



## **AMERICAN PICTURES**

**A personal journey through our ghettos**

**Jacob Holdt**

**[american-pictures.com](http://american-pictures.com)**

# Foreword

*American Pictures*  
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A special thank to Jens Frederik Olsen from  
www.memoryscan.dk for his fantastic scanning of the old,  
almost disappeared original slides.  
This has brought new life to the book which was previously  
mostly in black/white photos.

Call me not a citizen of Athens, but a citizen of the world.  
...*Socrates*

My country is the whole world.  
...*Dante*

To me it seems a dreadful thing to have a soul controlled by  
geography.  
...*George Santayana*

My country is the whole world, and my religion is to do  
good.  
...*Thomas Paine, Rights of Man*

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

'The rebel: There is not anywhere in the world a poor  
creature who's been lynched or tortured in whom I am not  
murdered and humiliated...  
...*Aime Cesaire: "Les Armes Miraculeuses"*

We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together  
as fools.  
...*Martin Luther King*

A book is rarely the work of one person, and a photo and  
travel book certainly becomes a very collaborative effort.  
I have in this book decided not to mention or changed all  
but a few of the real names. This saddens me since all but  
a few exploitative street photos are the result not only of  
people's hospitality, but usually of their strong cooperation,  
interaction and trust in me - as well as their later approval.  
Among the people who helped make the book I would  
especially like to thank those who gave me encouragement  
and financial donations during my trip: Alice Turak (\$10),  
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Annie Rush, David Miller, and the others who - in their  
impatience to get this book out in America - helped make  
translations of it. For criticism and feedback over several  
years, through which many of the ideas in the book grew, I  
am deeply indebted to Tony Harris, Jerry Justice and Howie  
Pinderhughes. Two women, however, have had a very special  
and deep impact on this book in its present form. Both of  
them have been invaluable for me in interpreting and  
clarifying my ideas and intentions. One of them is Camilla  
Decarnin, who wrote me the most critical letters I have  
ever received upon seeing my show in San Francisco, yet  
wrote from a deep sense of solidarity with its "message." I  
therefore asked her to help select those texts which would be  
of interest for Americans and to rid my translated English of  
too much "European" polemic. In our unending discussions  
on how the various parts would be understood by Americans,  
we discovered enormous differences between our two  
cultures. Where Camilla in her editing of the text tried to  
"translate" my Danish view to Americans, in the layout of  
the pictures I gave Kitte Fennestad a free hand to interpret  
my feelings in her own Danish way. I love her layout  
because it is so uncompromising and hope American and  
British readers will appreciate it - pure as she is in her choice  
of photos and constellations which may seem provocative  
within other cultures. It is not an easy job to choose from  
15,000 pictures, but working with Kitte for several years, we  
gradually arrived at this result.

With love Jacob Holdt  
www.american-pictures.com

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

*Jose Marti. (19th Century poet and freedom fighter)*

"We know now that there is no way out; that the system  
that was the evil offspring of public neglect and private  
greed has come to stay, a storm-centre of our civilization.  
Nothing is left but to make the best of a bad bargain. "If  
it shall appear that the suffering and the sins of the "other  
half," and the evil they breed are but as a just punishment  
upon the community that gave it no other choice, it will be  
because that is the truth."  
The quote above is from Jacob A. Riis' book How the Other  
Half Lives, which I found by chance in the summer of 1975  
when I dropped into a bookstore in San Francisco. I had  
never heard of Jacob Riis before. The book made such a  
strong impression on me that I decided to steal it - which  
says a bit about my economic situation at the time. (If any  
of you looking at this are just as down and out, naturally I  
will understand if you decide to steal my book. Stealing is  
not a good thing, but we all ought to try it once in our lives  
in order to get a bit of understanding for and solidarity with  
those who are forced into that way of life.)

Nobody is born a vagabond and it was a long series of  
circumstances that led me to such a happy state. I was born  
in a little country the size of Massachusetts. Together with  
Sweden, Denmark has for many years had a reputation for  
being one of the most liberal countries in the world. I grew  
up in the Western, more conservative, and formerly very  
poor part of Denmark from which thousands emigrated to  
America at the turn of the century. My father is a minister  
in a little village. For generations the firstborn son in  
the family has been named Jacob Holdt and has been a  
minister, so it was always in the air that that was to be my  
destiny too. My grandmother was the spiritual head of  
the family, who let no chance go by to tell me about the  
religious achievements of the family and make me aware  
of my duty. Through all the years I vagabonded in America  
I continually got letters from her about how I soon would  
have gathered worldly experiences enough to be able to  
come home and begin the study of theology.  
A very great part of the reason I continued vagabonding  
and imagined I would do it the rest of my life was the  
fear of returning home to eight years of dry Latin and  
Greek. Let me just explain here for American readers

that the church in Denmark is nationalized and ministers  
are employed by the state. Since very few people go to  
church, the ministers' role tends to be more like that of a  
social worker caring for the elderly, sick, and troubled.  
The rhetoric of "personal salvation, which I found rampant  
in American churches, is to a large degree unheard of in  
Danish churches. When I left church on Sundays in my  
childhood, my eyes would usually fall on a great beautiful  
portrait of a black woman across from the church. It was  
the only advertisement in the little village - the trademark  
for Denmark's biggest business, the cooperative store  
"Brugsen." When I have since thought of the enormous  
influence white advertising in America has had on the white  
as well as the black psyche, I can't avoid reflecting that this  
one-sided advertising must have had some effect on my  
later involvement in black issues. In the village elementary  
school we wrote reports on the apartheid system in South  
Africa and the black struggle in America long before the  
height of the civil rights movement. We were jubilant on  
the day South Africa's prime minister was shot, but our  
teacher pointed out that this would not solve the problems  
there, and in high school, when Martin Luther King became  
our hero, I, at least, was strongly affected by his philosophy  
of nonviolence. From my astonishment that the white  
church in both America and South Africa was hostile to  
blacks, I was not far from rebellion against my father's  
church. When the congregation at one point during the  
Biafra famine decided to spend several hundred thousand  
kroner to build a tower on our village church, I was so  
outraged that in the dead of night before Easter morning I  
painted over the entire church with huge biblical quotations  
about how you shouldn't build temples for God when your  
neighbor is suffering here on earth. My father's reaction  
took me by surprise. He was so furious that without a  
word he drove me out to the highway, where I was asked  
to hitch-hike off. During the next half year we were not on  
speaking terms. Perhaps this was the start of my career as a  
vagabond.  
I had at any rate not much of a choice. I had been kicked  
out after two years in high school and had been fired  
from several jobs. I was considered the black sheep of the  
family. Even the army had kicked me out. I had always  
wanted to join the Royal Danish Palace Guard, being deep  
down inside very conservative and even a member of the  
Conservative Party. But the very first day my company  
had target practice I ran into problems. We were asked to  
shoot at a target in the shape of a man, but it was absolutely

impossible for me to get myself to shoot at anything even resembling a human being, so I refused point blank. To avoid having to shoot again, I pretended to be sick and limped around on one leg. I was sent to examinations in various hospitals and walked with crutches for eight months before they kicked me out. Great was my surprise when the mailman half a year later knocked at my door with \$2,000 in compensation for having suffered in the army. I always had many travelers from all over the world staying in my apartment in Copenhagen. Several were American Vietnam deserters, who came to make a strong impression on me with their rejection of many of the values I had been brought up to believe in. One day I took in a 17-year-old Canadian runaway who stayed with me for a long time. Her parents were so grateful that they invited me to Canada to work on their farm. I wanted to flee the straitjacket of society, and the greatest and most decisive step you can take in that process is the one across the border of your own country. I sent my friends a furious 150 page letter when I got to Canada in 1970. Oddly enough, I had no strong feelings about the United States, but an excerpt from that letter shows some of the feelings I had about Denmark: "We are all guilty! You too, Kaj, could have smashed a few more windows at the Embassy, at Pan Am, at Berlingske Tidende (a conservative newspaper), at the Folketing (Parliament) ... as long as one pane of glass remains intact in the entire country, then we are all guilty of the crimes of the West in Indochina... but when that pane has been smashed... then perhaps the government will be able to feel which way the wind is blowing. Smash all of Denmark's windows so that even the coldest conservatives can smell the stench of napalmed flesh - so that Hartling himself leaps up in the night with sweat on his forehead hearing the death-screams of children bored through by fragmentation bombs! What is violence against glass compared to the violence we commit in Vietnam? Smash all the windows in the country! Smash the four bloody panes in the Danish flag, smash everything - as long as that is the only help we can give the Vietnamese. The day after our My Lai anniversary protest I left the country, depressed and disillusioned. Disappointed that 25 years of massacre against another people still does not penetrate the population's consciousness, disappointed that it still doesn't know a damn thing about what happens in Indochina, disappointed that our work to change these conditions was fruitless, disappointed that I belong to a population of evil, corrupt, brainwashed, pestilential, inhuman "human



beings" - but at the same time, relieved at my escape from five million blind murderers; happy at my resurrection from the Kingdom of Death... Denmark."

When I think back to the feelings I had then, I find it interesting that it was a young American I had staying with me who opened my eyes to the injustices of the Vietnam war and got me involved in opposing it, although during the whole time I was involved it was mainly out of a deep moral indignation. I did not see the Vietnam war as a product of any system, but merely as an unfortunate digression for democracy. Thus I remained a member of Conservative Youth and did not see anything inconsistent in that, just as I always felt irritated about the red banners in the demonstrations "because it would make people think we were communists."

I worked on the Canadian farm for a year along with a young leftist Argentinean who got me interested in Latin America. I therefore decided to travel down there just for adventure. To get to Latin America I had to pass through the USA. Canadians had told me many frightening stories about how dangerous it was to hitch-hike in the US, but I nevertheless decided to make the attempt. I took my savings from my work on the farm and hitched down to the border, crossing at Port Huron, a little town in Michigan. I was terrified. I saw a man walk down the street with a hunting rifle and perceived violent vibrations everywhere. The young people in town said that the police would beat me up if I hitch-hiked. I have since returned to this town and see it today as one of the most peaceful in America, but I have met many other young foreign visitors who have had

the same terrifying first meeting with the violent American society until they got used to it and in the end no longer perceived "the violence in people's eyes" as a sensitive Frenchman expressed it to me. I was so shocked that I took the bus to Detroit in the belief that it would be easier to hitch-hike from there. But that was only going from the frying pan into the fire. I got off the bus at night thinking I was in a great metropolitan city of millions with just as much nightlife as in European cities and when I couldn't see a soul around I asked for directions "to downtown." A news vendor answered with surprise, "You are downtown," and then told me that people simply didn't dare to walk outside at night. I was again so terrified that I ended up buying a ticket all the way to Chicago. The first young long-haired guy I talked to in the bus station in the morning told me that he had just gotten out of jail for hitch-hiking and that Chicago's cops had the reputation of being the worst to hitch-hikers. And had I been thinking of hitching through the South? I must be kidding. This up here was nothing compared to the South. I was now so despairing that after a day in the city I went to a church to get help. I hadn't enough money for a bus all the way through the US, and Chicago seemed such a terrible, inhuman, cold city that it gave me no desire to see more of America.

But later in the evening a young black writer, Waltdenia Lewis, started chatting with me in a coffee shop. She invited me to come and stay in her mother's house in a black middle class area of South Chicago. Here I spent a fantastic week with her and her friends - a week which meant a decisive turn for my relationship to America, which in spite of my early school teachings I had perceived as a boring white middle class country. That my first American home was a black home, which gave me warmth and encouragement in the midst of my freezing despair, was no doubt a great part of the reason I didn't immediately turn my back on America. Waltdenia and her friends introduced me to black culture in such an infectious way that I had to come back. They drove me everywhere and told me about the conditions of blacks in that most segregated of all American cities. They communicated in a language which I could hardly understand then, but which, with its almost singing, constantly joking soprano tone, I found fantastically rich.

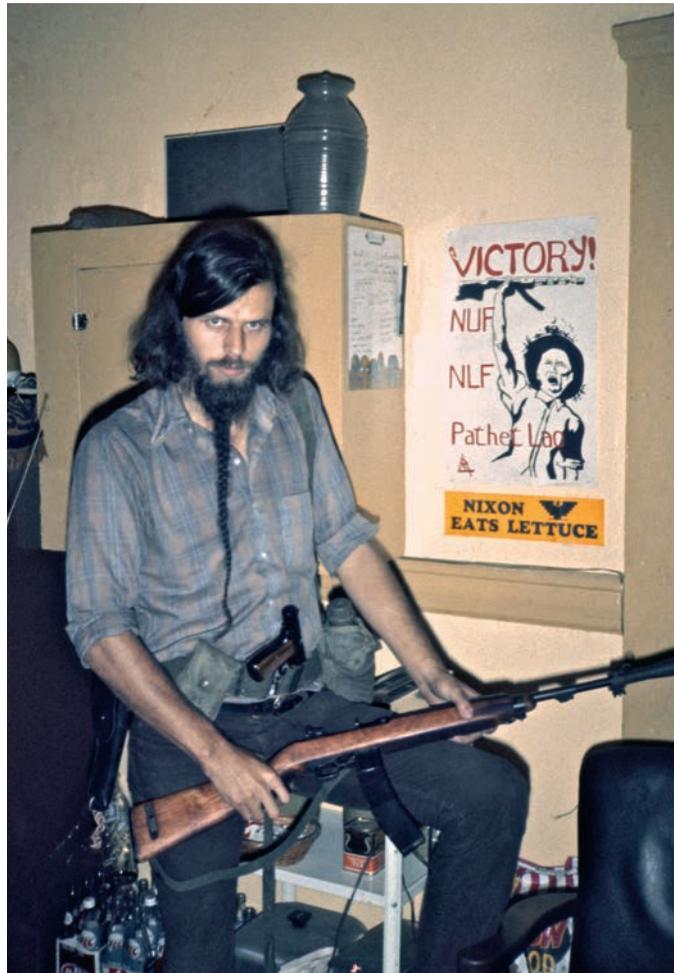
Without knowing it they also gave me a gift which was to be my admission card not only to black homes, but everywhere in society. One day when braiding their hair they insisted on braiding my beard, which had gotten fairly

long. They made a bet that I wouldn't dare to walk around a whole day in Chicago with a braided beard. I was terribly shy and ashamed of myself looking so foolish, but soon I discovered that this city which I had perceived as cold and misanthropic suddenly began to open up. People would smile at me or sometimes react negatively, but at any rate open up whereby contact is possible - the contact which is essential for the vagabond. Therefore the beard stayed braided, and without it this book would not have been made - if only because it several times helped save my life. I decided to find another way to Latin America and went back to Canada, where I hitch-hiked to Vancouver and down to San Francisco. It was as far as I got. As soon as I met the American youth there I fell in love with them and let them carry me away. Some Vietnam veterans invited me to go with them to the big anti-war demonstrations in Washington. That was in April 1971. There were one million demonstrators and a solidarity and atmosphere which made a deep impression on me. I saw hundreds of Vietnam veterans, many of them crippled, throwing their military medals up against Congress. It was then, moved to tears, that I realized this was no time for adventuring in Latin America, but that I had to give support to these people in some way. And for the next year I had little time for anything but rushing from demonstration to demonstration all over the country. I quickly overcame my fear of hitch-hiking, which seemed so ridiculous compared to what these Vietnam veterans had gone through, although I did take the precaution of wearing a shorthair wig at first, as it was then still common to shoot down people with long hair. I had seven such deaths confirmed personally - two of them sons of families I stayed with. (I myself only had beer bottles thrown at me from car windows, in addition to numerous fines and warnings from police who in several states consistently throw hitch-hikers in jail.) Gradually as I began to meet the ordinary population, I discovered how few of them actually supported the Vietnam war. I therefore began to ask myself what it was that allowed this war to rage on. Everywhere I met an openness to my point of view about Vietnam which I had never experienced among the fossilized Danes, as I began to think of them. I started to feel that while the disaster for the Americans was that they had not been informed about Vietnam by their one-sided press, which had in turn been misled by the government; the disaster in Europe was that the Europeans simply did not want to listen to other views than those they already had. Whether this impression was reasonable or not, it was

nevertheless what made me love the Americans. Working with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War helped to politicize me and I came to strongly oppose what we called the “system.” I got into circles, both black and white, which did not shrink from using violent methods and for a while I went through a period of questioning whether the use of such counter-violence was justified. I mention later in the book how Wounded Knee was a turning point which made me a strong advocate of non-violence - not least for practical reasons, since I have never been able to kill a fly. Yet after Wounded Knee I made a more serious attempt at going to Latin America and when I saw conditions in Guatemala - the hunger, the child funerals, and the brutal American installed military dictatorship’s repression of the Indians - I was so embittered that I hitch-hiked around in the mountains hoping to join the guerrillas. I didn’t manage to find them. Instead I was constantly stopped by machinegun-toting soldiers and interrogated. One time a branch tore my wig off and all my hair fell out right next to them - luckily without their noticing it.

Somewhere in the jungle I read an issue of Time which said that big demonstrations were anticipated at the upcoming Republican convention, particularly by the Vietnam veterans. As I had become enormously bitter toward Nixon for his support of Guatemala’s bloody regime, I decided that I had to support my friends in Miami. I tried to get there on a banana boat, but in vain. There were only six days till the convention. Hitch-hiking back to Guatemala City, up through Mexico and across Texas and the South, I arrived just in time. This was one of the biggest psychic leaps I ever made, for a few days after having left the Indians’ straw huts I managed to get to live in the headquarters of Nixon himself, the Fontainebleau, by disguising myself as a Republican delegate, with shorthair wig, tie, etc. A delegate let me share her room. Here I spent a couple of days in the company of the Nixon family and notorious Republicans such as John Wayne and Ronald Reagan. I felt strongly drawn to their warm personalities and I couldn’t help asking John Wayne his opinion of the time we stopped his film “The Green Berets” from showing in Denmark. Reagan I was much less interested in. I perceived him as an extremist demagogue and outsider without any chances. When he claimed that America had the best medical care in the world I knew he was lying. I had already seen plenty of suffering and unhealthy people in America.

Still, I tried to the best of my ability to live myself into the



Republican thought-world and my view became affected to such a degree that when I stood at the window of my room on the 12th floor I could not help looking at the thousands of demonstrators below as dirty hippies and lazy bums. I had no desire to sleep outside with them in the Flamingo Park. But entirely Republican I must not have looked, for I ended up being arrested and interrogated four times by the Secret Service. One time they sent a bomb squad up to my room to dismantle a gadget which turned out to be my ancient flash being recharged. Another time when I had been out with the demonstrators, and afterwards hid behind a bush to change to my shorthair wig and Republican outfit again, an agent hiding behind another bush called for reinforcements on his radio and a whole squad of agents came running and seized me. Their leader thought I was a “Bolshevik.” The fourth time I was seized I had managed to slip inside the convention center itself through waves of teargas during Nixon’s speech. It was the plan that an Australian journalist and I should unfold an enormous banner with something like “Nixon napalms babies” in front of Nixon, the world press, and the thousands of delegates. In my bitterness after the experience of Guatemala I felt this would be a worthy way to get at Nixon and wind up my USA journey. But as soon as the Australian reached under his shirt to fish out the banner - shakingly nervous as we both were - he was attacked by a whole flock of Secret Service men. I hurried as discreetly as I could away from the spot and up on the viewing stands under the huge American flags. But several delegates pointed me out to the agents. I ran behind the flags where there was a fairly free passage all the way down to the exit at the other end of the convention hall. I thought I had a great lead, but in running I started a several hundred yards long wave in the gigantic flags which the agents could follow with their eyes and walky-talkies, with the result that a great reception committee greeted me warmly when I emerged from behind the Stars and Stripes at the other end. However, nobody could prove that I had been with the Australian, so after a long interrogation I was released and avoided deportation. I was, however, deported from Nixon’s headquarters, but I considered it a great moral victory that I first managed to make good friends with one of the agents who said that he “understood” me. Such good friends that when months later I stood on the viewing stands on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington to see Nixon’s second inauguration and the grey flannel suited agents with their paranoid eyes advanced in front of the motorcade, one of them suddenly



jumped up and waved when he saw me in the crowd. I had succeeded in penetrating the secret police’s grey anonymity. In the beginning I had such negative feelings about Denmark that I had completely broken off all communication, but when I again started relating to my father I urged him to use many of the experiences I wrote about in his church, and a good dialogue emerged in which he sent me tapes of his sermons. My parents sent over a camera for my birthday so that I could “prove” the many shocking things I wrote about. It was a cheap half-frame camera that didn’t demand much skill from one who had never photographed before. In Wounded Knee the camera was damaged and it was almost a year before I could afford the money to get it repaired. So I got hold of a used Canon Dial, with which almost all the pictures in this book were taken. The first couple of years I traveled rather at random. It was during these years I learned how many lonely and lost souls there are in our society, as it was almost always them I ended up with. They needed someone who would listen to them. I felt like some kind of wandering social worker and the photography was only a secondary preoccupation for me - a kind of diary to remember the people who came to mean something to me. Often I spent days with a lonesome person listening, and the more I learned about their frustrations, the more I began to think about the society which had brought them into this situation. Many of these relationships were sexual in origin. It was often as if you had to pass such a threshold to reach the intimacy that lets you open up to each other. Americans are very sexually aggressive, both men and women, but I love them for that aggressiveness, because whatever else, it

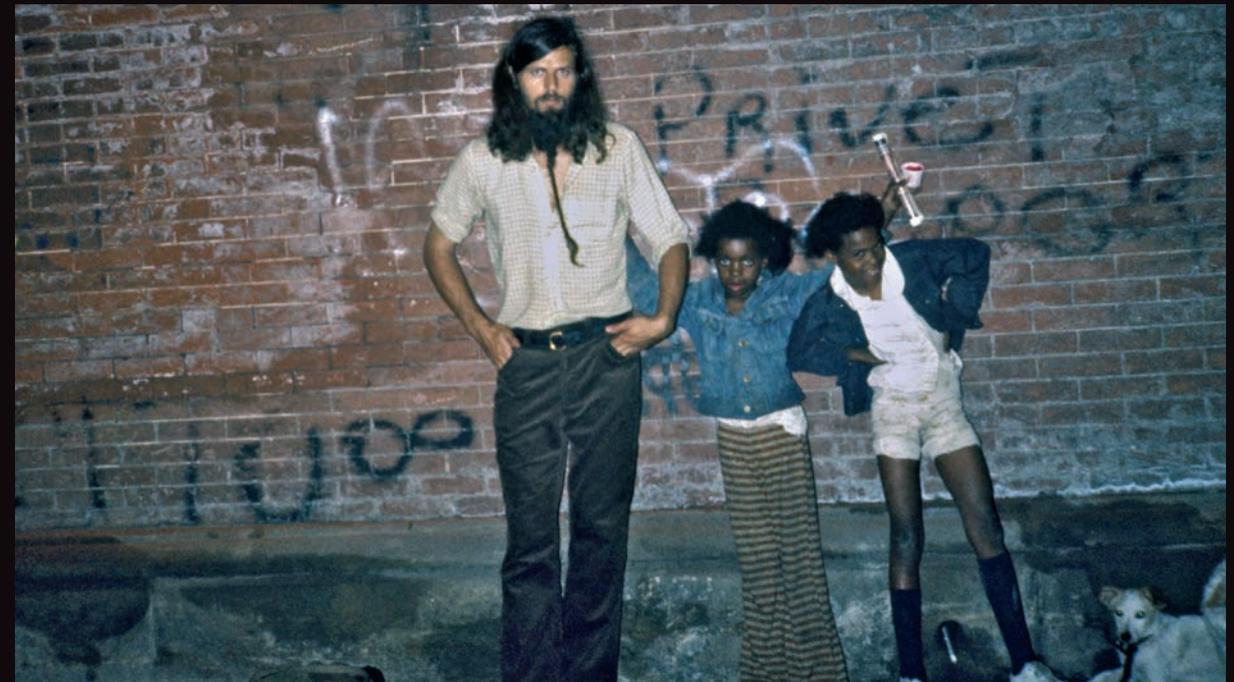
creates possibilities for human contact, whereas in Europe, for example, a man can easily travel without getting to know a single person. Certainly it could be a little irritating and exhausting, with my inability to say no, when I would get three rides with homosexuals in a row (the 25 miles between Winston-Salem and Greensboro thus once took a whole day) or even worse three religious lifts with three different sermons. I have sat praying with people all over America, but it could be a bit comical when in the course of one day I would have to pray to Jehovah in one home in the morning, later chant “Nam myo ho rengay kyo” in a Buddhist home, and in the evening kneel to Allah in a Black Muslim home. I always did what people told me to do and am therefore certain that I am in good standing with all the Gods. But when I was in a rush I often made a big detour around the thick Bible belt in eastern Tennessee, which almost always sent me to the “Kingdom of Heaven” instead of my destination. Occasionally I experienced the most surprising combinations of aggressiveness. In Texas I stayed with a Catholic priest whom I first had to pray with and who afterwards turned out to be gay. Critics will find a lot to accuse this book of, but it will certainly not be possible to criticize me for not having been completely open to Americans. I tried always to immerse myself completely into people’s ways of thinking, though one night I had a narrow escape. I had been sitting and praying for hours in a church in Mississippi with two women, both of them holding my hands. As always I tried the best I could to open myself up completely. They were convinced that I could be “saved” and that I would be able to “accept Jesus,” and they had a love and intensity in their eyes stronger than any I had ever seen, so suddenly my head started swimming and I really began to feel that I might see Jesus. Then I started to resist tooth and nail. I sat and whispered to myself, “No, you must not flee it all now. You must believe in people. You must believe in people. You must...” “ I succeeded in rescuing myself from being saved, but the dilemma I had found myself in was constantly a burning actuality for me. If I was to believe in people then I also had to have faith in what these two women were telling me. From then on I was more aware that to believe in people I always had to believe in the totality of the people I met. The argument I used that night was: “They don’t let blacks into their church.” Without that they would perhaps have “saved” me, but I did not have the heart to tell them that, as I liked them very much.

Although eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most

segregated hour in America, I constantly came to these white churches as I loved to see these racists from their best side which usually flourishes toward guests right after the service. From the moment when I began to see the sum of human suffering, the term “the system” which I had learned from the demonstrators, became practical for me, for as a vagabond you cannot survive without seeing people themselves as without sin. Otherwise you would soon be eaten up inside by hatred and thereby close yourself off from the world around you. It was nevertheless hard to avoid identifying myself more strongly with certain social groups than with others. Especially with the underclass whom in my wanderings for food and housing I constantly encountered. Without money and education I was myself a social loser and therefore naturally got in touch with these street and night people. Since I always tried to believe that what comes out of people’s mouths is the truth - especially with angry desperate people - I could not help being startled at hearing apparently absurd utterances from people in the black underclass, like “Hey, man, this ain’t nothing but slavery.”

A great deal of my journey was therefore guided by my increasing curiosity to find out whether there could reasonably be said to exist a kind of slavery in the midst of the apparently free and mobile American system. Some of the conclusions I came to I have gathered in this book. Almost everything in the book is based on personal experiences. Therefore there will probably be many misinterpretations in the book, which experts and scholars will be able to pounce on. The book with its emotional statements ought to be experienced for what it is: a travel book. It is a book for the broad masses I met as a traveler and its truth does not go deeper than the verbal utterances you hear in the underclass - which nevertheless are true for those pushed out of the system. As I could almost never concentrate on reading as a vagabond, only a very little derives from books. Even the statistics are picked up from garbage cans (from which I usually fished the excellent New York Times). I have, however, in this updated version written especially for Americans, checked some of my sources on the topic. Furthermore, I have learned from the audiences of the original slideshow (which the book is based on) in both Europe and America, and I have included photos and experiences from my later vagabondings in the States.

However, I want to stress that this book can in no way stand alone. To obtain a complete impression of the Afro-



American situation you must do other reading. If you do not intend to do that, blacks will be better off if you don't touch this book. It is, and can only be, a vagabond's impressions, and must on no account be considered the statement of an expert. The only thing one may call me an expert on is vagabonding, which is something you can't learn from books. In the last few years I have seen a severe deterioration of conditions for the black underclass and the late 1980's will most likely look even worse than the picture the book gives. It is worth mentioning that the shock I convey here at my meeting with American poverty is based on the underclass in its best years ever - the time right after the gains of the Civil Rights movement had been instituted and before Reagan's cutbacks had taken effect. I have often been criticized in America for not mentioning these gains. That I do not is partly because I take it for granted that everybody has heard about this now historical period in school and partly because I had not myself seen conditions before that time enabling me to compare. But it is difficult for me to imagine that conditions can have been much worse before my arrival. When conditions are as hopelessly desperate as I experienced them, dwelling on the big gains of the past can easily serve as an excuse for not doing anything about the problems today. Dostoyevsky once said that you can get an impression of a society's character by entering its prisons. Whether you can also judge a social system by entering its ghettos must be up to the reader to decide. I just don't think one can claim to be "objective" if one does not continuously see a society from the viewpoint of those worst off. Those journalists who try to balance the viewpoint of the rich with that of the poor have already accepted this lopsided distribution of wealth and justified it and are therefore themselves a part of the oppression. They can therefore not claim to be historically objective. History has almost always proven the worst-off right; there are not many today who will not admit that it was right of the radicals of years ago (the abolitionists) not to try to balance the point of view of the slave master with that of the slave - even when a majority of the slaves in the eyes of whites looked "happy." This worm's eye view is however not only a vagabond perspective, but also to some extent a traditional Scandinavian perspective. In Denmark, which has given support to many liberation movements in the Third World, the traditional social ideal is a country where "few have too much and fewer too little." The photos in this book of broken and apathetic people generate in the average Dane a strong feeling of sympathy and in many an

automatic indignation against that society which has caused such human oppression.

When they see the faces in this book they intuitively know that they are not the faces of a free society. Most Americans to whom I showed the book, however, leafed through it quickly with a feeling of distaste and automatically put the blame on the victims themselves. The same difference in attitude is behind the criticism I often get in America, that I present the black underclass as "powerless victims." When that underclass generation after generation has constituted a permanent component of society - even in the boom of the 60's - then they are, as a matter of fact "powerless victims" of a system not designed to give the weakest a chance. The lack of social understanding of which Scandinavians often accuse Americans is most clearly shown in their eternal pointing to some individual who worked his way up from poverty as proof that there is possibility of opportunity for the group, while they are blind to how the group as a whole is shut out from opportunity. Knowing how differently Americans will see these photos I can't help having uneasy feelings about publishing them in America. They could simply serve to reinforce racist attitudes toward the underclass there, since the feeling that it is "society's fault" if a group of people can't fit in (and that therefore society ought to change continually to be in harmony with human beings) seems to be on a decline in the conservative wave in the States.

There is naturally also racism in Denmark - first and foremost towards foreign workers and Greenlanders, especially now, as a result of the current economic crisis. Though I have gradually learned that I, like all other people, am a product of my environment, this of course doesn't mean that all Danes share the opinions of this book. In fact the original edition was meant as a very strong attack on parts of Danish policy, where I used the bogey of America to point out where certain tendencies in Denmark could lead if we don't change our political course in time. But even with this strong critique of Danish conditions, many elementary schools there have bought the book as a classroom text and the four-hour multi-media show has become a yearly recurrent event in Danish high schools. The difference between the Danish and the American points of view comes out most clearly in a couple of key sentences I hear again and again in the two countries. In the early 70's I felt myself extremely drawn to the American hippies, but when I constantly heard them fall back on a sentence I heard throughout the rest of the population - "I just want

to have a good time" - I knew how far I stood from them. For the corresponding Danish sentence is "Hvor har vi det dog godt herhjemme" - a strong conscience-stricken expression ("How good we (unfairly) have it here at home (in Denmark).") Such collective guilt about having it too good in comparison with the poor countries hardly exists in the States, while you sometimes get the impression that Scandinavians feel personally guilty for all the crimes in the world. The two expressions are directly reflected in our differing foreign policies, as Scandinavia has often given support to liberation movements in the same countries where America for purely egoistic and commercial reasons supports repressive regimes.

A part of this (in comparison to America) rather strong social awareness no doubt stems from the way Danes bring up children. We socialize children by bringing about guilt instead of using force. Since this is also the Jewish way of bringing up children it could explain the relatively strong Jewish American engagement in social issues and civil rights movements - and that I as a Dane often felt more in harmony with the Jews I met than with other white Americans. But to bring up children to feel strongly connected with their surroundings and actuated by guilt also has an unhappy side effect which is demonstrated in a higher suicide rate. In Denmark it is very common to commit suicide to hurt others with guilt feelings. Hardly anybody in the American army would dream of committing suicide because they feel wronged by their commander, but such tactics are common in Denmark. That it has nothing to do with the welfare state, as popular American theory has it, can be seen from the very low suicide rate in Norway's welfare state. Probably nothing is more misunderstood in America than this welfare system. Magazines like Time regularly call it "socialism," although our countries are just as capitalist as the US in terms of private ownership. A welfare state can maybe just be characterized as a more intelligent form of capitalism, giving the inhabitants so much security that they can walk the streets without fear, look into store windows without iron bars, get on the bus, get change back, and not sit on either hard plastic seats or slashed upholstery, and walk into any bank in the country and cash a check, to mention just a few of the things shocked Northern Europeans find they cannot do in America. American media often go out of their way to show the huge economic cost of the welfare state, such as people being mistakenly taxed up to 110% of their income (which however doesn't prevent the average

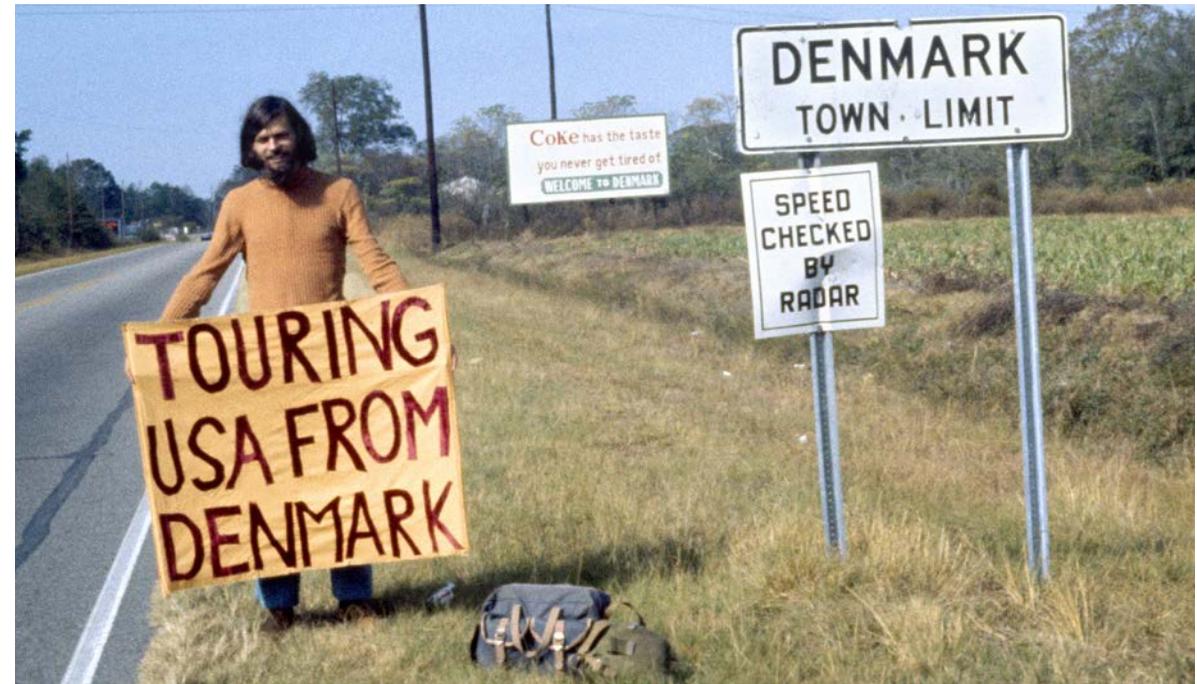
working class Dane from taking a yearly 5-week paid vacation - (the norm in most of Europe) - in Africa, Sri Lanka, Cuba, or the Mediterranean.) I will here in this book mostly concentrate on pointing out the alarming human costs involved in not having a welfare state though I in no way claim that a welfare state alone will solve the race problem in America. But it would alleviate the suffering of those most hurt. It is nevertheless necessary to point out that Danish social training combined with a feeling of distance from the problems may make Danes much more sympathetic to suffering and helplessness than to rage and resistance, which require not a guilt response (which comes from a psychological position "above" the victim) but solidarity - genuine identification with the group. Thus this guilt-ridden, if relatively strong, social awareness easily becomes condescending and paternalistic. Black Americans especially are very sensitive to this form of racism, which I can in no way say I am free from. What interested me most throughout my travels was human weakness and failure, both as a result of and as an indicator of social oppression. Certainly it is true that most blacks do not live like those in the book, but without understanding those who are too weak to effectively struggle against their oppression I have found it futile - at least photographically - to convey to a white audience how devastating and destructive racism is. Still I will not hesitate to point out that in the description of the people I met in my travels the book is a totally dishonest piece of work. By choosing to show only the side of people which relates to the subject matter of the book I indeed make them very one-dimensional. I personally know so many other sides of them and it saddens me to see many of best friends being reduced to such narrow roles. Moreover, vagabond sociology is of extremely questionable value as it may only be a certain type of people in any group who gives you shelter. Even though I visited thousands of American homes, my personal involvement with people and constant survival struggle did not always give the intellectual distancing necessary for sociological generalizations. When I nevertheless take the liberty of making sweeping generalizations in the book, it is more as a foreign traveler than as a sociologist: the type of primitive generalizations most foreigners make upon visiting a new country. You see a breadline of people in a communist country and immediately draw conclusions about that system. Such generalizations can at times be eye-openers to one side of the truth, but they can also be dangerous. When like me you come from a society with no



recent colonial background (unlike England and France) it may make you see certain aspects of black/white relations more clearly, having not yet developed a master-race mentality (although the influence of American media might be rapidly changing this Scandinavian aspect). But at the same time you are totally unaware of the racist stereotyping concerned people in such societies constantly try to avoid. As a Scandinavian you find it shocking to meet the high crime rate in the black community, or are amazed at the apparent contradiction of finding so many Cadillacs in the poorest part of the ghetto. But as a black or liberal white American you tend to overlook or downplay these aspects, well aware of how they have been used maliciously against the black race as a whole throughout history. So with my tendency as a foreigner to call a watermelon a watermelon no matter who eats it, many blacks will thus react to this book in a negative way. Furthermore they know the content of the book all too well and do not necessarily wish to be reminded of it again. As an oppressed race struggling against a negative image they have an enormous need for positive reinforcement. As a vagabond I only had a little contact with the "black bourgeoisie," who as a rule did not show me the same hospitality as the underclass. One better-off black couple in Alabama picked me up one day and were going to take me home, but when I showed them my pictures of the sufferings I had seen in the underclass I was let off with the words, "Don't you see anything positive in black people?" I quite simply didn't understand them then and was just as hurt as they since I felt that my photos clearly showed blacks as oppressed rather than incompetent - a positive view of them and a



negative view of their society, the way I had been brought up to see "social losers." Ironically, these are the same words you hear when white Americans are exposed to my book in Europe: "Doesn't he see anything positive in America?" Its subject doesn't exist within that ideal picture they are brought up to have of America. That it exists subconsciously is shown by one of the first things they usually say in Scandinavia: "How nice it is to be able to walk safely in the streets." While Americans sometimes almost proudly admit crime and violence are problems at home, most would not admit the most important principle that violence is directly the result of poverty, which in turn is directly the result of individuals (and consequently society) not caring about those less well-off than themselves. Of this violence I can certainly speak from experience. To travel in a country which like America is founded on colonial violence inevitably becomes an experience characterized by violence. The miracle of my survival I owe to my stubborn belief in the words of Jose Marti which helped me out of the following situations: four times I was attacked by robbers with guns (but managed in three cases to make good friends with them and be invited home, by pulling out my hidden beard; if you can make attackers laugh with you as equal human beings it is almost impossible for them to work themselves up again afterward to the position of executioners from which they can victimize you), twice I was attacked by men with knives, twice the police in fear pulled their guns on me, several times I was surrounded by angry blacks in dark alleys and only a hairbreadth from being killed, once I was ambushed by the Klan, several times bullets were whistling around me



in street shoot-outs, as well as at Wounded Knee, twice I was arrested by the FBI. I arrived in San Francisco with \$40 which lasted for five years. My travel expenses were therefore around \$8 per year. In Canada I had bought a sleeping bag and trained in sleeping outdoors on the ground. During all my vagabonding in the US I never slept outside and never got to use the sleeping bag (which I soon sold for lack of money) due to American hospitality. I doubt that there is any other country in the world where I could arrive with only \$40 and travel for five years entirely as a result of people's hospitality and generosity. I have stayed in 434 homes scattered in 48 states. I have hitch-hiked 113,750 miles - or four times around the globe. This doesn't include the number of miles I hitch-hiked in cities, where I hardly ever took buses. One reason I traveled so much was that I only had a tourist visa. Therefore I had to travel every three months to the American consulates in Canada or Mexico City in order to have my visa renewed. (This was also possible in the Immigration offices in most big American cities, but there it cost \$10, which I rarely had.) The only problem was getting into America again, as the border police usually don't let longhaired hitchhikers in without money. I solved the problem by borrowing a bank account from Canadian friends and borrowing a Cadillac on the Canadian side of the border which I filled up with Jesus literature. Dressed in my short-hair wig, white shirt and a tie covering up my long beard I usually slipped across the border with no problems, after which American friends drove the car back. This perhaps sounds like a troublesome way to stay in the US - millions of foreigners certainly

live underground with few problems - but it must be remembered that it was necessary for me to have my papers in order at all times, since as a hitch-hiker I was stopped by police and checked on their computers at least three times a day. This is to the vagabond's advantage, since drivers then never have to fear picking up a wanted criminal. With a tourist visa I also couldn't take any work. A single time in New York I did get free lodgings and a small amount of pocket money for working in a folk club called the Gaslight as a doorman. I had to throw out drunken Negroes and other undesirables, but by mistake one day I threw out Bob Dylan who had walked in without paying the cover charge. So I was on the road again. Almost all my film was thus financed by selling blood plasma twice weekly for \$5 each time. First they took the whole blood out, centrifuged it, kept the plasma and injected the red blood cells again, then repeated the process. It took four hours. Here in the blood banks I met many of the poorest people I got to live with. But in 1974 I had my financial breakthrough, when an elderly woman gave me \$70 to drive her car down to Florida. I used the money to make prints from some of my best slides so I had something to show people. From that moment I started getting frequent small gifts of money from people, \$5 or \$10 and in one case even \$30 from a wealthy woman in Boston. As it finally turned more and more into a project about the black underclass I imagined I would end up giving my photos to the Schomburg collection in Harlem, which has hardly anything on present-day poverty. Instead, the tragic circumstances under which I left the United States led to the photos being used in this book.

