A Pryor love

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VIDEO: Just A Band

JUST A BAND
VIDEO + AUDIO: Your Morning Mix

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YOUR MORNING MIX

And More.

BY MUSINGANDREA

Let this be the perfect mix for you to immerse yourself in throughout the week.

GypjaQ feat. Azealia Banks
– “Blown Aways”

Watch Banks do what she actually does best.
Ibeyi – “Intro/Ghosts”
The singing sister duo recently performed at Austin’s SXSW festival.

Denitia and Sene – “Because We Are Fools” (remastered)
Denitia has been doing her solo thing as of late but that doesn’t mean she’s not rocking with her musical counterpart Sene. Here’s the Brooklyn duo’s latest, a four track EP. Go here to purchase their sounds.
Wale feat. SZA
– The Need To Know

SZA’s airy hook takes a page from Musiq Soulchild’s track “Just Friends.”

Katy Perry feat. Missy Elliott
– Legendary Lover
(Urban Noize Remix)

Missy and Katy make a perfect pop-hip-hop team.
Da Brat- “Blessed”
The Atlanta rapper, who's been in the game for ages gives us a remixed treatment to Big Sean’s hit track that features Drake and Ye'.

Remy Ma – “Truffle Butter (remix)”
Just some days ago LE1F served up this delicious dance tune. On the remastered track, Remy oozes total confidence.

DonMonique – “Pilates”
Bronx rapper DonMonique takes the metaphor to another level.
June Marieezy
– “Fly” (FKJ Remix)

June has three new tracks out on her Soundcloud page. This being stylistically the best of them. Go here to purchase the Texas artist's sounds.

Jypsy Jeyfree – “Knives”

We've introduced the unique looking and sounding artist. Now, check out her latest visuals, a trippy, artfully done piece.
Siya
– “BBHMM (Bitch better Have My Money)”

Siya hops on the latest Rihanna single.

UNIIQU3- “The Fader Mix”

My Soundcloud homepage is littered with new tracks from rapper UNIIQU3. There are all sorts of music to head-bob along to—there’s a mash up from Fader magazine as well as collaborative tracks with up and comers.
Cakes Da Killa – “Get 2 Werk”

I’ve seen Cakes Da Killa perform live. His show is an upbeat rollercoaster where you never know what to expect.

Soulection – “Sade Compilation”
Brought to you by record label **Soulection**, the 12-track compilation pays homage to r & b legend Sade. Be sure to download.

**Major Lazer – “Roll The Bass”**

The duo has been rolling out a stream of new music; this being their latest.

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**About musingandrea**

Andrea resides in Atlanta, Georgia. She’s a lover of her very Jamaican family, music, cinema, different cultures, travel, basketball, and down to earth folk. She’s especially passionate about equality in the LGBTQ community particularly as it relates to people of the African Diaspora. Contact Andrea here:
PUB: The 2015 New South Writing Contest

Open for Submissions:
The 2015 New South Writing Contest

January 26, 2015

The 2015 New South Writing Contest will be be judged by Roger Reeves in the genre of poetry and Rebecca Makkai in the genre of prose. The contest awards $1,000 to one winner in poetry and one winner in prose, and a $250 runner’s up prize in each category. Please take care that you are submitting under the contest genre; regular submissions received during the contest period WILL NOT be entered into the contest. Your $15 entry fee also includes a one-year subscription to New South. You may submit electronically via Submittable ONLY. All paper mailed entries will be destroyed. The deadline for this contest is April 15, 2015.

Each entry must include:

1. A reading fee of fifteen dollars ($15). Entry fee includes a one year subscription to the journal!
2. The submitter’s contact info, including a mailing address for your subscription. (Do not include any identifying information in the manuscript).

POETRY
Submit up to three (3) poems per document.

PROSE
Non-fiction is welcomed and encouraged.

Submit one (1) short story or non-fiction piece per $15 Reading Fee.
Please limit your submissions to 9,000 words.

OTHER DETAILS:
While we take the greatest care in handling your entries, we assume no responsibility for lost manuscripts. Only unpublished work will be considered, and only writers who have not published a book of prose or poetry are eligible. Simultaneous submissions will be considered with notification. All rights revert to author after publication. Current students, staff, and faculty at Georgia State University are not eligible. New South publishes quality literary art promoting the work of emerging and established writers. New South holds no subject biases. The staff will select the best work regardless of style or genre. The final round of judging will be anonymous (the names will be removed from the manuscripts before the final judges see the entries). Judges from outside the staff will pick the winners from finalists selected by the New South staff.

Rebecca Makkai is the Chicago-based author of the forthcoming story collection Music for Wartime, as well as the novels The Hundred-Year House (a BookPage “Best Book” of 2014 and winner of the Chicago Writers...
March 31st in

Rebecca Makkai

Roger Reeves

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$1,000

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April Short Story Call Out

The image below is your prompt for the April Short Story.

![Prompt Image](https://storymojaafrica.wordpress.com/2015/03/30/april-short-story-call-out/)

Your story should not be more than 1600 words long. Send in your work in a word document attachment to blogs@storymojaafrica.co.ke.

Subject Title of your Submission Email Should Be: **April Short Story**

Deadline: April 17th, 2015

Selected Stories will be published on 27th April 2015. The story selected for Editor’s Choice wins KES 1000/- Airtime.

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POV: Why Mo’ne Davis was really called a “slut”

Black girls’ sexual burden: Why Mo’ne Davis was really called a “slut”
Just as I was harassed at 8 years old, baseball wunderkind Mo’ne Davis is a target of sexual shaming. Here’s why.

BRITTNEY COOPER

Mo’ne Davis (Credit: AP/Gene J. Puskar)

Mo’ne Davis is a Black girl wunderkind. At age 13, she has pitched a shutout at the Little League World Series, becoming the first girl ever to do so, and she has been on the cover of Sports Illustrated. Disney is now planning to do a movie about her called, “Throw Like Mo.”

I’m not ashamed to admit that I still watch the Disney Channel, and I will certainly be tuning in. But everyone isn’t as excited as I am to see a Black girl on the come up. Last week, Joey Casselberry, a sophomore baseball player from Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania, called Mo’ne a “slut” in response to the news about the movie. He was subsequently expelled from the team.

In response, Davis has forgiven him and she and her coach have asked that he be reinstated. About Casselberry, Davis released a statement, which said:

Everyone makes mistakes and everyone deserves a second chance. I know he didn’t mean it in that type of way, and I know a lot of people get tired of like seeing me on TV but just think about what you’re doing before you actually do it. I know right now he’s really hurt and I know how hard he worked just to get where he is right now.

Her level of empathy is remarkable but not particularly surprising. Black girls learn almost from the womb to empathize with others, even when those others have committed deep injustices toward us. Perhaps it is the unparalleled level of our suffering that makes us always look with empathy upon others.

But I am troubled. It is absolutely wonderful that Davis has this kind of care and concern and a heart so huge that she can forgive a nearly adult person for insulting her. It goes without saying that she’s a better person than Casselberry.

But she should not have to be. For starters, he meant what he said. One doesn’t slip up and mistakenly call a young teen girl a slut. Second, it bothers me that she sounds almost apologetic about how much others have to see her on television. Girls in our culture are taught that they should never take up too much space, that they should be seen (and look real pretty), but not heard. And Black girls in our culture are damn near invisible, whether in regards to their triumphs or their struggles.

Lest we think this inappropriate sexual shaming of Black girls is an isolated incident, let us not forget that in
2013, The Onion “jokingly” referred to then 9-year old actress Quvenzhané Wallis, as a “c*nt” in reference to her Oscar nomination that year for Beasts of the Southern Wild.

Such language is nothing short of vile and reprehensible. And it raises the question of why young white people have such a prurient fascination with young Black girls? Mo’ne Davis is 13. Quevenzhané Wallis is 11. One is a baseball player. The other is an actress. Why are they being characterized in sexual terms at any level?

The fact that Black girl artists and athletes are understood only in terms of a sexuality that they may not even have begun to articulate for themselves should concern us. That their sexuality is already being publicly circumscribed by white men (and the anonymous Onion tweeter) in dirty and shameful terms is appalling.

Even more concerning is Davis’ identification of Casselberry as “really hurt,” and as a person who has “worked hard to get where he is right now.” Black girls learn early and often the script of toting around someone else’s pain. We learn to identify with those who have abused us, to see their humanity, even when they don’t see ours.

Jesus.

I’m not just being flippant. We teach Black girls to be Jesus, and they grow up to become Strong Black Women, who hold families, and communities, and nations together, while they fall apart. And die early. I wish so deeply that Mo’ne Davis does not become this Black woman. I wish that Black girls’ lessons in building character and being the “bigger person,” did not have to be learned in a system that requires we gloss over long histories of racialized sexism and sexualized racism in order to do so.

Recently the African American Policy Forum released a report called “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected.” There are a number of troubling findings in this report. One is that Black girls are six times more likely than white girls to be suspended from school. Among boys, who are suspended more often than girls no matter their race, Black boys were three times more likely to be suspended than white boys. This suggests that Black girls actually suffer a higher instance of racially disparate treatment in matters of school discipline than their Black male counterparts. It also indicates that school is not a particularly safe space for either our girls or our boys.

The report also found that Black girls experience a high degree of sexual harassment and interpersonal violence in their schools and that this is often dismissed as “boys will be boys.” In other words, Black girls’ sexual security is a routine casualty of boys’ sexual maturation process. School officials are frequently reticent in addressing the problem, but when girls respond to harassment by defending themselves, they are often subject to zero-tolerance measures by school officials.

