises the courtroom with his verbal agility and acerbic wit.

## Around Town

by Joy McDowell

October is associated with witches, pumpkins, ghosts and ghouls. In Atlanta, however, it's a little different, with games, plays and famous names in the city.

### October

16

Howard-Harrel hosts Reading for Results from 6 to 7.

Westin Peachtree Plaza hosts the Octoberfest which comes to a close on the 28th.

17

Keeping the dream alive, the King Center begins its King Week Kick-off. The Fox Theatre exposes The Phantom of the Opera for the prices of \$24-\$29. The phantom haunts the opera until the 27th.

18

For music of a different tune, the Hawks play the Utah Jazz at the Omni at 7:30. The fee is a mere \$18.

20

From the basketball game to the political game, Jomandi Productions presents the play entitled Fraternities. Ticket prices range from \$7.50 to \$18. Luckily for starving students, a \$2 discount is offered for students. Fraternities makes its last step on November 4th.

23

Note taking skills are offered in Howard-Harrel from 6 to 7.

26-27

The D.C. Metro Club bus to the Howard-Morehouse Homecoming game leaves the AUC parking lot at 5:00 p.m. both days and returns Sunday. The cost is \$70. For more information call 659-1407 or 523-0676.

28

Appropriately, October saves the best for last. Our own President Johnetta Cole is a recipient of an award at the Third Annual Essence Award at the Civic Center.

Donald Sutherland assumes his character's cloak with an intense yet subdued anger. He affects the speech of an Afrikaner with great precision, never lapsing for a moment. We see the growth of this "blind" man to one who eventually sees too much, and actually cares about what happens to this white man, which I did not think I'd do.

Zakes Mokae, South Africa's most famous actor now exiled in the U.S., makes a strong appearance as Stanley the cab driver. We never know Stanley's last name or even if he'll make it to the end of the movie, but it's not important. Stanley is the conscience of the film, the omniscient presence of right in a completely wrong world. Mokae's character brings all of the desperate sides of the South African puzzle together for an exploding conclusion.

I left the showing of this film in complete shock and awe, because I had never seen anything like it. It is a masterpiece with no discernable flaws, and it would be a crime for any person who considers themselves "down for the cause" to miss it. It is so rare that a talented black filmmaker comes along to create such a moving piece, let alone a black woman. I can't wait until her next film graces the screen.



# Sports

## Spelman Gets Sporty

by Angela Frye

Will varsity sports alter the image of the Spelmanite, or even the college itself? If anything, these images should be "enhanced and present the Black woman as being successful and having class," says Kathleen Richey-Walton, coach of the basketball and track and field teams. In response to growing interest for varsity sports, Spelman's athletic department now offers basketball, volleyball, tennis, and track and field.

This year's basketball squad looks very promising. Last year, the team competed within the AUC, and also with Agnes Scott, but there was not much organization. Coach Richey-Walton is very optimistic about her plans for the year. Turn-out for the team is expected to be high. The team will begin its ten game season on November 15.

Last year's team only participated in 2 competitive meets. Coach Richey-Walton expects a good year from the team, with seven returning members, and many more who have expressed an interest in trying out. She says the team plans to train two to three times a

week, and engage in more dual competitions. Walton describes the team's mood as "really enthused about the season."

The volleyball team, coached by Mrs. Sue Feldkamp has also set high expectations. Last year, the team ended the season with a 9-13 record. The most important goal for the team, which includes beating Olgethorpe, is to have a good home tournament. Coach Feldkamp is in favor of a home tournament for historically Black colleges. She says they would like to capture the Phoenix Cup Tourney. "I would also like for all the students to come out and see the games. We would really appreciate the support," says Coach Feldkamp.

New uniforms have been purchased for the basketball and track and field teams, and the gymnasium floor has been revamped.

Despite the increase of interest for varsity sports, no mascot has been identified by the athletic department. What would best represent Spelman? Send your suggestions to the *Spotlight*.