## James 5: 1-6

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

Since the US, as a relatively young and immensely complex nation, has a strong identity-seeking need, causing foreigners to be constantly asked about their impressions of the country and creating great interest in the opinions of foreign writers such as de Tocqueville, Gunnar Myrdal, and Jean Revel, perhaps Americans also will find a vagabond's opinions worth looking at. A university researcher in Pennsylvania made a comparative study of all the countries in the world using social, economic, health, and even climatic factors, and came to the conclusion that Denmark was the best country in the world to live in and the USA number 42. For my own part the human factors are so overwhelming that they more than make up for the social and economic factors concerning the States as a place I would want to live. It will always remain my other native land. But if you love a country, you can't just leave it to destroy itself. Therefore when I mention several times in the book how Denmark has tried to solve certain problems (although similar comparisons could have been made to the welfare states in other northern European countries), it is to let Americans know what other countries are doing for their worst-off citizens in the hope of inspiring solutions to American problems.

Whether or not the book can do that, I hope that, if nothing else, it will be inspiring for vagabonds and stimulate others to begin vagabonding. In America there has been a long vagabond tradition, which in recent years has been rapidly on the decline as a result of fear and distrust. I hope that the book will make young Americans rediscover their fantastic country - not as a series of post. cards seen from sterile campers, but through being together with their beautiful fellow citizens. Especially I hope that it will get some of the millions of young unemployed people in Europe as well as America to start vagabonding in order to study the society which has made them unemployed. To be a vagabond - contrary to popular belief - is the very opposite of being a parasite. Not only do you voluntarily withdraw from the labor force, allowing the few available jobs to go to those whose need is greater than your own - especially older workers, who tend to disintegrate without their job identity - but the vagabond also withdraws from any claim to welfare or unemployment benefits from fellow citizens. But most importantly, vagabonding is capable of fulfilling a vital role within modern society: attending to the emotional needs of the poor and the lonely.

Yet I hope that the book will inspire you who are more

well-off to invite home every single one of the vagabonds you see and to pick up all hitch-hikers. Yes, this is naturally only a beginning, but if people do not even manage to stop for that human being who stands out there on the roadside asking for help, how is it then possible to imagine that they will ever be capable of being human toward the ghettos or the Third World? There is no excuse for not doing it. As a vagabond you soon discover that the worst thing is not your fear of other people, but other people's fear of you. When you have seen drivers' fear of you as a vagabond you begin to understand for instance how difficult it must be to be black in a white society. Your own fear of people can be overcome, because it is irrational and unfounded in reality, but you are powerless in the face of other people's fear of you: it immediately locks you up in a ghetto. Therefore start small. Invite every single hitch-hiker or tourist home, not to speak of others who have a need for a roof over their heads or human togetherness. You will discover that they are far more interesting than books like this one. And if you already have all your floor space filled up or for other reasons are not able to have them staying with you, then please send them to me.

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

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

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

of the dimly lit streets in the east ghetto. The cops were the nice jovial type who really only wanted to scare us, and therefore said that we could go free if we just handed over our marijuana cigarettes to them. I have seen the police use this method so many times in black neighborhoods, since they don't have to report the confiscated grass but can smoke it themselves. I did not carry anything myself, but knew that Nell had one or two joints, like most others. But suddenly Nell was seized by his fate's paranoia - the paranoia and distrust of his fellow man almost every one of his social background has - and he refused to hand over the joints.

For my own part I would not have hesitated a moment. I had complete confidence in the cops. Nell's distrust of the cops made him jam up like a lock and act irrationally. The police are trained to observe that kind of reaction in criminals and they immediately got out of the car to search him. They only found two small joints and his knife, but since he did not have any I.D. they took him to the station for fingerprinting. I knew right off that I would never see Nell again. He had been tripped up by the paranoia and sense of guilt common to all poor blacks, regardless of whether they have committed a crime or not. It was the same paranoia which had originally made him a murderer.

After Nell had gone from "this world," New Orleans suddenly seemed like a ghost town and I could no longer bear to stay in the same house. I wanted to leave the city, so I tried hitch-hiking in the direction of Baton Rouge. New Orleans is one of the hardest places in America to get a ride, and I waited on the Interstate with my sign for hours, hoping to get picked up before the police came. All of a sudden, the only Rolls Royce I've ever gotten a lift with stopped in the middle of the three-lane highway to pick me up. It was right in the rush hour and we immediately created a big traffic jam of honking cars. Just as I had gotten into the car, the police came wailing up behind us to give us a ticket for this illegal stopping. The man who had picked me up said he would take care of it, went back to the cops and without a word gave them his card. When the police saw his name, they became all smiles and friendliness and followed him back to his Rolls Royce, clapping him on the shoulder while assuring him that it was only a trifle and that we shouldn't worry about it anymore. I naturally wondered who this guy could be who got off so lightly without even a ticket. He told me that his name

was Wayne A. Karmgard, and that he had picked me up because I was standing with my sign, "Touring USA from Denmark." He had never picked up a hitchhiker before, but he suddenly thought it might be fun since he himself was of Danish descent. Normally this information makes me clam up instantly and get out of the car as fast as possible. I have long ago lost any desire to be with Danish-Americans, who all too often give me only one feeling: a sense of shame at being a Dane. To Danes visiting America I give this advice: if you want to get a good impression of the country, stay away from this population group, which often represents one of the most racist and reactionary white groups in the United States. 80 percent of them vote Republican I have heard. All they can talk about is how wonderful it is to be rid of the high taxes back in Denmark. They are fleeing from any human responsibility to have their taxes lowered. I have met Danish-Americans who were "red-hot" Social Democrats back home in Denmark, but who in just 5 years had been transformed into the blackest reaction. Danish-Americans stand in glaring contrast to American Jews, who are the only white group I feel in strong harmony with. This group has a very deep understanding of the conditions of the blacks and of the social mechanisms that in the same way made themselves Europe's "negroes" for so many centuries.

Well, all the same, to a Danish-American in a Rolls Royce I could not say no, and right away I started entertaining him with travel stories so that he would invite me home. I especially emphasized my experiences with Rockefeller, Kennedy, etc., since all little millionaires look up to the big millionaires and therefore I knew he would ask me home with a feeling of thus being brought a little closer to the Rockefellers. It worked, and I ended up heading back toward New Orleans. He owned the city's finest and most expensive hotel, right in the heart of the French Quarter. Everyone in town knew him, and later I was told that he owned a large part of the French Quarter and was a housing speculator (slumlord). A fabulous suite in his hotel, "Maison de Ville", was put at my disposal and I was told to just ring the bell whenever I wanted anything. Black waiters in freshly pressed uniforms served everything to me on silver trays, with unbelievable servility. I sat out in the garden of the hotel and let a black waiter bring me one thing after another in an attempt to get him to open up, but it was impossible. He probably felt his whole existence threatened when I addressed him as a normal human being.



I sat pondering how strange it was that at this moment Nell was being "served" by white prison guards in hell, while I was being served by black waiters in heaven. It was as if everything in our lives had, in a natural way, brought us each to his own place, and our short friendship had only been a utopia. But it struck me that Nell, as a black, had actually come further, for wasn't he more free than this broken servant who was only able to hold his head up by learning to enjoy his own oppression here in this rich Dane's sadomasochistic universe? Wasn't Karmgard a murderer and annihilator, while at the same time seemingly a tender, quiet and unhappy human being who had learned to exploit to the utmost the mechanisms given him in this society? Furthermore, people said he was the richest homosexual in town, which meant he himself was part of an oppressed minority group. Was it not the same insecurity as the vulnerable minority that had driven him up into this unfortunate position that had driven many Jews in Europe up into similar economic security through the ages? The security in these surroundings was nauseating. I felt restless and lonesome. It was a favorite hotel of the richest and most glamorous film stars, but there was no human contact. Should I go out in the street and find a poor person to share my luxurious suite and a bottle of wine? No, one should not buy friendship with wealth, I thought. Not even borrowed wealth. I only stayed there one night, a terribly lonely night.

For years I had shared home and bed with people, and it came as a shock to suddenly be lying there all alone. After my silver-tray breakfast the next day, I rushed headlong back to freedom, determined to find some people to live with. On Bourbon Street two young girls came running up to me to get my autograph. Being tourists, they had gone into the famous hotel out of curiosity and had seen me sitting there at breakfast under the palm trees and therefore assumed I was a movie star. For a moment I felt tempted to play "movie star" and maybe get to stay with them, but



then chose to tell the truth. Then they lost all interest in me, and I realized that I was back down to earth again. Due to the many tourists, it is impossible for a vagabond to find a place to stay in New Orleans.

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

Without mentioning Nell, she said after a long silence: "You can come and live with me now." So, I moved into Bonnie's tacky and cluttered apartment. There were lice and fleas and several inches of dust everywhere. What happened in the next few days was peculiar, for although we could barely communicate with each other and did not have a sexual relationship we quickly became closer than I have been to any other person on my journey. When we realized that we were probably the only ones Nell had confided his past to, we became inseparably bound to one another. Living with Bonnie was like living on a volcano of human warmth. She is the only one I know of who is still running the "under-ground railroad". To live with her was to be woken up almost every night by some black man on the run from the law. Here they all found a place of

refuge. Bonnie loved black men, especially those who in one way or another had revolted against the master-slave relationship. She had always been that way. Earlier, she had lived in Jacksonville, Florida, but had been beaten up and driven out of town by the whites. She had gone to New Orleans, which is considered a freer Southern town. Actually, her own two children were neglected and needed clothes, healthy food, and vitamins; but on the other hand they had, through their mother's actions, been brought up not to hate, and were far healthier in their own way than most white children. Throughout their childhood they had seen murderers, thieves, rapists junkies, and other felons take the place of their father in their mother's bed, but they had experienced them all as human beings because they saw them through the eyes of their mother, who refused to accept this as their real identity and who thus, through this faith in human beings, actually created human beings. For these children terms such as "murderer" and "nigger" had no meaning, since in Bonnie's home the men all behaved as their "Daddy," and this was how the children saw them. There was always rejoicing when a "Daddy" had come out of prison. Bonnie sighed a bit because they would never see Nell again, but she was already prepared to take in a new Nell. Bonnie and I developed a quiet understanding and affection for each other which over the years grew into such a strong love-relationship that time and again I returned to New Orleans to live with her. Bonnie does not know if she is Jewish or Danish or Irish or Polish. She is just American, she says.

*Excerpts of letters.*

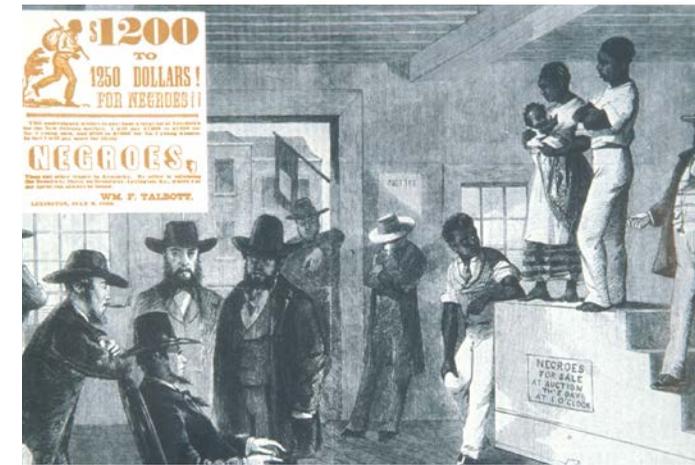
Ps. I have here let my stereotypical time-stamped generalizations about certain minorities stand precisely as a counterweight to Bonnie's more advanced, but in my opinion more genuine American attitudes which manifested itself in Obama's inclusive spirit 35 years later.



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

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

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



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

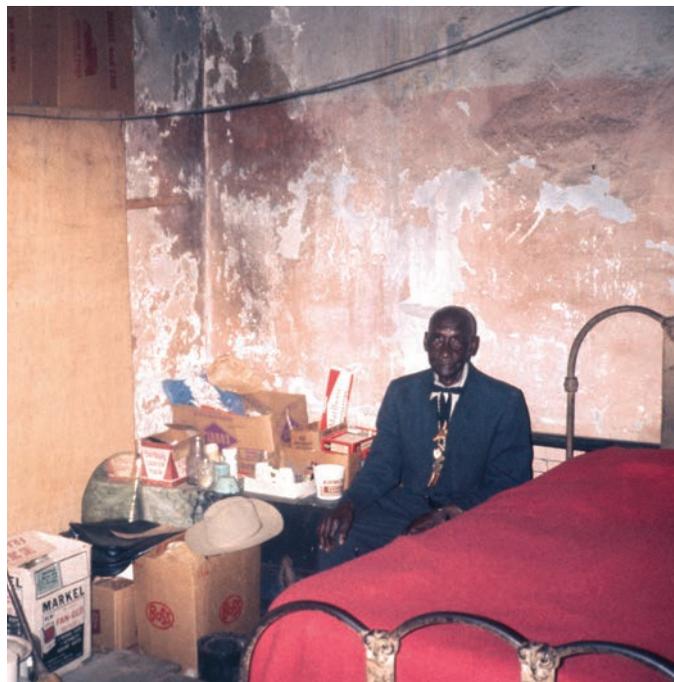
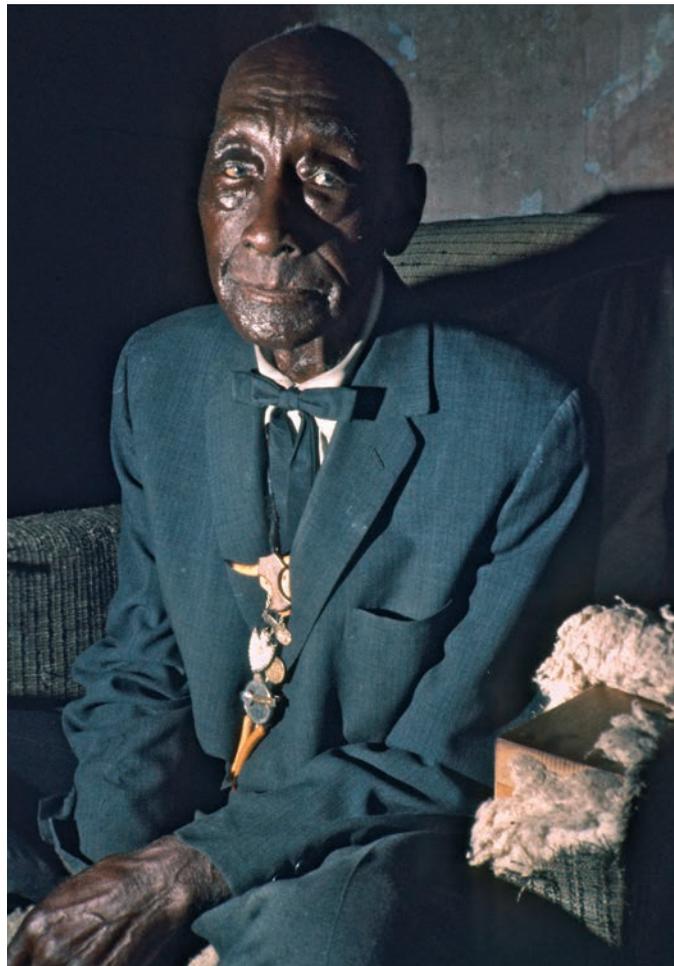
- *I come to the United States, when I was only twelve years old.*

- *Were you sold as a slave to the U.S.A.?*

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

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

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



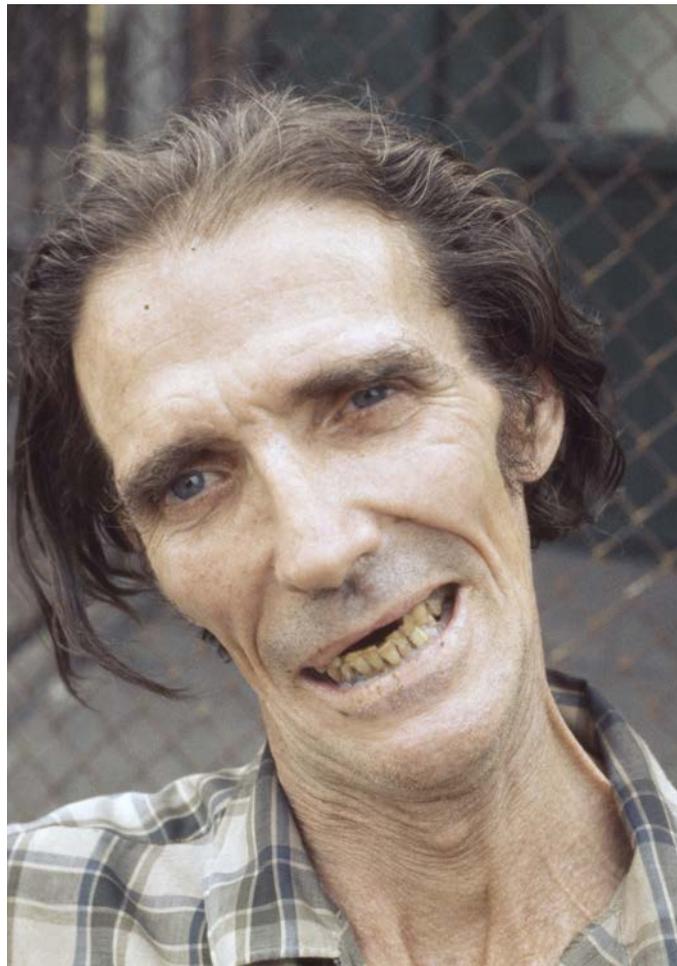
Historical photo

Martin Luther King - and the civil rights movement which he came to symbolize - changed the most overt and primitive forms of discrimination. But this most significant part of his dream went to the grave with him:

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

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





On my way to Florida in the winter I discovered where this fear and hostility, which blossomed into my terrifying encounter in the Northern streets, had its roots. Few blacks today pick cotton, but meeting those still trapped behind the cotton curtain in the midst of the affluent society of the 1970's seemed so surreal that I immediately felt thrown back in history - smothered by the cotton whose white tyranny once shrouded all black life in the South.

When I worked in the cotton fields, I soon discovered that reality looked quite different from historical pictures and caricatures I remembered of smiling, almost childishly happy cotton pickers. The smiles in this picture were in fact the only ones I saw in the cotton plantations, when one of the pickers could not figure out how my camera functioned.

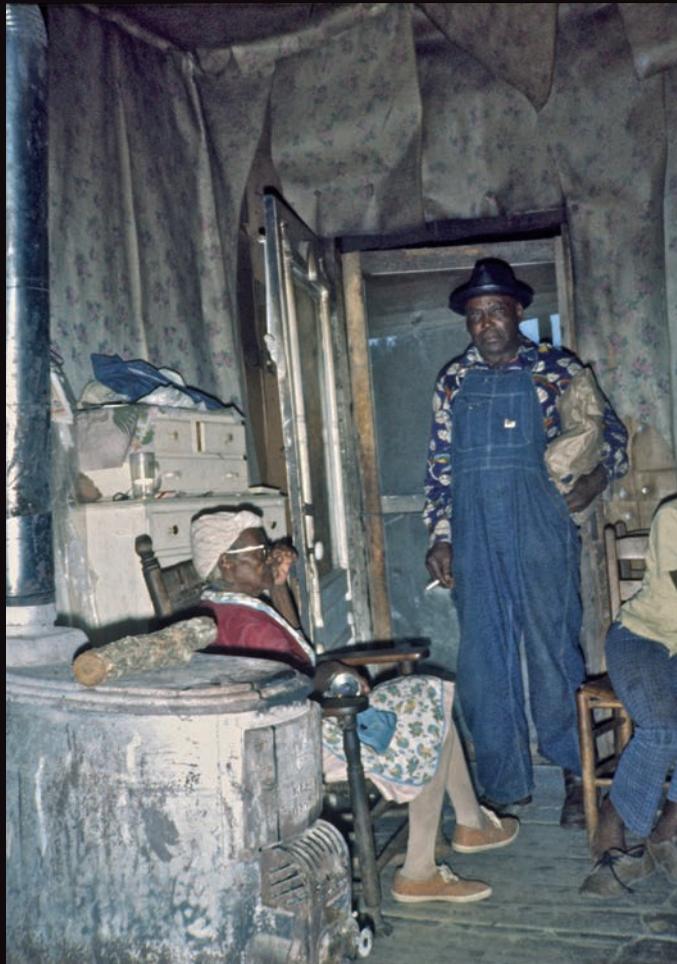
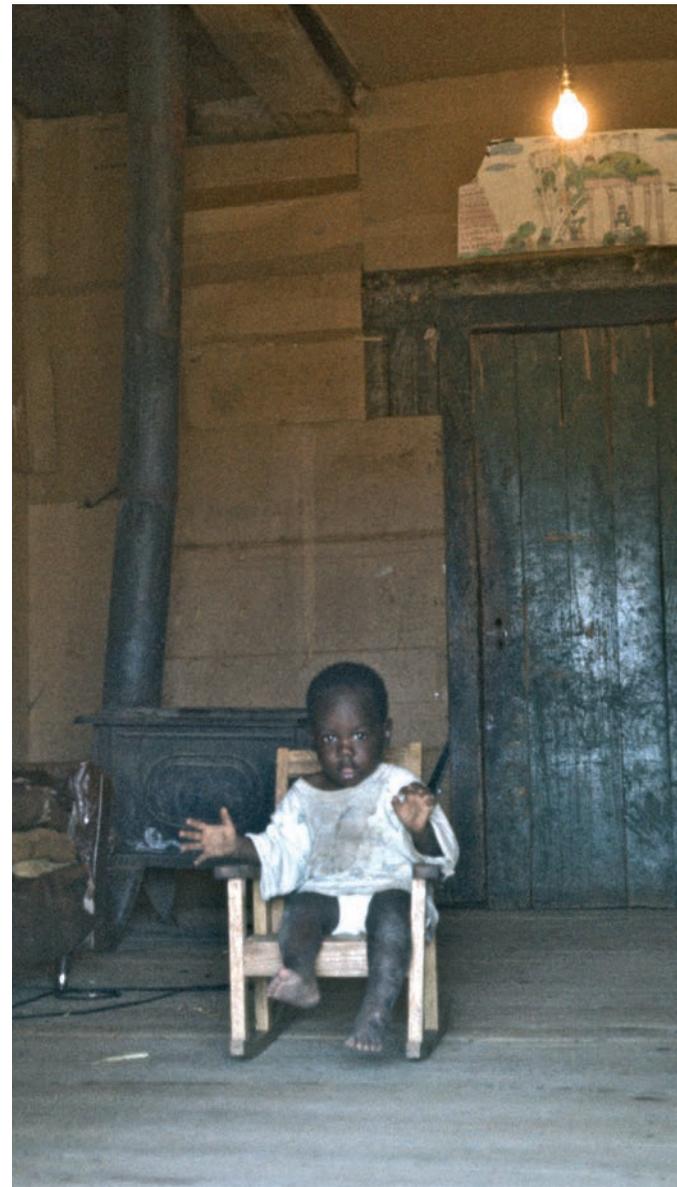


But when like me you come from Europe and have, for instance, never seen a pistol, you receive a shock you will never forget the first time you hear the tone of this language. After only a few days in this new country, I was held up by gunmen - a type of character I had never met. The fear I felt was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

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

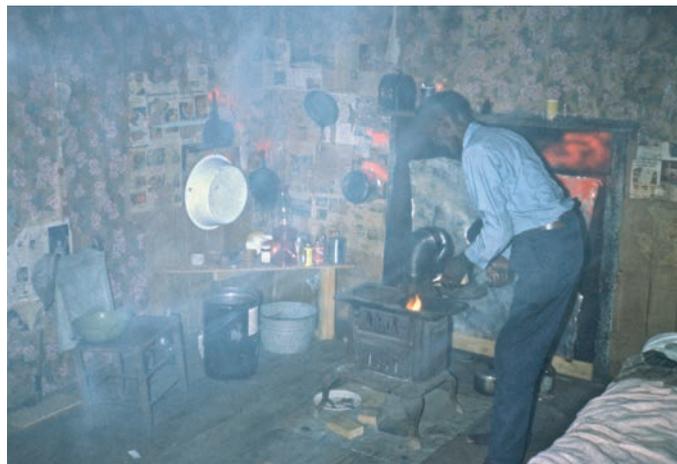
From the day I experienced that violent American reality, I began to understand the extent to which fear and anger characterize the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

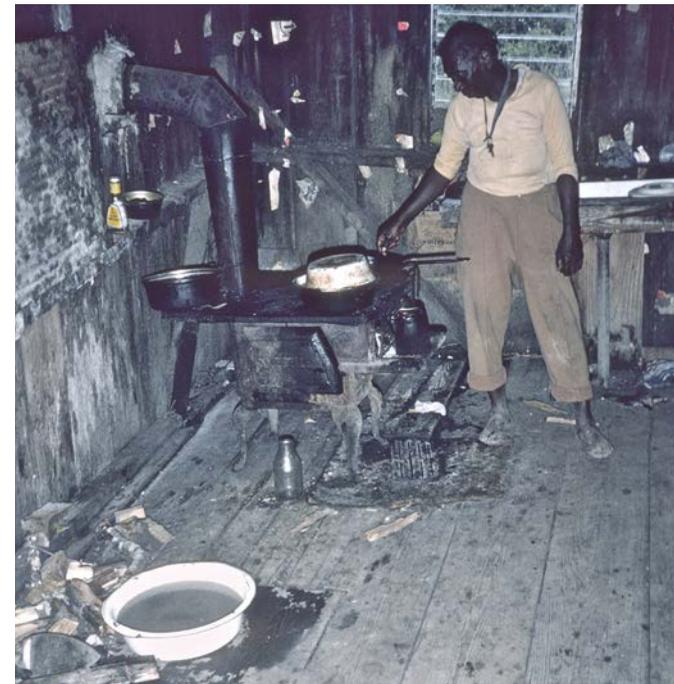




It took me a long time to overcome their hostility and fear of me as a white, but in the end, I got to stay with Marta and Joe in return for giving them all the cotton I picked. Though I toiled from morning to night and was aching all over, I never succeeded in picking more than four dollars' worth a day. The others were more experienced and could make over six dollars a day. This was relatively the same as today, where I see Martha and many of the others working for the discount chain Walmart and still cannot pull themselves up by the bootstraps. We worked on a piecework basis and were paid four cents a pound. The white landowner then resold it on the market for 72 cents a pound. I began to understand how the landlord could afford to live in a big white mansion while his black pickers must live in shacks.

At quitting time the son of the landlord arrived to weigh the cotton and pay us on the spot. We were tired and exhausted and there was no joy at receiving the money, which hardly stretched to pay for the kerosene for the lamp at home in the shack, which probably was not bigger or better than the ones the slaves originally lived in. How can these people be called free, when everything around them reminds them of the old master/slave relationship?





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

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

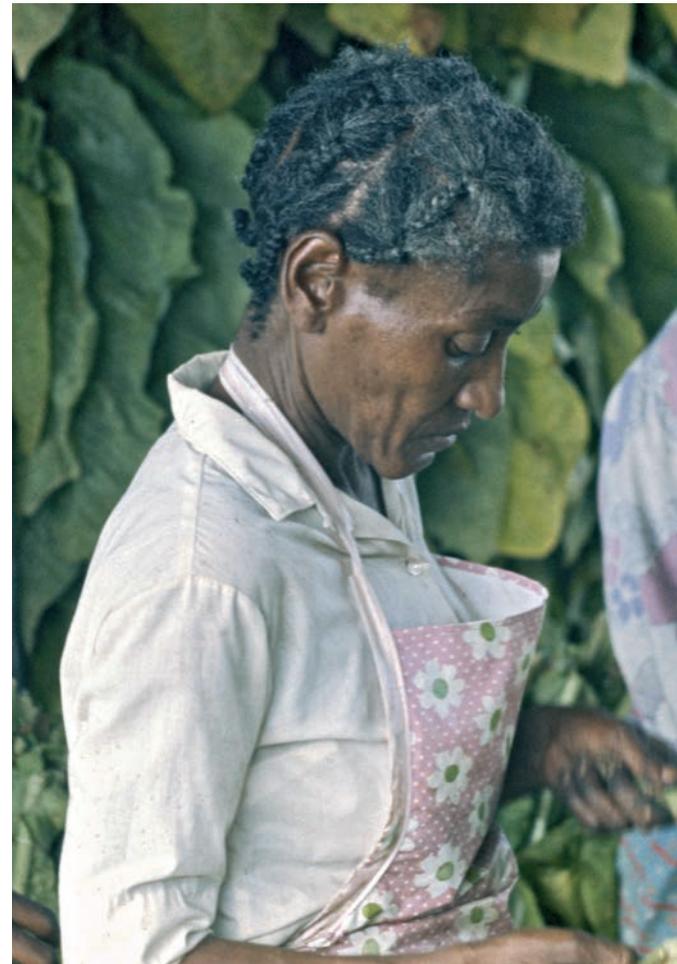
We certainly experienced the “machine” – personified in stockbrokers reading the tickertape just as a century ago they had found it their natural right to invest in human beings as private property – as more than mere paper-speculators when hour after hour the well-to-do people from up North swept past us in the cotton fields in their big motor homes and campers on their way to the sun in Florida. Many of the colleges such as Harvard I later spoke in up here were financed by slavery in the past. Today each of their rolling homes burns up as much gas in an hour as we could buy after a whole day in the cotton fields. Why are these paper-shufflers up in New York and Massachusetts able to have these extra rolling houses when they already have huge homes and the cotton pickers do not even have a waterproof shack to live in?

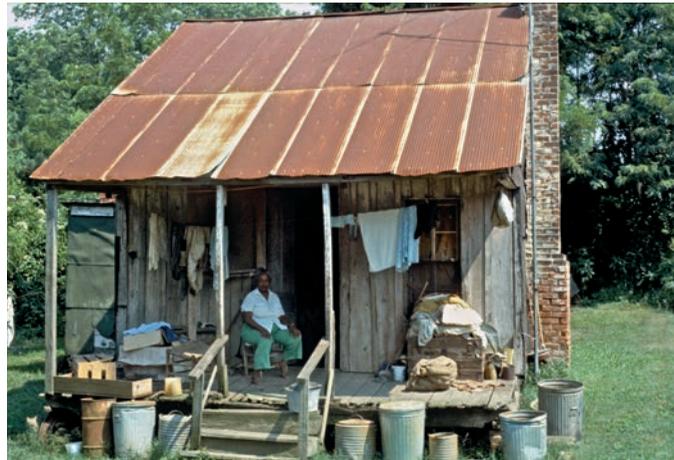


In the tobacco fields too I saw that it is the white man who Also in the tobacco fields I saw that it was the white man who owned and directed everything, while the blacks had to trail along after him - both in the spring, while the tobacco is planted, while the unemployed women sat in their shacks and watched, and in August, when the tobacco was picked. "It's real nigger-work," I heard the whites say. "They're already black so the tar doesn't stick as much on them as on whites." By law, they are guaranteed a minimum wage, which in year 2000 was only 1/3 of the one in Denmark. But since tobacco picking is seasonal work and there is not much work to find the rest of the year, it was indeed a meager yearly income they scraped together. Today, most blacks have given up and left the tobacco fields to underpaid illegal Latin American immigrants.

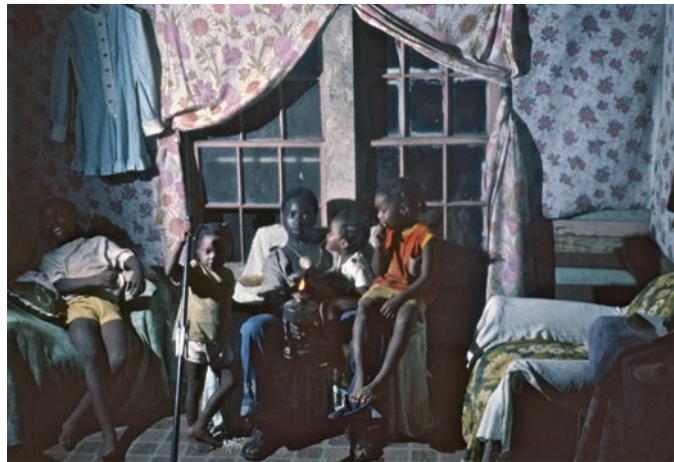


Later in the summer the tobacco is dried and sold at auction. In few places do we so visibly and forcibly continue to imprint the master-slave relationship into the consciousness of blacks as at the tobacco auctions. Wherever I go, I see the white buyers from the tobacco companies walk in front giving quick, discreet signals with pointed fingers and wagging heads, while the blacks rush behind them packing the tobacco bundles. The whites drive right into the auction hall in big flashy cars, and for lunch eat huge plate-size steaks inside, while the blacks have to eat their brown bag lunches outside. These people, who could gain human equality and freedom if they received just a couple of cents per packet of cigarettes sold, I saw working with expressions on their faces that only a slave could wear.





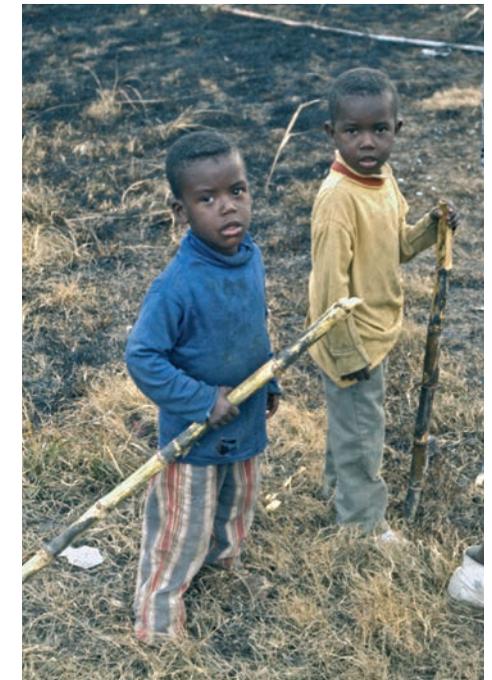
In the wintertime I usually hung around in the deepest Southern states and at Christmas one year I ended up in the sugar cane plantations of Louisiana. While I had perceived slavery in North Carolina's tobacco fields as primarily a state of mind, I was here shocked to find purely feudal or serf like conditions. The white landowner owned not only the plantations, but also the houses in which his black workers lived. They lay in a small cluster around his large plantation home - exactly as in the time of slavery. He also owned everything else in the small villages - including the only store which is called "the company store." Here the prices were 30% higher than in the bigger towns where the sugar cane workers could not afford to go, and where, incidentally, they often could not read the street signs as many of them were illiterate. Their average income was below \$3,000 a year, which often it had to support a family of 6-10 people. To survive, the workers therefore began to borrow from the landlord and soon fell into constant debt to him. Usually they did not pay with cash in his stores but got further credit and were in this way slowly pushed into economic bondage.



People who do not receive wages for their work, can only be called slaves. For had they first fallen into such a vicious circle, they were in fact owned by the landlord, as they could not leave his plantation until they paid off their debt. And that could only happen by a miracle.

When I was in New Orleans in 1972, a newspaper ran articles about this feudalism just outside the city with sentimental accounts of how the children in the sugar plantations only got an orange once a year for Christmas. A tear-jerking campaign was launched to send the children Christmas presents, and the dental students arranged free dental buses when it was revealed that they had never been able to afford to go to the dentist either.