Until very recently, I had forgotten my own harrowing experience of continued sexual harassment as an elementary school kid. In the 3rd grade, I took the bus home from school. For some reason, there were a number of older boys on the bus, who to my 8-year old me, seemed really big and really scary. They were probably around the age of 12 or 13. But each day a group of them, led by a ringleader named Gregory, would begin the taunts and jeers. They knew that I was a latchkey kid, that I got off the bus everyday, climbed the hill to our 2-bedroom apartment, and let myself in with a single key hanging from an ice cream cone key chain. So they began to threaten that they were going to get off the bus with me, follow me into my house, and do things to me. The level of menace on the face of the ringleader, the intentional way that he looked at me, the perverse pleasure he got from seeing me squirm in fear, made me believe him. I’m unsure how long it went on –weeks, months. Eventually I told my mother. And it was a very uncomfortable conversation to have, since I had only recently even been taught what sex was! With one phone call to the bus driver, the harassment stopped. I got on the bus, and Greg was curiously silent. I was relieved.

Although we have a broad societal discourse about the premature sexualization of children, somehow, Black girls’ structural vulnerability to sexual abuse continues to escape our notice. Not only do school officials routinely fail to address the challenges that make Black girls particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, but existing disciplinary measures demand Black girls’ silence or compliance, and punish them harshly when they refuse.

Mo’ne Davis did not experience this online sexual commentary in a school setting. But her magnanimous
response to Casselberry should be understood within this broader framework of the ways that Black girls are sexualized, harassed, and left to fend for themselves. If schools are sexually hostile spaces for young women, then certainly a male-dominated culture of sport is no better. I worry that Mo’ne’s rush to empathize and have Casselberry reinstated suggests that she is learning to go along to get along in a male-dominated world of sport. At age 13, her remarks outline the faint edges of an all-too-familiar teenage angst, namely the desire to be liked and accepted.

I recognize that I’m supposed to celebrate Mo’ne Davis’ character and applaud for her being so generous. To be clear, I’m mega proud of Davis. She’s an absolute superstar in my book. I love it when Black girls win. And she is winning. But as both a scholar and a former Black girl, I know that Black women’s prodigious capacity for empathy comes with a cost. Davis’ pain matters here. Not Casselberry’s. Too often Black women and Black girls on their way to becoming Black women are taught that everyone else’s pain matters more than our own. Too often we teach Black girls that they have to lose to win. Mo’ne, a consummate athlete, knows better than that.

That invisibility of Black girl pain costs us our self-confidence, our emotional wellness, our livelihoods and sometimes our lives. And that is not a win. Mo’ne Davis deserves our love, our support, and our advocacy. Sexist and racist behavior is for losers. And we need to call it out, denounce it, dismantle it, and make space for Black girls to win.

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Brittney Cooper is a contributing writer at Salon, and teaches Women’s and Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers. Follow her on Twitter at @professorcrunk.

>via: [http://www.salon.com/2015/03/25/black_girls_sexual_burden_why_mone_davis_was_really_called_a_slut/#](http://www.salon.com/2015/03/25/black_girls_sexual_burden_why_mone_davis_was_really_called_a_slut/#)

#Kalsamysalaam #neogrio! #neogrio!

March 31st in Neo-Griot

PROFILE: Richard Pryor

THE NEW YORKER

SEPTEMBER 13, 1999

A Pryor Love
The life and times of America’s comic prophet of race.

BY HILTON ALS

Pryor enlightened his audience on race and interracial relationships using a flamboyant vocabulary that he’d learned growing up in his grandmother’s whorehouse.

Winter, 1973. Late afternoon: the entr’acte between dusk and darkness, when the people who conduct their business in the street—numbers runners in gray chesterfields, out-of-work barmaids playing the dozens, adolescents cultivating their cigarette jones and lust, small-time hustlers selling “authentic” gold wristwatches that are platinum bright—look for a place to roost and to drink in the day’s sin. Young black guy, looks like the comedian Richard Pryor, walks into one of his hangouts, Opal’s Silver Spoon Café. A greasy dive with an R. & B. jukebox, it could be in Detroit or in New York, could be anywhere. Opal’s has a proprietor—Opal, a young and wise black woman, who looks like the comedian Lily Tomlin—and a little bell over the door that goes tink-a-link, announcing all the handouts and gimmes who come to sit at Opal’s counter and talk about how needy their respective asses are.

Black guy sits at the counter, and Opal offers him some potato soup—“something nourishing,” she says. Black guy has moist, on-the-verge-of-lying-or-crying eyes and a raggedy Afro. He wears a green fatigue jacket, the kind of jacket brothers brought home from ‘Nam, which guys like this guy continue to wear long after they’ve returned home, too shell-shocked or stoned to care much about their haberdashery. Juke—that’s the black
guy’s name—is Opal’s baby, flopping about in all them narcotics he’s trying to get off of by taking that methadone, which Juke and Opal pronounce “metha-don” — the way two old-timey Southerners would, the way Juke and Opal’s elders might have, if they knew what that shit was, or was for.

Juke and Opal express their feelings for each other, their shared view of the world, in a lyrical language, a colored people’s language, which tries to atomize their anger and their depression. Sometimes their anger is wry: Opal is tired of hearing about Juke’s efforts to get a job, and tells him so. “Hand me that jive about job training,” she says. “You trained, all right. You highly skilled at not working.” But that’s not entirely true. Juke has submitted himself to the rigors of “rehabilitation.” “I was down there for about three weeks, at that place, working,” Juke says. “Had on a suit, tie. Shaving. Acting crazy. Looked just like a fool in the circus.” Pause. “And I’m fed up with it.” Pause. “Now I know how to do a job that don’t know how to be done no more.” Opal’s face fills with sadness. Looking at her face can fill your mind with sadness. She says, “For real?” It’s a rhetorical question that black people have always asked each other or themselves when they’re handed more hopelessness: Is this for real?

Night is beginning to spread all over Juke and Opal’s street; it is the color of a thousand secrets combined. The bell rings, and a delivery man comes in, carting pies. Juke decides that everyone should chill out—he’ll play the jukebox, they’ll all get down. Al Green singing “Let’s Stay Together” makes the pie man and Juke do a little finger-snapping, a little jive. Opal hesitates, says, “Naw,” but then dances anyway, and her shyness is just part of the fabric of the day, as uneventful as the delivery man leaving to finish up his rounds, or Opal and Juke standing alone in this little restaurant, a society unto themselves.

The doorman’s tiny peal. Two white people—a man and a woman, social workers—enter Opal’s. Youngish, trenchcoated. And the minute the white people enter, something terrible happens, from an aesthetic point of view. They alienate everything. They fracture our suspended disbelief. They interrupt our identification with the protagonists of the TV show we’ve been watching, which becomes TV only when those social workers start hassling our Juke, our Opal, equal halves of the same resilient black body. When we see those white people, we start thinking about things like credits, and remember that this is a television play, after all, written by the brilliant Jane Wagner, and played with astonishing alacrity and compassion by Richard Pryor and Lily Tomlin on “Lily,” Tomlin’s second variety special, which aired on CBS in 1973, and which remains, a little over a quarter of a century later, the most profound meditation on race and class that I have ever seen on a major network.

“We’re doing some community research and we’d like to ask you a few questions,” the white woman social worker declares as soon as she enters Opal’s. Juke and Opal are more than familiar with this line of inquiry, which presumes that people like them are always available for questioning—servants of the liberal cause. “I wonder if you can tell me, have you ever been addicted to drugs?” the woman asks Juke.

Pryor-as-Juke responds instantly. “Yeah, I been addicted,” he says. “I’m addicted right now—don’t write it down, man, be cool, it’s not for the public. I mean, what I go through is private.” He is incapable of making “Fuck you” his first response—or even his first thought. Being black has taught him how to allow white people their innocence. For black people, being around white people is sometimes like taking care of babies you don’t like, babies who throw up on you again and again, but whom you cannot punish, because they’re babies. Eventually, you direct that anger at yourself—it has nowhere else to go.

Juke tries to turn the questioning around a little, through humor, which is part of his pathos. “I have some questions,” he tells the community researchers, then tries to approximate their straight, white tone: “Who’s Pigmeat Markham’s Mama?” he asks. “Wilt Chamberlain the tallest colored chap you ever saw?”

When the white people have left and Juke is about to leave, wrapped in his thin jacket, he turns to Opal and says, “You sweet. You a sweet woman. . . . I’ll think aboutcha.” His eyes are wide with love and need, and maybe fear or madness. “Be glad when it’s spring,” he says to Opal. Pause. “Flower!”

“Lily” was never shown again on network television, which is not surprising, given that part of its radicalism is based on the fact that it features a white female star who tries to embody a black woman while communicating with a black man about substantive emotional matters, and who never wears anything as theatrically simple as blackface to do it; Tomlin plays Opal in whiteface, as it were. Nevertheless, “Juke and Opal,” which lasts all of nine minutes and twenty-five seconds, and which aired in the same season in which “Hawaii Five-O,” “The Waltons,” and “Ironside” were among television’s top-rated shows, remains historically significant for reasons other than the skin game.
As Juke, Richard Pryor gave one of his relatively few great performances in a project that he had not written or directed. He made use of the poignancy that marks all of his great comedic and dramatic performances, and of the vulnerability—the pathos cradling his sharp wit—that had seduced people into loving him in the first place. Tomlin kept Pryor on the show over objections from certain of the network’s executives, and it may have been her belief in him as a performer, combined with the high standards she set for herself and others, that spurred on the competitive-minded Pryor. His language in this scene feels improvised, confessional, and so internalized that it’s practically nonverbal: not unlike the best of Pryor’s own writing—the stories he tells when he talks shit into a microphone, doing standup. And as he sits at Opal’s counter we can see him falling in love with Tomlin’s passion for her work, recognizing it as the passion he feels when he peoples the stage with characters who might love him as much as Tomlin-as-Opal seems to now.