Volleyball team practices for new season

Photo: Kelly Wilson

## Focus on fitness

by Aretha Hankinson

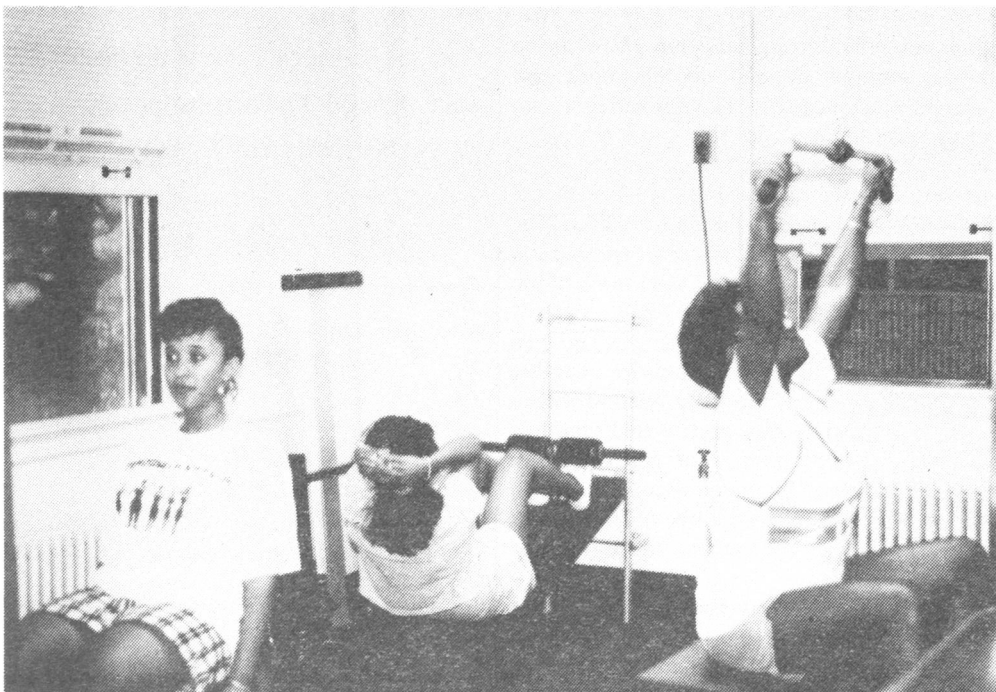
Have you eaten one too many rolls in Alma's? Do the people at Taco Bell have your burrito waiting when you make your "run for the border"? Are you looking for a way to get rid of nervous energy between parties? If you answered yes to any of these questions, maybe you should explore some of the fitness options on campus. They're sure to provide you with a means for exercise and enjoyment.

Read Hall offers many ways for Spelmanites to stay in shape. Besides P.E. classes, such as swimming and gymnastics, the gym is open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. During these hours students can play basketball, volleyball and badminton on the main gym floor or take a relaxing swim in the pool.

The fitness lab is also open during these hours and provides adequate facilities for Spelmanites who are seriously interested in working out. The lab has stretching room, stationary bikes, and trained assistants to help you with muscle development on the training

equipment. New this year, the lab also is equipped with a video recorder so students can use their workout tapes in the gym. An "Afrobics" class is offered in Read Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:00 pm.

Last year it was so popular that the average class had 90 students. This mix of aerobics and African dance will work every muscle you've got — plus some you forgot you had! If you are the kind of person that likes to move around, Afrobics may be the option for you. Not everyone can get to Read Hall twice a week for a structured program. If your schedule is full, but you feel that you need some type of physical program, create your own. Skip the peach cobbler at dinner, climb the stairs in Giles instead of the elevator, take a study break by walking around the oval. Make the commitment to fitness and it will definitely pay off.