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





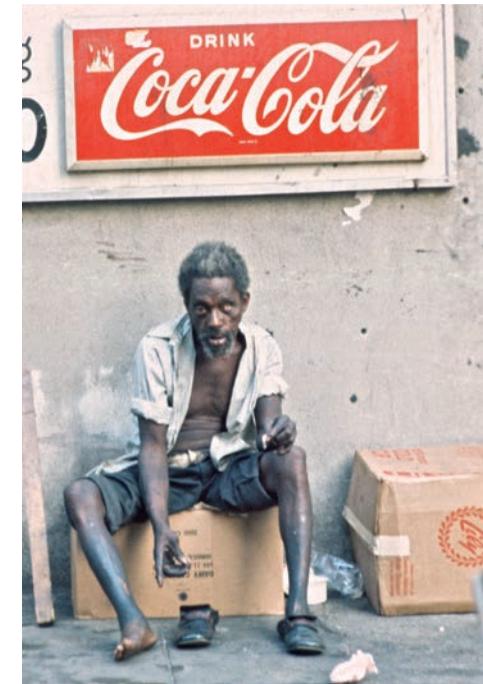
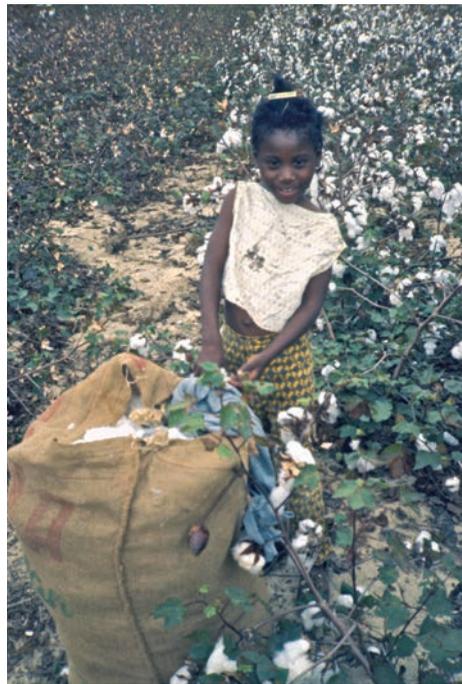
Because of their fear of reprisals from the whites, it was almost impossible to get to live with the sugar workers. When I finally managed to find a place and had gone to bed, the rumor about me had already swept like lightning through town, for suddenly the door was torn open and a mad neighbor, George Davis stuck the barrel of a gun in my stomach and chased me out into the cold winter night. Later that night a poor widow, Virginia Pate, took pity on me and allowed me to share a bed with five of her children in a shack far out in the swamps. It always gets cold in the morning when the stove goes out and since the children pulled the blanket to themselves, I froze the first night. But next morning Virginia began repairing old quilts so I would not freeze the following night. I will never forget this widow, whom I since visited almost every year. She was willing to defy the danger of the whites, even though she herself did not dare to be under the roof with me but slept in her sister Eleonora's shack. Along with her son, Morgan, I went hunting in the swamps for armadillos and other edibles. Drinking water we got from the roof gutter. George Davis was later murdered by Virginia's two nephews.



In my vagabond years, Florida's Attorney General charged the owners of sugar cane plantations of slavery. But except for a few who were imprisoned for directly chaining the workers, in the years under Bush, they stopped prosecuting such slave owners. After an exhausting day's work, the men were driven like cattle to slave camps often enclosed by barbed wire and "No Trespassing" signs. Just before my visit two such trucks overturned, killing one and injuring 125 others. Instead of receiving compensation, the men were fired. Inside the camps, with often over 100 to a room, only one dared talk with me, hidden in a bathroom, as they are immediately fired for talking to whites. Though these slave camps are owned by Gulf & Western, the real slave holder is the government and the taxpayers, who pay up to half the operating cost to avoid cheap imported sugar.



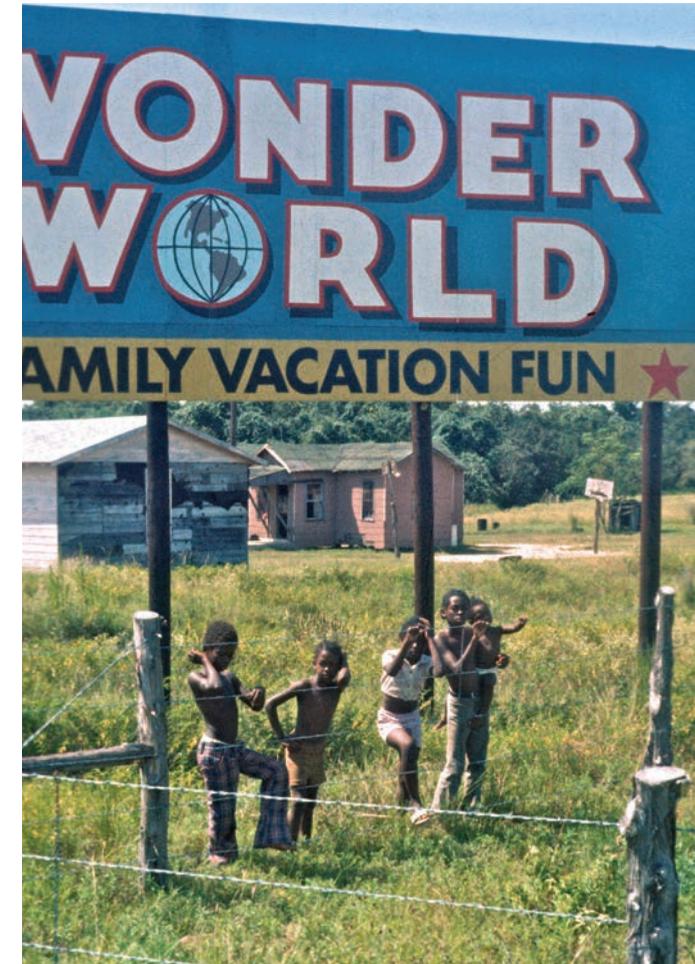


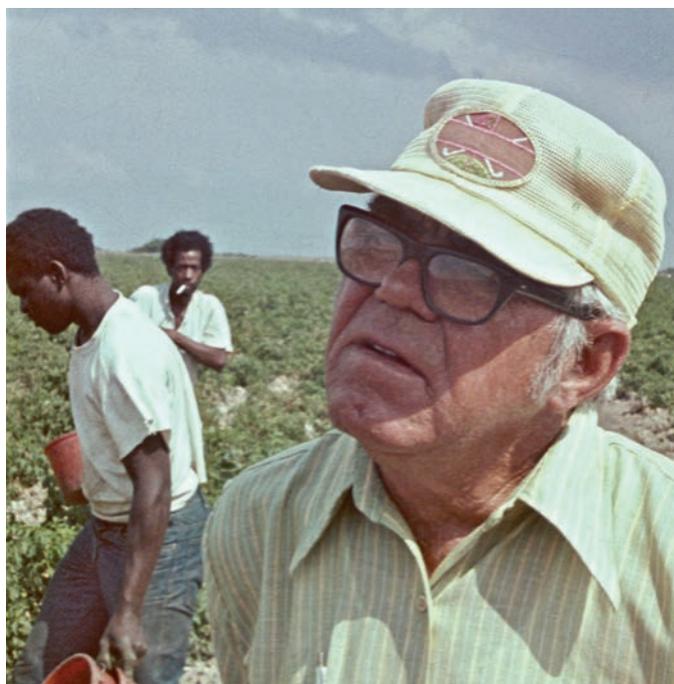


Today, I find more and more of these slave camps, and often take my shocked students from universities on visits to them. In North Carolina, I find bars where “slave-catchers” kidnap drunk people to their camps. These camps separate and destroy the black family, as slavery has always done. Wives and children are not allowed in the camps. Several men I talked to had not seen their families for up to eight months. A bloodstained, black hitchhiker I picked up after a lecture late one night had been so beaten up by the guards during his escape attempt that I had to treat his wounds. He told of another whose legs were crushed by the guards after an escape attempt and who now had to walk on crutches. “Welcome back to the free world,” I said. But he shook his head as he was on his way up to North Carolina’s camps. Voting with his feet was not a real choice for him – imprisoned by indifferent American voters in this Gulag camp system. Elsewhere, I saw migrant camps where the whole family can live together but are so dependent on each other’s earnings that they cannot afford to let their children leave work to go to school. Even today, much of America’s fruit is picked by children under the age of 16.

It is worth remembering when we in Europe are bombarded with cheap American fruit products that these are not only the result of wages only half as high as in Scandinavia, but also the “grapes of wrath” of farm workers, which we have chosen not to provide any social safety net like ours. They have no unemployment benefits, no free medical care or education, rent subsidies, child supplement, nurseries, or kindergartens. The cheap fruit we enjoy makes us guilty of a form of de facto slavery.

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





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

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

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

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

- Have you ever been on welfare or food stamps? - If I could get it I would, because I really need it. -How much does your husband make a week usually? - Not much, thirty-five or forty dollars a week, maybe. That don't hardly pay the rent and for something to eat. -And you work seven days a week?
- Seven days a week for 40 dollars, yes!
- Was there times where you had nothing to eat?
- There's been times where I had nothing, not even a cigarette. I've been down where I just had sugar, water and bread for three weeks. The people who ain't got it, they really suffer.
- But who would you blame for it all?
- The government. It is trying to starve us out. -You don't blame any of the people around here?

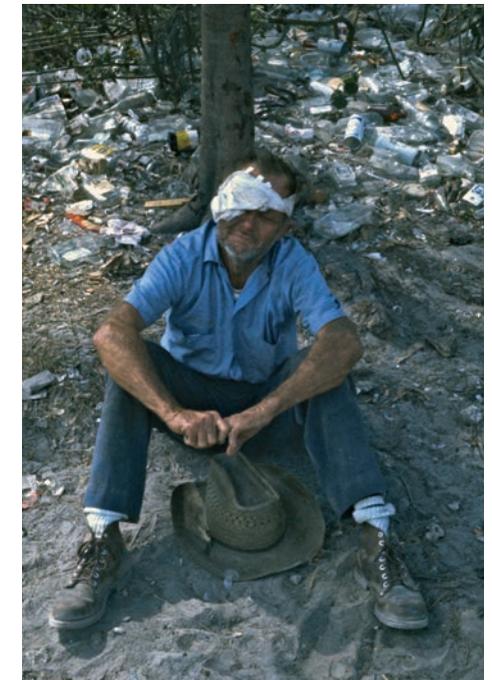


- No, I don't blame my people. I blame my government.
- I'm glad you don't blame the blacks or the Mexicans for it. A lot of people do, you know.
- No, this comes from the government itself. That's the reason there has been all the rioting and all this stuff... I've had my clothes and everything burned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



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

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

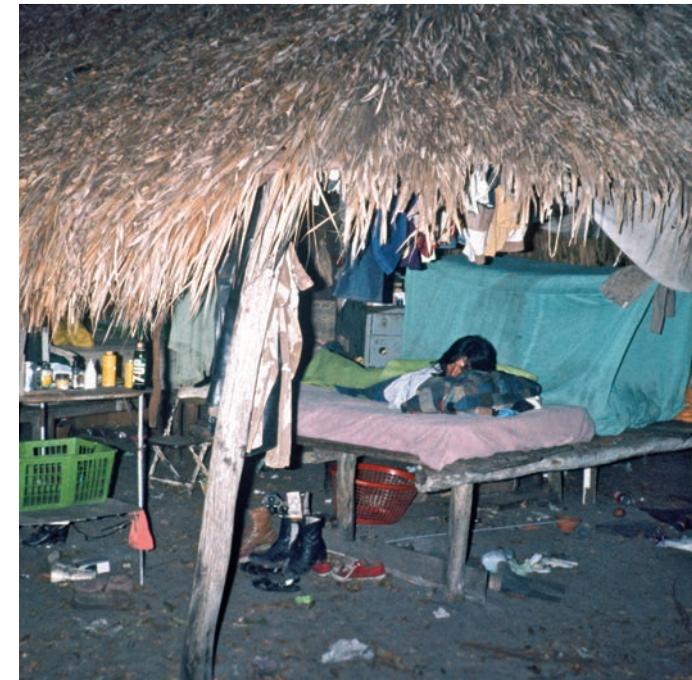
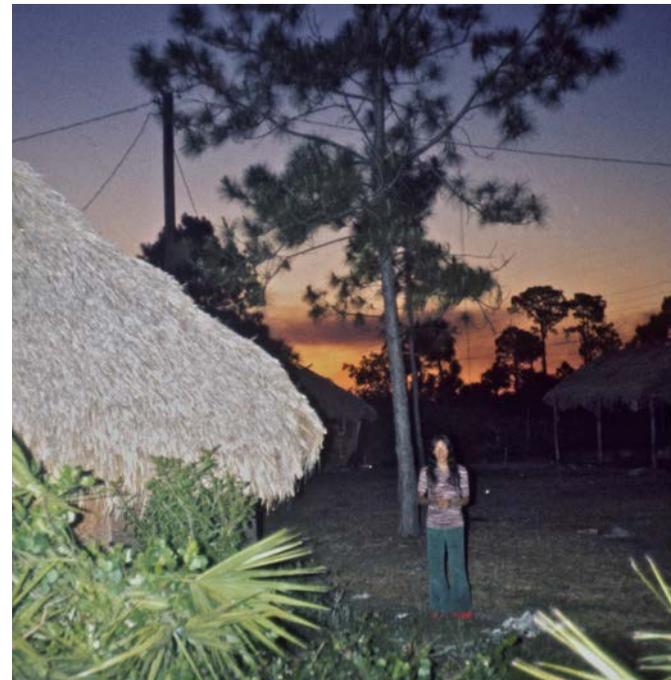


I saw more blood there than anywhere else in America, but only the few things I dared to photograph. This Mexican was stabbed while I was sitting next to him. Every morning there was a row of shabby individuals along the road who had been knocked down and robbed of everything the night before and now tried to hitch-hike out of town. But many will never get out of this slave camp. What soon came to interest me most was not the dead bodies, but the live ones – people in whom everything was extinct. These exhausted wretches, who earlier had managed to survive by working hard seven days a week, had slowly succumbed and were now just lying and waiting to die. At night they slept in the streets. One of them is squeezed in between the Pepsi- and the Coca-Cola machines. 25 years later, the picture had not changed. In 2008, the Immokalee Worker’s Anti-Slavery Campaign won its lawsuit against what the U.S. Attorney General called “outright slavery.” When I drove a hitchhiker home to Immokalee in 1996, my Norwegian fellow traveler Eli Saeter wrote in her book about the trip: “Outside the house where we are now, the hiker found two people killed. One had his head shot away. The other was stabbed. I’m scared. I dare not sleep. Jacob is exhausted, has driven far too far. He sleeps like a rock.” Yes, over the years I had become accustomed to violence.



Soon I received so many death threats because of my photography that I, like previously runaway black slaves, found refuge with the Indians outside the city, where I got to live with this woman from the Seminole tribe. I found it romantic to live in such palm-leaf huts, but the romance was not to last for long. After just a couple of days, those in town knew where I was and one night, I was woken by shouts ordering me out of the hut. I felt my last hour had come, but had no choice and stepped right out into the headlights of a pickup truck, from which some men with guns shouted to me in Mexican accents: “You be out of town before sunrise. If not, you will never see another sunrise!” Then I knew they were deadly serious, and the woman did not dare to have me living there any longer, so I slipped out of town like a shadow.

That I had indeed lived outside the law of the land, I saw six years later when I returned and saw that the Seminole Indians on the reservation had set up the United States’ first Native American casino, laying the groundwork for a multi-billion dollar industry to replace their previous gambling and alligator wrestling.





During such stays with Native Americans, I always had to ask if the destructive guilt that my white privilege inevitably carried with it among these, our pariahs, bore in fact testimony to an executioner role for which I had to take responsibility. One of the few times I gave up the vagabond role to take fate into my own hands was when I decided to fight alongside the Indians in Wounded Knee. What I had already seen of the Indians' conditions had made me disillusioned and depressed. The heavy shadow of tragedy which pervades the indigenous peoples was so overwhelming that I never stayed with them exceedingly long. Being with them naturally made me think more deeply about the relationship I had in Denmark with Greenlanders. Our excuses that we have no personal integration with them because they are so few, is completely irrelevant and reprehensible. That dawned on me when I was staying in the Native American reservations. Here I realized how strongly the psychological impact of our white cultures has set in with these minorities. I felt far more sympathy (albeit often of the useless romanticizing kind) towards the Indians in America than I ever felt towards the Greenlanders in Denmark.



Therefore, I was disappointed when in 1973 there was an opportunity to help the Indians fight for their rights. I had been expecting to see a mass movement of young whites venturing to Wounded Knee, but it turned out that all their sympathy was worth no more than the government's many broken treaties.

## Defeat at Wounded Knee?

The Native American uprising in Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973 became a turning point for me. We on the American left had constantly romanticized the use of armed force. Many of us were tired of demonstrations, so the leap to armed struggle was not great. But Wounded Knee was a depressing experience. In our romantic intoxication we had not given much thought to all the psychological problems one is exposed to when lying in trenches in snow and sleet for weeks. I saw so much discord and infighting among the Indians that I don't feel much inclined to talk about it. Also, they treated us white helpers almost as slaves. We helped them smuggle weapons and ammunition into the supply camp for the rebels, who at night carried it on to the trenches around the occupied village of Wounded Knee - an operation that took many hours since the FBI frequently sent flares up. We helpers were not very used to shootings, and it took a toll on many when the bullets flew over their heads. On one trip I lost my bag with both passport and camera, and a car was made available so that I could go and try to recover my things. As it was now daylight, I knew I would be discovered by the FBI and on the way back I was duly chased by an FBI car at a hundred miles an hour. I managed to elude them in the village of Porcupine when I hid myself in a funeral procession for an Indian who had been killed during the struggle.

Later, on another occasion, I was arrested by the FBI; I had a short-hair wig on, because the day before I had been arrested by them and thrown off the reservation. I had hoped that they wouldn't recognize me. When I was transferred to an Indian jail, I managed to persuade the Indian policeman to release me by giving him a bad conscience about his working for the government. Well, I don't think these external experiences were the reason I felt defeated, rather, it was my more intimate experiences. I had become particularly good friends with one of the leaders in Wounded Knee, a Sioux Indian whom I will call X. I had driven with him and a white lawyer from Rapid City. When we got to the reservation, they did not stop the car and we were shot at by the "goon squad". I was shocked, but later found out we had been carrying an arms consignment in the trunk. We dropped the lawyer off at the camp where the Indians were in the process of negotiating with Washington the handing-over of the now half-rotten body of one of the Indians killed at Wounded Knee. We then drove to the Rosebud Reservation, where X suggested that we stay overnight with his aunt. She let us sleep on a

mattress in her kitchen, and I began to stretch out a blanket on the floor so that X could have the narrow mattress. But he said we should share the mattress and gave me a long explanation on how, according to Indian custom, it was impolite to refuse an invitation. As we lay there on the mattress, he whispered mysteriously to me about the spirits, and the prairie wind moaning in the eaves added extra atmosphere. He gradually fell into an ecstasy and could not understand why I was not able to see the spirits in the darkness. He started shivering violently and held me tighter and tighter. After a while, his trembling lessened a bit and he began kissing me - big wet kisses. Only then did it dawn on me that he was homosexual, but a kind of homosexual I had not met before. Although he had a hard-on, he wasn't after sex and didn't take his clothes off. He just wanted to make love on a "higher plane" and spiced it all with spirits and demons in such a way that even today I still ask myself if he was really on the level with me that night.

The next day he took me with him to the supply camp where we spent the following week. Here I saw a completely different side of him as one of the camp leaders, and he never in any way showed that he liked me, so I soon concluded that Indian culture strongly suppresses homosexuality. But he treated me better than the other whites were treated and as his friend I soon got special assignments. Thus, it was he and I who would drive the truck with Clearwater's coffin and Morningstar, Clearwater's eight-months-pregnant widow. We had sat up all night in the house of the medicine man Crow Dog, holding a wake over the body. Both he and X had offered long Indian prayers by the coffin. The tears streamed down X's cheeks all the while and that which I had perceived on that other night as hypocrisy now seemed quite different. We took a green medicine that had a powerful effect and I let myself be carried away and stood up, like several others, to make a speech by Clearwater's coffin. I compared Nixon's slaughter of the Indians in Guatemala during the Eisenhower regime with his present genocide here in Wounded Knee. I was the first one who tried to put Clearwater's death into an international context, and it made a certain impression, I was later told.

Because of the many telegrams coming in from all over the world (even China and Russia), we had felt the whole time that we were in the midst of something of historical



importance. But the next day, as we stood out there, in the desolate hills where only a few scattered firs grew, lowering the coffin into the hole, we nevertheless felt strangely forsaken. I felt an immense emptiness and for a moment all historical significance vanished. I caught the eyes of a young Indian woman. She was of the Chippewa tribe and had hitchhiked up to Wounded Knee of Minnesota in red clogs to fight. She was extremely beautiful, and we started flirting with each other as our eyes met over the coffin. No sooner had we all smoked the peace pipe and scattered the ashes over the casket, as is the custom, than Bobby and I began spending all our time together. We tried to keep our relationship secret, as it was not acceptable for a red woman to be seen with a white man.

All the same, X soon got wind of it and was furious; however he was totally incapable of looking me straight in the eye and therefore dressed me down indirectly. He called the whole camp together and made a long speech about the promiscuity flourishing in the camp and how we had to respect the Indian traditions and be in mourning with dignity after Clearwater's death, etc., etc. He then called all the Indians together to discuss whether or not the whites ought to be expelled. I later found out that there had been a majority for it, but that X had then backed down and demanded that we stay. The long and short of it was that X had fallen deeply in love with me and I am absolutely sure that that was the only reason the whites were allowed to remain in the camp. Slowly I began to realize how in love with me X was. As he was inordinately jealous of Bobby, I got orders to sleep in the tent of honor in the future, along

with himself and Morningstar, who was in mourning. I was very, very moved that I would be sharing the tent of the widow of one of the first Indians to be killed in the first Indian insurrection of modern times. In my revolutionary intoxication I felt that I had landed right in the middle of a historic focal point. I had already become good friends with Morningstar because of the speech I had made over her husband's body, and I had very strong feelings for her - eight months pregnant as she was. But from there to actually living with her and the leader in the tent of honor was nevertheless a leap. Naturally I felt a certain pride toward the other whites about being "promoted" to Morningstar's teepee.

With this historical consciousness of my own situation I was not at all prepared for what happened in that very tent. Morningstar lay in the tent's only bed, chatting with me in the glow of the lamp, while I lay on the ground. She became more and more lively and seemed more and more overwhelming. Then all at once she asked if it was okay if she lay down beside me. I was completely taken aback, and before I could answer, she had climbed down to me and laid herself up close to me in my sleeping bag. I didn't know what in the world to do and lay completely stiff. I have often run into similar situations, but this was something very different, and to even think about sex in this situation was out of the question. It was only two days after her husband's funeral - the husband whose child she lay with there against my stomach. I was shaken and shocked. All my romantic and revolutionary ideals fell with a crash. (I have since been told that this behavior is not abnormal for a person who has just lost a husband or wife.) I was thinking of all the telegrams of condolence pouring in to us from all over the world, and I don't know how I should have managed the situation if X had not come back from a meeting just then. X became my rescuer. When we heard him coming, Morningstar got up in her bed again. X blew out the light and lay down beside me, just like the first night at his aunt's house. Since then he had not dared to show me any sign of affection. Although ordinarily I greatly prefer sex with women, I must admit that when he began to kiss me that night, I felt as if he had just saved me from a very, very embarrassing situation.

A few days later the warriors sneaked out of Wounded Knee and the rebellion was over - but not for me. Many of the weapons were buried in the hills around the camp,



after which the Indians fled and spread out all over the U.S. and Canada. Two of them stole all the money in Crow Dog's camp and took off for Oklahoma with it. Bobby had to leave before we got a chance to say goodbye. X was watching me day and night, and suddenly I again found myself in a crazy situation. He was so much in love with me that he wouldn't let me leave; but he dared not show it and therefore gave orders to the guards around the camp that I was not allowed to leave it for "security reasons." He said to me that I had taken pictures that could fall into the hands of the FBI, but to the guards he only mentioned the unspecified "security reasons," and suddenly I sensed hateful and suspicious eyes every-where, and every time I came close to the perimeter of the camp I immediately had a couple of rifle barrels pointed at me. My situation became more and more desperate, as I couldn't explain the actual reason to any-one in the camp. I didn't want to compromise X, and any-way, if I had told people that their great leader wouldn't let me leave because he was in love with me, they would not have believed me. I was a prisoner of the Indians without anyone knowing why. It became unbearable, and some days later I managed to escape through the reservation and hitch-hike the two hundred miles back to Rapid City.

In Rapid City I again stayed with the Indian woman who had first brought me into contact with AIM (American Indian Movement) before I went out to Wounded Knee. She had nothing but contempt left for the rebels and in the evening she took me to a big fancy steakhouse, where I had the best and most civilized steak I have had for a long



time. Oh, how I enjoyed being back in America! But the violence followed in my path, and one night our neighbor was murdered in the apartment downstairs as an act of revenge after the rebellion. For several days we sat together with his mother and got drunk while staring at the pool of blood on the floor, which she refused to wipe up because it was the only thing she had left of her son. The internal violence which increasingly characterizes Third World people as a result of their long oppression is, however, usually not turned outward among the Indians as with the blacks, but turned inward in the form of suicide. Perhaps our enemies, after all, saw the Wounded Knee insurrection as just another suicide attempt? And maybe we ourselves were influenced to such a degree by our enemy's view that we couldn't all live up to the harsh human demands the rebellion made on us. For my own part I had had enough of armed struggle and "armed love" and thereafter gave myself fully to the role of vagabond. To be a vagabond is just an attempt to give oneself fully to the individual person. But to be a revolutionary is an attempt to give oneself fully to all of humanity. No human being is able to combine these two attitudes, and for my own part I suffered a defeat at Wounded Knee, just as many of the Indians did. Human beings are so infinitely weak and small that if they are ever to become fully human they must combine these two sides. Although almost all of us suffered defeat in Wounded Knee, Wounded Knee was nevertheless a victory, because it was such an attempt.

Excerpts of letters



*Why do we call them the enemy  
this struggling nation  
we've been bombing across the sea?  
Why do we want these people to die?  
Why do we say North and South?  
Oh, why, oh why, oh why?*

*That's just a lie  
one of the many and we've had plenty.  
I don't want more of the same,  
No more genocide in my name!*

*Oh, why are our history books  
so full of lies  
when no word is spoken of why the Indian dies  
or why the Chicanos love  
the California land?  
Do all books say it was discovered  
by the white men?*

*That's just a lie  
one of the many and we've had plenty.  
I don't want more of the same,  
no more genocide in my name!*

Later, whenever I lived with Indians, I realized that Wounded Knee had' become a symbol of pride for the Indians. But also, that violence is not redemptive, but just carries the seeds of more violence. The oppressed become their own oppressors. Hundreds of Indians have been murdered in subsequent internal showdowns since. Yet this strong nationalism was as important and inevitable for them as the armed revolts of the blacks in the ghettos. It led them into a nationalist phase with black power and black beauty as symbols of pride in the form of afro hair and African clothing. Europe's Muslims today goes through the same phase with their parallel "I am Muslim, I am beautiful" symbols such as headscarf, hijab and rebellious burqas even worn by many well-integrated Muslims. Also, many Jewish men are starting to go with the Kippahs again. I learned that such a period of nationalism, in which the values of the white majority culture are rejected for a time, is necessary and inevitable for all minorities in an attempt to rid themselves of the self-loathing and self-destruction that our oppression has caused. But I also learned that this demonstrative and often violent phase is the easiest, and that the struggle afterwards is far more difficult and longer

- the struggle to create equality in the minds and hearts of oppressor and, yes, our oppressed. In this process of recognizing the humanity of the counterpart, in all systems of oppression we discover that we are constantly swapping hats with each other, are both oppressed and oppressors at the same time. When I hitchhiked in Guatemala and Mexico, I saw the Latinos down there pose as a bloody and oppressive master race towards the Indians, while in the United States they themselves are discriminated against as a marginalized minority. It was in demonstrations for these human rights that young Americans taught me to see the connection between the oppression of American minorities and the oppression of people in the Third World. In our groping attempts to understand and combat the brutality of the government, we began to use the term "the system" about the oppression we saw on the outside but would not realize we carried inside ourselves. For how do we avoid being paralyzed by guilt when, in the pool of blood, we see our own innocent racism's gradual accumulation into the genocide of one million Indians, six million Jews and Roma, one million Algerians, three million Vietnamese, 110,000 Iraqis, etc.?









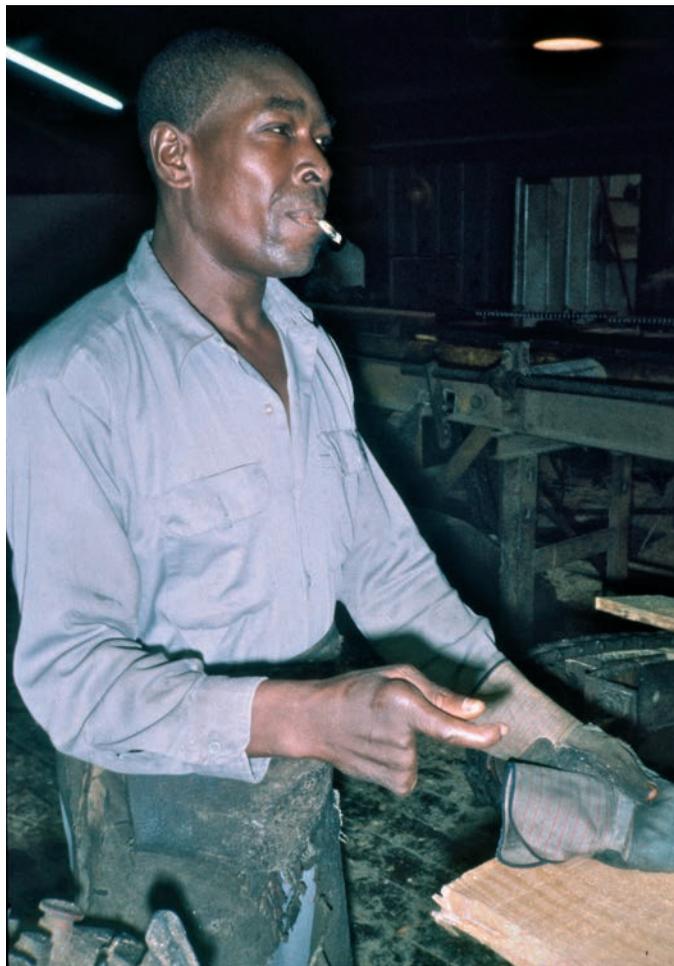
*Oh, why are the weapons of the war so young,  
and why are there only older men  
around when it's done?  
Why are so many of our soldiers black or brown?  
Do we say it's because they're good  
at cutting yellow people down?*

*That's just a lie  
one of the many and we've had plenty,  
I don't want more of the same,  
no more genocide in my name!*





In a society which makes such violent inroads on life and where European concepts such as workers' management and unions are light years away in the worker's consciousness the time-clock easily becomes the new whip of the slave master - a symbol of our constant and persistent violence. When I five years later returned to Sam Kator in the picture below to give him my book, he had been beaten to death by police in a prison cell. Traveling in the world of black Americans inevitably becomes a journey into the soul and back in history of every person you meet. In such a journey you begin to understand the traits and tendencies which we impressed on the souls and entire consciousness of black people during slavery and how we ever since not only perpetuated and re-stimulated both theirs and our own distress patterns, but intensified them.



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





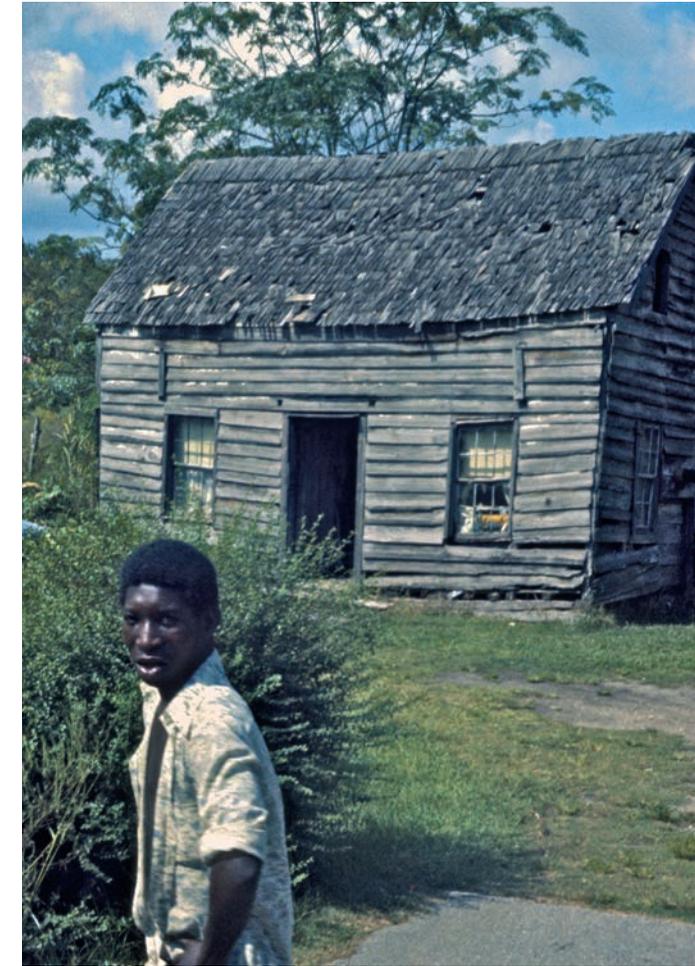
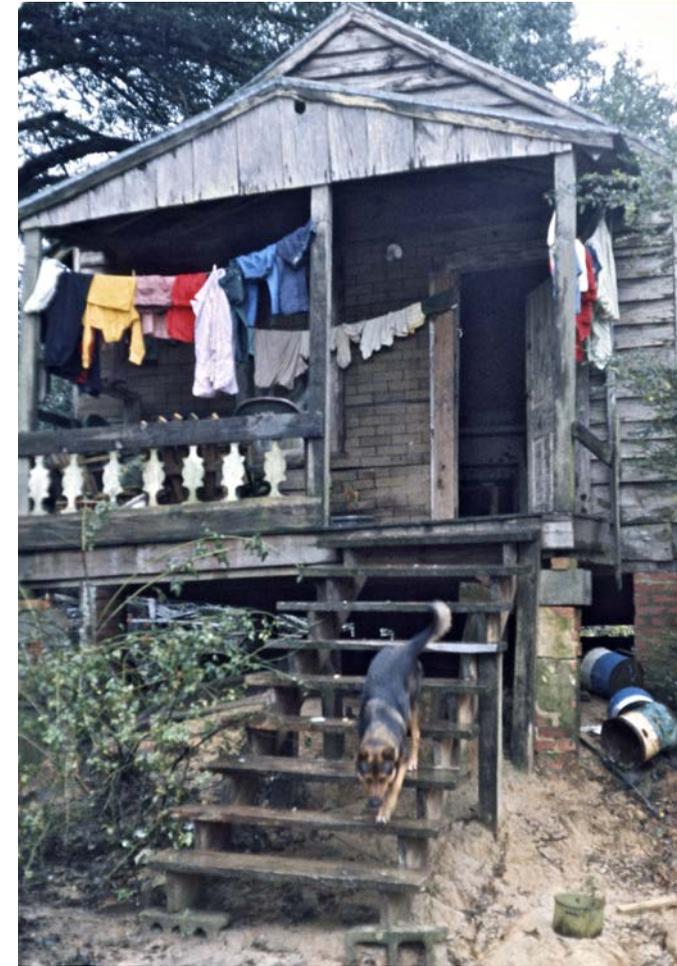
*Poor slave, take the shackles off your body,  
poor slave, put the shackles on your mind.  
Please listen to me carefully  
and if I'm wrong then correct me.  
But if I'm right my song do praise,  
now let's see if we agree:  
The definition of a slave  
means one not free entirely  
so a slave is still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

*A tree is still a tree  
though it sheds its leaves when winter comes.  
But it blooms again in spring  
for it did not lose its roots at all.*

*But a slave remains a slave  
without the knowledge of his roots  
until he's taught the past  
not just some, but all the truth.*

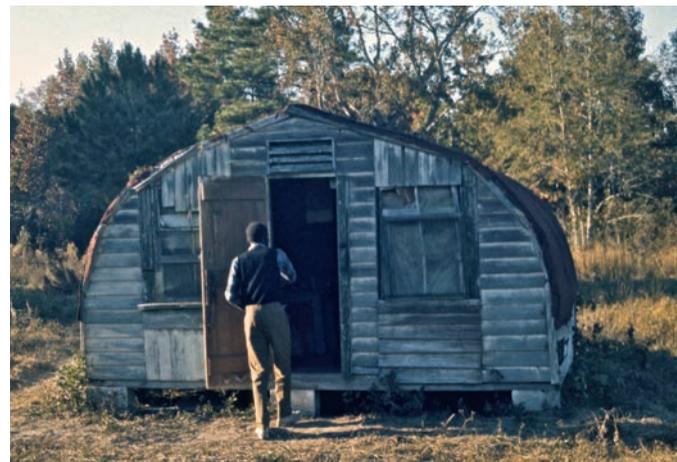
*There was a brother the other day  
telling me he's feeling high  
but I just sadly had to sigh  
for drugs and booze ain't glory,  
and if I had the chance to get high  
I would tell the truth and not a lie,  
for the highest high a man can get  
is from wisdom, knowledge and understanding.  
Poor slave, ease the pressure off your body,  
poor slave, put it on your mind...*

When I lived with the underclass, I understood how the physical shackles also became mental shackles. These shackles we have confined our slain Cain brother in since slavery are utterly inhuman and do not admit a feeling of freedom and the opportunity to unfold intellectually and creatively. 100 years ago, we lived physically close to our black neighbors. Always seeing our oppressed consigned to inferior living conditions is incomprehensible and hurtful also to the mind of the innocent white child. Growing up, we are slowly manipulated into developing hostile images - with the result that the natural joy of being with blacks in the USA or immigrants in Europe is violently suppressed. When the vicious circle of oppression is thus fulfilled, it becomes natural for whites to rationalize that the outcasts live right next to their own luxury homes in miserable shacks often



smaller than this original slave cabin. Or as white students often say after my lectures: "Before I saw your show, it never occurred to me that real people lived in those shacks!"

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



Thousands of Americans I saw grow up in the glow of the kerosene lamp. In the same way I did not feel capable of portraying the strange psychic feeling of suddenly being transferred to a condition we in Denmark have not known for the last hundred years - although it is delightful after all the stifling noise characterizing American homes suddenly to stand in the silence of no TV or radio. Liberal whites with no fear of the lights being turned off sometimes argue during my lectures that blacks should be happy for the same reason. With such romanticism we reveal a terrifying insensitivity toward the psychology of involuntary poverty. And even if you are perhaps free from the invasion of the commercials of affluent society inside your shack, you nevertheless have your prospect destroyed by the omnipresent aggressive billboards right outside.





## On hitch-hiking and psychic leaps

Hitchhiking in America is a perpetual attempt to try to overcome people's fear and make it a positive experience for them to pick you up. When you see the thrilling red brake lights and rush up in the dark and tear open the car door only to look into the barrel of a frightened driver's gun you know that it is to your mutual advantage and security that you should be forced to show the contents of your pockets or passport in this way. Trust can be promoted with a nice elaborate sign. I experiment with all kinds of slogans such as "Saving fuel for you" and "Bible belt - and no Good Samaritan?", but sad to say the only thing which gives people real trust is advertising that I am not American. Trust is essential for demographic hitch-hiking. Rides with women are among hitchhikers regarded as a special psychic encouragement and security after all the aggressions of so-called "rednecks" and "perverts." But women are a problem, too. Since American women are very open and unlike female drivers in Europe often invite you home, they make themselves extremely vulnerable. On the one hand it is important always to let the woman set the boundaries of the new friendship if you have even a hope of avoiding the sexism inevitably imposed on you as a man by a society which has never given you the choice of whether or not to become a sexist or racist, but only of trying to counter-act the negative acts such suffering causes. Without an awareness of your suffering you are bound to hurt the oppressed with your "master-vibrations." On the other hand you cannot just - as with male drivers - float along into any situation, as you can then easily cause hurt feelings. Even the most competent vagabond makes mistakes here, not least because you yourself are so vulnerable and the immense hardships on the road often make you fall in love with types you would never otherwise open up to. I had a striking experience of giving such injurious signals when a driver offered me the so-called "love drug" MDA which makes you unbelievably in love with all people. But the next ride I had was with a stiff 80-year-old woman who due to my ungovernable love couldn't help being affected and in the course of the next hours began to behave like an amorous teenager. So, we were both left a bit crestfallen when the intoxication disappeared.