Pryor riffing and digressing in 1964 at Café Wha?: “No one was funnier, dearer, darker, heavier, stronger, more radical,” Lily Tomlin says of the retired comedian. “He was everything. And his humanity was just glorious.”

Although Richard Pryor was more or less forced to retire in 1994, eight years after he discovered that he had multiple sclerosis (“It’s the stuff God hits your ass with when he doesn’t want to kill ya—just slow ya down,” he told Entertainment Weekly in 1993), his work as a comedian, a writer, an actor, and a director amounts to a significant chapter not only in late-twentieth-century American comedy but in American entertainment in general. Pryor is best known now for his work in the lackadaisical Gene Wilder buddy movies or for abominations like “The Toy.” But far more important was the prescient commentary on the issues of race and sex in America that he presented through standup and sketches like “Juke and Opal”—the heartfelt and acute social observation, the comedy that littered the stage with the trash of the quotidian as it was sifted through his harsh and poetic imagination, and that changed the very definition of the word “entertainment,” particularly for a black entertainer.

The subject of blackness has taken a strange and unsatisfying journey through American thought: first, because blackness has almost always had to explain itself to a largely white audience in order to be heard, and, second, because it has generally been assumed to have only one story to tell—a story of oppression that plays on liberal guilt. The writers behind the collective modern ur-text of blackness—James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison—all performed some variation on the theme. Angry but distanced, their rage blanketed by charm, they lived and wrote to be liked. Ultimately, whether they wanted to or not, they in some way embodied the readers who appreciated them most—white liberals.

Richard Pryor was the first black American spoken-word artist to avoid this. Although he reprised the history of black American comedy—picking what he wanted from the work of great storytellers like Bert Williams, Redd Foxx, Moms Mabley, Nipsey Russell, LaWanda Page, and Flip Wilson—he also pushed everything one step further. Instead of adapting to the white perspective, he forced white audiences to follow him into his own experience. Pryor didn’t manipulate his audiences’ white guilt or their black moral outrage. If he played the race card, it was only to show how funny he looked when he tried to shuffle the deck. And as he made blackness an acknowledged part of the American atmosphere he also brought the issue of interracial love into the country’s discourse. In a culture whose successful male Negro authors wrote about interracial sex with a combination of reverence and disgust, Pryor’s gleeful, “fuck it” attitude had an effect on the general population which Wright’s “Native Son” or Baldwin’s “Another Country” had not had. His best work showed us that black men like him and the white women they loved were united in their disenfranchisement; in his life and onstage, he performed the great, largely unspoken story of America.

“I love Lily,” Pryor said in a Rolling Stone interview with David Felton, in 1974, after “Juke and Opal” had aired and he and Tomlin had moved on to other things. “I have a thing about her, a little crush. . . . I get in awe of her. I’d seen her on ‘Laugh-In’ and shit, and something about her is very sensual, isn’t it?”

Sensuality implies a certain physical abandonment, an acknowledgment of the emotional mess that oozes out
Pryor’s art defies the very definition of the word “order.” He based his style on digressions and riffs—the monologue as jam session. He reinvented standup, which until he developed his signature style, in 1971, had consisted largely of borscht-belt-style male comedians telling tales in the Jewish vernacular, regardless of their own religion or background. Pryor managed to make blacks interesting to audiences that were used to responding to a liberal Jewish sensibility—and, unlike some of his colored colleagues, he did so without “becoming” Jewish himself. (Dick Gregory, for example, was a political comedian in the tradition of Mort Sahl; Bill Cosby was a droll Jack Benny.) At the height of his career, Pryor never spoke purely in the complaint mode. He was often baffled by life’s complexities, but he rarely told my-wife-made-me-sleep-on-the-sofa jokes or did “bits” whose sole purpose was to “kill” an audience with a boffo punch line. Instead, he talked about characters—black street people, mostly. Because the life rhythm of a black junkie, say, implies a certain drift, Pryor’s stories did not have badda-bing conclusions. Instead, they were encapsulated in a physical attitude: each character was represented in Pryor’s walk, in his gestures—which always contained a kind of vicarious wonder—between the seams that hold our public selves together—and an understanding of the metaphors that illustrate that disjunction. (One of Tomlin’s early audition techniques was to tap-dance with taps taped to the soles of her bare feet.) It is difficult to find that human untidiness—what Pryor called “the madness” of everyday life—in the formulaic work now being done by the performers who ostensibly work in the same vein as Pryor and Tomlin. Compare the rawness of the four episodes of a television show that Pryor co-wrote and starred in for NBC in 1977 with any contemporary HBO show by Tracey Ullman (who needs blackface to play a black woman): the first Pryor special opens with a closeup of his face as he announces that he has not had to compromise himself to appear on a network-sponsored show. The camera then pulls back to reveal Pryor seemingly nude but with his genitalia missing. Pryor’s two best comedy albums, both of which were recorded during the mid to late seventies—“Bicentennial Nigger” and “That Nigger’s Crazy”—are not available on CD, but his two concert films, “Richard Pryor Live in Concert” and “Richard Pryor—Live on the Sunset Strip,” which were released in 1979 and 1982, respectively, are out on video. The concert films are excellent examples of what the Village Voice critic Carrie Rickey once described as Pryor’s ability to “scare us into laughing at his demons—our demons—exorcising them through mass hyperventilation.” “Pryor doesn’t tell jokes,” she wrote, “he tells all, in the correct belief that without punch lines, humor has more punch. And pungency.” Taken together, the concert films show the full panorama of Pryor’s moods: brilliant, boring, insecure, demanding, misogynist, racist, playful, and utterly empathetic.

Before Richard Pryor, there were only three aspects of black maleness to be found on TV or in the movies: the suave, pimp-style blandness of Billy Dee Williams; the big-dicked, quiet machismo of the football hero Jim Brown; and the cable-knit homilies of Bill Cosby. Pryor was the first image we’d ever had of black male fear. Not the kind of Stepin Fetchit noggin-bumpin’-into-walls fear that turned Buckwheat white when he saw a ghost in the “Our Gang” comedies popular in the twenties, thirties, and forties—a character that Eddie Murphy resuscitated in a presumably ironic way in the eighties on “Saturday Night Live.” Pryor was filled with dread and panic—an existential fear, based on real things, like racism and lost love. (In a skit on “In Living Color,” the actor Damon Wayans played Pryor sitting in his kitchen and looking terrified, while a voiceover said, “Richard Pryor—afraid of absolutely everything.”)

“Hi. I’m Richard Pryor.” Pause. “Hope I’m funny.” That was how he introduced himself to audiences for years, but he never sounded entirely convinced that he cared about being funny. Instead, Pryor embodied the voice of injured humanity. A satirist of his own experience, he revealed what could be considered family secrets—secrets about his past, and about blacks in general, and about his relationship to the black and white worlds he did and did not belong to. In the black community, correctness, political or otherwise, remains part of the mortar that holds lives together. Pryor’s comedy was a high-wire act: how to stay funny to a black audience while
The standard approach, in magazine articles about Pryor, has been to comment on his anger—in an imitation-colloquial language meant to approximate Pryor's voice. "Richard Pryor said it first: That nigger's crazy," begins a 1978 article in People magazine. And Pryor had fun with the uneasiness that the word "nigger" provoked in others. (Unlike Lenny Bruce, he didn’t believe that if you said a word over and over again it would lose its meaning.) Take his great "Supernigger" routine: "Look up in the sky, it's a crow, it's a bat. No, it's Supernigger! Yes, friends, Supernigger, with X-ray vision that enables him to see through everything except Whitey."

In 1980, in the second of three interviews that Barbara Walters conducted with Richard Pryor, this exchange took place:

WALTERS: When you're onstage . . . see, it's hard for me to say. I was going to say, you talk about niggers. I can't . . . you can say it. I can't say it.

PRYOR: You just said it.

WALTERS: Yeah, but I feel so . . .

PRYOR: You said it very good.

WALTERS: . . . uncomfortable.

PRYOR: Well, good. You said it pretty good.

WALTERS: O.K.

PRYOR: That's not the first time you said it. (Laughter.)

Pryor's anger, though, is actually not as interesting as his self-loathing. Given how much he did to make black pride part of American popular culture, it is arresting to see how at times his blackness seemed to feel like an ill-fitting suit. One gets the sense that he called himself a "nigger" as a kind of preemptive strike, because he never knew when the term would be thrown at him by whites, by other blacks, or by the women he loved. Because he didn't match any of the prevailing stereotypes of "cool" black maleness, he carved out an identity for himself that was not only "nigger" but "sub-nigger." In "Live on the Sunset Strip" he wears a maraschino-red suit with silk lapels, a black shirt, and a bow tie. He says, "Billy Dee Williams could hang out in this suit and look cool." He struts. "And me?" His posture changes from cocky to pitiful.