Deeya Dobbins, Tashia Garrett and Natasha Irvin work up a sweat. Photo: Karen Neely

## The Essence Awards

By Doreen M. Smith

The Third Annual *Essence* Awards will be held at the Atlanta Civic Center on October 28th at 8:00. This will culminate a week of events beginning on the 22nd. One of the honorees is our own, Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole for her contributions in education. Others to be honored include Suffragan Bishop Barbara Harris, Religion; Suzanne de Passe, Business; Florence Griffith Joyner, Sports; Byllye Y. Avery, Health Science and Technology; Dr. Selma Burke, Arts and Literature; Bonnie Lee St. John, Courageous Spirit. Many activities are planned throughout the week with entertainment including Stephanie Mills, Najee, and The Winans. The ceremony will be hosted by Debbie Allen and Marvin Winan. Be sure not to miss out. Tickets range from \$20 to \$150 and can be purchased at all SEATS locations.

### 1989-90 Basketball Schedule

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Nov. 15	Atlanta Foxes	TBA
Home Nov. 29	Georgia College	7:30
Home Dec. 2	Kenesaw College	7:30
Home Dec. 5	Morris Brown College	7:30
Home Dec. 9	Tuskegee University	—
Away Jan. 16	Taladega College	7:30
Home Jan. 22	Georgia College	7:30
Away Jan. 27	Atlanta Christian	7:30
Away Feb. 3	Morris Brown College	6:00
Away Feb. 10	Atlanta Christia	7:30

### 1989 Volleyball Schedule

October	
17 Morris Brown College	Away 7
20 Paine College	Away 7 & 8
20 Ft. Valley State College	
24 Oglethorpe	Away 7 & 8
24 Covenant	
27 & 28 Phoenix Cup Tournament at Oglethorpe	
Coach: Sue Feldkamp	
Student Assistant: Stacey Walker	

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## SSGA Activities

by Doreen M. Smith

Ever wonder what your student fees are used for? Throughout the semester, the Spelman Student Government Association (SSGA) plans several activities for your enjoyment. SSGA representatives say they would like students to show more interest in these events. Kimberly Geddings, a junior economics major, says, "The activities over the past years have been good. It's more of a lack of enthusiasm on the student's part. I think more students need to support the sponsored activities." The SSGA hopes that freshmen will possess the enthusiasm to help rejuvenate the missing Spelman Spirit. "The class of 1993 is very unique and active," says Adrienne Lance, SSGA Vice-President. "They are able to have a positive influence on Spelman Experience."

As Spelman begins a new year, the SSGA looks forward to a semester of enjoyable activities. "We are excited about the upcoming year and hope that all students become involved," says Kandance Weems, SSGA President. "With many activities behind us, the coming events promise something for everyone."

The following is a tentative schedule for this semester:

### October

- 1-7 UNITY WEEK, in conjunction with other AUC schools: 3 Black Male/Female Relationships Workshop: Giles Old Library, 7-8:30 PM. Leader: Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu.
- 4 Movie: "Ethnic Notions", Lower Concourse Manley-TV Room, 7PM.
- 5 AUC Forum: "Setting New Standards", Exhibition Hall- Woodruff Library, 7:00 PM.
- 6 AUC Reggae Concert: Bands include Drop Plus, Raga Muffin, Ascending Sounds plus vendors from the Atlanta Area. Patio and lower Manley, 11-7:30 PM.
- 8-14 ENDING DISCRIMINATION, POVERTY AND INJUSTICE WEEK
- 10 Sisters Speak: "Human Rights - the Female Experience, Giles Old Library. 6 PM. Panel includes: Jane Smith of INROADS-Atlanta; Jackie Payne; Managing Attorney with the Legal Aid Society; and Bensonetta T. Layne, Employment Discrimination Attorney.
- 11 National South Africa Protest Day
- 12 Movie: "We Shall Overcome", Lower Concourse Manley-TV Room, 7 PM.
- 18 Movie: "The White Girl" by Tony Brown Productions, King Chapel, 7 PM.