Among the most beautiful things you experience as a vagabond are, however, such relationships with old people whom you one way or another manage to evade in normal life. They are the most harmonious group for the hitchhiker as they - unlike working people - live on the

same time level as the vagabond and furthermore can give your journey its important fourth dimension: the historical perspective. When you hear statements from them like "What this country needs is another great depression to bring us all together again" you experience the enormous alienation which makes being together with the vagabond so important for these people. But the hyperactive ones can kill you with their psychic leaps!

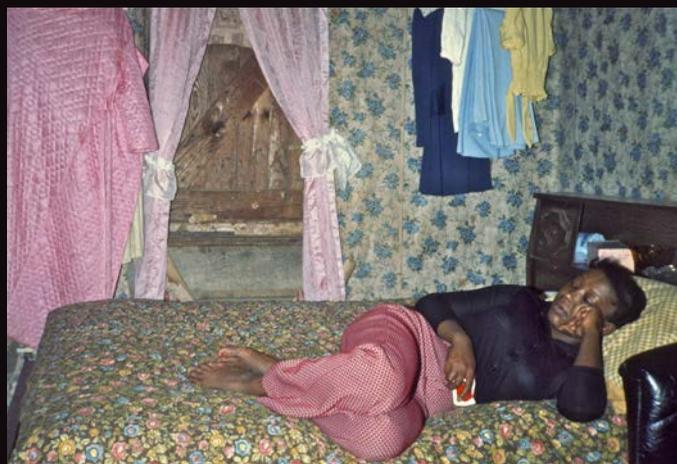
In Florida a 72-year old rich man picked me up, the notorious Bill Gandalls, and when he heard that I photographed he made me his private photographer. He wanted me to expose the "filthy rich" on Palm Beach and took me to the most exclusive parties, where we wallowed in champagne, women and multimillionaires, immediately afterward taking both me and luxurious gifts over to the black slums in West Palm Beach or the slave camps outside the city, and the next moment driving around to report these "criminal" conditions to police, courts and city councils. From six in the morning to two at night he stormed and raged over the injustices. If we were lost, he would stop anywhere to ask directions. One night it was outside a full suburban church. He ran in, stopped the service, presented me as a minister's son from Denmark, then delivered a thunderous indignant sermon after which he conducted the choir. After half an hour the congregation lay in fits of ringing laughter and he suddenly remembered his real mission and sent church-goers to their cars to get maps, after which a large circle lay on the church floor to find "Indian Road". Every day he had new projects. One day he learned from some young people about "organic farming" and got so inspired that we got started right away on procuring four truckloads of manure from the Everglades in order to *fly* it over to his estate in the Bahamas. After a week like this I was totally defeated from lack of sleep and proportion and had to leave. Oh, how I enjoyed the freedom on the highway again! But the next ride was with an 82-year old woman who was so hyper-active that she only napped while I was actually driving. If she had not sent me up to Philadelphia a few days later to get one of her cars and let me use her credit card to invite my poor friends from the cotton and tobacco fields as well as passing drifters and hitchhikers to the finest restaurants on the way back to Florida, she might very well have worn me out completely.

*Letter to Mog, an American friend.*



In the same way I felt it difficult to photograph America's rich upper class. Unlike today's boastful rich, the rich displayed guilt in the 1970s. The gap between rich and poor has grown dramatically since the 1970s, when the USA had achieved its greatest equality ever. At that time, the upper class allowed only "modest" mansions and ranches around the country. I could only photograph one room at a time which in no way shows the true dimensions of their mansions. Although the photographic gap between rich and poor was small, the psychic leaps I took from shack to plantation home or urban ghetto to millionaire home each time felt as if I had taken a trip from Earth to the moon. When I hitchhiked with a white salesman in 1974 and showed him the pictures, he kept insisting that I must have taken them in the 1950s, even though we could see shacks all around the car. "Then come in and visit my friends", I said, pointing to a shack only 400 yards inside the field. There he sat in shock with Scye Franklin by her open fireplace with the winter wind whistling through the cracks of the house for the rest of the day - and discovered that "American Pictures" was just something he previously had not wanted to see.







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



a welfare mother in South Chicago and a businessman in North Philadelphia gave me a big bag of tokens, so the son in my family in South Phillie wouldn't have to walk to Temple University. In the South I rarely found the same effusive compassion for the poor, but the psychic leaps I experienced there too.



One morning I was cutting firewood for this 104-year-old woman in South Carolina. She and her 77-year-old daughter usually had to cut all their firewood themselves. Their shack resembled the medieval houses in the Open-Air Museum in Copenhagen, but it did have a well though many others do not. The daughter's husband was 97 years old and all three slept in the same bed to keep warm when the fireplace turned cold in the morning. Their house was owned by the white landlord (living behind the trees in the rear) whom they paid \$30 a month. Later that day, although I had torn a big hole in my pants while cutting wood and wasn't wearing my short wig, as I usually did on such occasions, I managed to get into a press conference with Julie Nixon in Charleston. Nixon's daughter, who was visiting a home for handicapped children, walked around shaking hands with crippled children. Afterwards the press asked her friendly questions. I managed to spoil the entire press meeting by quite simply asking her whether she did not think it was hypocritical to visit these handicapped children after Nixon had just vetoed a bill to aid the handicapped. Julie Nixon became so embarrassed that she was unable to answer and the manager of the institution



interrupted the performance with all possible diplomatic speed. At night when the visit was broadcast on TV my question had been censored out.



To switch environments so fast can be shocking when the physical distance is only a few miles apart. But when you roam about for many years you realize that such psychic vagabonding is necessary for your survival. Shaped by a Danish middle-class environment I found it overwhelming to live entirely in ghetto homes for very long with their overcrowding, persistent noise, and psychic oppression. After a while I found it necessary to search out into more affluent homes where I can spend a few days in my own room and get peace of mind. But soon I get bored here and search back to the ghetto homes. In Washington, North Carolina, I first lived in four black homes, three of them without electricity and running water. When I stayed with this young woman, Cay Peterson, at the kerosene lamp I had to sleep all night in an armchair

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

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

we had an intercom to communicate between the different sections of the house. There was even an indoor fishpond as big as some of the pools in the shacks when it rained. Where had all this abundance come from? The answer is not always so simple, but people later told me that the woman's father, a lawyer, owned many of the dilapidated ghetto shacks in the town, a town where 60% live below the poverty level. I wondered how I had ended up here in his home just when the misery he had helped create in the ghetto had practically driven me to prison. Again, I felt the blacks' indictment of my white privilege and how everything in society forces us immigrants into the white side of the pattern of oppression in the USA. Others were not so lucky, and just then a black woman, whose family I knew, was sitting in the city jail. Here she was raped by the white prison guard and soon became world famous because she, Joan Little, murdered the white rapist. White rape of blacks is not uncommon in the South, but it was startling that Joan Little had the courage to kill the white rapist. Without a major human rights campaign, she would have been sentenced to death in this state where even burglary is punishable by death. All over the world, children are born with open and loving minds with an appetite for life. But in America, this wonderful innocence is thus early brutalized by the government's harmful and incomprehensible message - that it is right to take another person's life! This brutalization they reenact later in life whereby the violence increases - while in Denmark it decreased when we abolished the death penalty. The psychic leaps I had made in Joan Little's hometown had coincidentally given me an insight into the economic preconditions for white supremacy. Such contrast journeys are necessary to see society clearly. I can e.g. not stay long in white homes before I begin to see with their eyes on "negroes" as inferior. Such a devastating view of those we have harmed oppressors all over the world develop. I always try to be open to such brainwashing, for if you do allow yourself to enter the way of thinking of the oppressor, you also have no opportunity to love them and understand the pain we got early when as open and loving children we learned to dehumanize people who are our closest neighbors. Without understanding our deeper motives and pain, I would not be able to understand why racism continues generation after generation despite our own lofty ideals of love of our neighbor. In my years as a vagabond, however, I was able in time to break out of this brainwashing and move back to the different black culture.



## Credo

Dear Edwina.

I've finally gotten to a home with a typewriter, which gives me a chance to tell you a little bit about what has happened since we were together last. I have ended up living with two young white women here in Greensboro. They are treating me as if I had gone to heaven, which has an overwhelming effect on me after the last couple of weeks of a helter-skelter existence. One of them, Diane, is a model and a criminologist of the leftist kind, and likes my pictures so much that she will do everything in her power to get me money to buy more film. She has very good connections and with her charm and her looks it is easy for her to conjure up money for good causes. For example, she has just collected over \$3,000 to get a lawyer for a Vietnam deserter who is in prison. Since she can't go around to the same affluent homes right after she has just tapped them, I'll have to wait at least half a year, but she has promised that by then she will collect some money for me by telling people that it is to be used for a home for handicapped children or something. I think it sounds a little unsavory, but she says that may be it will teach them that it is the government's job to provide such human rights, and not something which should be left to private charity. Well, I doubt that she will really be able to collect anything for me. Every time I have had that kind of small hope I have been disappointed. I guess I still have to be content with selling blood and with the small gifts of money I get on the road by entertaining people with my pictures and experiences. Last week I had an income of nine dollars, which is the best ever: five dollars from an interested salesman who picked me up, two dollars from a black woman in Tony's father's grill, and two dollars from a guy in West Virginia who found my picture of the junkies with the Capital in the background interesting and bought it. Included in the deal was his lunch bag which contained three chicken legs. Now, since I have had these prints made, it makes me so happy every time I experience that kind of positive reaction. But it also scares me a little sometimes. In one place a woman started crying when she saw my pictures, and I didn't know what in the world to do. It is strange with Americans. They have lived in the midst of this suffering all their lives without giving it a thought, and then suddenly, when they see it frozen in a photograph, they can begin crying. Some accuse me of beautifying the blacks, though if anything most people here in the South probably admire my pictures for that reason. I just don't understand it; I photograph them

exactly the way I see them, and a photograph doesn't lie, does it? But the more I ponder over it, the more I come to realize that this parallax shift in the way we see blacks must be due to the fact that they have lived in this master-slave relationship for such a long time that they simply are not capable of seeing blacks as human beings, but can only see those sides in them which confirm their "slave nature." But when Southern whites nevertheless react positively to my pictures, I believe it is because in reality they are unhappy about seeing with these "master"-eyes. They are longing to become human, and the moment I can "prove" to them that blacks are human and not slaves, eternal children, or subhuman (or what have you), this makes them themselves human and no longer masters or super-humans or whatever. If I don't interpret it this way, how then should I explain that even the worst racists down here give me money once in a while, although mumbling something or other about how they think "it is funny how I run around photographing niggers." I have to admit that it often seems difficult when I try to depict the master-slave relationship *as an institution* not to end up depicting it as if people in this system really have this "nature."

Often I feel that my own view becomes contaminated by this sneaking poison in the South, because I put great emphasis on respecting the dignity of these people, especially the older people. They have lived in this master-slave tradition all their lives, and both for the blacks and for the whites I feel that it would do violence to them to try to tear them out of this tradition (though the coming generations absolutely must avoid this crippling of the mind). I, therefore, never try to impose my views on them, but try to understand theirs and to learn from them. Precisely because from the beginning I respect their dignity, I often build up such strong friendships with them that through these friendships I can get them to respect and to learn from my point of view. As a vagabond in the South it is absolutely essential to be able to communicate through friendship instead of inciting hostility and confrontation. But if you are able to do that - and even receive constant love and admiration, as I am fortunate enough to, or almost daily hear sentences like "I envy you" or "Do you know that you are a very lucky person?" - then you are walking a thin line where you easily get mired down in the mud. This gap between my utopian reality and my actual reality (which we have talked about before) is just as difficult to bridge as a river that constantly grows wider and wider,

so that you slowly lose sight of the other bank, while you little by little drown in mud on your own bank. However, it seems that if you interpret “the mud” on this side of the river correctly (that is, if you dig down to people’s deepest longings, even if they still do not see the connections between it all), then they will allow you to build an ivory tower so tall and beautiful that you can sit up there and tell people down on the bank below you how nice the other bank looks. But since you yourself do not have any personal contact with the other shore - a contact which could have changed your own character and entire soul - there is no way you can communicate your vision to the people below, since they see no evidence that you yourself have actually been “touched” or changed. Besides, they are busy enough just trying to keep their heads above the mud. They therefore soon forget the message of your story, but find the story itself so interesting, that they allow you to build the ivory tower even higher and to reinforce it and beautify it. In frustration and depression at not being able to communicate your message down to them, you get more and more insecure and have a greater need for recognition and admiration of the ivory tower you have built - even more than for their recognition of why you originally wanted to build it. Finally you become so confused and insecure that only their recognition of the tower itself, its beauty and form, counts for you. And you build it higher and higher, until you get up to those cynical heights where you can no longer really see either your own or the opposite bank, and they begin to look alike. Moreover, you have now reached such a height that you lose touch with the people on your own bank as well and decide to send your ivory tower out in book form so people have something to entertain them-selves with there in the mud. Though what you really started out to do was build a bridge to the opposite bank, you end up building a tower on your own bank. Instead of helping people out of the mud, you are in reality making their situation worse in that you have now given them something either to be happy about or to cry over right where they are and thus reinforced this muddy river bank. Moreover, your ivory tower is morally reprehensible precisely because it is built on a foundation of mud: your artwork is the direct result of the exploitation of the people you originally had it in mind to help, and the higher your tower becomes, the further you remove yourself from their suffering. It is thoughts like these which have made me increasingly depressed in the last months. I constantly hear people saying, “How I envy you that you

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

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

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

taken me to her apartment to show me how her ceiling was leaking, in the hope that I was a journalist who could get the city to repair it.

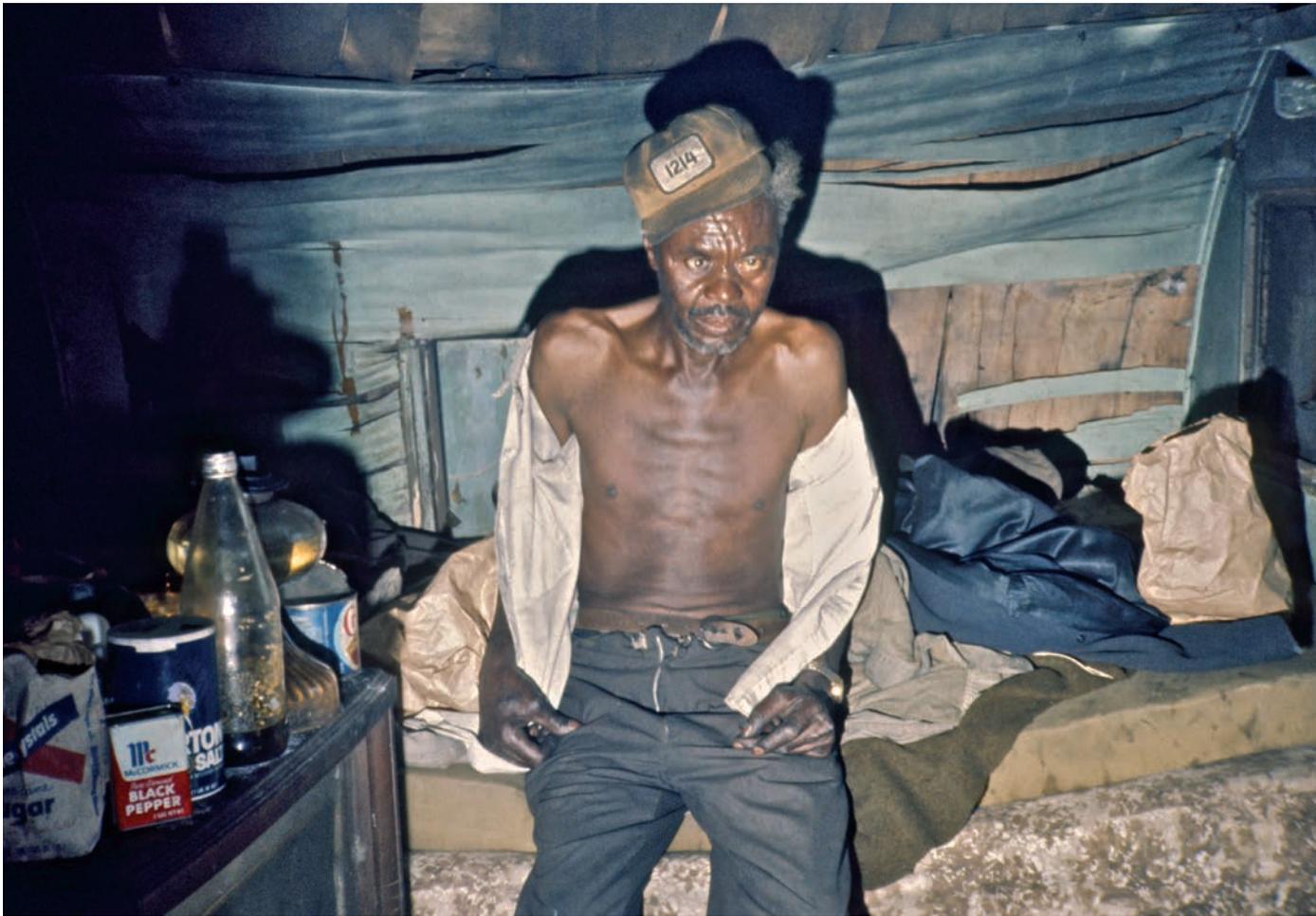
When he left, I got on with the woman so well that she let me stay. She had just had her first child and it was a wonderful experience to see her spend almost every minute tending it. I sat for hours watching. She was also deeply religious, and when the baby was sleeping, we sat praying together or she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

I have, as you know, often been “mistaken” for Jesus among Southern blacks because of my hair (which is one reason I keep my silly braided beard), but in most cases their sense of humor allows us to laugh together at their Jesus-identification. You will probably see it as yet another



example of the “slave’s” identification with or even direct infatuation with the “master.” Whatever is behind it, it is probably of some help to me in breaking through the race barrier. But in such a shocking situation as this, I simply had no idea of what to say, as I didn’t know if it would be wrong to shake her out of her religious experience. I searched for a fitting Bible quote... the futility of the Samaritan woman drinking from Jacob’s well... but I couldn’t get a word to my lips. I stood there for more than an hour before I had the courage (cruelty) to break her trance. It was such a strong experience that I didn’t feel I could stay there for the night.

As I wandered around the streets again, I met around ten o’clock a young black woman who must have been a little drunk, for she asked right off if we couldn’t be friends (unusual from my experience of black women in the South). She said that if I could find a place to stay that evening, she would come stay with me. I doubted it would work, but we walked into one of those Southern “joints” (speakeasies) and talked to her cousin about possible places. All of a sudden she started kissing me wildly all



over and asked sweetly, “Are you a hippie?” I said no, but she didn’t get it. Actually, this joint was not the safest place to hang out. Around us in the dark we could dimly see 15 to 20 “superflies.” A couple of them came over and warned me in a friendly tone that it was a dangerous place, but I answered with conviction, “I ain’t scared of nothing,” which usually impresses them, since they themselves are scared of their own shadow in these joints. But then all hell broke loose. Someone must have told the guy the woman was “shacked up with” about our project, for suddenly he came running in with a big knife and went first for his woman. Luckily he didn’t use the knife, but he beat the poor woman to pieces, hit her in the face and gave her a real beating, worse than I have seen in months. I must have been pretty cold-blooded that evening, now that I think of it, because I immediately pulled out my camera and tried to attach the flash, but just then two guys came running over and grabbed me:

“You better get the hell out of here. When he’s done with her, he’s gonna go after you.” And they practically carried me out of the place. I never saw the woman again. Though I

have seen this kind of thing so often, I was a little shocked, because in some way I myself had been the cause of it. It is as if you can’t attain deep human relationships without always becoming either victim or executioner. For the most part I am of course a victim, but since I always try to go all out with people, it happens now and then that I cross the invisible line separating the victim from the executioner. This I hate, because I am then forced to take matters into my own hands instead of letting other people direct things. I didn’t get that far on this night, though, and I’m beginning to fear that I have gradually become so hardened that I have lost my own will power. Perhaps it was this thought that nagged me, and made me react differently than usual later that night. For when I had walked around for yet another couple of hours, I finally managed to get a roof over my head with two old bums. They were drunk as hell, and there was an incredible mess. They couldn’t even afford kerosene, so there was no light. We were all three supposed to sleep in one bed. There were inches of dirt underneath it and every 25 minutes one of us had to get up to put wood on the stove, since it was very cold. At first I was sleeping between them, but then I realized they were

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

Finally the guy left around eight o’clock and I got a couple of hours of sleep. Later in the day I met him in the local coffee bar. He came over and asked if I was mad at him. I said, “Of course not, we are still good friends. I was just so damn tired last night.” He was so glad that he began to

dance around, making everybody there laugh at him. He was one of those who are outcast among both blacks and whites. I was very sad, because I felt that I had destroyed something inside myself. I felt a deep irritation that I had not been able to give him love. In his eyes, I was a kind of big-shot and it would have made him happy if I had given myself fully. There was just something or other inside me that went “click” that night, so the whole next day I felt a deep loathing of myself. I am constantly finding many shortcomings in my relationships with people, but the worst thing is when my shortcomings hurt such people, who are already hurt and destroyed in every possible way by the society surrounding them.

If I could not constantly give such losers a little love, I simply would not be able to stand traveling as long as I have.

The only thing that has any meaning for me in my journey is being together with these lonesome and ship-wrecked souls. My photographic hobby is really, when all is said and done, nothing more than an exploitation of the suffering, which will probably never come to contribute to an alleviation of it. But still I can’t stop registering it, because in some way or other it must get out to the outside world.

That strength I get by being together with these extreme losers, and the love I often receive from them, is what in spite of everything gives me a slender hope that my pictures will be able to speak even to society’s winners. That I nevertheless reacted so negatively that night may also stem from the fact that I recently had a similar experience which hurt me deeply. It was the same day that I left you in Plainfield. One of the first ones who picked me up on the road in New Jersey was a white guy in his fifties or sixties. He immediately began talking about how he had always been the black sheep in the family and even used the expression “dirty old man” about himself. Such self-hatred I meet so often among older homosexuals. He asked me to go home with him and talk with him, and I couldn’t say no, although I did have in mind to get to North Carolina the same day. After we had talked all day, he took me in the evening to the movie theater where he was the projectionist. He was running a John Wayne movie of the usual kind. In the middle of the film he began to stroke my thighs. It didn’t really surprise me, but I found it so ironic that the whole time he stood there commenting on the film, especially the two-fisted scenes, cheering John Wayne on: “Give it to ’em, knock ’em out” etc. How could

he identify to such a degree with John Wayne's frightening universe of male chauvinism and macho oppression, which more than anything else had oppressed him throughout his life and given him this violent self-hatred? During the intermission I walked around in the large shopping center where the cinema was located. No matter where I went, sales-stimulating plastic music from the loudspeakers followed me, and I suddenly felt a terrible disgust with America, which I erroneously equated with my John Wayne experience. But in the midst of this disgust I felt that even though these people are to such an extent their own oppressors, it had to be possible to get through to them and tear them loose from this sadomasochistic pattern. In the evening, when I came home to him, I tried to see all the beauty in him. It was not easy, for he was indeed of that type whom society has condemned as repulsive and obscene, but with all the energy I had just received from my stay with you, I had such a surplus that night, that I really believe that I felt glimmerings of love for him.

But then the thing happened which was to defeat me. In the heat of the night in bed my wig slipped off, and out fell my long hair. I could clearly see his astonishment and distaste, but he tried to hold it back and mumbled something in the way of: "Well, at least you aren't a dirty hippie." But from that moment our relationship was smashed to pieces, and I was not able to get him to open up again. He would probably have preferred to kick me out right there and then, but I was allowed to stay since it was pouring that night. Although he was short and had short, stumpy legs, he was so fat that I had to sleep all the way out on the edge of the bed and could only keep from falling off by supporting myself all night with one hand on the floor. I therefore couldn't sleep, but just lay there thinking about how strange it is that people can have such strong prejudices that they even take them to bed with them. Since it was still pouring the next morning, I wondered if I should stay another day and try to break through the ice, but that was obviously not what he had in mind. Almost without mumbling a word he drove me out to the main road near Milltown, where I stood in the pouring rain for the next seven hours, since, as you know, people will never pick you up when you need it most. You must be crazy standing out in the rain, they think. It was then that the Jewish businessman at long last fished me up. As you can understand, I was almost as far down as he was, though I didn't tell him about my depressing experience.

Well, I will tell you more about Washington, N.C., in a later letter and just finish off by saying that I am now on the way out of the depression I was in over you back then, though the memory of you still hangs like a heavy dark cloud over my journey. It is still a mystery to me how I could be so hurt by our relationship, and why it took the direction it did. Although you are younger than me, it nevertheless developed into something of a mother-son relationship, which I in no way could have imagined at the beginning of my love for you. Your strength and wisdom did not let you be seduced into a relationship as unrealistic as ours would have become. You belong to the black bourgeoisie, and though I loved to fling myself in your luxurious upholstered furniture, I ought to have realized right away that it wasn't my world. You were fascinated by my vagabond life and supported me in my project from a feeling of black pride, but your pride was nevertheless threatened by the world I represented. Right back from when your ancestors were given an education by the slave master, your family has kept up this class difference, and I can't help feeling that this mile-wide psychological gap you have been brought up to feel between yourself and that ghetto I normally move around in, was what actually destroyed our relationship. But no matter how I analyze it and try to understand it, it is hard for me to accept that it should end like that between us. The suffering I went through in your house, I never wish to experience again, but as a vagabond, I have nevertheless become so much of a fatalist that I believe it has been good for something, and that it will make it easier for me to identify with and become one with other people's suffering, though of course the suffering I see around me in this society is of a far more violent nature than what I experienced with you. Even so, I will still use the word "suffering" to describe the process I went through with you. Without this suffering you couldn't have knocked me so much off balance. From the moment you realized that we weren't right for each other, and your love cooled down to a certain aloofness, I experienced a growing desperation in myself. I am by nature not very aggressive, as you know, and not even very self-protective, but confronted with your beginning rejection, I experienced an increasing aggression which became more and more unbearable. With all your psychological insight, you probably sensed it. At any rate, it blazed up that night when I moved into your bed without being invited, thereby breaking my fixed principle of traveling: never violate people's hospitality.

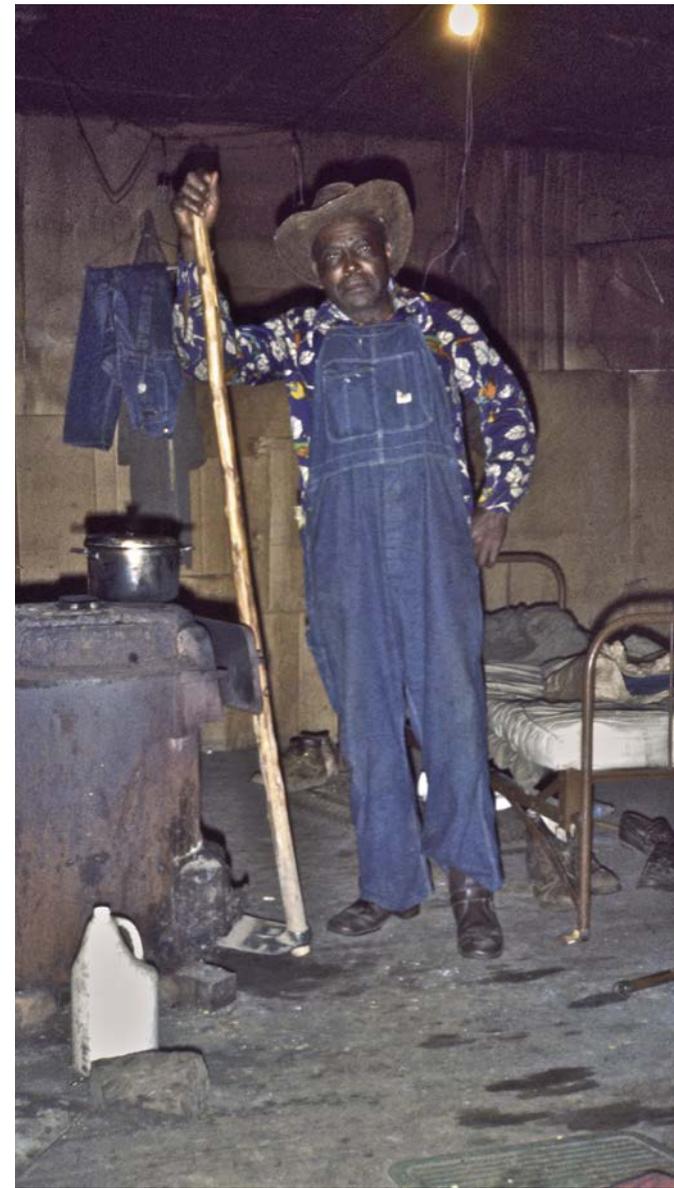
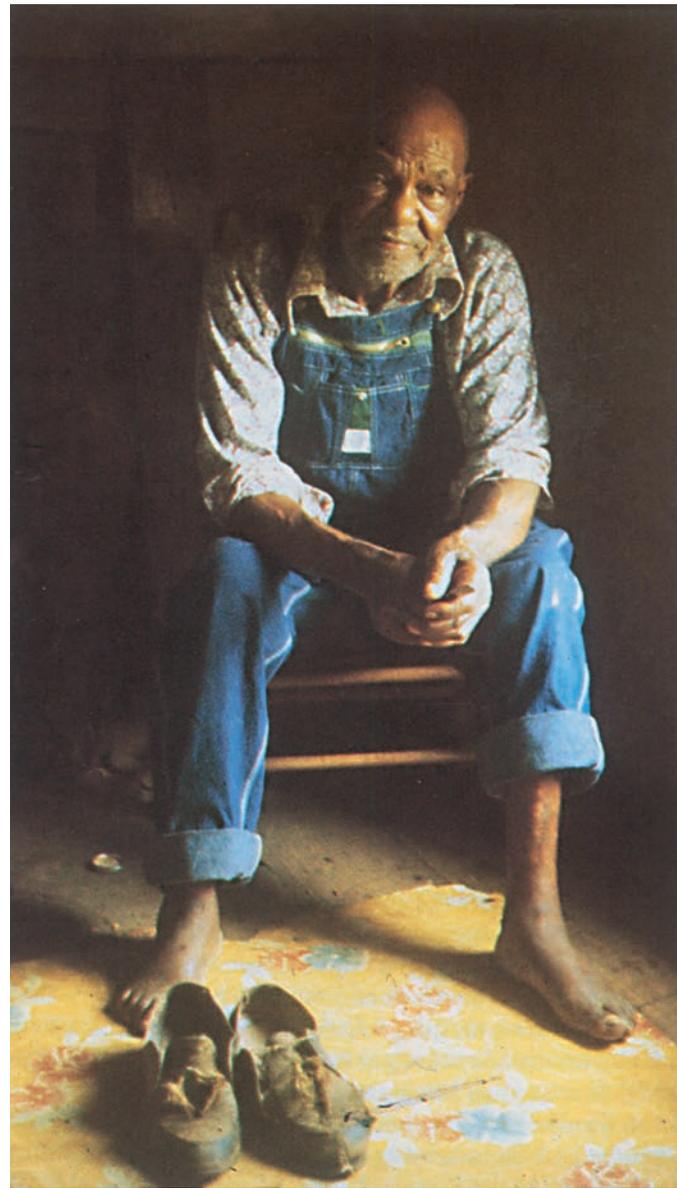
But if I am really to illustrate the psychological desperation I felt over you in my love, a desperation stronger than any I have ever felt toward a woman, then I can't do it better than by letting W.E.B. Dubois' well-known quotation describe my frame of mind:

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

I don't think that this picture of my state of mind during those days is very much exaggerated, so insane was my infatuation. But it amazes me that at such an early stage you could see how lopsided our relationship was. A marriage between us, when all is said and done, would have had this invisible glass barrier between us, with me inside the cave, which I have devoted so much of my life to, and with you on the outside. With all your upper-class nature you could never have lived the life I lead in the cave, and which I try to show to the outside world with my pictures. I know that in my mind in one way or another I will always be inside the cave, while you know as well as I do that you

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

*With love, Jacob.*



In Alabama I lived with the rich owner of several banks which he had built up himself. Jack Ray was one of the more liberal in Alabama and employed blacks as cashiers. He was a loving, empathic person, so it hurt me when he referred to them as “niggers”, as people did around there. Often as the poor tramp I got a strong desire to get an education in order to have a career and get to the top in society, but whenever I, as here, got a chance to live the so-called good life, it usually made me so sick that I quickly fled out again to the highway. For where did all the gold, which he used for his luxury home outside the city, come from? He told me that he had made his fortune by giving bank loans to poor black sharecroppers so that they could buy themselves a mule or move from the rotten shack into a streamlined plastic trailer to join the new plastic proletariat

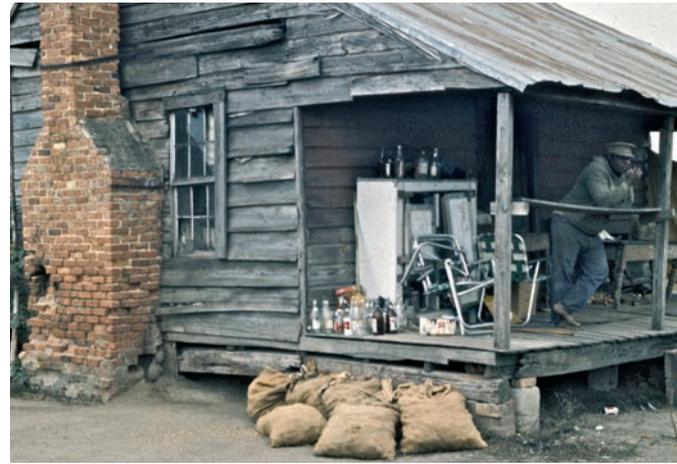
of more than 30 million Americans. But many sharecroppers could even afford these modern shacks. They have enough trouble paying off their mules and were in constant debt to both the bank and the white landowner who owned the fields and to whom they often had to pay the greater share of their crops, just as we in feudal Europe paid the church and the squire. The system started after the civil war when neither the planters nor the freed slaves had any money. Driven by hunger to work for little or nothing, the destitute blacks made agreements with their former slave-owners to borrow land as well as housing and seed. In theory, they would share the profit. But debt and dishonest bookkeeping usually brought the sharecroppers into a situation materially worse than under slavery, in which the master had at least an interest in feeding them. The system has continued from



generation to generation and on top of the eternal debt to the landlord came the debt to the commissary store and later the bank, all helping to create a white upper class. Already when he picked me up in 1973, he had made himself so rich that he could fly me around in his private airplane. Since when I returned, his banking empire had grown even larger, and he invited me to dinner at a private club for whites only. As a sponsor of everything from scholarships to orchestras, he joined The Chamber of Commerce in 1993, and a Jack L. Ray Family Park was named after him. But no blacks attended the festivities. Perhaps because his most important contribution to society was through such monetary policies to help double the net worth of every white American from 6 to 12 times of every black American - from the time I first met him until his death in 2006.



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



My attempts to find out about conditions for these sharecroppers ran into an almost impenetrable wall of fear and intimidation. I had imagined that this fear was entirely historically conditioned until one night after a visit to such a sharecropper, on my 10-mile walk down a dead end road to my shack, I was suddenly "ambushed" by a pickup truck with headlights turned on me and guns sticking out. I managed to talk my way out of this situation, but little by little I realized that such intimidation was deeply rooted in the violent system of peonage, which traditionally has prevented sharecroppers and farm workers from fleeing their "debt" by the use of beatings, jailings and murder.



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

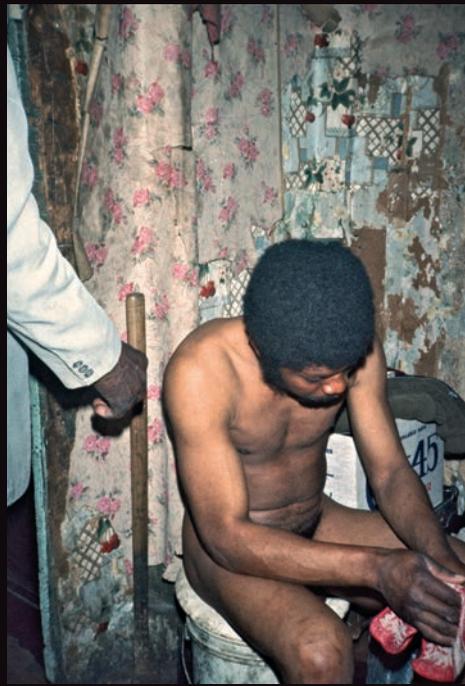
Yet the Justice Department did nothing to prosecute these slave owners, who even traded and sold the peons to each other. Although there were an increasing number of peonage cases in the 1970's, it is only a few that end up in court; and only the most cruel, such as a case in 1980 where a planter chained his workers to prevent their escape, reach the press (and the American public). In the 1990s, The Atlanta Constitution ran a big story about a landowner who had fled to the tax haven of the Bahamas from his debt-ridden tenant farmers who had no idea whether they had been bought or sold.

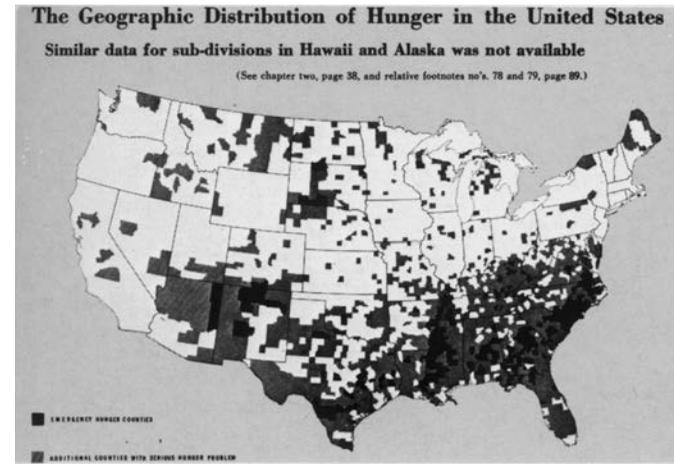
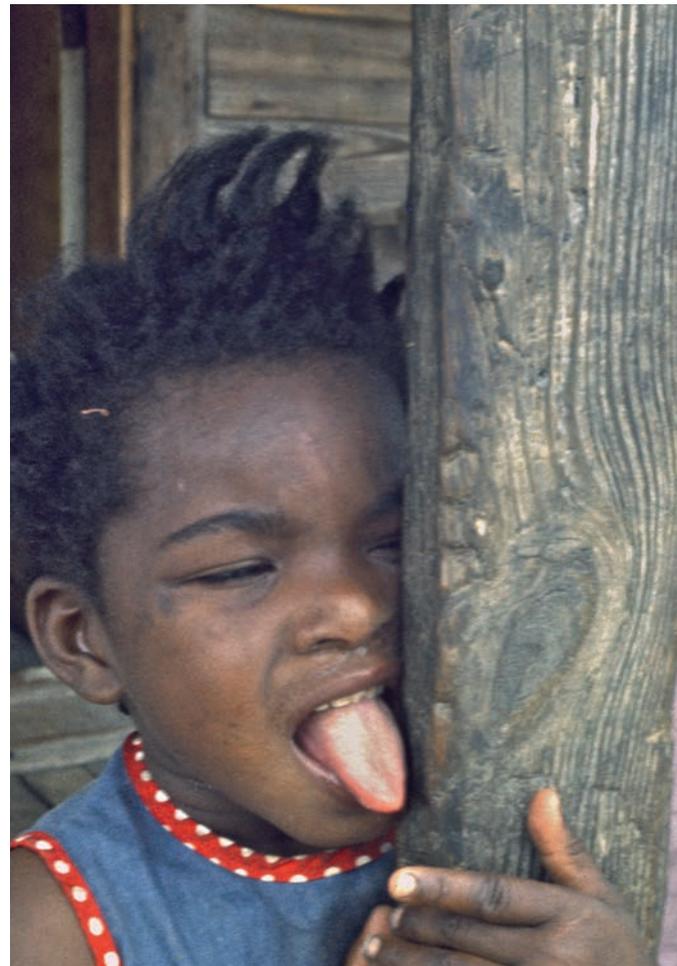


The more I began to penetrate this undercurrent of dread and terror, the more I felt that the 20th century had a far more violent influence on the black psyche than slavery. I began to feel poles apart from the common white ignorance which seems forever unable to understand why their own white ancestors could "make it" in a short time while the blacks in 100 years of "freedom" had been "incapable of making it." This banker, who is a recent beneficiary of this violent ignorance, had unknowingly fit one more piece for me into the pattern of hunger and dread I saw in the rural underclass of the 70'es.