Pryor believed that there was something called unconditional love, which he alone had not experienced. But to whom could he, a "sub-nigger," turn for that kind of love? The working-class blacks who made him feel guilty for leaving them behind? His relatives, who acted as if it were their right to hit him up for cash because he'd used their stories to make it? The white people who felt safe with him because he was neurotic—a quality they equated with intelligence? The women who married him for money or status? The children he rarely saw? He was alienated from nearly everyone and everything except his need. This drama was what made Pryor's edge so sharp. He acted out against his fantasy by testing it with rude, brilliant commentary. A perfect role for Pryor might have been Dostoyevsky's antihero, Alexei, in "The Gambler," whose bemused nihilism affects every relationship he attempts. (Pryor once told Walters that he saw people "as the nucleus of a great idea that hasn't come to be yet.") That antiheroic anger prevents him from just telling a joke. He tells it through clenched teeth. He tells it to stave off bad times. He tells it to look for love.

**HIS LIFE, AS A BIT**

Black guy named Richard Pryor, famous, maybe a little high, appears on the eleventh Barbara Walters special, broadcast on May 29, 1979, and says this about his childhood, a sad house of cards he has glued together with wit:

PRYOR: It was hell, because I had nobody to talk to. I was a child, right, and I grew up seeing my mother . . . and my aunties going to rooms with men, you understand. . . .
WALTERS: Your grandmother ran a house of prostitution or a whorehouse.

PRYOR: Three houses. Three.

WALTERS: Three houses of prostitution. She was the chief madam.

PRYOR: . . . There were no others.

WALTERS: O.K. . . . Who believed in you? Who cared about you?

PRYOR: Richard Franklin Lennox Thomas Pryor the Third.

The isolation that Richard Pryor feels is elaborated on from time to time, like a bit he can't stop reworking. The sad bit, he could call it, if he did bits anymore, his skinny frame twisting around the words to a story that goes something like this: Born in Peoria, on December 1, 1940. “They called Peoria the model city. That meant it had the niggers under control.” Grew up in one of the whorehouses on North Washington Street, which was the house of his paternal grandmother, Marie Carter Pryor Bryant. “She reminded me of a large sunflower—big, strong, bright, appealing,” Pryor wrote in his 1995 memoir, “Pryor Convictions.” But “she was also a mean, tough, controlling bitch.”

Pryor called his father’s mother “Mama,” despite the fact that he had a mother, Gertrude. When Richard’s father, Buck Carter, met Gertrude, she was already involved in Peoria’s nefarious underworld, and she soon began working in Marie’s whorehouse. Everything in Richard Pryor’s world, as he grew up, centered on Marie, and he never quite recovered from that influence. “I come from criminal people,” he told one radio interviewer. At the age of six, he was sexually abused by a young man in the neighborhood (who, after Richard Pryor became Richard Pryor, came to his trailer on a film set and asked for his autograph). And Pryor never got over the division he saw in his mother: the way she could separate her emotional self from her battered body and yet was emotionally damaged anyway.

“At least, Gertrude didn’t flush me down the toilet, as some did,” Pryor wrote in his memoir. “The only person scarier than God was my mother. . . . One time Buck hit Gertrude, and she turned blue with anger and said ‘Okay, motherfucker, don’t hit me no more. . . . Don’t stand in front of me with fucking undershorts on and hit me, motherfucker.’ Quick as lightning, she reached out with her finger claws and swiped at my father’s dick. Ripped his nutsack off. I was just a kid when I saw this.” Pryor records the drama as a born storyteller would—in the details. And the detail that filters through his memory most clearly is the rhythm of Gertrude’s speech, its combination of profanity and rhetoric. Not unlike a routine by Richard Pryor.

Pryor soon discovered humor—the only form of manipulation he had in his community of con artists, hookers, and pimps. “I wasn’t much taller than my Daddy’s shin when I found that I could make my family laugh,” Pryor wrote.

I sat on a railing of bricks and found that when I fell off on purpose everyone laughed, including my grandmother, who made it her job to scare the shit out of people. . . . After a few more minutes of falling, a little dog wandered by and poo-pooed in our yard. I got up, ran to my grandmother, and slipped in the dog poop. It made Mama and the rest laugh again. Shit, I was really onto something then. So I did it a second time. “Look at that boy! He’s crazy!” That was my first joke. All in shit.

When Pryor was ten years old, his mother left his father and went to stay with relatives in Springfield, Illinois, but Pryor stayed with his grandmother. In a biography by John and Dennis Williams, Pryor’s teacher Marguerite Yingst Parker remembered him as “perpetually exhausted, sometimes lonely, always likable. . . . He was a poor black kid in what was then a predominantly white school, who didn’t mingle with his classmates on the playground.” Pryor often got through the tedium of school by entertaining his classmates. Eventually, Parker struck a deal with him: if he got to school on time, she would give him a few minutes each week to do a routine in front of the class. Not long afterward, Pryor met Juliette Whittaker, an instructor at the Carver Community Center. “He was about eleven, but looked younger because he was such a skinny little boy. And very bright,” she recalled in the Williams book. “We were rehearsing ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ and he was watching. He asked if he could be in the play. I told him we only had one part left, and he said, ‘I don’t care. I’ll take anything. I just want to be in the play.’ . . . He took the script home and, unbeknownst to anybody, he memorized the entire thing.”

When Pryor was in the eighth grade, a teacher who was fed up with his classroom routines asked him to leave school. He slowly became absorbed into the mundane working-class life that Peoria had to offer, taking a job at
a packing plant, running errands. When he was seventeen, he discovered that the black woman he was seeing had also been sleeping with his father. Then, in an attempt to escape, Pryor enlisted in the Army, in 1958. He was stationed in Germany, where he was involved in a racial incident: a young white soldier laughed too hard about the painful black parts in the Douglas Sirk film “Imitation of Life,” and Pryor and a number of other black inductees beat and stabbed him. Pryor went to jail, and when he was discharged, in 1960, he returned to his grandmother’s twilight world of street life and women for hire.

Pryor had some idea of what he wanted to be: a comedian like the ones he had seen on TV, particularly the black comedians Dick Gregory and Redd Foxx. He began performing at small venues in Peoria, telling topical jokes in the cadence of the time: “You know how to give Mao Tse-tung artificial respiration? No. Good!” The humor then “was kind of rooted in the fifties,” the comedian and actor Steve Martin told me. “Very straight jokes, you know. The dominant theme on television and in the public’s eye was something Catskills. Jokes. Punch lines.” And it was within that form that Pryor began to make a name for himself in the local clubs.

But Pryor was ambitious, and his ambition carried him away from Peoria. In 1961, he left behind his first wife and their child, “because I could,” and began working the night-club circuit in places like East St. Louis, Buffalo, and Youngstown, Ohio. In 1963, he made his way to New York. “I opened Newsweek and read about Bill Cosby,” Pryor told David Felton. “That fucked me up. I said, ‘God damn it, this nigger’s doin’ what I’m fixin’ to do. I want to be the only nigger, ain’t no room for two niggers.’ ” In New York, Pryor began appearing regularly at Café Wha?. By 1966, he had begun to make it nationally. He appeared on a show hosted by Rudy Vallee called “On Broadway Tonight.” Then on Ed Sullivan, Merv Griffin, and Johnny Carson—appearing each time with marcelled hair and wearing a black suit and tie that made him look like an undertaker. But his jokes were like placards that read “Joke”: “When I was young I used to think my people didn’t like me. Because they used to send me to the store for bread and then they’d move.” Or “I heard a knock on the door. I said to my wife, ‘There’s a knock on the door.’ My wife said, ‘That’s pecul-yar, we ain’t got no door.’ ”

He was fêted as the new Bill Cosby by such show-business luminaries as Bobby Darin and Sid Caesar, and other comedians and writers counselled him to keep it that way: “Don’t mention the fact that you’re a nigger. Don’t go into such bad taste,” Pryor remembers being told by a white writer called Murray Roman. “They were gonna try to help me be nothin’ as best they could,” he said in the Rolling Stone interview. “The life I was leading, it wasn’t me. I was a robot. Beep. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Sands Hotel. Maids are funny. Beep. . . . I didn’t feel good. I didn’t feel I could tell anybody to kiss my ass, ‘cause I didn’t have no ass, you dig?”

A drug habit kicked in. Then, in 1967, while Pryor was doing a show in Las Vegas, he broke down. “I looked out at the audience,” Pryor wrote. “The first person I saw was Dean Martin, seated at one of the front tables. He was staring right back at me. . . . I checked out the rest of the audience. They were staring at me as intently as Dean, waiting for that first laugh. . . . I asked myself, Who’re they looking at, Rich? . . . And in that flash of introspection when I was unable to find an answer, I crashed. . . . I finally spoke to the sold-out crowd: ‘What the fuck am I doing here?’ Then I turned and walked off the stage.”

He was through with what he’d been doing: “I was a Negro for twenty-three years. I gave that shit up. No room for advancement.”

In the following years—1968 through 1971—Pryor worked on material that became more or less what we know today as the Richard Pryor experience. A close friend, the comedian and writer Paul Mooney, took him to the looser, more politicized environs of Berkeley, and Pryor holed up there and wrote.

The black folklorist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston once wrote that, although she had “landed in the crib of negroism” at birth, it hadn’t occurred to her until she left her home town that her identity merited a legitimate form of intellectual inquiry. It was only after Pryor had left Peoria and wrested a certain level of success from the world that he was able to see his own negroism, and what made it unique. As Mel Watkins writes, in his book “On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying,” after Pryor moved to Berkeley and met the writers Cecil Brown and Ishmael Reed he discovered that “accredited intellectuals” could share “his affection and enthusiasm for the humor and lifestyles of common black folks.” Pryor also discovered Malcolm X’s speeches and Marvin Gaye’s album “What’s Going On.” Both taught him how to treat himself as just another character in a story being told. He distanced himself from the more confessional Lenny Bruce—whose work had already influenced him to adopt a hipper approach to language—and “Richard Pryor” became no more important than the winos or junkies he talked about.