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





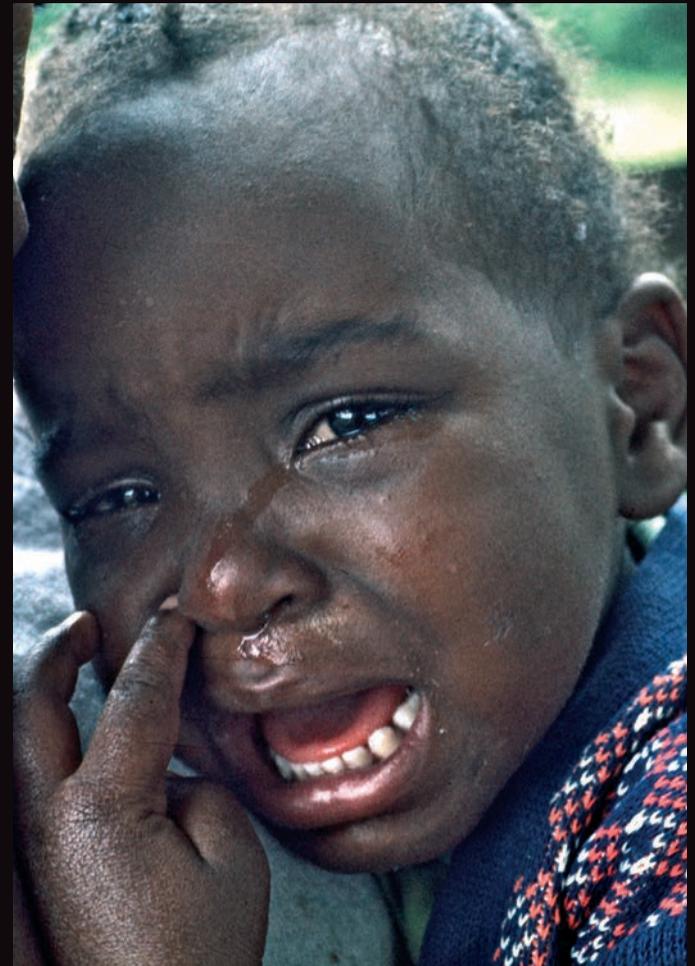
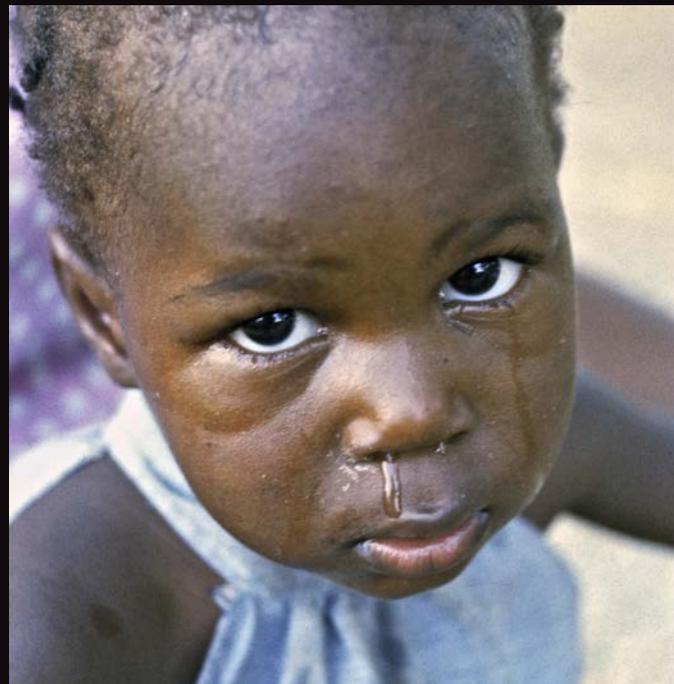


The hunger - and the reasons for it - which I saw around the banker were not unique. Traditional American philosophy insists that if a man goes hungry, he has only himself to blame because he will not work. But why did I so often see the hungry work harder and longer than those people who were causing their hunger?

It is the children such a social cynicism hurts most. Malnutrition gave them reduced resistance to disease, which is why starvation on the death certificate was usually called "pneumonia". Everywhere in the South I saw these little epitaphs hidden away in the fields. In many districts, infant mortality among black children was 8-10 times higher than among whites. In comparison, the black infant mortality rate was only twice as high as the white one during slavery (exactly as it is for the whole country today). In other words, more than 6,000 black babies die each year because they do not have the same health and nutritional conditions as whites. More than 8,000 black infants would not die every year if they had access to the same health care, birth preparation and weekly visits by health nurses before and after the birth, which we take for granted in a welfare state like Denmark.

I found it difficult to photograph hunger as only a few were visibly emaciated. Many people were already overweight at the time because they had to eat a lot of carbohydrates to get enough protein like Blondie Ecell's mother seen here. When I returned to give her the book, she was ashamed of my mention of her as overweight. Since then, obesity has become so commonplace among the poor that much of the shame is gone. While we better off whites previously discriminated against the lethargy of the malnourished blacks, today we discriminate more frequently against the obesity of the many. I have often wondered if I did it myself as a photographer to better reach and change white racists with my pictures - or because I myself was subject to their racist views? But there is no excuse for hunger in a highly developed society. For - contrary to racism - poverty and malnutrition are solely a result of how we vote. And since the 1970s, in every election, Americans have voted to widen the gap between rich and poor. They forget that the countries, such as Denmark, Sweden and Japan, which have achieved the greatest equality and health and thus do not crush the initiative of quite as many, at the same time had the world's highest economic growth in the entire 20th century.





**Caroline is starving to death. Slowly.**

Yes, and it's happening right here in the U.S.A. Right this minute as you read these words. Who's Caroline? One of thousands of hungry children throughout the rural South suffering from a lack of nourishment so severe it affects her present health and the development of her mind and body.

In the words of a white Southern doctor to a Senate committee . . . "Malnutrition is not quite what we found; the boys and girls were hungry, weak, in pain, sick . . . suffering from hunger and disease and, directly or indirectly, they are dying from them— which is exactly what starvation means."

A few years ago, the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund was established to do something about this critical situation. And it's working. In the last three years, alone, 112,988 of the neediest people have been assisted. What's more, by providing the money for buying Federal food stamps, the food purchasing value of this

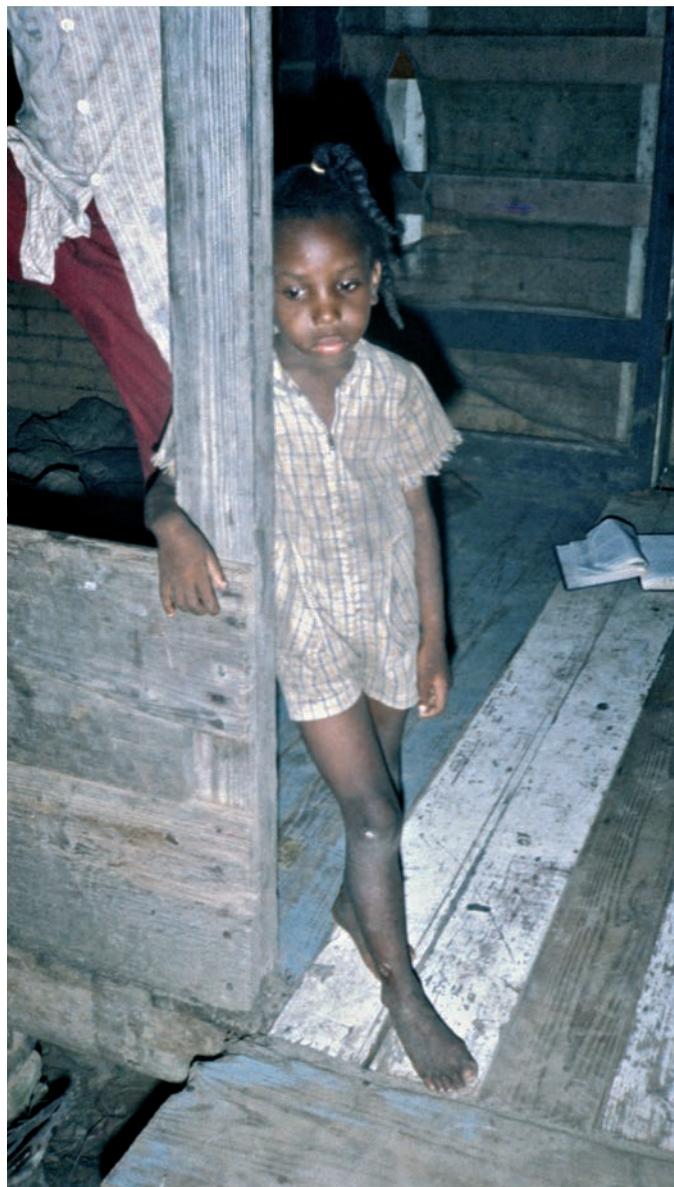
assistance has multiplied an average of nine-fold! Thus your tax-deductible \$10 contribution to the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund buys about \$90 worth of urgently needed meat, milk and bread. Just \$25 can feed a large family for a month! Please help by sending as little or as much as you can. Today?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



NAACP  
EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND.  
DEPT. 88, BOX 121,  
RADIO CITY STA.,  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019



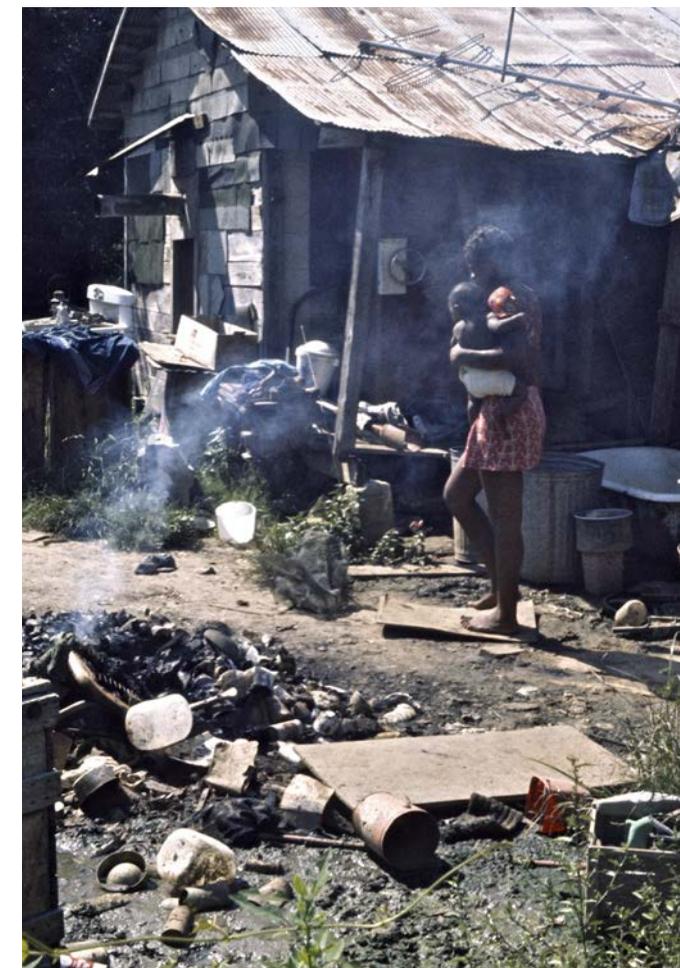
The hunger that we indirectly inflict on our outcasts reinforces our racist view of them. During the years I traveled I found the whites increasingly blaming the victims for their lethargic behavior, rather than Federal lethargy. The death on the tombstones only represented the tip of the iceberg. Improper diet makes people lethargic and leaves them open to all kinds of diseases, which is one reason why life expectancy for blacks is seven years shorter than for whites as seen again under Covid-19. Numerous black children we historically exposed to incurable brain damage because of hunger, also causing laziness, apathy, alienation, and incapacity for work. Usually, I found it difficult to get close to the sullen, withdrawn children who were incredibly fearful of strangers. Again and again in poor shacks I ate cornbread, grits and baked beans with fat lumps in, and



in better-off homes more traditional "soul food" like ham knuckles, hog maw, chitterlings, pigs' ears, feet and tails and similar fat crumbs from the white man's table. Hundreds of thousands got less than the 3.5 pounds of bacon and pork a field hand received weekly under chattel slavery. The worst hunger was found on remote back roads and among urban old people. A hungry dog is a good sign that there are hungry people in the area. In the winter, when hunger was at its worst, I saw the blacks digging up roots in white-owned fields. Many black women in the South eat dirt. In Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina, nearly 50% of black women ate clay at that time, which was still happening in the year 2000, according to the New York Times. This woman, who was listless and exhausted from anemia, led me to the slope where she dug for the "food" which she shared with her son.



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





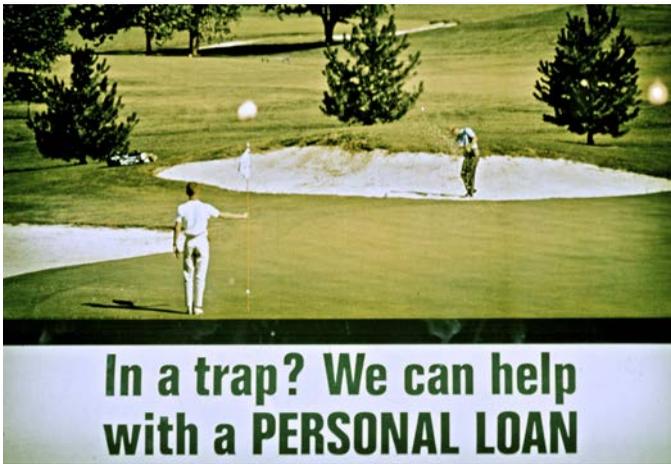


The personal encounter with the constant whining, restlessness, and snotty noses of those children who cry incessantly because they go to bed hungry, seems almost a relief and infinitely preferable to the empty eyes and dead silence of those children whom hunger has made so apathetic that they are no longer able to cry. But are we ourselves able to cry? When I cooled off in the endless shopping malls with numbing Muzak, these stark contrasts in one day almost made me cry over how easily and carefree we through such escapes let that kind of hunger chisel into the minds of blacks around us throughout their American history? I was not born into this oppression, but how would it affect myself throughout my life to witness what happens to a people's soul seeing its mothers lay their children in the grave? Or see mothers die at a brutal rate: 13,600 black women yearly die in childbirth. Only 3,481 would die if they had access to white health care and fewer than 2,000 if they had if they had health insurance as in Europe. How can we spend billions on rolling steel gadgets while condemning our children to rank only 15th lowest in child mortality, letting 17,686 babies die unnecessarily in 1977? Does the bombardment of ads for cars and materialism make us insensitive and blind to human values and the suffering around us? What does it not reveal about our priorities that we let the automobile cemetery in the background fence in, but not the human cemetery in the foreground? Priorities which let GM destroy the electric trolleys in American cities in 1936 in order to sell more cars, forever trapping us in concrete spaghetti mazes, like that of Los Angeles, which eventually caused 500 deaths yearly from its annual 460,000 tons of car pollutants – crippling inner city black kids with lead poisoning.

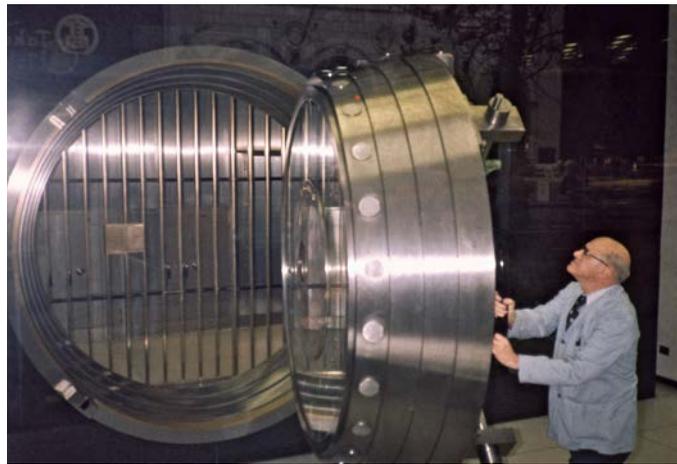


The ideological blinding which leaves people to “row their own boats” is upheld through a persistent bombardment of appeals to our selfishness and greediness. The laws of our system, invisible for most people, constantly manipulate us with incessant Horatio Alger propaganda with stories about Rockefeller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





How such a wolf-philosophy manifests itself is not difficult to see. Gigantic money-palaces in the middle of black slums were just one of the more hideous aspects of this philosophy's pathological nature. Today, the money is only located in white areas and surrounded by an army of homeless blacks who did not exist in the 70's. Close to neighborhoods, infested with rats, dirt and violence, you walk straight into banks built like marble castles with huge gold-decorated safety vaults. Yes, there is plenty of money in the banks and insurance companies and among those who own them. But why, I ask – with the morale of the street and the vagabond – why then is there no money for my crippled friend Lee who must sit outside in the street every day and beg for pennies? Lee told me that he had studied law at university in his youth but had to give up because he got polio. He still studies, and I got several books for him on the topic which interested him most, namely business law, which he still believed would be a means of pulling himself up by his bootstraps. Lee was not only a victim of his own pocket philosophy, but a caricature of the social disease determining that American doctors shall make so much money that the poor cannot afford them. While all other rich countries have free health insurance, American doctors operate for profit with the result thousands die of causes they would not die of in Europe. Before Obama's health care law, \$ 50 million could not afford health insurance at all. Why should the middle class pay less than 4% of their income on health care while the poor must pay more than 15% (for dilatory third and fourth class care) with the result that the most affluent white Americans are as healthy as the Danes, but poor (black) health comparable to many underdeveloped countries? Why are there fewer doctors per capita in black ghettos than even in Central Africa and why don't they ever pay home visits there? In the Norfolk ghetto I spent a whole day comforting a grief-stricken lonesome man, whose wife had died the night before because he was unable to get her to the doctor, and I suddenly couldn't help feeling a deep guilt, like the boy who cried wolf, recalling the many mornings



in my youth when the doctor was called for my "stomach ache" because I had not done my homework for school. Few can afford to cry wolf in the midst of the wolf-society, where health care for profit is a deadly business indeed: 24,000 blacks die annually from lack of "white medical care"; 39,500 American women die annually in childbirth



for lack of "Scandinavian health care," while American men's life expectancy ranks only 35th among U.N. member nations. Since Americans pay almost twice as much for their privatized health care as Europeans, and also have to pay more than the price of a house for just four years of university, you understand why most can no longer afford



or have time for our 6 week vacations. They do not grasp that precisely because the Danes pay twice as much in tax, we have so much money left over (after all bills are paid) that even workers can afford to travel the globe thin. (I use Denmark as an example since Bernie Sanders did in his reform campaign).



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

The most pernicious of poverty's diseases is, without a doubt, apathy, the state of mind into which millions of people are thrown when they realize they cannot hold their own in a world of the upward climbing optimism of the wolf-philosophy - and therefore give up the struggle. The needy in the United States are a minority and see the contrasts of affluence everywhere they look. As a result, the solidarity and pride often characterizing rural communities in poor countries are absent, so that poverty becomes more cruel and much more destructive psychologically than in any other place in the world.

In America you are constantly told that it is your own fault if you are poor, and thus you fall into a state of violent self-hatred - a morbid state I find unequalled anywhere else in the world. That state of mind helps to kill love in society, the invisible threads of mutual interdependence and trust which ought to flow between people in a wholesome society. The destruction of love sows an increasing distrust and fear. Although fear seems to direct everyone in such a society it is first and foremost the poor it paralyzes.





The bitter truth, however, dawned on me when I came to Mary and her son John far out on the stifling humid backroads of Alabama to get a glass of water. For without indoor water and toilet, we ended up - in more ways than one way - sharing water at the Samaritan woman's well. Mary and I romanticized our relationship in these harsh surroundings, but her trust in people around her was not like mine and she had three pistols and a shotgun under the bed to defend herself. It became some of the happiest days of my life, and to this day we still nurture strong feelings for each other. When I briefly was going away to see a Ku Klux Klan meeting in Kentucky, Mary gave me a silver cross to protect me. But it soon appeared that Mary could have had more use for the silver cross than I. For no other reason than that she had had a white man living with her, three whites one night threw a firebomb into her kitchen, and the entire house stood in flames. She managed to get her son out, but her brother, who was asleep, perished in the flames.

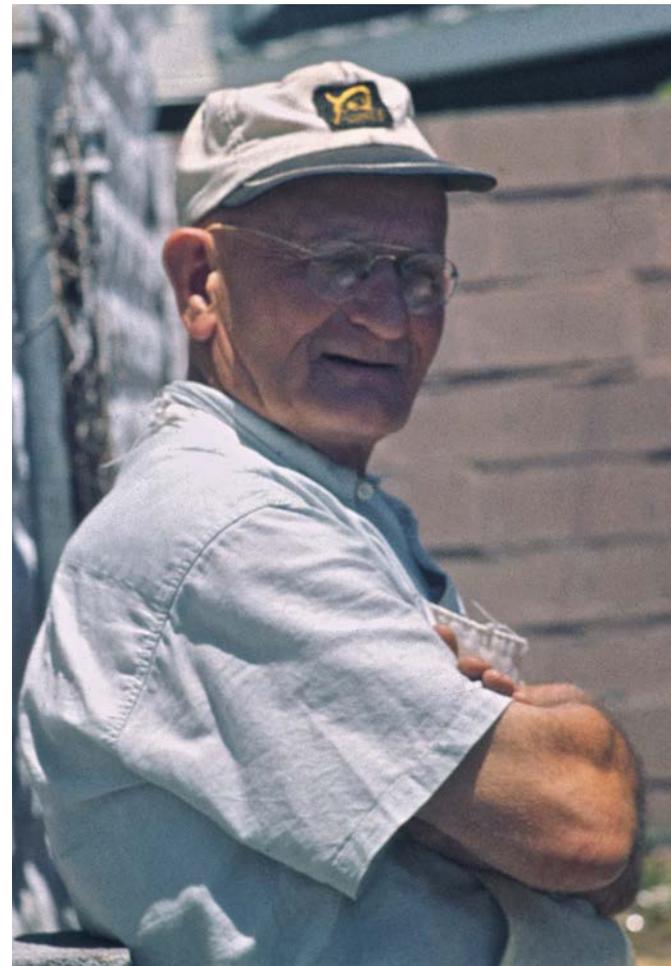
One of the things I find most difficult getting used to in America is this ubiquitous fear - and its resulting reactions. Not only the primitive fear of other people, but more frighteningly the institutionalized fear of old age, sickness and insecurity, which seem to darken the golden years of most people and makes them think and act in ways you feel are totally irrational and self-defeating when you yourself have been shaped by a "cradle-to-grave" welfare security. A desire to hold on to white supremacy is one of the resulting distress patterns in the victims of such fear. This in turn made blacks fear whites such as this woman who first fled me:

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

I always felt that blacks exaggerated a bit when they told me such things. I have always had a rather naive faith in the goodness of people, probably because I have not grown up in poverty and insecurity. Without this faith I could not have traveled the way I did, as my faith usually directly helped to encourage the good sides of people. Consequently, I got along well with southern whites who I am more fond of because of their warmth and honesty than the perhaps more liberal, but less warm and direct whites in the North.

The tragedy threw me into my recurring dilemma: Can I, as an outsider, have fully developed human relationships with those we condemn as our outcasts, the pariahs? Those who want to maintain a caste system will always condemn such relationships. Therefore, crippling taboo systems can only be broken down if we on a personal level try to be fully human to everyone - with the risk this entails for deeper feelings and infatuation. But ignoring each other's background can also - as in Romeo and Juliet - imply danger for oneself and others - a danger (or fear if it is conscious) which must never limit us in our human involvement - - the love of our neighbor as of ourselves. Often Americans end up blaming me for Mary's tragedy in guilt about the unspoken apartheid line in their hearts and minds which actually caused our Shakespearean tragedy. In the same way we Europeans always condemn Americans for this peculiar gut resistance to intimate black white relationships, while we forget our own primitive resistance to relationships with Muslim immigrants. Everywhere in the world the minds of both oppressor and the oppressed are devoured with obscure obsessive blockings towards intermarriage and intimate inter relationships. But for the outsider of a particular oppression it is easy to see that neither the oppressor nor the oppressed is free! My relationship to Mary has only grown deeper over the 40 years until her death in 2014, but her life since has been hard. After her brother's murder, her sister was murdered the same year. When Danish TV interviewed her, she shocked Europeans speaking about the escalating violence around her - such as the recent murder of her daughter-in-law.

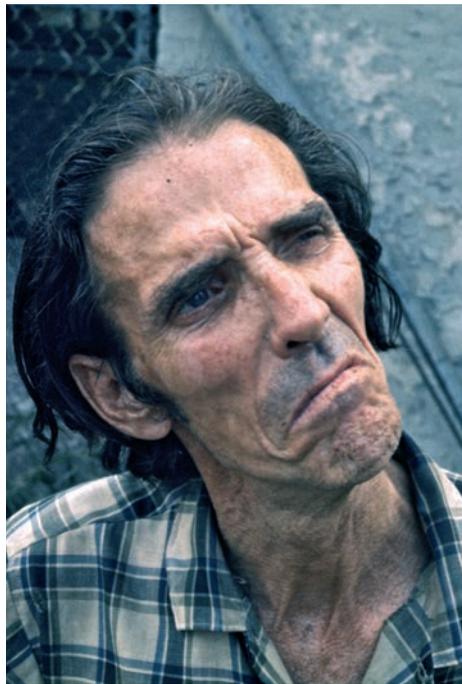




Recording of a white man (top left) who picked me up close to Mary's place in Alabama: - *What do you think about integration?* - *I don't go for it at all. Let them be on their own and go ahead. Hell, I don't believe in mingling up with them, going to school with them, going to church with them. I've never had anything against niggers. They can't help being a nigger any more than I can help being a white. They are a different race of people and let them be different... - You always voted for Wallace?* - *I sure have... but he ain't... he has got nothing against niggers as far as them being niggers is concerned... There is a lot of niggers who vote for him... he gets lots of nigger votes...* - *What did you think of Martin Luther King?* - *Who... Martin Luther King?... Why - (spitting out the window) he wasn't nothing but a troublemaker... a communist agitator...* This southern racist is a textbook example of the oppression we go through to become oppressors. The innocence of his childhood had systematically been oppressed by his parents' irrational injunctions "Niggers are dirty. Don't play with those children, they will stab you." As with children throughout the South, his natural zestfulness, appetite for life and affection for others was suffocated. While he

was being hurt, his mind had shut down in a despairing accumulation of pain which over the years became these chronic distress patterns. Incessantly he now had to replay his unhealed distress experiences like a record stuck in the same track with "nigger, nigger, nigger." I knew I listened to the voice of history and that the bombing of Mary's house was the extreme but logical consequence of this oppression. If he had grown up in the North as a child, he would not have ended up thinking so evil. And maybe even less in Denmark in my youth (before today's racism). When I one day showed my pictures - i.a. that of Mary in bed - to such a southern white, the degree of my crime against this apartheid system dawned on me. As a "neutral" Scandinavian, I felt that Mary was extremely beautiful and attractive and therefore got quite a shock when I saw the disgust and deep distaste this white man expressed at the thought of being with this "dirty, dark, repulsive skin." Little by little I realized that this negative view was rooted in white supremacy and had ended up becoming an internalized yet deeply held honest conviction which had infected not only the whites all over America, but also the blacks' own view of dark-skinned beauty.





Historical photo



Vagabonds and blacks have a special relationship to poor whites. With their guns hanging inside pick-up trucks as symbols of power, they are the ones who shoot at hitch-hikers late Friday nights, throw beer bottles at you other nights and try to run you over at all hours. While the better-off whites set the tone, the poor exercise much of the direct physical oppression of black people, who in turn contemptuously call them "poor white trash." It was they who were given the brutal and sadistic roles of slave overseers and catchers. Like poor whites today, the overseers sensed that they were held in contempt by plantation society and took out their insecurities and hostilities on the blacks in relentless cruelty. It was to them that demagogic, racist politicians addressed themselves, but when blacks got voting rights and swung the political

pendulum towards more liberal politicians, the poor whites lost much of their policing role and the little pride they had. Like the blacks, they suffer from self-hatred and react violently against their surroundings by for instance throwing trash all over. They too have their intelligence impaired by malnourishment and neglect and can be even more fearful than blacks. When I approach their shacks they often run inside and lock the doors. When I go hunting with them and see their cruelty to the animals, I realize that the source of their violence and abusive behavior was their own early oppression - beaten as helpless children into their insensitive and repressive social role. This cycle of mistreatment is similar to that suffered by blacks who tend to replay their violent experience on their own kind; the poor whites not only have their own children, but also the

blacks as a vulnerable and socially sanctioned target group. Having always been told that whites are superior they feel left behind when they see blacks in better jobs than themselves. They feel that "niggers have gotten too many rights" and that "no nigger can ever achieve status as even the lowest white," and they therefore feel lost behind a wagon by seeing that many blacks today live better and have better jobs than themselves. They do not understand the inner dynamics of our system which often leaves them unemployed and instead blame someone who is a little different - just as similar groups in Europe use Muslim immigrants as scapegoats, Israelis use Palestinians, Japanese use Koreans, Indians and Africans use lower castes and tribes - and everybody fantasizes about the Jew - especially where no Jews exist!

Since no society or system has ever been free from oppression, we must in every new generation learn to embrace and heal patterns of anger before they accumulate in genocide. If we do not dare to confront the dark sides of ourselves, we all too easily act them out in displaced anger. With no cradle to grave equality and security in America, especially the poor are at great risk here. Their racism, poor education, and the persistent insensitive smear campaigns against them as "rednecks" and "crackers" makes them even more right-wing than most Americans and against any social safety net which would also benefit blacks. Unable to attack the real targets of their frustration, white anger often turns to racial violence. Such bitterness caused poor whites to lynch almost 10.000 blacks.



# Teenagers Kill Black, 15

Continued From Page 1

Two other residents confirmed this part of her statement.

"They were encouraging the kids to attack them," said woman. "They were shouting 'get the nigger' and 'kill the bastard.'"

Several members of the social club, which is just north of the park where Johnson was found and across the street from where Sanders was beaten have denied seeing the attack or taking any part in it.

Police have canvassed buildings in the predominantly Italian neighborhood searching for witnesses with no success.

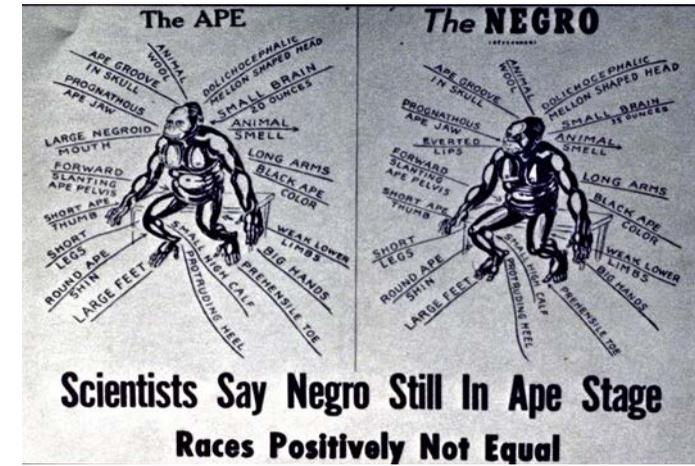
A Post reporter also interviewed dozens of people in the area without finding any witnesses to the attack other than the woman mentioned. She asked to remain anonymous because she feared possible reprisals against her family. But he indicated she would talk to police.

Many members of the community said they'd heard about the incident but none admitted to actually seeing the attack or knowing any-

an officer close to the investigation, "because no one is talking to us. But since no white kids were hurt and around it isn't likely that we didn't find any weapons the black kids were doing the attacking."

Several incidents with racial overtones have erupted in recent months between local whites and black teenagers attending nearby Chelsea HS and Food and Maritime Trade HS. Community and religious leaders have insisted that those incidents were not racially motivated but were caused by a natural conflict of interests over the use of a local gymnasium.

Neither of the youths beat-



The lynchings still continue. Derrick Johnson was only 15 when he walked into a poor white area of New York. White parents usually instill xenophobia and racism in their children with more guilt and subtlety, but here they openly stood in the street doors, inciting their children "Kill the nigger" and "Kill the bastard" and the children went for him with baseball bats in broad daylight. When police questioned people in this poor neighborhood, no one would give any information. From European experiences we know that such poor embittered whites can be manipulated either in a fascist or a socialist direction, but their narrow-mindedness and authoritarian outlook often leads them to embrace a violent right-wing radicalism that has been far more fatal and threatening to our outcast minorities in Europe than in the United States over the last 100 years.

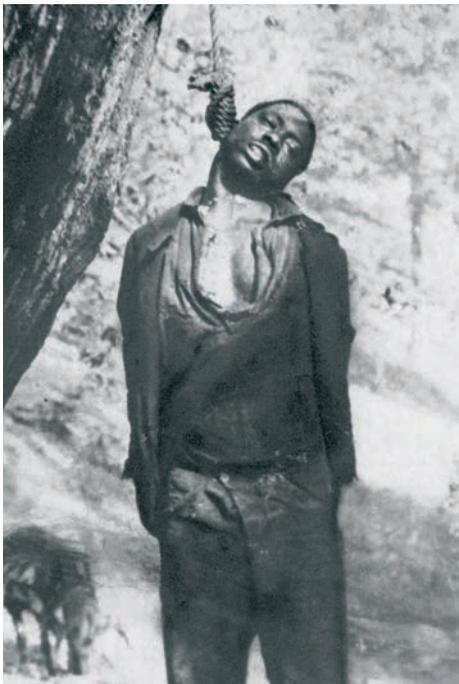


My Nazi friend here had first joined the Communists, but discovered that they wanted equality for blacks and went over to the Nazis, who say whites are superior to blacks and that they will "send all niggers back to Africa." While the Nazis thus adhere to the general desire in the northern states (similar to most white Europeans) to keep our outcasts out of sight ("evasive racism"), today's Ku Klux Klan does not want to get rid of the blacks, only to keep them down or "in their place" ("dominant racism").

In the South I saw how they cooperated with the police, who disarmed all blacks in the area of a Klan meeting, but not the Klan members carrying pistols and sub-machine guns. Dressed in a white robe-like coat I managed one night to sneak into one of their religious cross burning ceremonies where I taped this speech:







Historisk foto



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

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

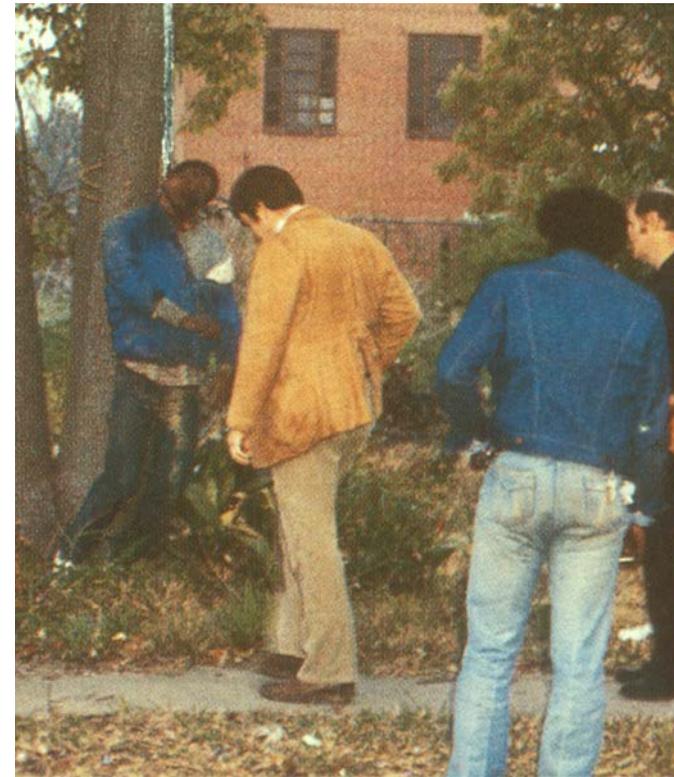
Friends, some years ago the Klan was called to Washington to go before the investigating committee - believe it or not - on the assassination of King. They turned this committee over to two, not blacks, I will refer to them as niggers, because they squandered five million of your hard-earned tax dollars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



Historical photo

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

..... Yes, that’s how I wrote in my American version of the book in 1983, when I was trying to understand the clan, but did not know them as humans apart from a hitchhiking incest victim who took me with to this clan meeting. Since I’ve gained a much deeper insight by working intensely with two of America’s largest klan groups for some years, I can see that I was not entirely wrong, but still described very

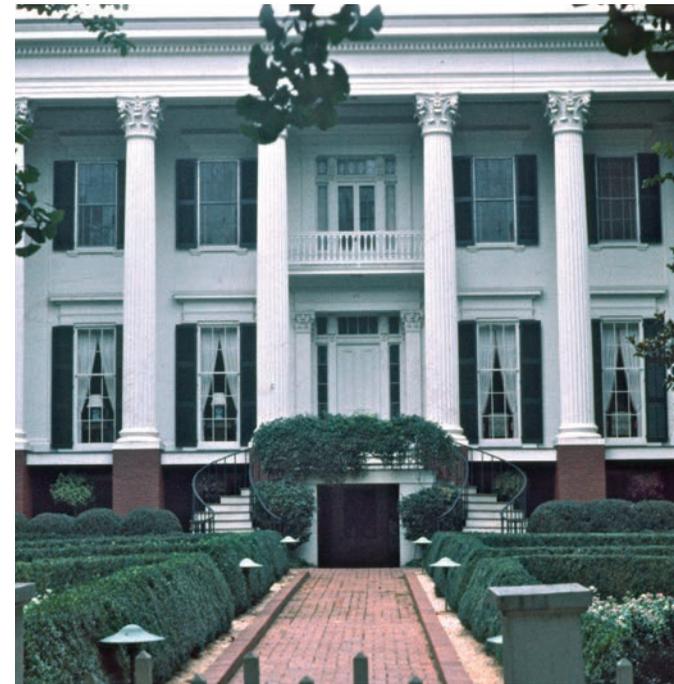


The lynching in 1983 of Marvin Davis in Mobile, Alabama. Ku Klux Klan members kidnapped at gunpoint a randomly chosen 19 year old college student on a city street “to show Klan strength in Alabama”. Next morning his body was found hung by the neck in a black neighborhood. Only one Klansman, James Knowles, was caught and put on trial. Morris Dees from the Southern Poverty Law Center relates how the audience wept as the confessed lyncher told how Marvin begged for his life while Klansmen prepared the noose for his neck. Police photo

judgmentally. That saddens me now that I’ve learned that it’s precisely the hatred and condemnation of society that the clan seeks and is maintained by. For it cannot be my purpose with this book to spread hatred and condemnation, but rather that we, through insight and empathy for the pain of others, learn to take responsibility for our own racism. My work with the KKK has taught me no longer to believe in hate, as in almost all the members I have found an abysmal, untreated pain after violent abuse in childhood. And people in pain we must not distance ourselves from - not even when we see the harmful symptoms of their pain, which in the case of today’s clan is nothing but a clumsy cry for help. They should be given help as a doctor, social worker or a loving fellow human being would give it.

Yes, the clan committed terrible terror especially during the civil rights struggle - incited by mainstream whites, who refused to be forcibly integrated by the government and therefore always acquitted the clan. Most recently after the Greensboro massacre in 1979, when they murdered 5, including my friend Tony’s ex-girlfriend. The leader, Virgil Griffin, whom I later befriended, was acquitted by a white jury. Yet times have change and the clan today condemns the terror of that time but does not mind that we use it to think bad of them. For they simply breathe for us to cultivate them as “the bad guys”. Yet, I am encouraged by are the acts of love I see them perform in secret such as putting their lives on the line to help blacks and how they often have more intimate black friends than my average college students, etc. Since this book has no room for this story, I hope you will continue on [www.american-pictures.com/gallery/ku-klux-klan/](http://www.american-pictures.com/gallery/ku-klux-klan/).





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

Mrs. Barnett: *This is the bill of sale to my great, grandfather from Mr. Cadman for Lucinda, her children and her increase forever. The price was \$1,400. Mrs. Hill (her friend from another plantation home): But you see, when they came here they were savages, and I think instead of blaming the South like the North blamed us, I think we deserve a bit of credit. They sold them to us and they knew they were selling us savages. But they just kept sending them. And then they began talking about our harsh treatment, but you know when you had people working for you, you would do every-thing for them, feed them up, give them clothes and housing and take care of them.*

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

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

When a "house slave" came in with afternoon tea, the talk, as always in the Southern aristocracy, turned to the follies of their servants – a way for them to maintain their paternalistic attitude toward the blacks and thus give themselves the social distinction of previous times.



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

Was it this kind of condescending racism I myself was developing in this society? Or how long could I hold on to a naive notion that as a foreign immigrant I would be able to keep myself afloat in this ocean of racism which drowned everyone else?



In the South I had experienced two completely opposite white reactions towards our oppressed as hatred and love. Value judgments such as good and evil began to disintegrate for me the more I could see through these peculiar distress patterns as being products of a centuries-old system. I could no longer hate these whites in spite of their trail of destruction. From this moment I could show them respect and understanding doors began to open everywhere: the doors of Southern hospitality. When I later traveled among South African whites, I met an even more overwhelming hospitality which seemed directly proportional to a greater class difference between blacks and whites. Just as in South Africa, blacks in the South receive the traditional friendliness as long as they have underclass status. They are not paid mainly for their work, but rather for their servility and humility, for knowing “their place” and being dependent. Their passive resistance to this subjugation is seen as “irresponsibility” and “shiftlessness” which further confirms the “necessity” of the paternal relationship, thereby increasing white status. This artificially high status adds to the psychic surplus displayed, for instance, in an overwhelming hospitality and friendliness towards the individual but not the group, such as “Negroes,” “Yankees,” “communists.” I had arrived in one plantation home with my wig on, but as the hostess Emely Kelley had increasingly fallen in love with me, one night I surprised the dinner party by suddenly displaying all my hair. Emely burst out “I know you are a communist, but I like you anyway.” This hospitable class may not participate in white terrorist acts, but it benefits directly from such policing. None of the

plantation homes I lived in were locked although they were filled with gold, silver, and expensive paintings right next to some of the poorest people on earth, whom I often saw commit violent crimes towards each other.

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



## On saying yes

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

but suddenly I became tremendously frightened of them and rushed into the bus station. I did not dare to be out on the street, even in daylight. (The hash made me extremely paranoid, and it is exactly when you send out vibrations of fear to other people that you get jumped). That day I understood the agonizing fear most Americans carry around and can't do anything about. Since that day I have had more understanding of people's reactions in America. Sometimes I, too, feel afraid of other people. One night in New York I heard a voice calling to me from a dark alley down in the sinister area near Ninth Avenue. I was absolutely convinced that if I went into the alley I would be attacked. But I was more afraid that if I did not do it, it would set a precedent, and then I would be paralyzed, like so many others in America. I forced myself to go in there. Of course, it turned out to be only a worn-out five-dollar streetwalker. I gained insight into a kind of suffering I had never encountered before, which proved to me once again that it never hurts to say yes. As a rule, you are directly rewarded for it. In Detroit, a five-year-old boy persistently asked me to go home with him and take some pictures of his mother. I didn't have time that day but decided to go with him anyway. When we got to his home, I saw that his mother was sick, and four of his seven brothers and sisters had big rat-bites on their backs and legs. In the beginning I perceived not being able to say no to people as a weakness, since I have always been very yielding. But now I have become convinced that it is a strength and have therefore made it a habit wherever I go. Almost every day when I hitch-hike, at some point I get invited into a restaurant by a driver. I get the menu but it is impossible for me to choose. After an embarrassingly long pause the driver usually suggests something, and I immediately say yes. I couldn't care less what they serve me. Food is just a means to keep going. I have discovered that even the inability to choose has its advantages when you travel. When I was in the blood bank in New Orleans and as usual fought my way through "the gay wall" out of this town with many gays, on my way up to see the floods in the Mississippi delta I got a lift with a fat antique dealer. He kept pressing me to come with him into the dark woods with promises like "I will put you up with a rich white lady afterwards". I did not want to waste time with another "dirty old man", but couldn't get myself to directly say no. So I ended up letting him follow his lusts out in the woods and true enough, afterwards he drove me to one of the large plantation homes in Natchez, where his friend, the owner,



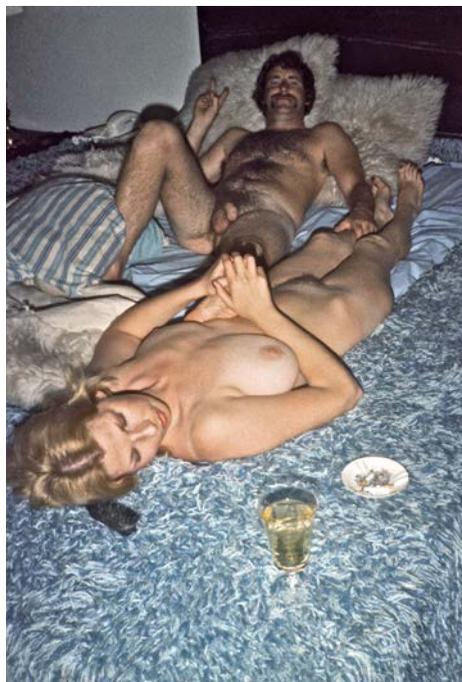
Emely Kelley, immediately invited me on equally intimate experiences. Without saying yes to a little pain, you don't get into heaven, I had long ago learned. After weeks of hunger, it really felt like getting into heaven to have black servants serve us on silver trays in the canopied beds. Yet it is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

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

*Letter to an American friend*

\* (I have since found that these unsophisticated sentences from this original letter about my love for prostitutes as an oppressed group in the U.S. and especially Britain, are often misunderstood in a sexual rather than a political way. For a clearer understanding of my relationship to prostitutes, see page 240-241).



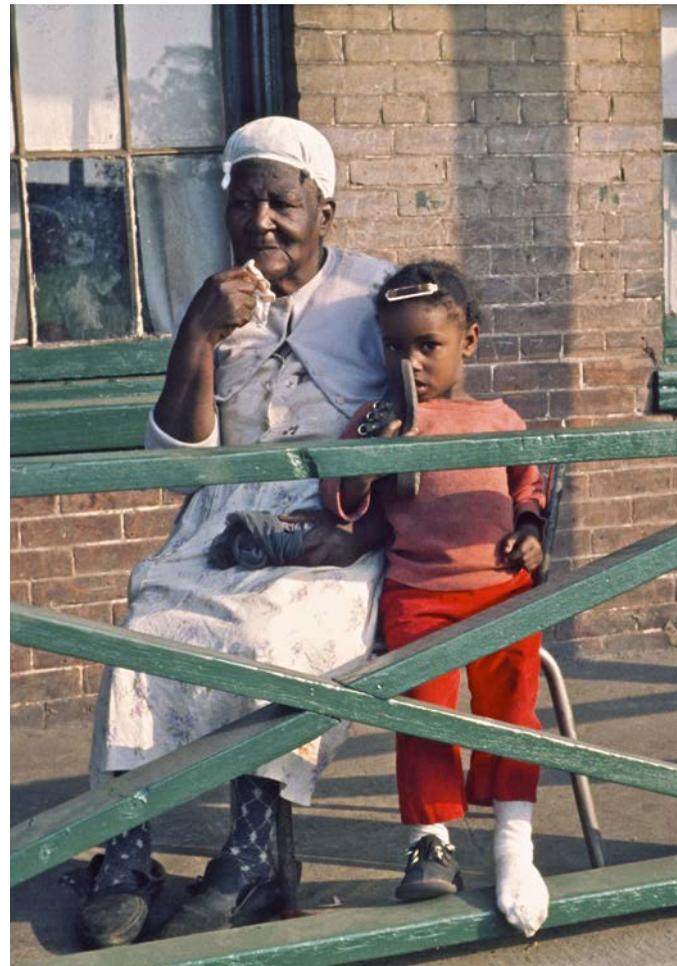


I had found that one of the most peculiar aspects of Southern hospitality is the desire to immediately “give” the male visitor a very attractive “girl.” Not only in the old aristocracy, but also among the “up-and-coming” millionaires, seldom more than a day had passed before they had supplied me with a “date” from the same class (or more often one aspiring to become a member of that class), often without even having asked me. When I was living with some relatives of arch-conservative Senator Stennis in Mississippi I was given a list of possible belles to choose from, while the banker in Alabama absolutely insisted on giving me Senator Allan’s personal secretary for the night. Their attitude towards “white womanhood” seems little better than their historical relationship to black womanhood, yet this sacred white womanhood is used as one of the many excuses for violent suppression of blacks, and to instill fear in whites. In such a destructive and irrational climate it is perhaps as hard for real love to thrive under the crystal chandeliers as among those confined to “shacking together” in the glow of the kerosene lamp.

No whites, I feel, can fully comprehend the enormous psychological pressure of constantly being bombarded with the theme that you are worth less than whites. The worst damage occurs when the victim begins to believe and internalize the oppressor’s prejudices. Cruel invalidations such as “You ain’t shit, nigger” I constantly hear reverberate in underclass families. They instill in each other our deep racist feelings for them and the gloomy prospects of being banished to a permanent existence in the shadow of white society. The hope, I found among blacks in the 70’s, has everywhere today been replaced by self-blame. People can survive oppression and avoid a devastating self-blame if they are able to clearly identify the oppression and thus see a hope that one day it will cease. Unlike a hundred years ago today we live so isolated from each other that the blacks - whom we now ruthlessly bombard with the narrative that they have achieved freedom - for the first time in history have difficulties identifying their oppressor and therefore without hesitation look for the cause of their growing pain within themselves. And once we succeed in convincing oppressed people that they are their own worst oppressors, everything falls apart.



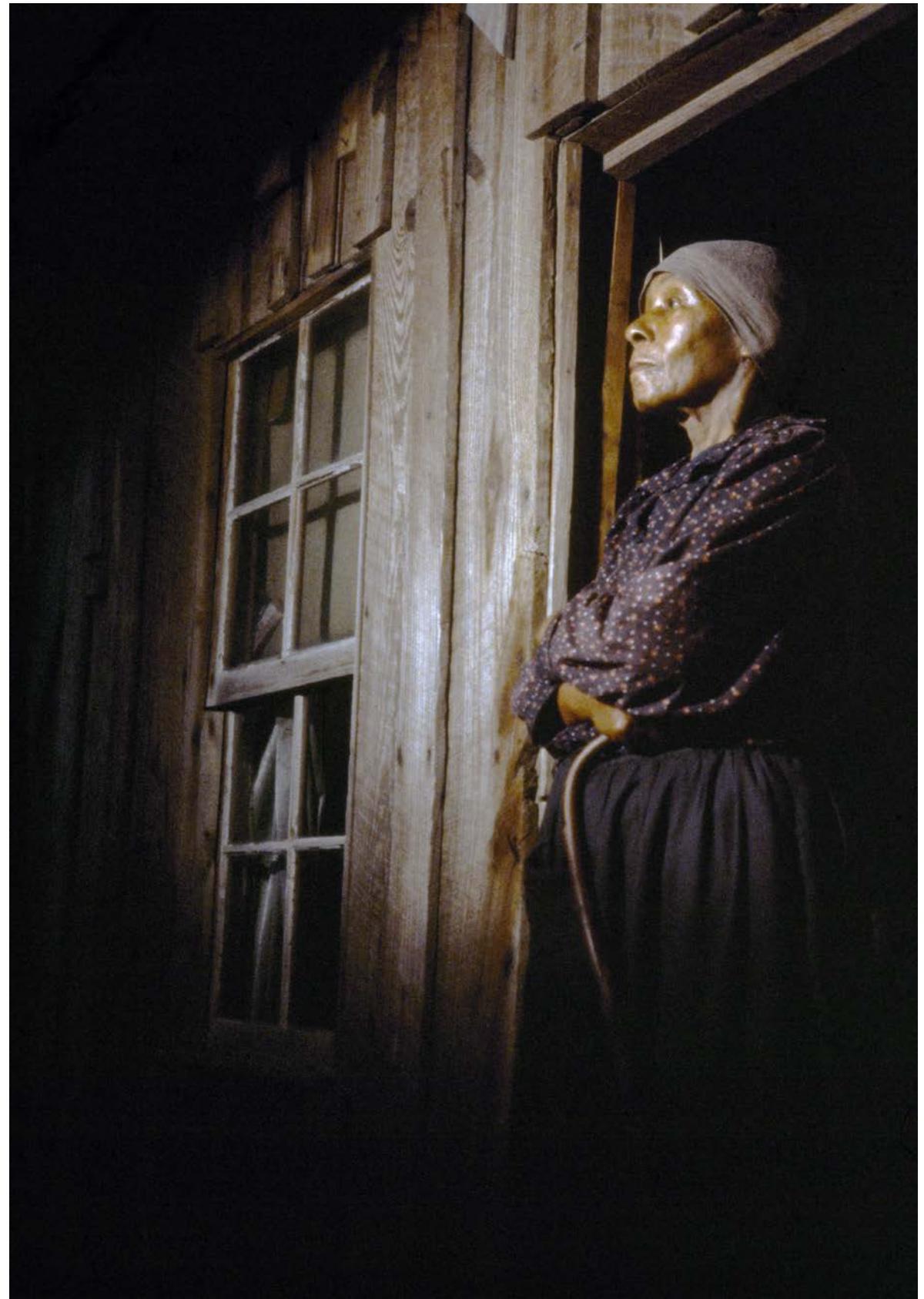


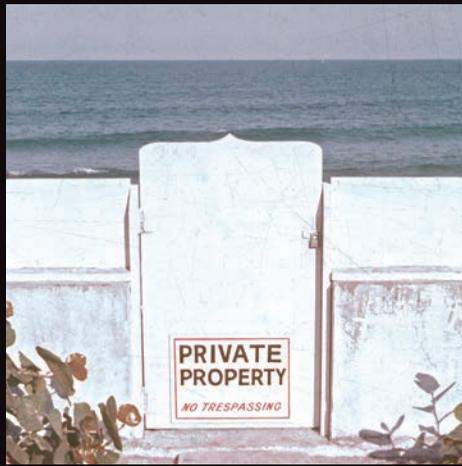


Neither their earnings nor sense of self-worth are great enough to recreate the nuclear family we constantly hold up as the ideal, and the sense of hopelessness and failure drives families apart. Nobody feeling good about themselves could oppress so devastatingly as we do it today. And the victim is not only the family of the outcast, but increasingly the children. We love to mention that our "best friend is black" to attain moral stature and black recognition. And we love to denounce the more primitive racism of others, but forget that bigots like the KKK and the Nazis themselves are so deeply traumatized that they stand without real power to affect the overall quality of life of blacks in the US or Muslims in Europe. No, our victims know full well that it is us, the "good" law-abiding citizens, who are today silently forcing millions of our outcasts into ghettos, isolation and despair. In our white guilt over not being able to live up to our lofty ideals and Christian, liberal values, we flee into escapist black TV shows to cover up for our ultimate crushing of the black family. Today more than 70% of black children grow up without a father and one in ten without either parent twice as many as when I first came to America - and three times as many as under slavery.



Therefore, the grandmother has to take care of them. Black students, who here after the turn of the century are capable of succeeding despite this - the black family's worst oppression since the slave auctions - often tell me that the grandmother was their saving angel.  
*Grandma's hands  
 clapped in church on Sunday morning.  
 Grandma's hands  
 played the tambourine so well.  
 Grandma's hands used to issue out a warning,  
 she'd say, Billy don't you run so fast,  
 might fall on a piece of glass -  
 might be snakes there in that grass.  
 Grandmas hands  
 soothed the local unwed mothers...*





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

Many of these children's missing fathers have over time built the southern highways in chain gangs. Today there are no chains, as bloodhounds and sub-machineguns are far more effective. By following some of the prison trucks I discovered that among other things the prison workers clean up around the mansions and on the private beaches of the richest people in the world in Palm Beach. To work here under the guns of white overseers can hardly be perceived by the black consciousness as anything but a direct continuation of the slave work formerly carried out around the large white plantation homes. Just as the slaves in those days found it justifiable to steal to survive the hardships that had been forced upon them, many of today's unhappy prisoners also feel forced into crime to survive the poverty which these white millionaires are guilty of. Their active reverse class struggle has meant a regressive redistribution of money from the poor to the rich, away from the relative economic equality I experienced in the 70s. When it is a fact that blacks everywhere in America get much longer sentences than whites for similar offenses, the perception of slavery becomes a concrete reality. Many blacks have received a life sentence for criminal charges of which whites would have been acquitted. The many thousands who suffer from this forced legacy from slavery can therefore, in a sense, be called our political prisoners.



Historical photo

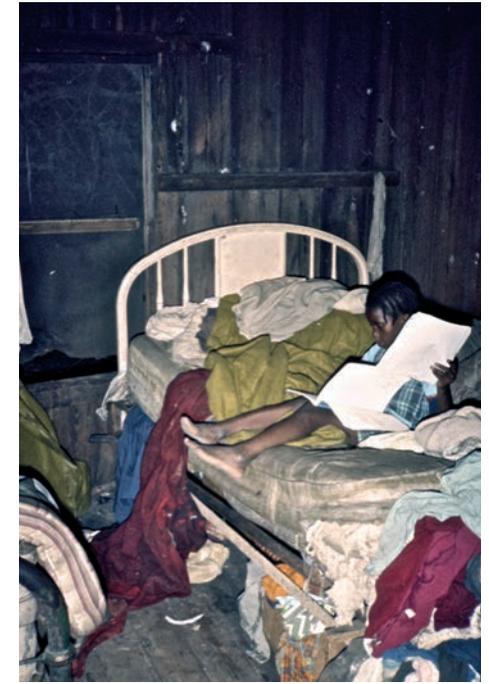
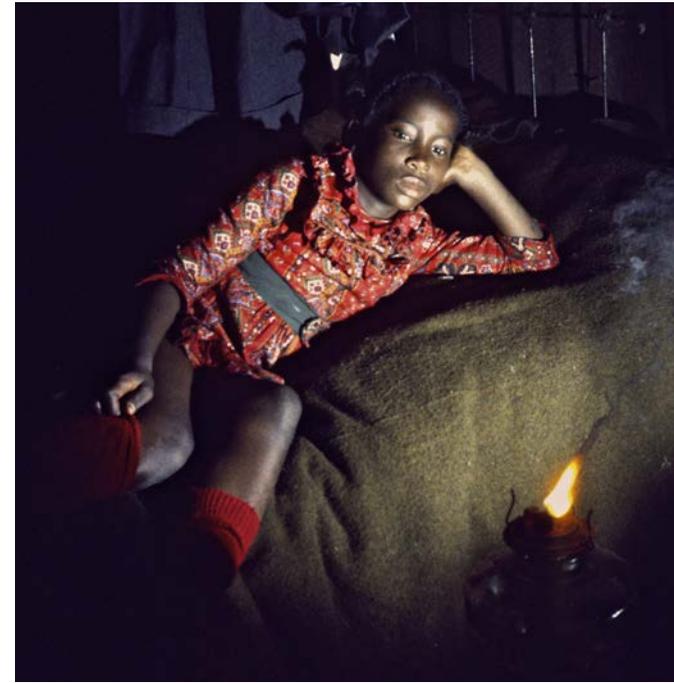
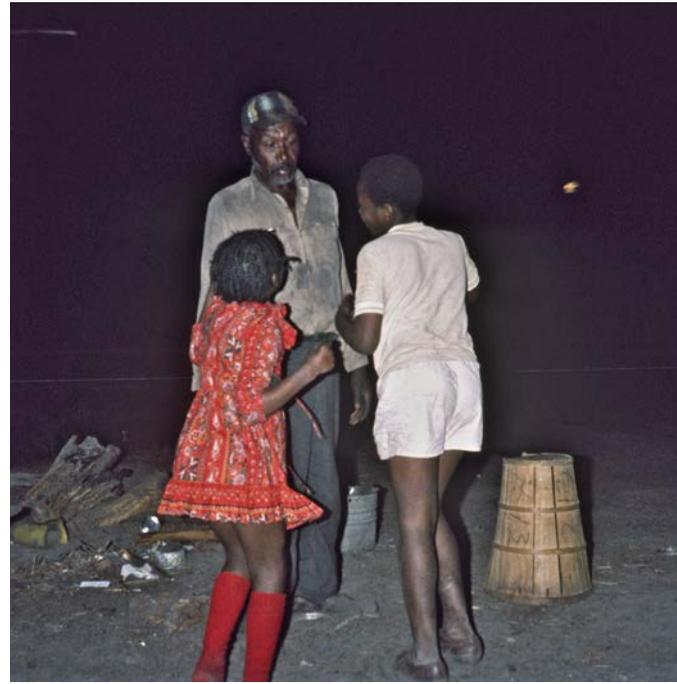




Most of my friends in this book I find in a relatively worse situation today than when I first met them. But here on Palm Beach and Miami Beach with America's wealthiest families, there are some people whom we with Reagan's, Bush's and Trump's tax cuts for the rich made even richer. It is also here that until a few years ago blacks apart from servants were not allowed to set foot – and where in practice they are often still arrested, if they do. Occasionally, however, a beggar does get in and gets a penny from the multimillionaires. It is also here that America's presidents play golf on some of the finest courses in the world - and use black caddies whom they pay less than 5-6 dollars an hour. And it is here that these black slave workers can see white millionaires getting out of their Rolls Royces to read the latest

quotations from Wall Street. Nevertheless, I also found here a leftist millionaire, who gave me some amusing days and let me borrow his Mercedes so I could follow the prison slaves in this money hell. And if you use prison prisoners to work for you, you must of course also have the police by your side. When you have killed love and trust in society, all the TV cameras and electronic surveillance equipment in the world are not enough. It would be very unfortunate to have your children kidnapped. Then you'd better lock them up in a cold, isolated world, like Tania and her little sister here, and have a Cuban nanny take care of them. And for busy career parents, it's probably wiser turn them into slaves of TV than to let them see the world outside - out there, where only a few miles away Linda and her family live.





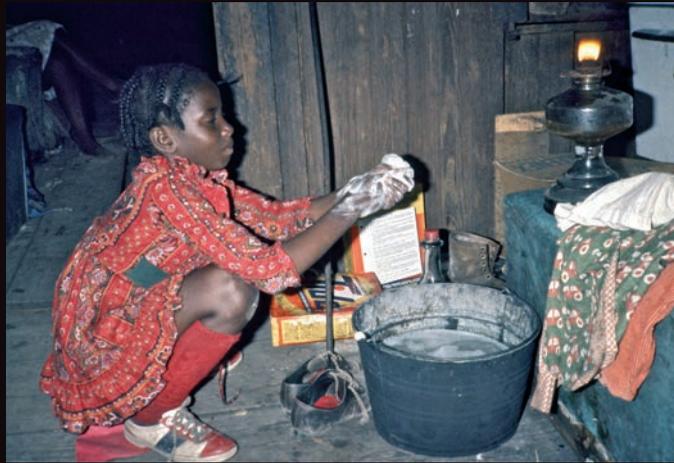
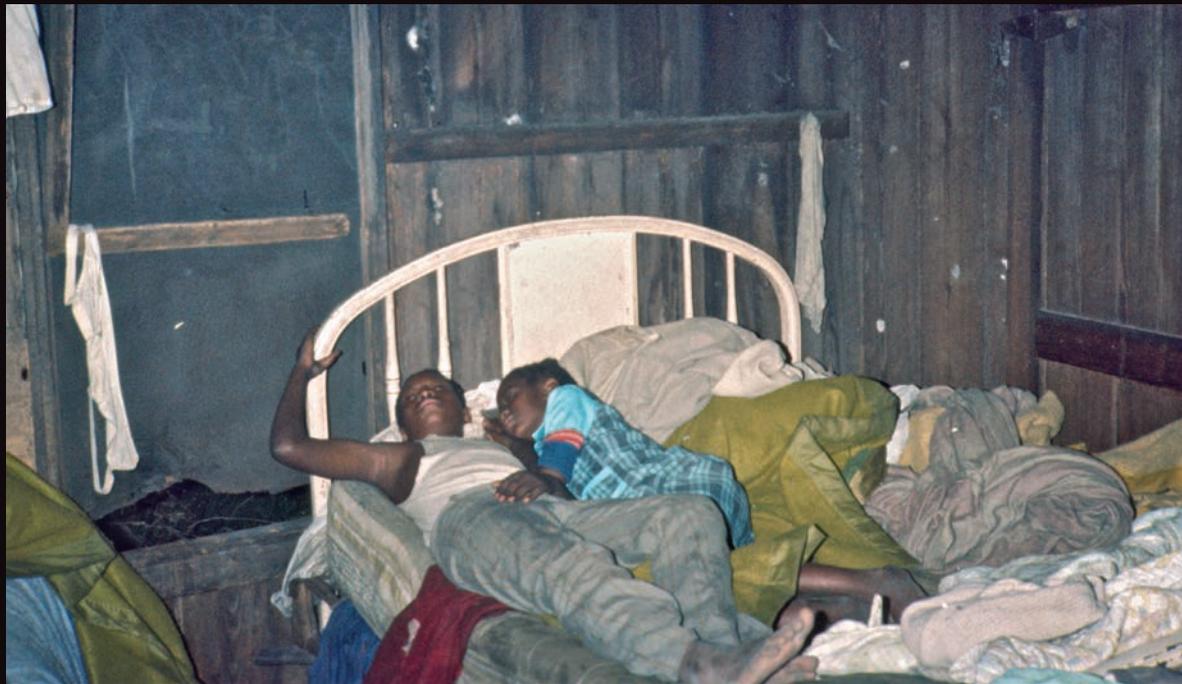
Linda lived not too far from Disney World, but that I should not mention too loudly, for she has never had money to go there. So poor were they at Linda's that they rarely had light before I moved in with them. I had a little millionaire money with me so I could buy kerosene for their old lamp. It was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

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

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

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





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

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

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



# Ideological blinders

(or Deuteronomy 15: 7-11)

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

I saw the most striking example of this blindness in Mississippi when I got a lift with a representative of the usual optimistic type. He talked on and on about how this was a country with opportunities for all. Everyone can be successful, if only they want to. Anyone can become

a millionaire in ten years. If you have the strength and desire you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps. I hear the same phrases so often while riding down a road with shacks on both sides, that I probably wouldn't have paid any attention to it if we had not on that particular day been passing through a completely flooded stretch of the delta. It was in the poorest part of Mississippi, where you see almost nothing but tin-roofed shacks inhabited by poor tenant farmers, whose only property is often just a mule and a couple of pigs. The Mississippi River had recently overflowed its banks and a lot of drowned mules and pigs were lying along the road. People sat on the roofs of their shacks, and in some places only the chimney stuck up above water. Others rowed around their houses in boats trying to save their drowning mules. After we had driven

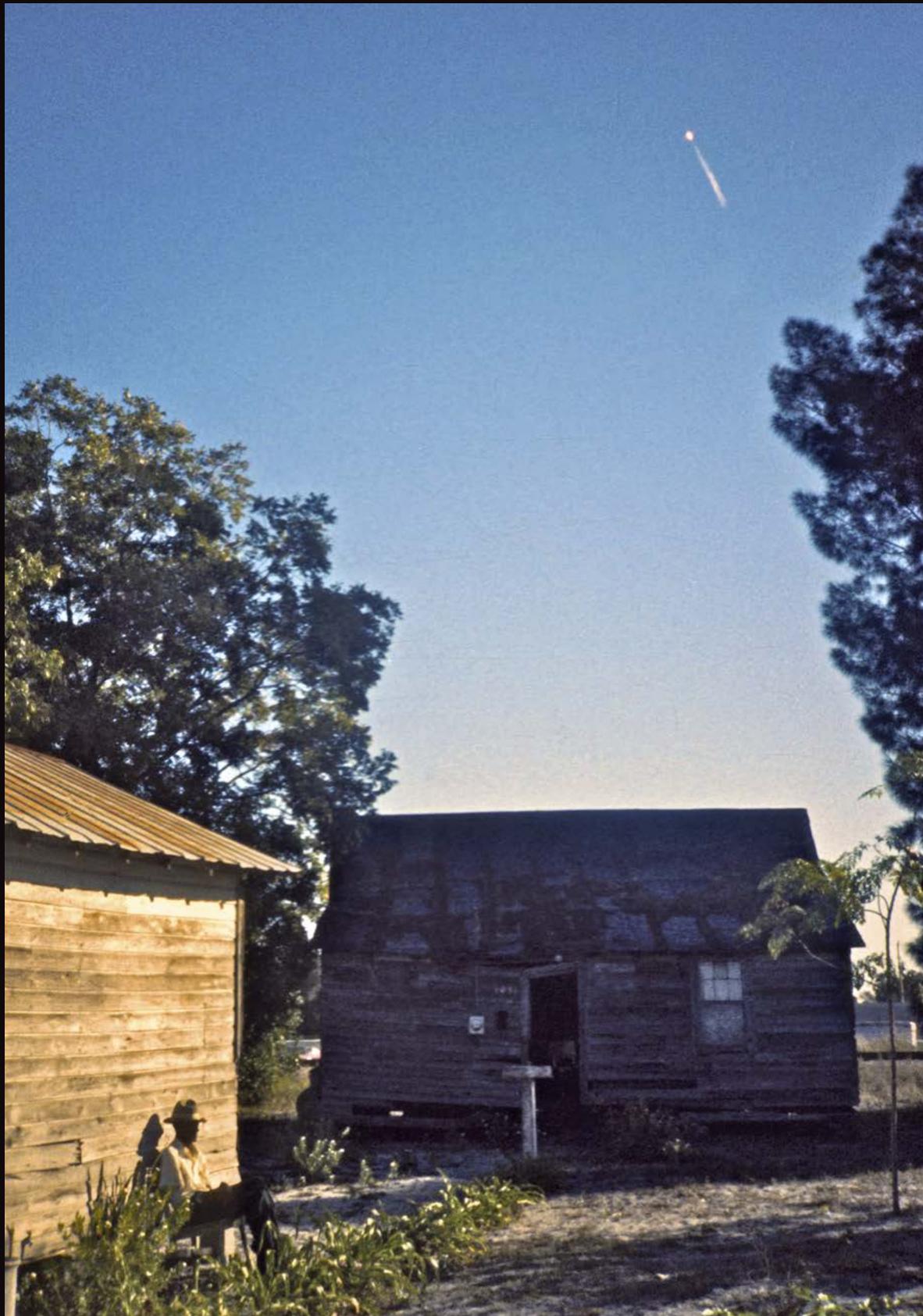


through these surroundings for about an hour, I asked him if he knew the expression "to let people paddle their own canoe," after which I asked to be let off even though I knew it could be days before I got another ride in that part of Mississippi.

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

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

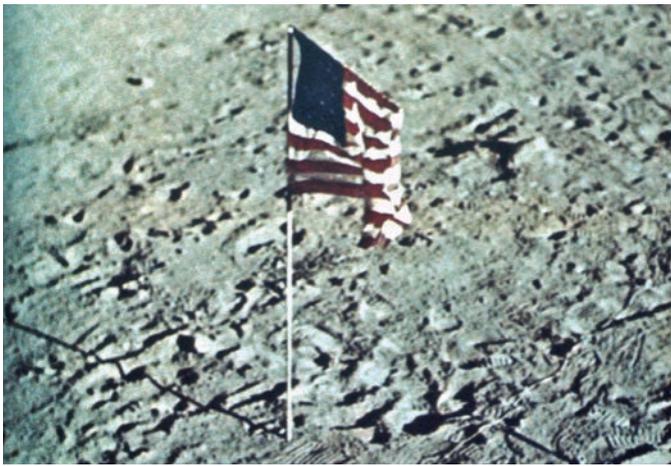
*Letter to an American friend*



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

As America's oldest citizen, Charles Smith was invited to be guest of honor at the launch of a moon rocket, but declined as he refused to believe a man could reach the moon. One morning, close to his home, in an area where I still on occasion hitch rides with mule drawn wagons, I saw the launching of a rocket through the cracks of a shack I had stayed in. But this old man, Cape Canaveral's closest neighbor, did not notice as the rocket slowly ascended over his dilapidated shack. He had no electricity nor radio to inform him of this billion-dollar project. Even if he had been told, he was too sick from malnutrition and disease to lift his head and watch the rocket.

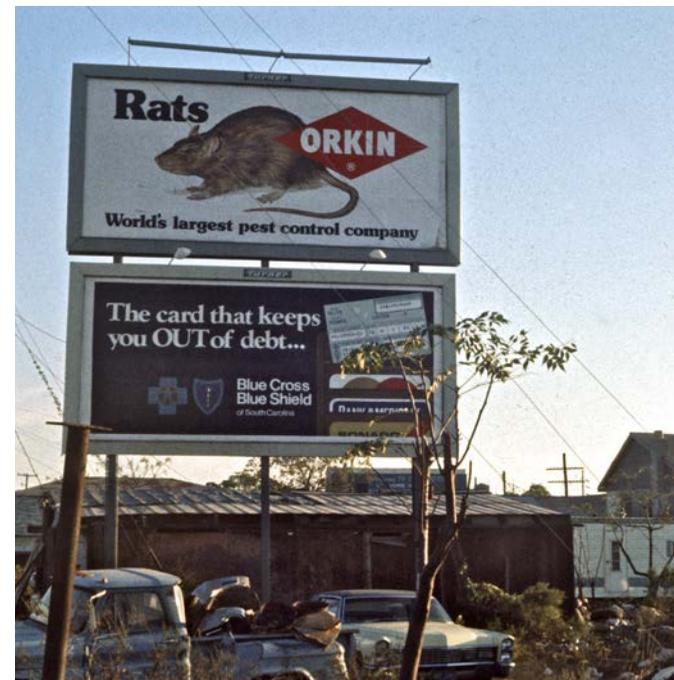




*A rat done bit my sister Nell  
with whitey on the moon  
her face and arms began to swell  
and whitey's on the moon.  
I can't pay no doctor bills  
when whitey's on the moon  
ten years from now I will be paying still  
while whitey's on the moon,  
You know, the man just upped my rent last night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



In Chicago, 600 black babies died of rat bites and malnutrition the year a flag was planted on the moon. In Detroit I stayed with a family where four of the children were bitten by rats while sleeping. Their weeping was only drowned out by the motorists tearing along on the highway right outside the house. Trapped in our own system, we whites must chase on superhighways to safely reach from protected suburbs to our work downtown without being confronted by the rats, the misery, and the violence in the ghettos. But what actually was done to us in childhood to make us repress our natural love for others, allowing us to literally drive over them without a thought? What wounds in us can make us create such an infernal noise for my friends forced to live under these highways since I met them 48 years ago - in this home for our shared unhealed pain?




**LET'S GET RID OF RATS**

**EVERY TENANT MUST HELP**

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

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

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**



Yes, the vagabond wandering on foot below the busy highways will see society in quite a different way than the motorist inside the system. Coming up from the South on a late winter night you are frightened by the speed of the traffic. You see it passing above you on the elevated highways and realize that your only chance of succeeding is to get up there into all that speed. You try to climb up the icy slopes but keep slipping back. Your southern dream of leaving the “sweltering heat of injustice and oppression” turns into a nightmare as you realize that the icy slopes do not lead to “valleys that have been leveled and mountains that have flattened out” as in King’s dream. Eventually you give up the Sisyphean climb and wander on foot underneath the roadways in the shadow of dark pillars. You have not yet learned that you may be there to stay - though the pillars seem like the same old Greek plantation pillars already confining you to a new ghetto and eventually may look like bars - for you still have hope. You have not yet realized that you are in the process of entering a divided world which is a ghastly realization of H.G. Wells’ The Time Machine, populated with Eloi and Morlocks. The Eloi are creatures of the light for whom life is a picnic, except at night, when the dark beings from the underworld come up to eat them. The Morlocks live underground, run all the machinery and cannot bear light. Neither the Morlocks nor the Eloi are real people, but only aspects of humanity which the conditions they live under have fostered in a special direction.

As a vagabond you will see this terrifying vision of our rich societies today - the forced ghettoization of millions of southern blacks who migrated towards prosperity and

hope in the North exactly like today Muslim immigrants in Europe - in a different and perhaps more human terms than the sociologist. The vagabond has the advantage of standing outside and being able to quickly move between the different milieus. Furthermore these milieus are not just numbers and statistics for him, for you can only survive among Eloi and Morlocks if you manage to believe that it is the human being which is their real identity, in spite of the nature of things around you which constantly seems to contradict this fact. Though these elevated highways symbolize the vagabond’s or poor immigrant’s struggle against an inhuman system, they are equally significant of the powerlessness of those who ride them, over increasingly misanthropic and deserted cities wherein they as a result of such distorted priorities no longer dare move on foot. Occasionally, however, upon their highways they do get shot at from the ghettos below such as I heard it happened in East St. Louis and Detroit – just as it has already happened from our own marginalized people in the Danish street gang wars. In these barren, anxiety-ridden, and seemingly “neutron-bombed” landscapes it becomes a deadly necessity to have a car. The reasonable answer therefore is to create even more concrete spaghetti and human sterility, which is why there is no longer enough money for public transportation for the poor, at the same time as we egoistically destroy the climate so that further millions of climate refugees from the south will flee north and have to be accommodated by our children in the future. Rather than integrate with our neighbors we will start building Trump like walls against them.