Pryor began to reconstruct himself first through the use of sound—imagining the sound of Frankenstein taking
In those years, Pryor began to create characters that were based on his own experience; he explored the territory and language of his family and his childhood—that fertile and unyielding ground that most artists visit again and again. The producer George Schlatter, who watched Pryor’s transformation at a number of clubs in the late sixties and the early seventies, told me, “Richard grew up in a whorehouse. The language he used, he was entitled to it. Now the kids coming up, they use the word ‘fuck’ and that becomes the joke. Richard used the word ‘fuck’ on the way to the joke. It was part of his vocabulary. It was part of his life experience.” As Pryor began to recall his relatives’ voices, he became able to see them from the outside, not without a certain degree of fondness. “My aunt Maxine could suck a neckbone, it was a work of art,” he’d say. Or:

My father was one of them eleven o’clock niggers. [Voice becoming more high-pitched] “Say, say, where you going, Richard? Say, huh? Well, nigger, you ain’t ask nobody if you could go no place. What the fuck, you a man now, nigger? Get a job. I don’t give a fuck where you go, be home by eleven. You understand eleven, don’t you, nigger? You can tell time, can’t you? . . . Eleven o’clock, bring your ass here. I don’t mean down the street singing with them niggers, either. I ain’t getting you ass out of jail no more, motherfucker. That’s right. [Pause] And bring me back a paper.”

Pryor’s routines became richer in depth, in imagination—rather like the characters Edgar Lee Masters created for his brilliant, problematic “Spoon River Anthology.” But the most popular and best-known of Pryor’s characters—Mudbone, an old black man from Tupelo, Mississippi, whom Pryor created in 1975—also shows how a Pryor character can be too well drawn, too much of a crossover tool. Mudbone spoke with a strong Southern dialect and his tales were directly descended from the slave narratives that told (as the critic Darryl Pinckney described them) “of spirits riding people at night, of elixirs dearly bought from conjure men, chicken bones rubbed on those from whom love was wanted.” From “Mudbone Goes to Hollywood”:

OLD NEGRO MAN’S VOICE: There was an old man name was Mudbone . . . And he used to sit right here in front of the barbecue shop and he’d dip snuff . . . and he’d spit . . . . He’d been in a great love affair. That right. He had a woman—he loved her very much—he had to hurt her though ‘cause she fucked around on him. He said he knew she was fucking around ‘cause I’d leave home and go to work and come back home, toilet seat be up. . . . So I set a little old trap for her there. Went to work early, you know, always did get up early, ‘cause I like to hear the birds and shit . . . . So this particular morning, went on to work. Set my trap for this girl. She was pretty, too. Loved her. Sweet as she could be. Breast milk like Carnation milk. So I nailed the toilet seat down and doubled back and I caught that nigger trying to lift it up. So, say, Well, nigger, send your soul to heaven, ‘cause your ass is mine up in here.

Mudbone was the character that Pryor’s audiences requested again and again. But, as Pauline Kael noted in her review of “Live on the Sunset Strip,” Pryor became tired of him: “Voices, ostensibly from the audience, can be heard. One of them calls, ‘Do the Mudbone routine,’ and, rather wearily, saying that it will be for the last time, Pryor sits on a stool and does the ancient storyteller [who] was considered one of his great creations. And the movie goes thud. . . . Pryor looks defeated.”

And he should: Mudbone was the trick he turned and got tired of turning—a safe woolly-headed Negro, a comic version of Katherine Anne Porter’s old Uncle Jimbilly. Compare Mudbone, for example, to the innovative and threatening “Bicentennial Nigger” character: “Some nigger two hundred years old in blackface. With stars and stripes on his forehead, lips just a-shining.” “Battle Hymn” theme music, and Pryor’s voice becomes Stepin Fetchit-like. “But he happy. He happy, ’cause he been here two hundred years. . . . Over here in America. ‘I’m so glad you’ll took me out of Dahomey,’ ” Shuckin’ and jivin’ laugh. “ ‘I used to could live to be a hundred and fifty, now I dies of the high blood pressure by the time I’m fifty-two.’ ”

By 1973, Richard Pryor had become a force in the entertainment industry. He now appeared regularly in such diverse venues as Redd Foxx’s comedy club in Central L.A., where the clientele was mostly black, and the Improv, on Sunset Strip, which was frequented by white show-business hipsters. And he behaved as badly as he wanted to wherever he wanted to—whether with women, with alcohol, or with drugs. “I got plenty of money but I’m still a nigger,” he told a radio interviewer. He had become Richard Pryor, the self-described “black
"The idea of a black guy going out and saying he fucked a white woman was outrageous . . . but funny," Schlatter told me. "White women dug Richard because he was a naughty little boy, and they wanted some of that. He was talking about real things. Nobody was talking below the waist. Richard went right for the lap, man."

Pryor had directed a film called “Bon Appétit” a few years before—the footage is now lost. “The picture opened with a black maid having her pussy eaten at the breakfast table by the wealthy white man who owned the house where she worked,” he recalled in “Pryor Convictions.” “Then a gang of Black Panther types burst into the house and took him prisoner. As he was led away, the maid fixed her dress and called, ‘Bon appétit, baby!’ ”

Each time someone asked why “that nigger was crazy,” Pryor upped the ante by posing a more profound question. On a trip to a gun shop with David Felton in the early seventies, for example, Pryor asked the salesman, “How come all the targets are black?” The salesman smiled, embarrassed. “Uh, I don’t know, Richard,” he said, shaking his head. “I just—” “No, I mean I always wondered about that, you know?” Pryor said.

Pryor’s edginess caught the attention of Mel Brooks, who was already an established Hollywood figure, and in 1972 Brooks hired him to work on a script called “Black Bart,” the story of a smooth, Gucci-wearing black sheriff in the eighteen-seventies American West. This was to be Pryor’s real crossover gig, not only as a writer but as an actor, but the leading role eventually went to Cleavon Little. Whatever the reason for not casting Pryor (some people who were involved with the movie told me that no one could deal with his drinking and his drug use), there are several scenes in the film (renamed “Blazing Saddles”) that couldn’t have been written by anyone else. One scene didn’t make it in. It shows a German saloon singer, Lili von Dyke, in her darkened dressing room with Bart, whom she is trying to seduce.

**LILI:** Here, let me sit next to you. Tell me, *schatzi*, is it true vat zey say about the way you people are gifted? . . . Oh, oh, it’s twue, it’s twue, it’s twue, it’s twue.

**BART:** Excuse me, you’re sucking my arm.

Pryor’s best performances (in films he didn’t write himself) date from these years. There is his poignant and striking Oscar-nominated appearance in Sidney J. Furie’s 1972 film, “Lady Sings the Blues.” As the Piano Man to Diana Ross’s Billie Holiday, Pryor gives a performance that is as emotional and as surprising as his work in “Juke and Opal.” And then there is his brilliant comic turn as Sharp-Eye Washington, the disreputable private detective in Sidney Poitier’s 1974 film, “Uptown Saturday Night”—a character that makes use of Pryor’s ability to convey paranoia with his body: throughout the movie, he looks like a giant exclamation point. And as Zeke Brown, in “Blue Collar,” Paul Schrader’s 1978 film about an automobile plant in Detroit, Pryor gives his greatest sustained—if fraught—film performance. In an interview with the writer Kevin Jackson, Schrader recalls his directorial début:

“There were . . . problems. Part of it was to do with Richard’s style of acting. Being primarily versed in stand-up comedy he had a creative life of between three and four takes. The first one would be good, the second would be real good, the third would be terrific, and the fourth would probably start to fall off. . . . The other thing Richard would do when he felt his performance going flat was to improvise and change the dialogue just like he would have done in front of a live audience, and he would never tell me or anyone what he was going to do.

Generally, though, Pryor had a laissez-faire attitude toward acting. One always feels, when looking at the work that he did in bad movies ranging from “You’ve Got to Walk It Like You Talk It or You’ll Lose That Beat,” in 1971, to “Superman III,” released twelve years and twenty-seven films later, that Pryor had a kind of contempt for these mediocre projects—and for his part in them. Perhaps no character was as interesting to Richard Pryor as Richard Pryor. He certainly didn’t work hard to make us believe that he was anyone other than himself as he walked through shameful duds like “Adiós Amigo.” On the other hand, his fans paid all the love and all the money in the world to see him be himself: they fed his vanity, and his vanity kept him from being a great actor.

In September, 1977, Lily Tomlin asked Pryor to be part of a benefit at the Hollywood Bowl to oppose
Proposition Six, a Californian anti-gay initiative. Onstage, Pryor started doing a routine about the first time he’d sucked dick. The primarily gay members of the audience hooted at first—but they didn’t respond well to Pryor’s frequent use of the word “faggot.” Pryor’s rhythm was thrown off. “Shit . . . this is really weird,” he exploded. “This is an evening about human rights. And I am a human being. . . . I just wanted to test you to your motherfucking soul. I’m doing this shit for nuthin’. . . . When the niggers was burning down Watts, you motherfuckers was doin’ what you wanted to do on Hollywood Boulevard . . . didn’t give a shit about it.” And as he walked offstage: “You Hollywood faggots can kiss my happy, rich black ass.”