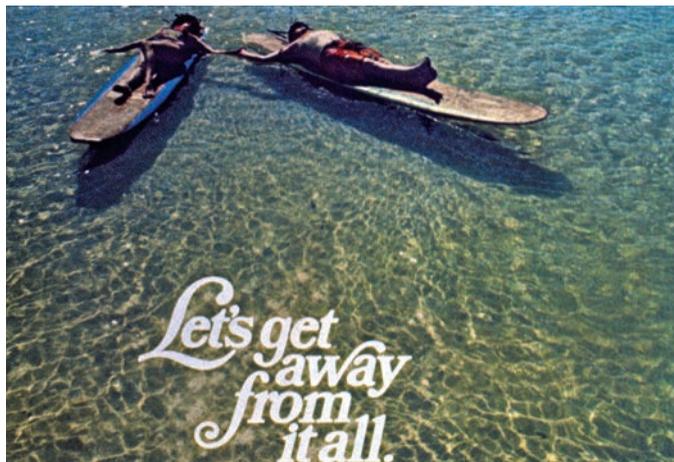


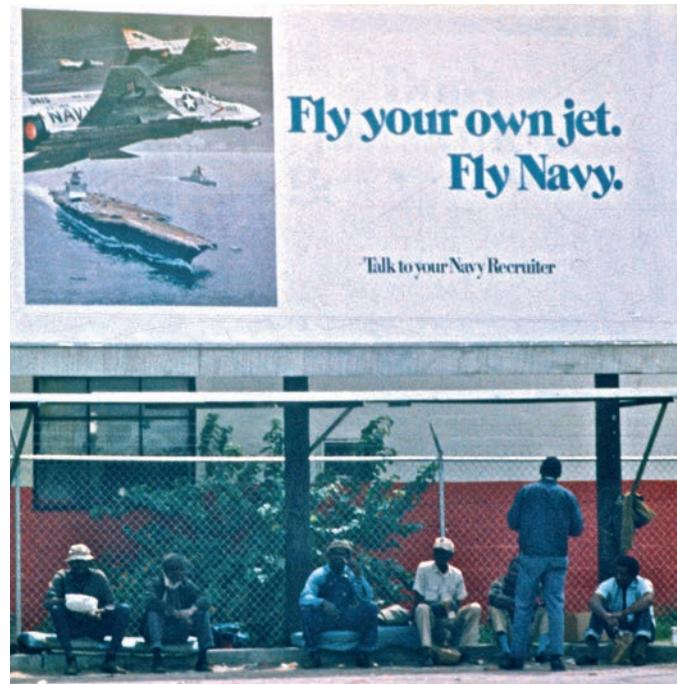


Though the globe cannot afford this forced private consumption, we are passively more and trapped in a vicious circle. We are forced into decisions which from our concrete horizon suddenly seem reasonable - such as military intervention against the poor countries to get more oil. A small percentage of the world thus robbed most of the world's cheap energy reserves in a single century. Car radios and TVs pound us with sweet messages about buying bandages to soothe our aching wounds - making us blind to our environmental destruction and climate racism. In our destructive, evasive flight, we throw ourselves into ever more contempt for the future of brown children - both abroad and at home. We insist on our "right" to drive our own children enormous distances in climate-damaging SUVs to private and remote schools - in the US away from the

blacks and in Europe away from the brown children in the neighboring school. The vicious circle increasingly comes to resemble a flight away from the poverty, ghettoization and suffering we have created. A chaotic flight drowning in music and messages about means for this flight, means creating needs for more flight - flight away from ourselves and everything we have built up, flight into ourselves and out into loneliness. Fleeing whites spend more every weekend on skiing and hotels than the underclass we leave in the cities make in a week. But although we are oppressors in one sense, we feel just as ensnared by this system as our victims - and fundamentally just as unhappy.

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





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



The vicious circle of our consumption creates additional artificial needs. Our behavior is already today flooding or drying up the livelihoods for many of the world's brown citizens and imposing on them escalating water and sand wars driving millions of climate refugees to our shores. True democracy faces a dilemma, when politicians everywhere in the rich world only think of securing reelection in consensus with selfish voters who do not want their oppressive behavior limited in the name of the whole. We let them sweep the problems under the rug by selling hot air to the poor so that they do not make demands on us for the behavioral changes necessary for humanity and the future of our children. Through our cynical racism today, we push the problems onto our own children tomorrow and in the process deprive them of any empathy and sense of decency when, as a consequence, they in the future will feel "forced" into violent climate-fascist measures with gigantic walls and repressive measures to keep the poor out or – in the case of our own domestic blacks/browns - down.

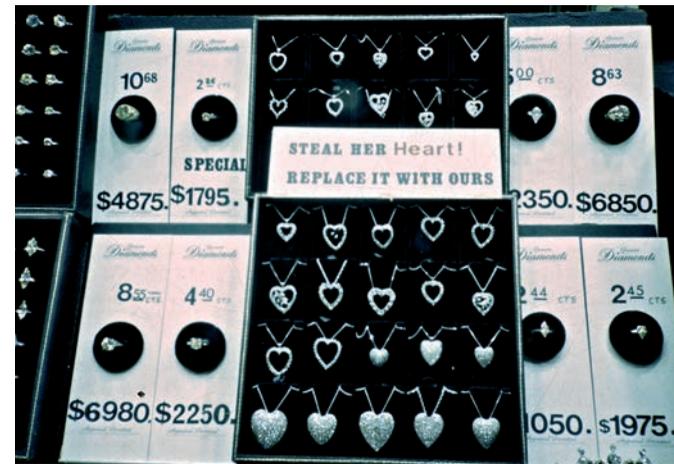
In Norfolk, Virginia, one of the biggest ports in the world for warships, this starved woman tried to get to a hospital with chest pains but had no money for an ambulance. Every morning from her bed she sees warships being built through her soiled windows. For lack of electricity and Tv, her only entertainment is to watch the aircraft carrier being built outside. In in the glow of the kerosene lamp, she gets glimpses of the world drama through her windows ..... aircraft carriers burning up more energy in one second than her house would use in 100 years.





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

Under democratic welfare capitalism we have both the freedom and the duty to constantly control and adjust the free market forces to create a more fair distribution and avoid crises. Yet it is a fact that our system's inner structure has never been good at providing work for all inhabitants. Therefore, we have to dump the surplus production in our "backyards," the poor countries, in the form of luxury goods for the upper class - and arms against the lower class. Backyard dumping for profit has become such an essential element of our system that without the biggest waste disposal agency of them all, the Pentagon, domestic unemployment would be noticeably higher. Although twice as many jobs could be created for the same dollars by investing in welfare, the environment and the climate, the nature of the system thwarts planning the economy to produce human rather than material (or deadly) goods. Without our intervention, the system thereby creates a frame of mind, which forces us to "dump" both the domestic ghettos and the poor countries.



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



# Christmas in New York

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But Larry was the type who had to rap with everybody in the street, no matter who they were. He had been in a respectable marriage for four years, but confided in me that the whole time he had really been a street person at heart. So we had not walked far before we had a whole flock of street people with us; most of them were bums. At one time there were five whom Larry had promised that he would surely find them a place to stay and a bottle of wine on top of that. Two of them walked on crutches. A third went around flailing the air as if he were swatting mosquitoes. I was absolutely convinced that we could never find a place to sleep for this whole crowd, but since something unexpected always turned up in such crazy situations, I didn't say anything about it to Larry. We asked the few people we met if they knew of a place we could stay, but concentrated first and foremost on the Jews, as the others were celebrating Christmas, you see, and we therefore assumed that they did not have room in their hearts. Since I was the only white, it was up to me to handle this, while the others kept a bit in the background. But all efforts were in vain. One person said that if it really was true that I was a foreigner he would be glad to take me home, but he dared not, so instead he gave me six dollars for the YMCA. Naturally we rushed off and bought a few bottles of apple wine with the money, and from then on things looked a bit brighter. But we were still unable to find any place to sleep, and the wine made the bums loud and aggressive and the



man swatting mosquitoes began shadowboxing at people, so that they fled in all directions.

It was close to two o'clock when I was sent into the Broome Street Bar to find new "victims." As I checked out the crowd, a dark-haired woman came over to me and stood for a long time staring into my eyes in a strange way. Then she said very slowly: "You have fish eyes." I thought that she was on some drug and tried to keep from looking at her. Then she said, "I want you to come and live with me." I pulled myself together and asked if I could bring a couple of my friends with me. She said no. I said that then I couldn't come, but she nevertheless gave me her address. I then went on with the others for another couple of hours, but I couldn't get her out of my thoughts. The situation now looked completely hopeless for us. We were really plastered by this time. Over in the piles of corrugated cardboard on Mercer Street we had lost one of the guys on crutches, who had fallen asleep. As it was now raining heavily and I was almost unconscious, I slipped away from the others around five o'clock. I was very embarrassed about it and during the next couple of days I felt very ashamed. But a week later I was lucky enough to run into Larry on Washington Square, and he told me that he, too, had left the others in the lurch and had found a huge fat white woman over in the West Village, where he lived now. That comforted me and we continued being good friends.

I myself had gone back to that strange woman. It turned out that she lived in a huge loft on Greene Street and had a studio on Broadway as big as a football field. Her bathtub was a little palette-shaped swimming pool. All she wanted from me was that I should keep her company. For three days we sat from dawn to dusk staring into each other's eyes. Everywhere there were huge plaster fish; they hung on the walls and gaped foolishly down at us. But there was certainly more life in them than there was in her. For three days I tried desperately to talk with her. All I managed to get out of her was that she felt very lonely and that she had never lived with a man before. She was forty years old, born in the ocean, and could only communicate with fish. She had nothing else to say. I was curious to find out who she was, so one night while she was asleep I searched through some of her papers and found out that she was the world-famous artist Marisol Escobar, who had twice been on the cover of Time Magazine and once on Look; but her last exhibition of fish sculptures had gotten bad reviews. It turned out that she was swimming in money. One day I had to sign as a witness on a contract for several thousand



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

"Did it ever occur to you that all your art is entirely for the rich folks, and isn't benefiting the poor people at all?" No answer. And still no food. She had a refrigerator, so at one point while she was asleep I took the liberty of checking to see if there was any food in it. I got a bit of a shock when several big cod-like frozen fish came tumbling out - and nothing else. If I had not been so hungry, I would probably have had a bit more patience with her.

Then suddenly came my rescuer wandering into this silence. It was Erica, who had previously helped Marisol polish the fish sculptures. She was laughing and happy, and it was fantastic to hear a human being again. She perceived my situation quick as lightning, and as elegantly as a fish, seven dollars slipped into my hand under the table. Later she whispered to me that I could move in with her. When Marisol fell asleep that evening, I fled over to Erica, who lives in a tiny miserable fire-escape apartment on 11th Street.

Erica, whom I am now living with, is quite simply a find. She is a lesbian, but does not have the feelings of hatred toward men that characterize so many New York lesbians. It always makes me so happy when I can have a good relationship with a lesbian woman. Erica, like me, can't

understand the necessity of hating men. It's certainly true that both heterosexual and homosexual American men are alarmingly aggressive, but one must still try to understand the oppression and the society which created this John Wayne culture.

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

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

Erica is a different woman. She has made me into the epitome of male chauvinism: my function in her home is, in fact, to be a pimp. Erica is a stylish prostitute - a call-girl - and it has now become my job to answer the telephone, sort out the obscene calls and ask the nice ones to call again at 5 p.m. for a second sorting. She has an ad in the sex magazine Screw, which apparently all businessmen read, for the telephone rings nonstop. The finals start around 6 p.m. when I have to choose the very nicest voice and arrange a meeting in a hotel for 7 p.m. We then take a taxi up to the hotel, which usually is on the East Side, as we stick to nice businessmen. My job is to sit in the lobby drinking Coke for about an hour, and if

she has not come down by then, I have to go up and knock at the door.

On the way home we usually walk and eat Italian ice cream, which Erica loves. But the most fantastic thing about her is that she is not an average hooker. She just loves to help people and give them warmth in the midst of this coldness. She says that most of her customers are extremely lonely and have a need not so much for sex as for warmth. In fact, seen with typical male eyes, she is no physical beauty - abnormally thin, flat-chested, with curly red hair - but she has such charm and beauty inside, that these men can't resist her at all. Almost everyone gives her a hundred dollars, although we have only agreed on seventy-five, and only one has ever called and complained. She says that most often she doesn't even go to bed with them, but only gives them physical and especially spiritual massage. She has bought me many rolls of film, but for good reasons I have said no to money.

In the daytime she goes to singing lessons and dance classes or sits for hours making coffee services out of foam rubber. Every single cup, saucer, and spoon is perfect down to the smallest detail. She has several glass cupboards filled with foam rubber china, as in the most respectable bourgeois homes. She is a fantastic inspiration for me. One day when a man had been mugged outside on the street and had been left lying there for a long time, Erica was the only one who bothered to call an ambulance. But no ambulance came and people were just standing staring stupidly at the half-dead man. She kept telephoning. The thing is that there are only Puerto Ricans living there, so it usually takes up to an hour before police or ambulances arrive. Then she got the bright idea of calling the police and asking them to hurry over because there was a white man being attacked by several blacks and Puerto Ricans right outside; two police cars and an ambulance came immediately. This trick is common in New York, but it seems to work every time. I have often seen Erica give a whole day's wages to people in need. She would bring it directly from the rich businessmen in the hotels to some beggar on the street. Another night she was even more fantastic. We were on our way to a movie when we saw a bum in his fifties sitting there asking for help to buy a bottle of wine, and for somebody to talk to. We sat and talked with him for a couple of hours over the wine, and he said that he was about to have delirium tremens and was afraid he would die. Erica immediately said that we would go with him to the hospital, and he cried for joy. He had been waiting



for this moment for ten years. He had never himself had the courage to go to the hospital. We took him in a taxi to St. Vincent's Hospital. We sat in the waiting room for two hours. He cried the whole time. Then we were told that they would not accept him. He had been sitting there drinking and got absolutely impossible, screaming and yelling. I, too, shouted something about being from a civilized country with free hospital and health care for everybody. Then the police were called and we were thrown out in great style.

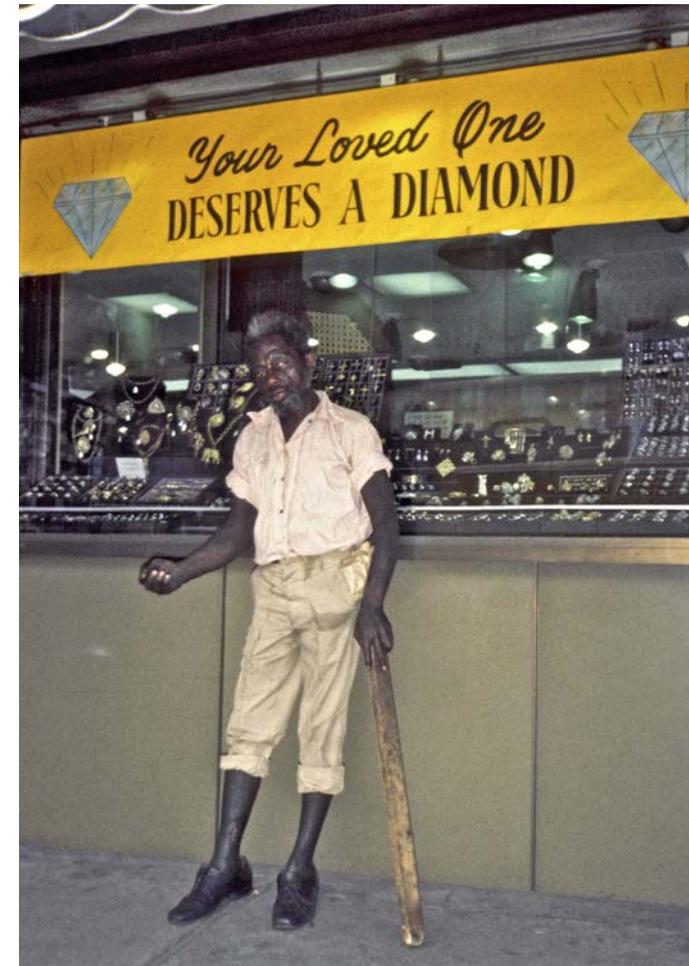
We took a cab to the emergency room at Bellevue Hospital and sat there with the strangest people: screaming, hysterical, suicidal, and God knows what. We sat there until six o'clock in the morning, but nothing happened. Meanwhile the man drank his entire bottle and sat on the floor and cried with his head in Erica's lap, while begging us not to leave him. Several times he urinated in his pants, and a pool formed around him as he took his penis out and let it hang there. Erica kept tucking it back in, but it kept coming out. Most of the patients had by then fled out of the room. Then he began to vomit all over the place, the most peculiar slimy and stinking puke I have seen in a long

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

*Letter to an American friend*



When love is made a sales item and all humanity in us is sold out, one begins to sense the dark sides of our minds that created the ghetto. My vagabonding in the world's most advanced disposable system became an inward journey, in which I constantly tried to distinguish the human beings from the system in which they lived. Incessantly I had to ask myself whether the warmth and openness I received as a vagabond was a genuine American characteristic or whether the system had given the population a superficial hospitality - a need for a short non-committal disposable friendship. But to be disposed of after use was in any case preferable to the human coldness I had known in Europe, which would never have given a vagabond a chance. I learned that where a system is most oppressive and cruel (such as in South Africa during apartheid), you often find the greatest human warmth - a warmth which shouldn't be thrown away in the attempt to find more just systems. Though I found life in the Northern states more just than in the South, I constantly had to hitchhike back to the humanness of the South in order to survive as an individual, just as many blacks search back. The more liberal North invited blacks to migrate up in the 40's



and 50's because it needed their labor - just as Northern Europe invited brown "foreign workers" in the 1960s. But as human beings, we did not need neither them, - and therefore gradually isolated and abandoned them in huge overpopulated ghettos. Our growing insecurity and fear today under globalization leave a deep accumulating pain which is rapidly changing the world scene. Never before in history have we been so actively involved in forcing so many people into ghettos. What took us 500 years in Europe to accomplish with the Jews we have in only a few decades achieved with millions of Muslims. Ghettoization ultimately leads to ethnic cleansings, as seen in many countries. But only in a few places has a minority become as ghettoized as blacks are in the United States. In many cities, such as Detroit and Chicago, up to 94% of blacks are frozen out in completely all black neighborhoods. Disposable society, backyard dumping both things and human beings, has killed love by isolating and alienating huge sections of the population. But it cannot strangle the scream of pain and emptiness that sound from those we disposed of - the scream from the underground, as can be read everywhere in the ghetto and the underground.

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

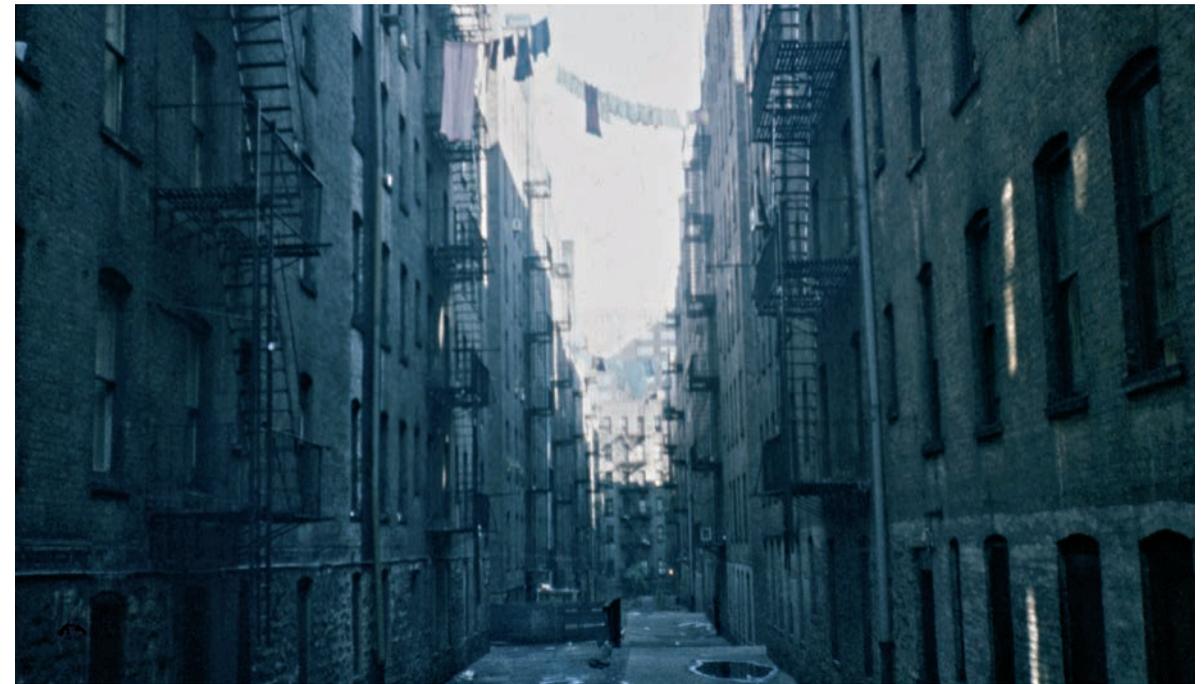


The system - or the sum total of our daily repressive thinking - as always, uses repressive tolerance towards the pressure from our victims, strangulating the scream from the underground by exalting it granting it acknowledgement for its artistic value.

The oppressed are given safe conduct to exhibit in the art galleries for the better-off and better-thinking among us - with all our sympathetic words about the “problems of the ghetto” and for “our immigrants” and benevolent sermons on hunger and overpopulation in the underdeveloped countries. We strangle the oppressed with all our high-flown talk about “integrating them” while we ourselves flee to the suburbs and away from “black schools”, causing further ghettoization. We are vociferous in our bragging about having a black friend here and a Muslim friend there, but we do not wonder why blacks in the US or immigrants in Denmark only rarely come to these art palaces and accept without batting an eye that black waiters carry on the master-slave relationship at these functions. As the buffer troops of oppression, we can absorb all criticism of the system and distort it and avert it by consentingly raising it to the level of art. This is also what will happen with my photographs. These affluent liberals, whom I came to hate and love at the same time because they are so much a side of myself, will give me all possible support in publishing and exhibiting my critique of society, shocked at the things I have seen in America. They feel ashamed because I have crossed a threshold which they feel they ought to have crossed themselves but could not – with their paralyzing fear of those they have helped to ghettoize. Such people exist in all societies, squawking about the necessity

for change in order to help ghettos and underdeveloped countries “up.” But when it comes to election day, all their promises wither away in the status-quo wastebasket with votes for the Democratic party (or, in Europe, various social democratic parties).

Therefore, I cannot avoid feeling that I too exploited the victims, for I know all too well that these pictures will not benefit them at all. We will feel a little sentimental realizing that our underclass must suffer like this. But we will do nothing to change our lifestyle, give up the climate destructive motorhome, SUV, central climate control, charter trips, and distant private school to redistribute the goods of the earth. And so my pictures will only become a catharsis. Although I knew this and often was told so by the underclass blacks who had no illusions about trying to talk to the “inner goodness” in their white oppressors, I nevertheless persisted and have thus betrayed both the blacks and the Third World, making this page the only one in the book almost all African Americans can agree with. I have created an entertaining emotional release and thereby strengthened an unjust system. I am just as hypocritical as these art snobs because I am playing by their rules. If my critique became too “radical”, they would just turn their backs on me. Therefore I am forced to water it down so my book risks becoming a tear-dripping and condescending “paternalistic” naive vagabond adventure story on the sufferings of the ghetto and our unfortunate shadow sides - such as the following sentimental journey into Harlem just a few blocks away from the stronghold of these liberals - the Museum of Modern Art



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







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

This funeral home next to a drug rehabilitation center clearly illustrates the unremitting choice you have in Harlem - the choice between an instant death or an enslaved life under The Man. Thousands of addicts choose the door on the left. They know all too well that if they choose the door on the right, they will either become re-habilitated, which means a return to the previous condition in which they could not survive without using drugs - or else they become "up-habilitated" by learning how to live with the ghetto jungle through mind-crippling and killed sensitivity - thus subjugating themselves to the The Man's blame-the-victim slavery of changing the victims rather than their oppressive environment.

This woman is a living illustration of the constant choice in Harlem. A mad attacker had broken into her apartment and tried to kill her with a big knife. She survived by jumping out a window on the third floor - and was crippled for life.



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

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

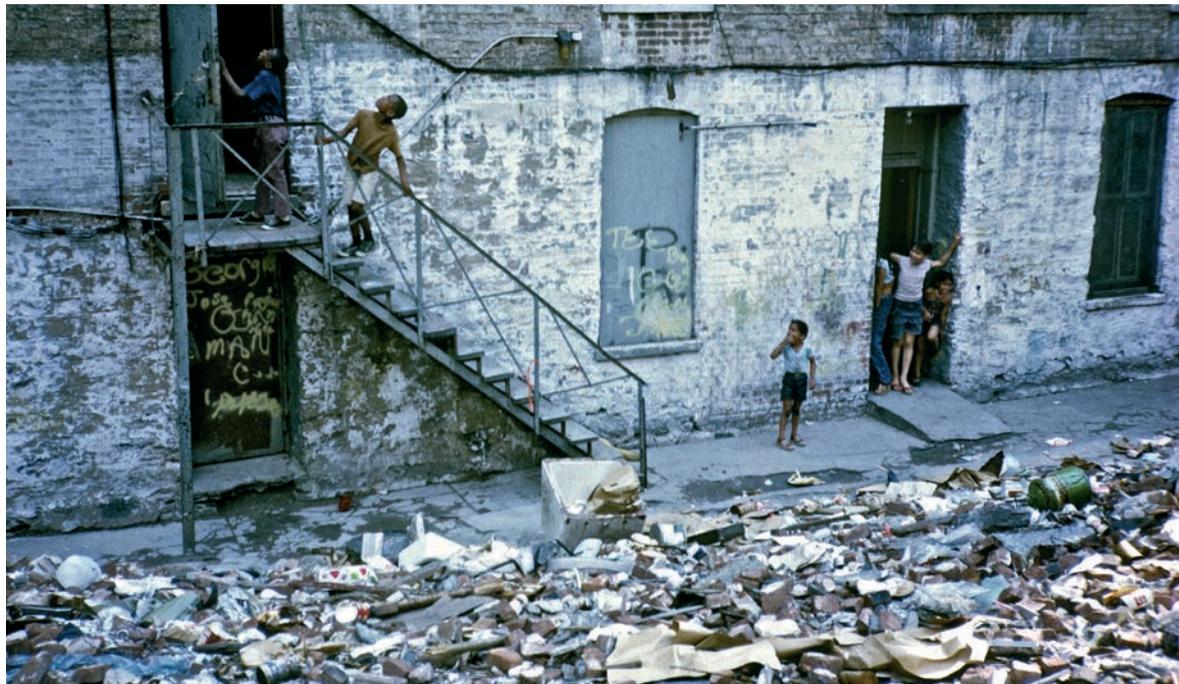
This man, who had been an addict for 16 years, suffered from malnutrition and running sores all over his body. He was unable to find any more healthy spots to shoot up in and therefore had to take the foul-smelling bandage off his leg to find a vein. He suffered terribly and knew all too well that he had less than two years left to live. Therefore, he had nothing to lose, and urged me to show the pictures to the world in order to frighten other young people so that they should never come to suffer like himself.





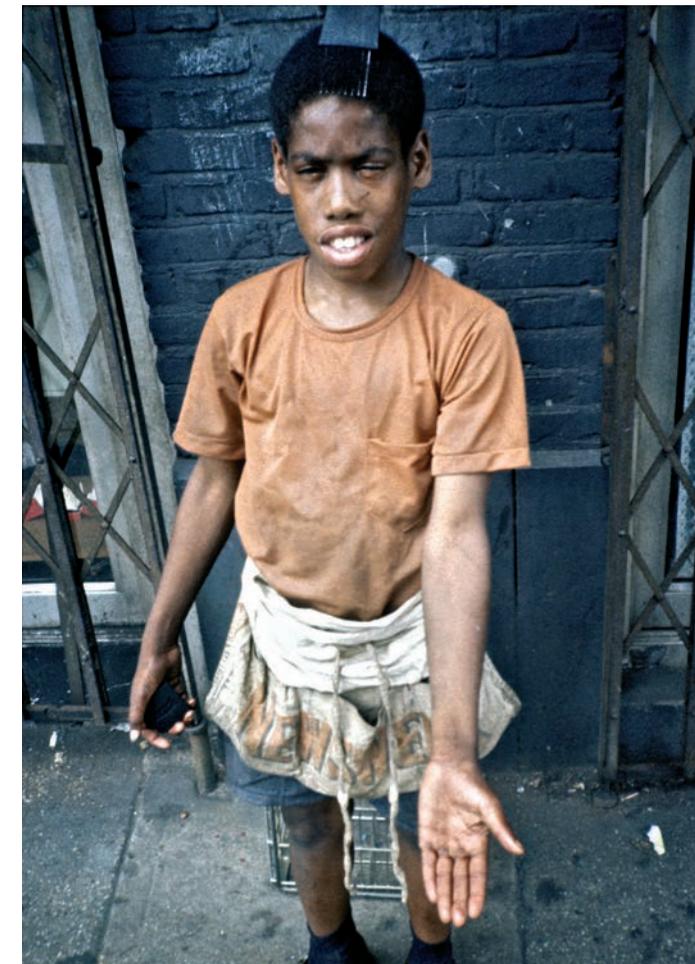
*Or put your girl to sleep sometimes  
with rats instead of nursery rhymes  
with hunger and your other children by her side.  
And wonder if you'll share your bed  
with something else that must be fed  
for fear may lie beside you  
or it may sleep down the hall.  
And it might begin to teach you  
how to give a damn  
about your fellow man!*





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

But it is not just the adults who suffer in Harlem. The most indescribable and distressing suffering I have met is that which befalls the children, and which is helping to mold and cripple their minds and entire being for life. Not only those children who are forced to imitate begging dogs to survive - or those children trying to get a penny by polishing windows for white drivers at the stoplights. It is even more the children that we directly murder with our negative thinking about them - the crushing thinking they have internalized from early childhood to such an extent that they are convinced that they have no future. What impression does it make on the children of pain when they experience their sisters and brothers being shot and killed in the street? When I was teaching a school class in Harlem, I discovered that there was not a single one of the pupils who had not experienced shoot-outs in the streets, where bullets hit even the most innocent child. They refused to believe that I came from a country with no guns. "How do people defend themselves?" they would ask. And what impression does it make on a young mother to have to say farewell to her four-year-old son in a world in which it is hard to tell the difference between a cradle and a coffin?





Interview with a wino:

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

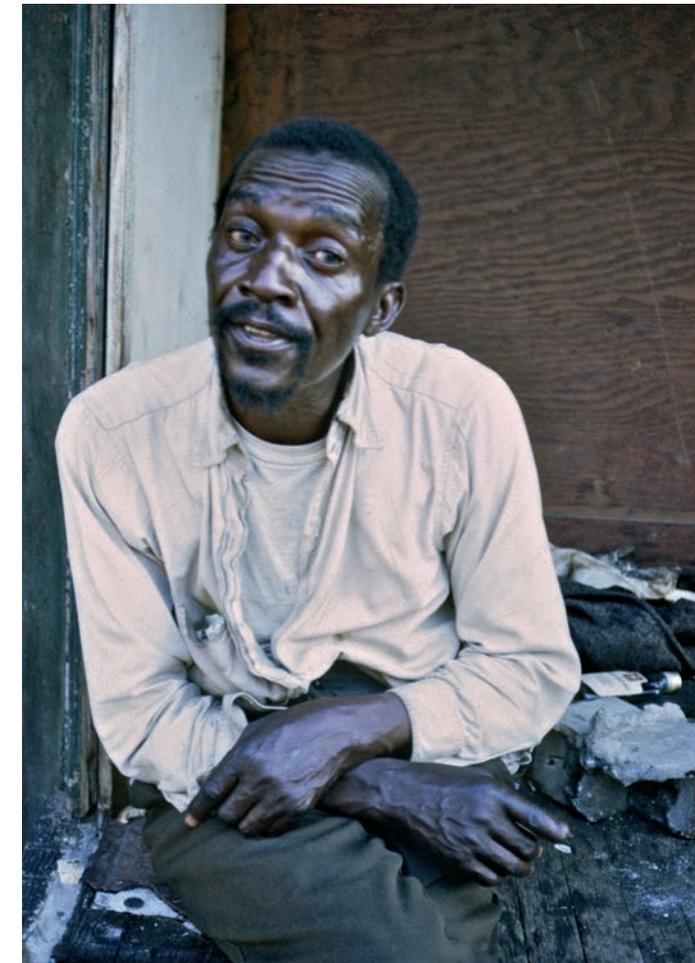
*And it might begin to reach you  
Why I give a damn about my fellow man,  
And it might begin to teach you  
How to give a damn about your fellow man.*

This type of “Give a damn about your fellow man” - journey through Harlem illustrates in all its saccharine sentimentality the white liberal way of seeing the ghetto. From the paternal, almost loving care of blacks by the Southern plantation aristocracy there is a direct link to the endless talk about helping one’s fellow man among Northern liberals. Many liberals do great and exhausting work in the ghettos, but whether we breastfeed or bottle-feed our outcasts the result is the same: We are, in fact, blaming the victims themselves by trying to adjust them to their unjust casteless fate, instead of changing ourselves. We do not consider blacks or browns inherently inferior as do the conservatives.

Instead they see them as functionally inferior as a result of the injustice, slavery, and discrimination of a distant past. After having experienced this book we will ask with despair: After having experienced this book they will ask with despair: “What can we do?” But we do not have the courage - or are paralyzed with fright for looking into the depths of the soul to get in touch with our abyss of pain. The pain which makes us into such powerless, but effective oppressors. Thus, we liberals, in fact, are one of the most important tools of continued oppression. We help the outcasts to adapt itself to an oppression which renders them functionally inferior enough to satisfy our own liberal needs to administer paternalistic care to the “untermensch” (subhuman).

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

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



*If I can't be accepted, I want to be noticed  
If I can't be noticed, I want to be feared  
If I can't be feared, I want to be hated*

The blacks’ own view of Harlem is directly opposite our need to see a victim, since they cannot see only the dismal in the ghetto without going insane. For instance, they will not emphasize that 10% of Harlem’s youth are bloody criminals terrorizing the streets. They will turn it upside down and be encouraged by the incredible fact that despite this criminal environment, 90% of the youth have never been in conflict with the law. They will look at the flourishing culture thriving amid the oppression, be heartened by the fact that most Harlem’s population are surviving - see the many roses that manage to grow up in this jungle.



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

For me, such a rose was Marilyn. When I first met her, she was a heroin addict shooting up a couple of times a week. Her situation in the little apartment was despairing and I admire her for being able to get out of it, for I myself sank deeper and deeper while I lived with her. Never in my life have I lived in such oppressive and annihilating conditions. I was able neither to think nor write in the apartment. The reason was not only the constant housebreakings; it was rather the fear of them and the fear of what might happen next time as well as the fear of walking out in the hallway or in the street, where you could be attacked by knife- and gunmen. Narrowness you can become accustomed to. You soon get used to a dinner table which also functions as a bathtub in the kitchen. You can also get used to having a wire fence between the kitchen and the bedroom so that the rats will not get in and bite you in the face. And it very soon becomes a habit to brush all the dead cockroaches on which you have lain during the night out of the bed in the morning. Even the constant shootings and police sirens from the violent American TV knocking through the walls from adjacent apartments can be a pleasant relief from the similar sounds from the street.

But the persistent fear of that moment when you yourself might get stabbed in the stomach - that you can never get used to. Even on Christmas Eve I was attacked by three gunmen close by. How I survived it, you must not ask me. It is a paradox that in the richest country in the world the word "survival" (which I had never even heard before coming to America except in connection with Darwin) has become a daily standard concept. But ask rather how Marilyn survived it - not only in body, but also in mind. Not only did she survive, but she was even able to wrench herself out of the ghetto and become an actress in San Francisco. Yes, she was a rose who managed to shoot up through the asphalt.

All over the world we oppressors love to use such encouraging exceptions to further oppress our victims with. We constantly assure each other with rosy stories of individuals or a black middle class, or an Obama having made it - that we are not only fair, but virtual saints. It is a mean spirited and calculated effort to show that there is something wrong with all those not making it again blaming our captives for their own captivity.

But Harlem was far from being the worst ghetto in New York. In the South Bronx, where European film crews often shot their footage on the wartime destruction of Germany, there were districts where nine out of ten people died an unnatural death - from murder, hunger, overdose, rat bites, etc. In the Brownsville ghetto I saw two murders and heard of four others the same day. Most oppressors have difficulty understanding how we build ghettos. There are, for instance, no walls around a ghetto, and it is not necessarily a result of bad housing. It is not only the underclass we ghettoize. In Detroit, housing was far better than in Harlem. That the ghetto is not anything physically concrete like broken bottles and litter I experienced very strongly in Detroit where I was fortunate enough to get to live on both sides of the dividing line between the ghetto and the white areas – all the way out there where every white house is up for sale. Many things I can understand about white racism, but to this day it is for me an absolute mystery why these whites are moving away from everything they have built up and come to love just because a black family moves into the neighborhood. For these better off blacks in every single respect live up to the square white middle-class demands of a well-cut lawn, a hedge, and rhododendrons. And this is what the neighborhood would continue to look like if the whites didn't flee. At the same time these blacks have a culture far more American than that of the European and Asian immigrants whom the whites immediately allow access to their so-called melting pot. When I lived on the white side of the embarrassing ghetto fence of For Sale signs they could usually not offer any logic for moving except for the totally unacceptable one about “declining property values” which naturally only happens because they all sell out at once. Thus I experienced it as one great white American conspiracy to prevent blacks from getting access to the melting pot, masterminded by the National Association of Real Estate Boards (a subversive organization which ought to be closed down by Civil Rights laws). When whites flee to what thus become attractive neighborhoods, house values and assets rise, and we can borrow in our equity to go travelling or to send our children to expensive universities. But at the same time, we are causing the housing values of blacks to collapse inside the areas that we thereby turn into ghettos, preventing them from taking loans and thus making them poorer and poorer. In the 70s, every white man with this aversive racism had made himself 6 times as rich in assets as every black man. By the year 2000, we had become 8 times as rich and, after



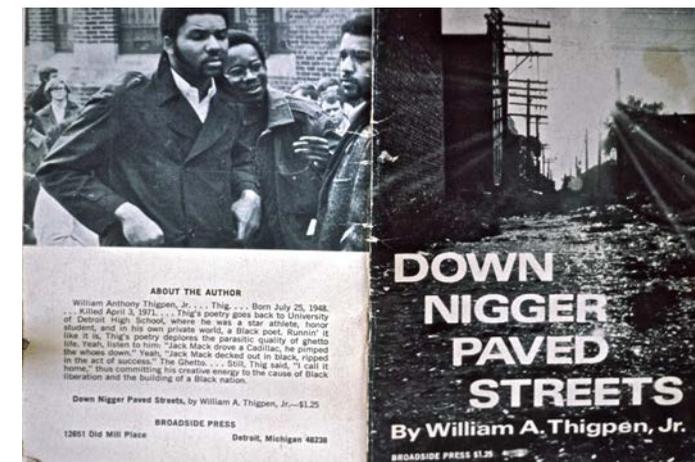
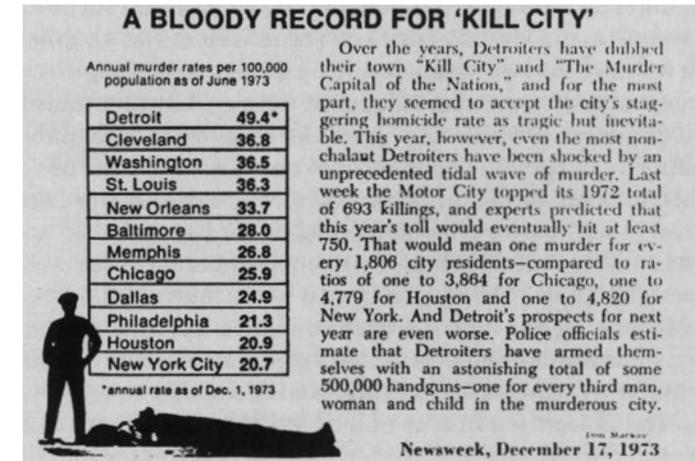
the tax cuts of the Bush years, 12 times as rich as each black. For every white who moved I experienced on the other side of the fence a stab in the heart of the blacks. The older ones would do everything to please the whites, but the young ones were far more sensitive. The sudden feeling of being forever shut out of society's mainstream - seeing someone remove the ladder to the “American Dream” at the very moment you are closer to it than ever - naturally triggers violent resentment. Our aching stab in their hearts would change a few of these otherwise well-behaved young, into mischief-makers churning up hate for the remaining whites on the ghetto fringe, who then in turn would blame the victim and move. I am not dealing in this book much with the problems of the middle class but I couldn't help seeing a direct link between the violence committed against the dignity and self-worth of these frontier people out on the edges of the ghetto and the violence I later experienced in the inner ghettos; between our white all-American stab in the heart of the black middle class and the frightening backstabbing in the underclass. Thus, I understood that the ghetto is a white socially enforced continuation of chattel slavery's violent milieu. When this internalized white violence comes under direct pressure from unemployment, which is especially severe in Detroit, it explodes in physical violence. Just as the number of black divorces fluctuates with unemployment, so do murder and violence against family members. Almost every time I came back to Detroit more of my black friends had been killed. This letter to my parents, written during my first months in America, shows how I immediately sensed the Golgotha-stab of white racism behind the bleeding of a people on the cross.