Pryor liked to tell the truth, but he couldn’t always face it himself. Although he spent years searching for an idealized form of love, his relationships were explosive and short-lived. From 1969 to 1978, he had three serious relationships or marriages—two with white women, one with a black woman—and two children. There were also affairs with film stars such as Pam Grier and Margot Kidder, and one with a drag queen. He was repeatedly in trouble for beating up women and hotel clerks. His sometimes maudlin self-involvement when a woman left him rarely involved any kind of development or growth. It merely encouraged the self-pity that informed much of his emotional life.

By the late seventies, Pryor was freebasing so heavily that he left his bedroom only to go to work and even then only if he could smoke some more on the set. He was even more paranoid than he’d always been and showed very little interest in the world. The endless cycle of dependence—from the drinking to the coke to the other drugs he needed to come down from the coke—began to destroy his health. Then, in 1980, he tried to break the cycle by killing himself. He wrote his own account of the episode, in “Pryor Convictions”:

After free-basing without interruption for several days in a row, I wasn’t able to discern one day from the next. . . . “I know what I have to do,” I mumbled. “I’ve brought shame to my family. . . . I’ve destroyed my career. I know what I have to do.” . . . I reached for the cognac bottle on the table in front of me and poured it all over me. Real natural, methodical. As the liquid soiled my body and clothing, I wasn’t scared. . . . I was in a place called There. . . . I picked up my Bic lighter. . . . WHOOSH! I was engulfed in flame. . . . Sprinting down the driveway, I went out the gates and ran down the street. . . . Two cops tried to help me. My hands and face were already swollen. My clothes burnt in tatters. And my smoldering chest smelled like a burned piece of meat. . . . “Is there?” I asked. “Is there what?” someone asked. “Oh Lord, there is no help for a poor widow’s son, is there?”

Pryor was in critical condition at the Sherman Oaks Community Hospital for seven weeks. When Jennifer Lee—a white woman, whom he married a year later—went to visit him, he described himself as a “forty-year-old burned-up nigger.” And, in a sense, Pryor never recovered from his suicide attempt. “Live on the Sunset Strip,” which came out three years later, is less a pulled-together performance than the performance of a man trying to pull himself together. He could no longer tell the truth. He couldn’t even take the truth. And, besides, people didn’t want the truth (a forty-year-old burned-up nigger). They wanted Richard Pryor—“sick,” but not ill.

Jennifer Lee was born and grew up in Ithaca, New York, one of three daughters of a wealthy lawyer. In her twenties, she moved to L.A. to become an actress, had affairs with Warren Beatty and Roman Polanski, and appeared in several B movies. She met Pryor in 1977, when she was hired to help redecorate his house. “We sat on an oversized brass bed in Richard’s house,” she wrote in an article for Spin magazine. “He was blue—heartstic over a woman who was ‘running game’ on him. He was putting a major dent in a big bottle of vodka. You could feel the tears and smell the gardenias, even with hip, white-walled nasal passages.” Since that day, she told me, laughing, as we sat in the garden at the Château Marmont, in L.A., last winter, she has always been “the head bitch.”

As Jennifer talked with me that afternoon, dressed in black leather pants and a black blazer, her white skin made even whiter by her maroon lipstick, I thought of the photographs I had seen of her with Pryor, some of which were reproduced in her 1991 memoir, “Tarnished Angel.” These images were replaced by others: the white actress Shirley Knight berating Al Freeman, Jr., in the film version of Amiri Baraka’s powerful play, “Dutchman,” and Diane Arbus’s haunting photograph of a pregnant white woman and her black husband sitting on a bench in Washington Square in the sixties. Then I thought of Pryor’s routines on interracial sex. From “Black Man, White Woman”:

Don’t ever marry a white woman in California. A lot of you sisters probably saying “Don’t marry a white woman anyway, nigger.” [Pause] Shit. . . . Sisters look at you like you killed yo’ Mama when you out with a white woman. You can’t laugh that shit off, either. [High-pitched, fake-jovial voice] “Ha ha she’s not with me.”
There really is a difference between white women and black women. I’ve dated both. Yes, I have. . . . Black women, you be suckin’ on their pussy and they be like, “Wait, nigger, shit. A little more to the left, motherfucker. You gonna suck the motherfucker, get down.” You can fuck white women and if they don’t come they say, “It’s all right, I’ll just lay here and use a vibrator.”

Pryor was not only an integrationist but an integrationist of white women and black men, one of the most taboo adult relationships. The judgments that surround any interracial couple: White girls who are into black dudes are sluts. White dudes aren’t enough for them; only a big-dicked black guy can satisfy them. Black dudes who are into white girls don’t like their kind. And, well, you know how they treat their women: they abuse them; any white girl who goes out with one is a masochist. The air in America is thick with these misconceptions, and in the seventies it was thicker still. Plays and films like “A Taste of Honey,” “A Patch of Blue,” “Deep Are the Roots,” “All God’s Chillun’ Got Wings,” and “The Great White Hope” gave a view of the black man as both destroyer and nursemaid to a galaxy of white women who were sure to bring him down. But no real relationships exist in these works. The black male protagonists are more illustration than character. (Though they make excellent theatrical agitprop: what a surplus of symbols dangles from their mythic oversized penises!) In his work, Pryor was one of the first black artists to unknot the narrative of that desire and to expose it. In life he had to live through it as painfully as anyone else.

When Jennifer Lee first slept with Pryor, she told me, she touched his hair and he recoiled: its texture was all the difference in the world between them. That difference is part of the attraction for both members of interracial couples. “Ain’t no such thing as an ugly white woman,” says a character in Eldridge Cleaver’s 1968 polemic, “Soul on Ice.” In some ways Pryor found it easier to be involved with white women than with black women: he could blame their misunderstandings on race, and he could take advantage of the guilt they felt for what he suffered as a black man.

Yet, while Pryor may have felt both attracted by and ashamed of his difference from Lee, he also pursued her through all his drug blindness and self-absorption because he saw something of himself in her. “What no one gets,” Lee told me, “is that one of the ways Richard became popular was through women falling in love with him—they saw themselves in him, in his not fitting in, the solitude of it all, and his willingness to be vulnerable as women are. And disenfranchised, of course, as women are.” That black men and white women were drawn to each other through their oppression by white men was a concept I had first seen expressed in the feminist Shulamith Firestone’s book “The Dialectic of Sex.” There is a bond in oppression, certainly, but also a rift because of it—a contempt for the other who marks you as different—which explains why interracial romance is so often informed by violence. Cleaver claimed that he raped white women because that was the only kind of empowerment he could find in his brutal world. At times, Pryor directed a similar rage at Jennifer Lee, and she, at times, returned it.

Life in the eighties: Pryor gets up. Does drugs. Drives over to the Comedy Store to work out a routine. Has an argument with Jennifer after a party. Maybe they fly to Hawaii. Come back in a week or so. Some days, Pryor is relaxed in his vulnerability. Other days, he tries to throw her out of the car. Richard’s Uncle Dickie says about Jennifer, who is from an Irish family, “Irish are niggers turned inside out.” Richard says about Jennifer, “The tragedy was that Jennifer could keep up with me.” And she did. They married in 1981. They divorced in 1982.

With Lee, Pryor took the same trajectory that he had followed with many women before her. He began with a nearly maudlin reverence for her beauty and ended with paranoia and violence. In “Tarnished Angel,” Lee describes Pryor photographing her as she was being sexually attacked by a drug dealer he hung out with—a lowlife in the tradition of the people he had grown up with. Pryor could be brutally dissociative and sadistic, especially with people he cared about: he did not separate their degradation from his own. He was also pleased when Lee was jealous of the other women he invariably became involved with. And when she left him, she claims, he stalked her.

Pryor got married again in 1986, to Flynn Be-Laine, two years after she’d given birth to his son Steven. Lee moved back to New York, where she wrote a challenging review of Pryor’s film “Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling,” for People:

Well, Richard, you blew it. I went to see “Jo Jo Dancer.” . . . I went looking for the truth, the real skinny. Well, guess what? It wasn’t there. . . . How sad. After all, it was you who was obsessed by the truth, be it onstage or in your private life. . . . You had no sacred cows. That’s why I fell in love with you, why I hung in through the wonder and madness. . . . Listen to your white honky bitch,
Richard: Ya gotta walk it like you talk it or you'll lose that beat.

But later the same year, when Lee interviewed Pryor for *Spin*, they had reached a kind of détente:

LEE: What about the rage, the demons?

PRYOR: They don’t rage much anymore.

LEE: Like a tired old monster?

PRYOR: Very tired. He hath consumed me.

LEE: Has this lack of rage quieted your need to do standup?

PRYOR: Something has. I’m glad it happened *after* I made money.

Pryor had gone sober in 1983 and he soon recognized that, along with alcohol, he needed to relinquish some of the ruthless internal navigations that had given his comedy its power. He performed live less and less. There were flashes of the old brilliance: on Johnny Carson, for example, when he responded to false rumors that he had AIDS. And when his public raised its fickle refrain—“He’s sick, he’s washed up”—he often rallied, but in the last eight years of his performing life he became a more conventional presence.

Pryor divorced Flynn in 1991, and in 1994 he placed a call to Jennifer. He was suffering from degenerative multiple sclerosis, he told her, and wouldn’t be able to work much longer. “He said, ‘My life’s a mess. Will you help me out?’ ” she recalls. “I thought long and hard about it. . . . I wasn’t sure it would last, because Richard loves to manipulate people and see them dance. But, see, he can’t do that anymore, because he finally bottomed. That’s the only reason Richard is allowing his life to be in any kind of order right now.”

Lee came back to Pryor in July of that year. “When I got there, he was in this ridiculous rental for, like, six thousand dollars a month,” she told me. “Five bedrooms, seven bathrooms. Honey, it was classic. You couldn’t write it better.” Lee helped him to find a smaller house in Encino, and she has cared for him since then. He has two caregivers and is bathed and dressed in a collaborative effort that has shades of Fellini. He spends his days in a custom-made wheelchair, while others read to him or give him physical or speech therapy. Every Friday, he goes to the movies. According to Lee, he can speak well when he wants to, but he doesn’t often want to. “Sometimes he’ll say, ‘Leave me the fuck alone, Jenny,’ ” she tells me, laughing. “Just the other day, Richard was sitting, staring out the window, and his caregiver said, ‘Mr. Richard, what are you thinking about?’ He said, ‘I’m thinking about how much money I pay all you motherfuckers.’ ” He doesn’t see his children much, or his other ex-wives, or the people he knew when he still said things like “I dig show business. I do. . . . I wake up every morning and I kiss it. Show business, you fine bitch.”

**BLUE MOVIE**

“Was that corny?” Lily Tomlin said to me one afternoon last winter when I told her I’d heard that certain CBS executives hadn’t wanted her to kiss Pryor good night at the close of “Lily,” back in 1973. After all, Pryor was then a disreputable black comic with an infamous foul mouth, and Lily Tomlin had just come from “Laugh-In,” where she had attracted nationwide attention. Tomlin kissed him anyway, and it was, I think, the first time I had ever seen a white woman kiss a black man—I was twelve—and it was almost certainly the first time I had ever seen Richard Pryor.

Tomlin and I were sitting with Jane Wagner, her partner and writer for thirty years, in a Cuban restaurant—one of their favorite places in Los Angeles. Tomlin and Wagner were the only white people there.

“We just loved Richard,” Tomlin told me. “He was the only one who could move you to tears. No one was funnier, dearer, darker, heavier, stronger, more radical. He was everything. And his humanity was just glorious.”

“What a miracle ‘Juke and Opal’ got on,” Wagner said. “The network treated us as if we were total political radicals. I guess we were. And they hated Richard. They were so threatened by him.”

CBS had insisted that Tomlin and Wagner move “Juke and Opal” to the end of the show, so that people
wouldn’t switch channels in the middle, bringing down the ratings. “It threw the whole shape of the show off,”
Tomlin recalled in a 1974 interview. “It made ‘Juke and Opal’ seem like some sort of Big Message, which is not
what I intended. . . . I wasn’t out to make any, uh, heavy statements, any real judgments.”

“Everybody kept saying it wasn’t funny, but we wanted to do little poems. I mean, when you think of doing a
drug addict in prime time!” Wagner told me. And what they did is a poem of sorts. It was one of the all too few
opportunities that Tomlin had to showcase, on national television, the kind of performance she and Pryor
pioneered.

“Lily and Richard were a revolution, because they based what they did on real life, its possibilities,” Lorne
Michaels, the producer of “Saturday Night Live,” told me. “You couldn’t do that kind of work now on network
television, because no one would understand it. . . . Lily and Richard were the exemplars of a kind of craft.
They told us there was a revolution coming in the field of entertainment, and we kept looking to the left, and it
didn’t come.”

It is odd to think that Richard Pryor’s period of pronounced popularity and power lasted for only a decade, really
—from 1970 to 1980. But comedy is rock and roll, and Pryor had his share of hits. The enormous territory he
carved out for himself remains more or less his own. Not that it hasn’t been scavenged by other comedians:
Eddie Murphy takes on Pryor’s belligerent side, Martin Lawrence his fearful side, Chris Rock his hysteria, Eddie
Griffin his ghoulish goofiness. But none of these comedians approaches Pryor’s fundamental strangeness,
vulnerability, or political intensity. Still, their work demonstrates the power of his influence: none of them would
exist at all were it not for Richard Pryor. The actor Richard Belzer described him to me as “the ultimate artistic
beacon.” “It was like he was the sun and we were planets,” Belzer said. “He was the ultimate. He took socially
complex situations and made you think about them, and yet you laughed. He’s so brilliantly funny, it was
revelatory. He’s one of those rare people who define a medium.”

According to Lee, Pryor has been approached by a number of artists who see something of themselves in him.
Damon Wayans and Chris Rock wanted to star in a film version of Pryor’s life. The Hughes Brothers expressed
interest in making a documentary. In 1998, the Kennedy Center gave Pryor its first Mark Twain Prize, and
Chevy Chase, Whoopi Goldberg, Robin Williams, and others gathered to pay tribute to him. Pryor’s written
acceptance of the award, however, shows a somewhat reluctant acknowledgment of his status as an icon: “It is
nice to be regarded on par with a great white man—now that’s funny!” he wrote. “Seriously, though, two things
people throughout history have had in common are hatred and humor. I am proud that, like Mark Twain, I have
been able to use humor to lessen people’s hatred!”

In some ways, Pryor probably realizes that his legendary status has weakened the subversive impact of his
work. People are quick to make monuments of anything they live long enough to control. It’s not difficult to see
how historians will view him in the future. An edgy comedian. A Mudbone. But will they take into account the
rest of his story: that essentially American life, full of contradictions; the life of a comedian who had an excess
of both empathy and disdain for his audience, who exhausted himself in his search for love, who was a
confusion of female and male, colored and white, and who acted out this internal drama onstage for our
entertainment.

Hilton Als, The New Yorker’s theatre critic, wrote the catalogue essay for the Robert Gober retrospective
currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art.

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>via: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1999/09/13/a-pryor-love?
mbid=nl_032915_Daily&CNDID=30109741&spMailingID=7620834&spUserID=NjQyOTc2MTkzNjES1&spReportId=NjQyNTY1OTYwS0
Contested Legacy of Dr. Ben, a Father of African Studies

By SAM KESTENBAUM
African studies professor Yosef Alfredo Antonio ben-Jochannan was born on December 31, 1918 in Ethiopia to a Puerto Rican woman, Julia Matta and an Ethiopian man, Kriston ben-Jochannan. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to St. Croix, part of the United States Virgin Islands, where he grew up as an only child. ben-Jochannan attended the Christian Stead School in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. After graduation from high school in 1936, ben-Jochannan attended the University of Puerto Rico where, in 1938, he received his B.S. degree in engineering. During that summer, ben-Jochannan’s father sent him to Ethiopia to study firsthand the ancient history of African people. He returned home and received his M.A. degree in anthropology from the University of Havana in 1939. ben-Jochannan holds Ph.D. degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Havana.

In 1940, ben-Jochannan immigrated to the United States and working as senior draftsman for architecture firm, Emery Roth & Sons, in New York City. Seven years later, he began leading tour groups to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. He led the groups twice a year for several decades. ben-Jochannan’s teaching career began in 1950 at Malcolm-King Harlem College and City College of New York in New York City. In 1976, he became an adjunct professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. ben-Jochannan has worked closely with other notable Africana studies scholars including John Henrik Clarke, Edward Scobie, and Leonard Jeffries.

ben-Jochannan has written and published over forty-nine books and papers including, We the Black Jews, Black Man of the Nile and His Family, and Africa: Mother of Major Western Religions

The faded plaque to the right of the door said “Jochannan, Yosef B.,” but visitors to this nursing home on the northern edge of the Bronx knew the frail 96-year-old inside by another name: Dr. Ben.

As a sign of respect, many would also bend down on one knee.

The room was covered in mementos from a life spent between continents, weaving together the threads of the African diaspora: honors and awards, photos of Egyptian statues, kente cloth, a mug decorated with hieroglyphs and piles of letters from admirers and acolytes.

Yosef Alfredo Antonio Ben-Jochannan seemed unaware of the shrine that had accumulated around him. His eyes were barely open. He sat hunched in his wheelchair, dressed in baggy pants, a faded purple sweatshirt and a kufi.

One of his daughters held his hand; a granddaughter showed him photos of her own child on a cellphone.

Though he now had difficulty speaking, exhausted by even the smallest effort, Mr. Ben-Jochannan was once a powerful orator and a prolific author, one of the most vital and radical Afrocentric voices of his generation.
And he may have been the last. On March 19, Mr. Ben-Jochannan died, leaving behind 13 children from three marriages and a generation of intellectuals and activists who looked to him for guidance.

His life spanned eras. When Mr. Ben-Jochannan was born, Africa was largely under colonial rule, the Voting Rights Act was a half-century away and the lynching of black Americans was at its peak.

To some, Mr. Ben-Jochannan was a sage, a self-taught scholar who dedicated his life to uncovering the suppressed history of a people, challenging narratives that had written Africa out of world history.

In the 1960s, Mr. Ben-Jochannan emerged as prominent figure in Harlem, pushing his anticolonial message to its limit, claiming that the very foundations of Western civilization, including Greek philosophy, Judaism and Christianity, were African in origin. He regularly lectured to crowded auditoriums; he was a disciple of Marcus Garvey and a confidant of Malcolm X, and he appeared on stages with Amiri Baraka, Al Sharpton, James Brown and Louis Farrakhan.

“He is a kind of godfather to all of us in African and Afro-American studies,” Cornel West, the author and activist, said. “I salute him. I was blessed to study at his feet.”

And yet to others Mr. Ben-Jochannan was an impostor and a historical revisionist. The Anti-Defamation League, troubled by books of his with titles like “We the Black Jews: Witness to the ‘White Jewish Race’ Myth” stopped just short of calling him an anti-Semite.

His work, the group once wrote, was “blatantly inaccurate” and “unworthy of any educational institution.”

But Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s legacy is not confined to academic debate. As part of his enterprise, he took thousands of black Americans on tours of the Nile Valley, to visit the pyramids and temples of ancient Egypt, where he always took special care to point out the faces on statues and shapes of the figures in hieroglyphs.

Asked in the weeks before his death what drove him to make these repeated pilgrimages to Egypt, Mr. Ben-Jochannan cleared his throat and answered very slowly. “I wanted people to see their faces were the same," he said.

Mr. Ben-Jochannan was born, he claimed, in Ethiopia, to an Ethiopian Jewish father and a Puerto Rican mother (herself from Yemeni Jewish stock). But there is little evidence for that other than his own word; some peers, and even a family member, have privately expressed doubts.

Most accounts agree that wherever he was born, Mr. Ben-Jochannan was raised in the Caribbean and moved to New York City around 1940.

Harlem at that time was swirling with various strains of black nationalism in the wake of Mr. Garvey’s pan-Africanist movement. This is where Mr. Ben-Jochannan found his voice, holding impromptu lectures in city squares and talks at community centers. He later began teaching at Harlem Prep, an experimental school that
opened in 1967, and at Malcolm-King: Harlem College Extension, a two-year liberal arts school, in the 1970s and '80s.

Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s self-published books — around 20 volumes in total, with titles like "Africa: Mother of Western Civilization" and "Black Man of the Nile and His Family" — were collaged with hieroglyphs and hand-drawn maps. Ignored by academia, they became staples in Afrocentric libraries.

“I consider Dr. Ben the greatest of the self-trained historians,” said Paul Coates, founder of Black Classics Press, who would later work as Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s publisher. “There’s still no one like him.”

Having already established a reputation among African-Americans, in 1973 Mr. Ben-Jochannan joined Cornell University’s Africana Studies and Research Center (at the time only four years old), in Ithaca, N.Y., as a visiting professor.

He was a distinguished figure at the Africana Center, eventually becoming an adjunct over his 15-year affiliation with Cornell. A painted portrait of Mr. Ben-Jochannan still hangs at the school.

During that period, Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s 15-day trips to Egypt, billed as “Dr. Ben’s Alkebu-Lan Educational Tours,” using what he said was an ancient name for Africa, were more popular than ever. They typically ran three times a summer, shuttling as many as 200 people to Africa per season. In 1987, one ticket, all expenses paid, was $1,545.

“I was always taught that the ancient Egyptians were Caucasian,” said Anthony T. Browder, who traveled with Mr. Ben-Jochannan in the 1980s. But in southern Egypt, Mr. Browder saw a statue of a pharaoh that left him speechless. “The face is African,” said Mr. Browder, who is the director of the IKG Cultural Resource Center, an organization devoted to the “rediscovery and application” of ancient African history. “It was mind-blowing, evidence of African greatness, thousands of years before our ancestors were enslaved.”

In accounts of his own life, some of Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s embellishments seemed to serve a larger purpose: gesturing to a distant past, establishing a grand narrative and creating a nearly mythic public persona. Others appear to be mere falsehoods or plain deceit.

Documents from Malcolm-King College and Cornell show Mr. Ben-Jochannan holding a doctorate from Cambridge University in England; catalogs from Malcolm-King College list him holding two master’s from Cambridge. According to Fred Lewsey, a communications officer at Cambridge, however, the school has no record of his ever attending, let alone earning any degree. Similarly, the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez, where he also said he had studied, has no records of his enrollment.

It’s not clear whether employers had ever looked into Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s qualifications.

“They condemn me for not being an intellectual of the Ph.D. type,” Mr. Ben-Jochannan once said, reacting to questions later raised about his résumé. While he used the “white man’s credential” to go “certain places,” Mr. Ben-Jochannan said, he refused to “let the white man certify” his work.

Though beyond reproach to most acolytes, Mr. Ben-Jochannan was challenged publicly by classical scholars like Mary Lefkowitz, now a retired professor at Wellesley College. While Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s work was rooted in a desire to undo the damage done by colonial historians, Ms. Lefkowitz said, he was simply offering pseudohistory as an alternative.

“It’s a myth of conspiracy: ‘White people have taken away history and hidden the truth,’ ” Ms. Lefkowitz said. “But it’s all more complicated than that.”

Mr. Ben-Jochannan seemed unfazed by criticism.

“I don’t care whether white colleagues appreciate me as a historian or not,” he wrote once. “I’m writing for the African person all around the world.”

In the next decades, as most of his peers died, Mr. Ben-Jochannan emerged as the elder statesman of Afrocentrism. But like any vanguard, he may have been a victim of his own success, eclipsed by the younger intellectuals he influenced.
“That entire generation of self-trained historians really gave me my first sense of skepticism,” Ta-Nehisi Coates, an editor at The Atlantic, and the son of Paul Coates, Mr. Ben-Jochannan’s publisher, wrote in an email. “What people like Dr. Ben were saying was, ‘History is not this objective thing that exists outside of politics,’ ” Mr. Coates wrote. “ ‘It exists well within politics, and part of its job has been to position black people in a place of use for white people.’ And that notion of skepticism goes with me in all of my work. It runs through everything I do.”


**HISTORY: Police violence and New Bethel Incident**

**Police violence and New Bethel Incident**
“The “New Bethel Incident” took place in Detroit, Michigan, in March 31, 1969 during the First New Afrikan Nation Day Celebration at the New Bethel Baptist Church, on the West Side. One policeman killed and another wounded. Four Blacks wounded. Between 135 and 240 persons were arrested. Police later freed 125 persons. Criminal Court Judge G. Crockett [1909-1997], frees 8 other Blacks. Chaka Fuller, Rafael Viera, and Alfred 2X Hibbets were charged with killing. All 3 were subsequent tried and acquitted. Chaka Fuller was mysterious assassinated a few months afterwards.

“The seeds of Malcolm took further root on March 29, 1968. On that date the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) was founded at a convention held at the Black – owned Twenty Grand Motel in Detroit. Over 500 grassroot activists came together to issue a Declaration of Independence on behalf of the oppressed Black Nation Inside North America, and the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) was born. [19] Since then Blacks desiring an independent Black Nation have referred to themselves and other Blacks in the U.S. as New Afrikans.”

COINTELPRO Attacks

“In 1969 COINTELPRO launched its main attack on the Black Liberation Movement in earnest. It began with the mass arrest of Lumumba Shakur and the New York Panther 21. It followed with a series of military raids on Black Panther Party offices in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Haven, Jersey City, Detroit, Chicago, Denver, Omaha, Sacramento. and San Diego, and was capped off with a four-hour siege that poured thousands of rounds into the Los Angeles BPP office. Fortunately Geronimo ji Jaga, decorated Vietnam vet had earlier fortified the office to withstand an assault, and no Panthers were seriously injured. However, repercussions from the outcome eventually drove him underground. The widespread attacks left Panthers dead all across the country – Fred Hampton, Mark Clark, Bunchy Carter, John Huggins, John Savage, Walter Toure Pope, Bobby Hutton, Sylvester Bell, Frank “Capt. Franco” Diggs, Fred Bennett, James Carr, Larry Robeson, Spurgeon “Jake” Winters, Alex Rackley, Arthur Morris, Steve Bartholomew, Robert Lawrence, Tommy Lewis, Nathaniel Clark, Welton Armstead, Sidney Miller, Sterling Jones, Babatunde Omawali, Samuel Napier, Harold Russle, and Robert Webb among others.[21] In the three years after J. Edgar Hoover’s infamous COINTELPRO memorandum, dated August 25, 1967, 31 members of the BPP were killed,[22] nearly a thousand were arrested, and key leaders were sent to jail. Others were driven underground. Still others, like BPP field marshal Donald “D.C.” Cox, were driven into exile overseas.

Also in ’69, Clarence 13X, founder of the Five Percenters, was mysteriously murdered in the elevator of a
Harlem project building. His killer was never discovered and his adherents suspect government complicity in his death.

The RNA was similarly attacked that year. During their second annual convention in March '69, held at reverend C.L. Franklin’s New Bethel Church in Detroit, a police provocation sparked a siege that poured 800 rounds into the church. Several convention members were wounded; one policeman was killed, another wounded, and the entire convention, 140 people, was arrested en masse. When Reverend Franklin (father of “The Queen of Soul,” singer Aretha Franklin) and Black State Representative James Del Rio were informed of the incident they called Black judge George Crockett, who proceeded to the police station where he found total legal chaos.

Almost 150 people were being held incommunicado. They were being questioned, fingerprinted, and given nitrate tests to determine if they had fired guns, in total disregard of fundamental constitutional procedures. Hours after the roundup, there wasn’t so much as a list of persons being held and no one had been formally arrested. An indignant Judge Crockett set up court right in the station house and demanded that the police either press charges or release their captives. He had handled about fifty cases when the Wane County prosecutor, called in by the police, intervened. The prosecutor promised that the use of all irregular methods would be halted. Crockett adjourned the impromptu court, and by noon the following day the police had released all but a few individuals who were held on specific charges.[23] Chaka Fuller, Rafael Viera, and Alfred 2X Hibbits were charged with the killing. All three were subsequently tried and acquitted. Chaka Fuller was mysteriously assassinated a few months afterwards.[24]

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Nov 2, 2015 “Assata Shakur Liberation Day” marks 36 yrs of freedom for our Comrade Assata Shakur, Our Warrior was liberated from a NJ prison by Comrades In The Black Liberation Army click here to read more or here www.assatashakur.com


March 31st in Neo-Griot
laid off when by mistake he joins the worker's union during one of their See full summary ». Director