## Easter in Detroit

(or St. John 19, 31-37)

Dear Mom and Dad,  
This is the most shocking Easter I have ever experienced. I am now in Detroit, which is nothing less than a nightmare. On the way from San Francisco I stopped off in Chicago to visit Denia, the young black writer I lived with at Christmas. Even there the horrors began. You remember the two girlfriends of hers that she and I spent so much time with? She told me that one of them, Theresia - that tender, quiet nineteen-year-old girl - has since been murdered. She was probably killed by someone she knew, since it seems she opened the door to the murderers. She was found by her fiancé, shot and cut up with knives. She was the second person I have known in America who has been murdered. Denia has now bought a gun and has begun target-practicing. That night in Chicago I also experienced my first big shoot-out, probably between police and criminals. We were on a visit on Mohawk Street when it suddenly broke out down below in the darkness. I tried to look out, but Denia pulled me away from the window.

Well, I have almost forgotten all that, compared with the things that have happened here in Detroit. First I lived with a well-off automobile-worker's family in one of the respectable black neighborhoods at the seven-mile limit, way out there where the white areas begin. Their son had picked me up and invited me home - the third black home I have lived in. Beautiful people. Easter morning they took me to church. But then I moved into the ghetto itself with three students, and since then it has been a nightmare. One of the first days I was here, Thigpen, whom I had just been introduced to, was murdered. He was a fantastic person, big as a bear, and a poet (I am sending you his collection, *Down Nigger Paved Streets*). Apparently for no other reason than that he had written a harmless poem about the narcotics trade in the city, he was found the other day executed by narcotics gangsters along with two of his friends. They were tied up and laid on the floor and shot in the back of the head. But what shocked me most was the reaction of the three I am living with. One of them, Jeff, had known Thigpen for years and is photographed with him in a book. But Jeff just came in calmly with the newspaper one morning saying, “Hey, you remember this dude, Thigpen, you met the other day? Look, they blew him away too.” It made no greater impression. This is how they react to all of the violence, which really is getting to me. But still, they are afraid themselves. It is not only me who is trembling from fear here.



The nights are the worst. I'm beginning to get really down from the lack of sleep. Jeff and the two others sleep upstairs, while I stay down in the living room. Every night they shove the refrigerator in front of the door and put some empty bottles on top, so that any attempt to open the door will make the bottles fall and wake them up. One night the cat leaped upon the refrigerator and knocked over the bottles with a crash, so I shot upstairs to the others. I am a nervous wreck by now and constantly lie listening for footsteps outside (nobody but robbers dares to go on foot at night in Detroit as far as I can tell from here). Once in a while I hear shots outside. I have never really trembled before, but now I sometimes get the same jelly-like sensation as that night I was mugged in San Francisco. My heartbeat alone is enough to keep me awake. In fact, I really didn't think I had closed my eyes once the entire week, until I suddenly woke up from a terrible nightmare.

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

But the nightmares are not always over when day breaks. One of the first days I was there, I ventured out in the streets on foot. Scarcely half an hour had gone by before a police car with two white cops stopped short and they called me over to the car. I was almost happy to see white faces again and walked over. They asked to see my ID. You are constantly being stopped like this when you walk around in the ghetto. I often ask myself what difference there really is between being in the ghetto here and being a black in South Africa, when you must constantly show your identity papers to white policemen. So almost automatically I stuck my hand down into my shoulder bag to get out my passport. Immediately the cops' pistols jumped out right into my face: "Hold it!" It is a terrible experience to be looking into the muzzle of a gun, and I began trembling

from fear. But nothing happened, they were just afraid that I had a pistol in my bag. It felt like a miracle that their guns had not gone off.

How can people live in such a world where they have so little trust in each other? They gave me the usual warning: "You better get yourself or of this neighborhood quick!" I had regained my self-confidence and answered audaciously, "I live here!" The longer I live here, the more I look at the whites with the eyes of the blacks, and I can't help but harbor an ever-increasing hatred for them.

It is a strange sensation to live in a city like Detroit where you never see anything but black faces around you. Little by little you undergo a slow change. The black faces become close and familiar, and therefore warm, while the white faces seem distant and unknown and therefore cold. In spite of all the horrors, I certainly have no desire to go out into the cold icy wastes out there where the ghetto stops. So you can probably understand the shock I get each time I turn on the TV and suddenly see nothing but white faces.

Yes, in a strange way the white faces become a substantial part of the Detroit nightmare. For it is not only the crime which keeps me awake at night. It's just as much the television and the radio. Everywhere in the ghettos of Detroit and Chicago it's a habit among the blacks to leave the television and the radio on throughout the night to make robbers think you are still awake. Another thing is that they have gradually become so accustomed to sleeping with the TV and radio on that it has become a kind of narcotic; many of them simply cannot fall asleep without this noise. I discovered this one day when Denia and I wanted to take a nap in Chicago and she automatically turned on the TV so as to fall asleep. It is shocking how early some people become addicted to this noise-narcotic. When lived a young black mother in Jackson, fifty miles outside Detroit, I discovered that it was almost impossible for us to live together. When we went to bed she always turned the radio. I then lay there waiting for her to fall asleep, after which I slowly tried to turn down the volume, as otherwise it was absolutely impossible for me to fall asleep. But every time I got the volume down to a certain level, it made her two children, two and three years old, wake up and start crying, so I immediately had to turn, the volume again. I could only take it for two nights, after which I had to move. We were simply, as the woman said "culturally incompatible."

But I think there are terrifying implications if so many blacks in the urban ghettos are equally dependent on this



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

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

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

Jeff was so happy in Cuba that he tried everything possible to avoid being sent back to the U.S., but he was not allowed to stay. Now, after the trip, he has had problems with the

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

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

I will remember Detroit as an endless gliding drive through a ghost-town to the sound of the car radio's newest black hit, "For god's sake, give more power to the people," which is being pounded into my head. And then every day the newest murder statistics. Since it's Easter week, only 26 people were murdered. They expect to reach 1,000 before Christmas! More lives are lost in one year in the civil war here than in six years in Northern Ireland. Yet in the newspapers, "five people killed in yesterdays violence in Detroit" merit only a notice on page 18, while the front page headlines decry the loss of two lives in Northern Ireland's "tragic" civil war. By the way, did the Danish papers write about the stigmatized black girl, who was bleeding during Easter? Anyway, I hope you have had a more peaceful Easter.

*With love, Jacob.*

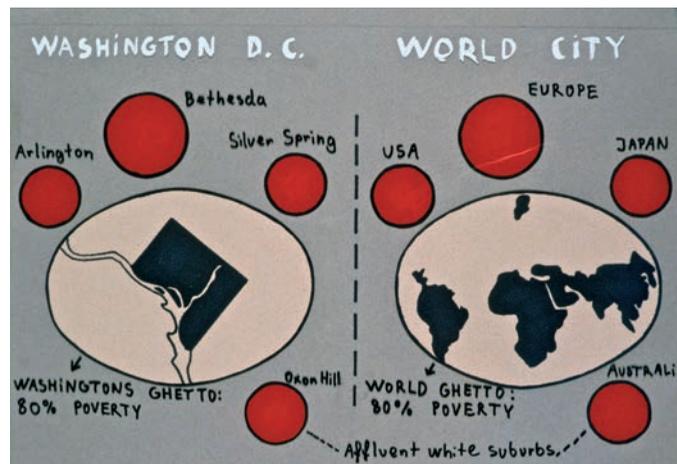


American ghettos stretch out in thick belts five to ten miles wide around downtown business districts as seen here in Houston, where the rich live in the inner city and the poor in slums on the outskirts. The underclass is constantly being squeezed and pushed around. Urban 'removal'- supposedly for its benefit - is everywhere being used to get rid of, concentrate, or hide our undesirables such as in historic Harlem where today most blacks have been pushed out from. It often made me cry to see how old historic European-looking "slum" neighborhoods are being plowed under and stood on end, as here in Baltimore's cozy and charming ghetto. Stacked up, you feel even more confined, and accordingly the crime increases proportionately with the height of these vertical slums. In Philadelphia, the street gangs were replaced by floor gangs then struggled with each other floor against floor, and it could mean death to get off the elevator on the wrong floor. More than 100 street gang members aged 12 to 17 were killed there every year. One of them was my local street vendor who made a living selling my book American Pictures. I had several friends who were held up at gunpoint by 10-11-year-old children who also shoot wildly around with Israeli Uzi

machine guns. By giving them a sentence often is twice as long as their age, whites hope to have removed a part of the ghetto... we hope to remove part of the ghetto ... in the same futile way as when we demolish the houses in which the ghetto is contained - without removing the causes of the ghetto. Though five out of six housing code violations in slums are proven to be from the clear neglect of landlords and only one in six can be attributed to despairing tenants, nevertheless the popular blame-the-poor myth persists that "people cause slums." A couple of slumlords I lived with in huge mansions outside the cities were certainly helpful in spreading such ideas. Yet having lived for years in those old dilapidated apartments handed over to the poor when they are already worn out and used up, I never witnessed any tenant destruction of the type which makes a slum: leaking roofs, sagging floors and stairways, defective plumbing, sewer pipes, and wiring. But never will I forget the pain and anguish I went through with my best friends in the Fillmore ghetto, Johari and Lance, when their daughter died falling through a rotten window which their slumlord for years had resisted bringing up to code standards.

It is a paradox that we always look for the cause of the ghetto inside the ghetto itself, when it is implied in the very concept of “ghetto” that the causes are to be found outside. Especially in the ring of affluent white suburbs encircling every city. Here we have trees, swimming pools and all the possibilities for expanding in the world. We make sure to live outside the city limits so our children will not have to go to school with the undesirables and we avoid paying taxes to the city although we get our income from it. In this way the cities for years became poorer and poorer. A typical city like the capital Washington D.C. in this way is similar to the city we all live in, the world city. In the middle of both cities there is 80% colored slum and poverty, and around it we have put the lavish suburbs of Europe, USA, Japan, China and Australia, which own most of the business inside the ghetto in the South, but nevertheless refuse to pay taxes to this city, even though we bring home huge profits home from it. Like the ghetto of the world, Washington is thus getting poorer and poorer, and we must send development aid to give back a little of what we took out. Although the net flow of capital out of poor countries than we send back, most of us are convinced that we are generous and therefore resent the rising anger and terrorism against the West in the Third World. Our ignorance is often expressed in the choice of leaders such as Trump, who goes alone against all other nations in their lack of recognition for the need to repay some of the super profits from unequal trade agreements, loans, underpriced raw materials, climate destruction or tax havens etc.

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



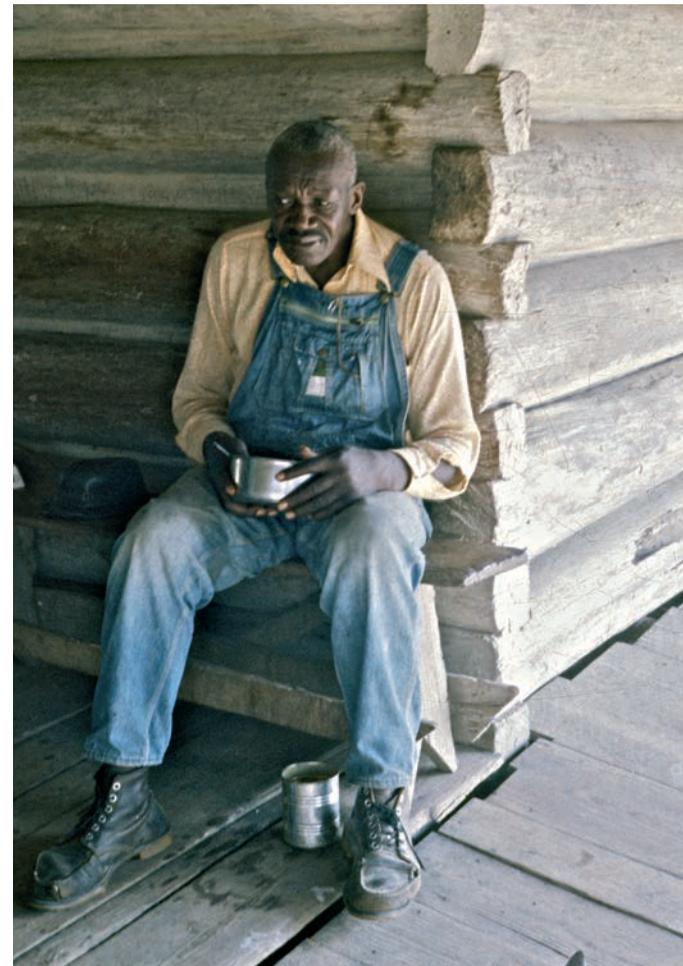
One out of ten inhabitants in black areas of the city was reported a drug addict one year by the Post. These two - addicts who first attacked me, but later invited me home, live only three blocks from Congress, whose white dome can be seen in the background. Although the members of Congress dare not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



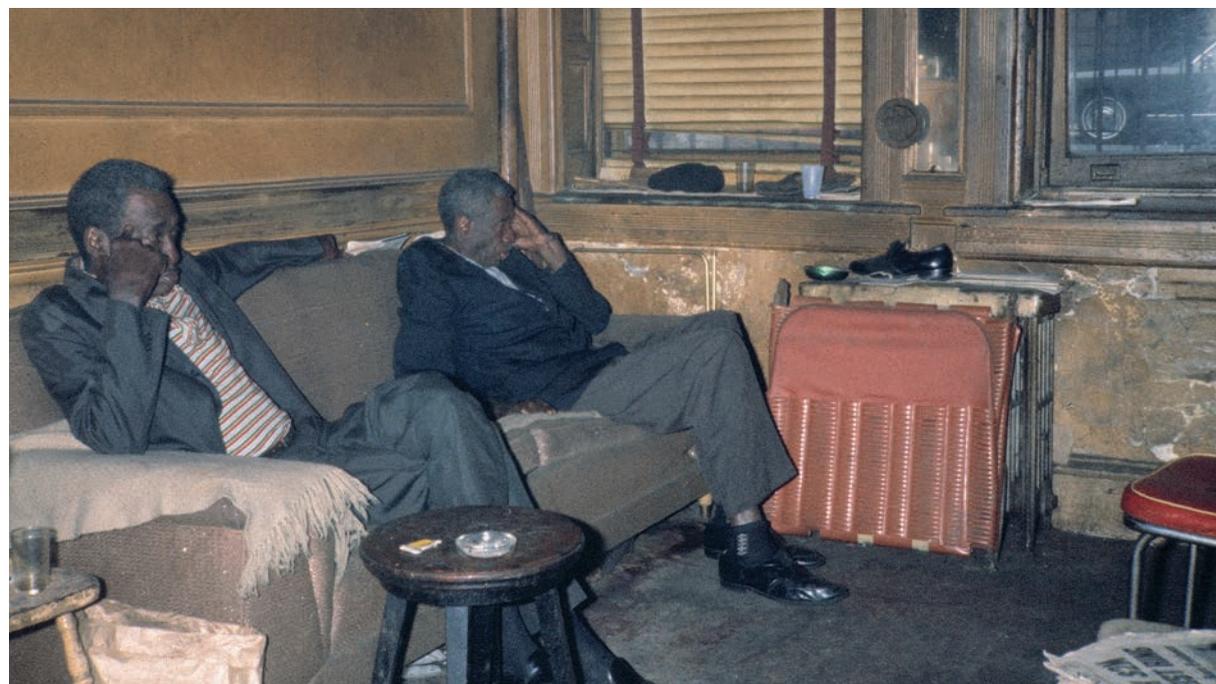


When we lock people up in a ghetto our violence against them in time will turn on ourselves. By comparing with another ghetto - the old people's or "grey" ghetto - I understood why those we confine find it impossible to escape the ghetto. With no visible walls around the grey ghetto either, old people's dependence on the crumbs from the rich makes them forever feel imprisoned in a psychology of powerlessness like slavery's. As with the underclass, many elderly are so handicapped that they cannot hold well paid jobs, and have no possibility of improving their economic situation. The feeling of having no power over your own situation and being completely dependent on the crumbs from the rich people's tables are part of the psychopathology of the ghetto, creating in the minds of many of the elderly authority figures resembling black psychology's "The Man." The gray ghetto is to some extent linked to our black or immigrant ghettos as poverty forces them into the same neighborhoods, where the old are often as discriminated against and forgotten by disposable society as the blacks. Sometimes old people are found dead from hunger at home from fear of venturing out to buy food. This old woman with the "smile" sign in the window I found to be the closest neighbor to Congress, which condemned her to a pension 40% below the official poverty line. In the south, I met old people who were not able to get social security at all. Thousands receive less than the official minimum of 1400 \$ per month. Used to the system in the European welfare states with social and health personnel who visit at home to cook, clean and shop for the elderly and infirm makes in my eyes the neglect of the elderly in the United States look even more appalling.

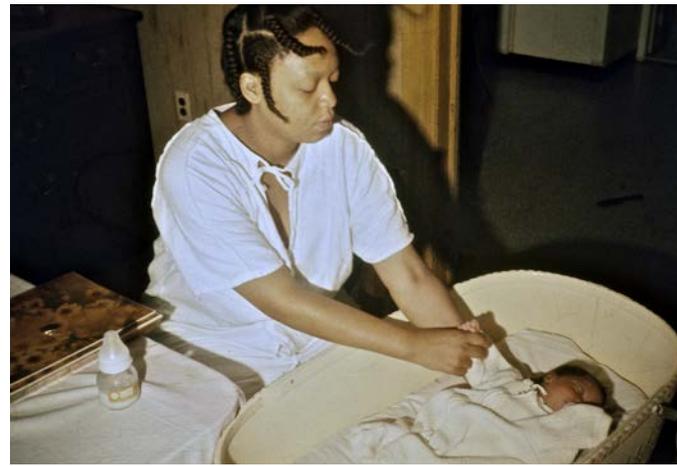
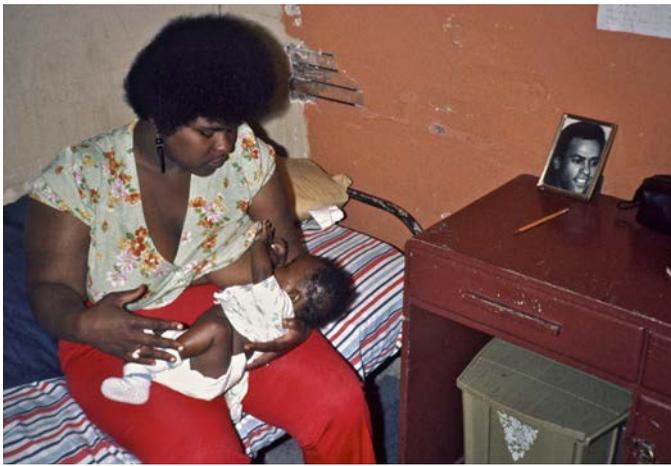




This old Jewish woman, who became one of my best New York friends, had emigrated from Russia before the revolution. Her hope was that Congress would permit her to return to Communist Russia so that she could live her last years in “freedom from hunger and freedom from fear,” as she put it to me in 1972.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







Americans are in favor of some social security in old age, but for the losers in our economic system, they refuse to create a safety net like the one we take for granted in Europe's welfare states. Where the welfare state respects the dignity of the individual, the American "disposable society" deliberately tries to destroy it with a network of spies to

infiltrate the privacy of people who are on what Americans ironically call "welfare." Throughout history, the system has tried to destroy the black family. The tradition of "selling away" husbands and wives and children from each other in slavery continues, with the welfare department as both paternal caring master and infernal cruel overseer. Many black fathers have been forced to leave home so that their wives could get assistance since Congress ordered welfare for mothers cut off if a man was present. Millions of women thus live in loneliness and utter poverty, since only one out of 20 families on assistance include men although more than 50% of underclass men are unemployed.

In this way was created a special class called the black "welfare mother," who fared far from well in a vicious circle of poverty, dependence, fear and especially humiliation. Although most people on welfare are white, they are blamed for getting on assistance by having been "promiscuous." An incredible charge since it was my clear observation as well as the conclusion of several studies that whites, among their other privileges, are far more "promiscuous" than blacks.

Cruelty to these stigmatized mothers originates in politicians' hysterical speeches about "welfare loafers," speeches designed to distract attention from the way these same politicians hand out billions in welfare to billionaires for oil depletion, agribusiness subsidies, etc. They create a climate in which the poor have to run the gauntlet of elaborate, lengthy, demeaning investigations and follow-up harassment to get their few crumbs. Every sadistic trick is used to dehumanize them. In many places they must stand in line from four o'clock in the morning in frost and rain, then wait inside in a concentration camp atmosphere all day only to find out that "no more cases are being taken today." If they get money from secret lovers, they often dare not spend it on kitchen utensils, for the spies of the system are constantly checking for evidence of a man. A new toaster

or other gifts can cause their meager support instantly to be taken away. Every time I lived with such welfare mothers, I had to hide under the bed or in the closet whenever the spies arrived without notice. Many women have never known any other existence and are slowly being destroyed by this eternal home life, enslaved by stupefying TV programs.

I don't think Americans really are aware how cruel they are to these people, but it can be equated with the racist treatment we in Denmark today offer our refugees and immigrants. The 'introductory benefit' the system offers them is below the subsistence minimum in today's Denmark. Unlike the generous welfare state of the past, we have become a mirror image of America's disposable society, trying to get people out of the way as waste. In the United States, it is deliberate policy to push people out of society by refusing help to people whose rents are too high. At least people on development assistance in Denmark have their rent paid to better integrate them into society. American welfare mothers are usually put away in special poorhouses, often near garbage dumps or noisy freeways where land is cheap. Such "housing for the poor" is the official banishment of untouchables; every city has such dehumanizing "projects," ostracizing people in a pariah culture so destructive that in the end they become useless to society. By isolating the welfare mother so effectively the population can continue blaming the victims without ever having to see what kind of suffering it is inflicting on them.

In such isolation and with a sense of being society's garbage dump, children in the projects are easily pushed into crime. When I stayed with Nell Hall on page 198, I found that she often didn't go to the welfare office or shopping for fear of having to walk through her own project. The children and America are the losers, for while only 5% of children in Europe's welfare states grow up poor, 21% of American children are now shaped so violently by poverty that they risk being useless in the high-tech world of the future. No



society trying to compete in the cut-throat globalization race can afford to lose so much of its human potential on the floor. Precisely these arguments were the reason why many American universities forced their freshman students to see American Pictures and to work with racism.





For those who attempt to escape the vicious circle of dependence and underclass pathology, the alternatives do not look bright. To survive, they are easily forced into a criminal existence like my friend Alphonso in Baltimore, whom I met when he and his street gang tried to rob me. Alphonso's wife had a job in a coffee shop, which gave the family approx. 1/3 of a Danish minimum wage. There is in America an entire underworld of millions of service workers, who are exploited mercilessly since Congress will not legislate decent minimum wages for them. The U.S.A. thus has more menial service jobs than any other developed country.

Alphonso and his wife loved each other and their six children dearly, and it hurt him immensely that he was unable to find a job to support his family. It was my first year in America and I remember how shocked I was to learn that there was no aid to get in such a situation. I came from a country where young people are helped when they are out of school until they find work so as not to force them into crime. I was therefore very moved that in order to survive Alphonso simply had to rob in the street. I went with him to steal shoes for the children and he introduced me to Baltimore's criminal underworld. In this way he could maintain a nice home and could even rent a car a couple of times a year to drive his children on a picnic. However, when I returned a year later his children looked very sad, but they wouldn't tell me why. I found out that Alphonso was in prison and sentenced to more than six years' confinement. When I arrived at the penitentiary, I discovered that his oldest son also was in



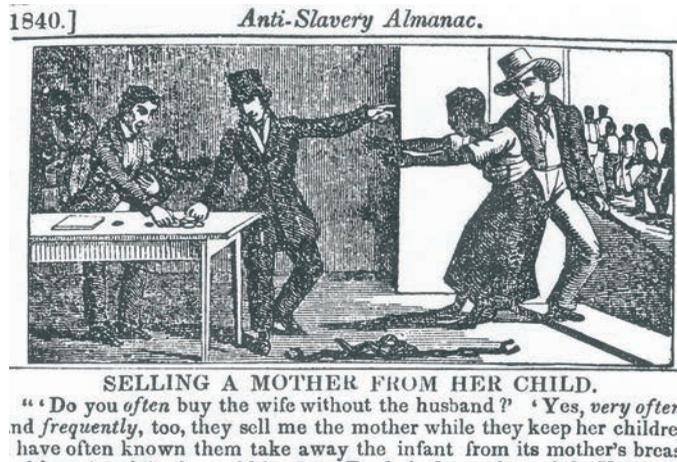
prison with him. When the family had suddenly lost the income of the father, the son had attempted a bank robbery to help out the family. Here is Alphonso's wife seen on a visit to the prison. For the next six years she was not able to touch her husband and could only hear him through noisy monitored telephones. Thousands of black marriages have been dissolved this way. Thus, modern society has institutionalized the legacy from chattel slavery of destroying the black family. In the 1980s Alphonso made a living as a street vendor selling this book with his son, Nathaniel, pictured - although Nathaniel was murdered before he got settled with me. Alphonso was also with American Pictures around schools to entertain my sheltered upper-class students about his life in a ghetto they have never known.



These continuous economic attacks on the black family were constantly explained to me by liberal whites. The black family is unstable and pathological, according to their theory, because the black man was emasculated and robbed of his manhood “back in slavery” while the black woman became tough and domineering in order to survive. Black mothers bring up their children to repeat this pattern, resulting in a population unfit for success. When the effects of our continued oppression seem to “confirm” this pattern, the oppressed easily begin to believe for themselves the myths we hatch to justify our power structure. Our veiled attempts to justify ourselves by denying the man of the ghetto, making him look stupid, inadequate, and weak, are therefore easily internalized by our outcasts. Internalized racism causes lack of self-appreciation making the underclass male invalidate almost everything he does, give up job training programs and education, and in frustration and defense finally reject the identity as breadwinner - thus further fueling our racist stereotype. The deepening, violent chasm we create today between men and women in the ghetto covers up for a new master slave system in which we simply do not need the slave anymore. We no longer need blacks in America - or

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





While master-slave society has done its utmost to nurture a threatening sexual image of the black man, we have spared no effort in continuing the devaluation of the black woman started in chattel slavery. Probably no other nation has let a whole race of women go through centuries of systematic and often daily rape - and been so successful afterwards in putting the entire blame on the victim herself. Everything was done to dehumanize and “break” the black woman by selling and flogging her naked in a puritan society. To abuse her to that degree (with the white woman then attacking her for “seducing her husband”) it is necessary to develop an enormous disdain for her to avoid feeling guilty. Along with negative myths about her morally loose character and “animal” sexuality (which is always created around rape victims), this systematic devaluation of the black woman has left deep scars today.

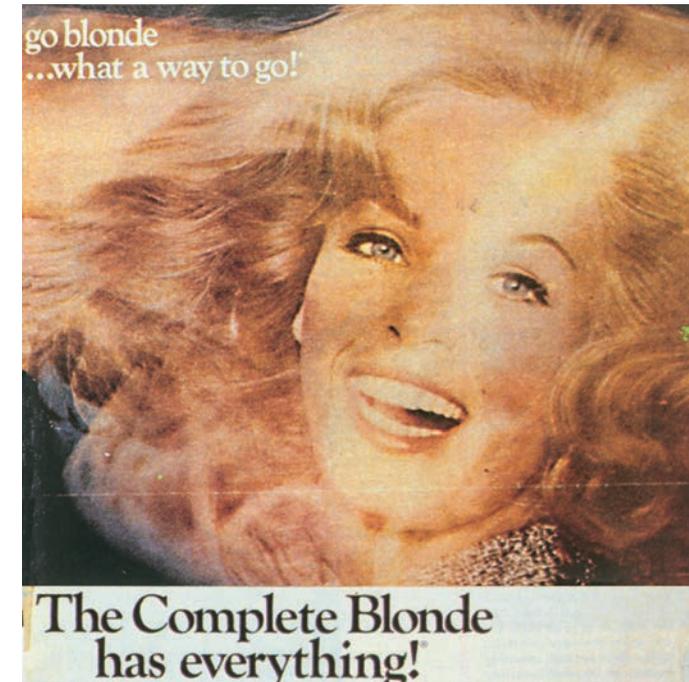
When black women in Harvard Law School objected to my nude photos, we agreed that they should hold a meeting to decide if I should use these photos in an American context. Unlike whites they did not think that I had been sexually exploiting the poor black women who despite strong peer



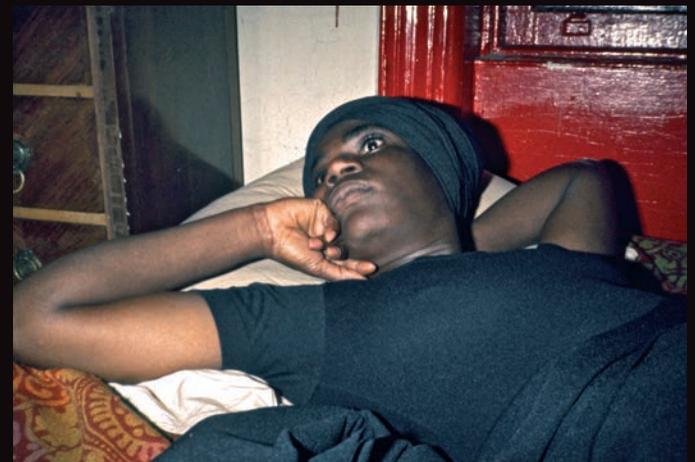
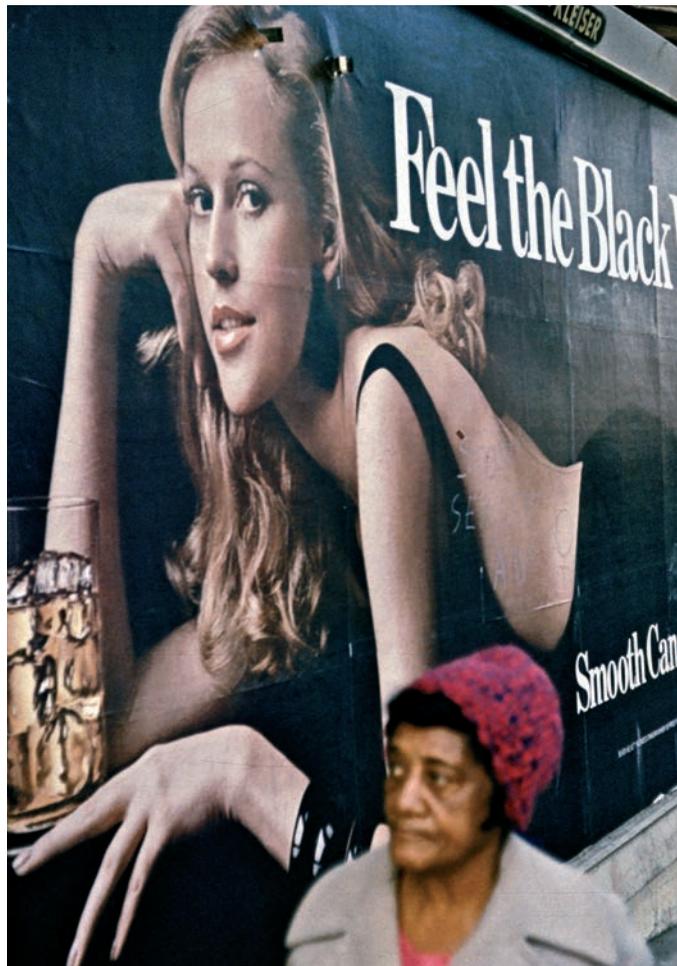
pressure had the courage to shelter me as a vagabond. For they knew very well that the black American woman contrary to what I later found in Africa has developed enormous defense mechanisms against the white man in response to centuries of abuse. If I didn't make this clear for white viewers, I should not use the pictures. For their uneasiness - these later successful Harvard lawyers and politicians said - was exactly a result of having themselves to such a degree internalized white beauty ideals that they associate everything negative and ugly with black nakedness - or like white racists - reduce them to sexual images.

The black woman was always told to deny those sides in herself considered feminine by a sexist society. Always she had to slave in the house for the white woman, who for her part, was cultivated as something sublime. Her main task was to raise the white children. There was no time for her own children, which she had to humiliate and treat in a harsh way to enable them to survive a racist society. In guilt over selling children away from mothers and forcing enormous devotion out of self-effacing nannies to our white children, we try to justify the cruelty by stereotyping the black woman as excessively strong and able to endure an unusual amount of ordeal and pain altogether to the point of being inhuman, - an image which is enhanced by watching the victim raise her own children with harshness. I do not find the upbringing harsher than among ghettoized people in other countries, e.g. Denmark.

Centuries of cult of so-called pure, white womanhood continues in white advertising's propaganda, which has a tremendous impact on both the colored and the religiously covered woman. Always she has been told that white skin and loose, straight hair is the right thing to have. To survive our destructive impact, and in some cases to “pass” as a white, the black woman began making herself white with skin-lightening creme and to straighten her frizzy hair in a complicated and painful process. Her children, who go through similar torture, must reason, that if they have to endure so much pain to become acceptable, they really must have been ugly before this process started. Again, they internalize our deeper racist thinking when they blame and endlessly torment each other for having too dark a skin color.



In addition to the negative effect on the black woman's self-image of all colored women, these white beauty ideals may have had a devastating impact on the family. The quarrels I so often hear in underclass homes let me feel that the black man's view of women has been deeply influenced by the social ideal. What depresses me most is not that over 70% of black families now have only one parent present, but what I see in the still the nuclear families still intact. Nothing is more hurtful than hearing our deeper white thinking "You ain't shit, nigger" or "ugly bitch" echo in constant quarrels between these unhappy and powerless partners, and how the children internalize them as "I am worse than shit!" The frightening aspect of ghetto men constantly "hitting on" "their" devalued women, can be seen in 1/3 of all wife murders in the US being committed by blacks, who make up only 12% of the population. Violence against women is appallingly high all over the world. That it is only 35% higher for black than for white women in the US sadly might result from the black man almost no longer being present in the home. In Denmark, violence against immigrant women is growing explosively and now accounts for 42% of the women in the shelters. Here too we shift responsibility away from ourselves attributing it to the misogynic cultures they came from, rather than our marginalization of them. We forget that with our distancing and non-inclusion of them in our social lives, we behave like American whites towards blacks and with the same result - that our victims close in on themselves and are artificially kept in cultures, they hoped to escape. The violence we commit against the young people by not making them feel at home in either culture, we eventually get back.





## Luke 7, 36-50

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

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

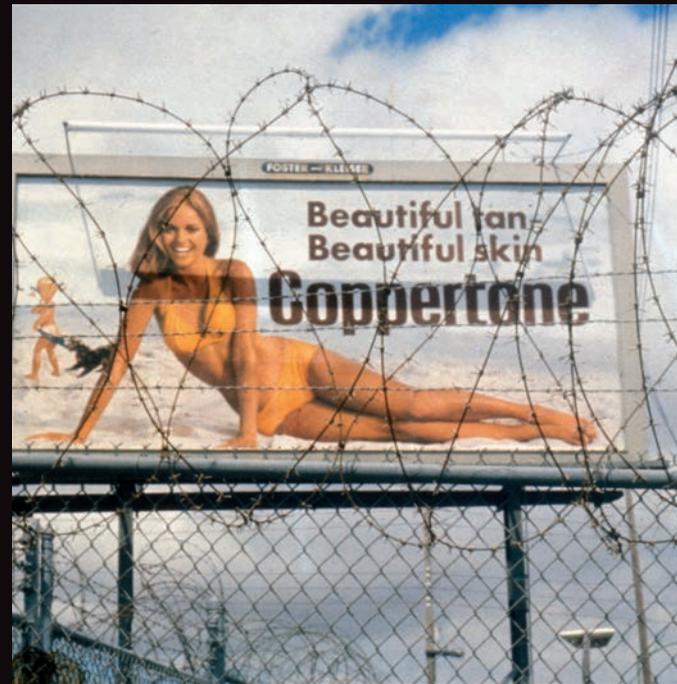
Often the brutality of such women shocked me. I saw them time and again do the most revolting things to both men and women. For that very reason it was such an overwhelming experience when a relationship could arise between us, and I had an opportunity to get a glimpse of the warm humanity under the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

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

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

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

*Letter to a friend*



So we cripple the underclass, exclude it, stereotype it, degrade it - all to avoid the hurt of confronting our own Cain-creation and the rips it causes in the delicate fabric of our middleclass power and security. Even though the barriers of discrimination we erect in our fear against the threat of our outcasts can only be maintained because our pariah lack the power to threaten anyone at all, except each other, the ghetto still makes us uncomfortable and anxious.

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

Dare we look him in the eye while he explains about what he lost in this struggle for our freedom - the freedom he never experienced - the freedom to make other people of color overseas as dependent as himself - the freedom to give us the intoxication of power and self-satisfaction at our foreign aid or federal poverty programs - the paternalistic freedom he will suffer from the rest of his life - the freedom with which we daily bombard all poor people on Earth without letting them taste its goods - the freedom to forget our fellow man while tyrannizing him:



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





When I traveled about in Florida's slave camps, I discovered a great difference in the degree to which this psychological terror has oppressed the mind in different countries. One of the camps contained only blacks from Jamaica who astonished me by keeping their camps neat, for instance, while the Americans would throw trash all over in their camps.

Liberal scholars explain these differences in character by going back to chattel slavery. Where the blacks in Latin America and the West Indies today are more integrated in society, it is because the Latin form of slavery was feudalistic and, in its nature, open. The church protected the slave families from being divided and there was possibility of upward mobility and freedom. In America, on the other hand, slavery was capitalistic; even the church defined the slave as a sales item rather than a human being, and there was no possibility of psychological escape. The capitalist type of slavery was a closed system, while the feudal kind was an open system and therefore not as destructive to the mind. Slavery in the U.S. has therefore been compared with German concentration camps, where it was possible to study the effect of a totally closed system on human beings. Diaries written in concentration camps by intellectuals show how, in a short time, they were degraded to sub-human status and began to develop a psyche much like the average slave in the States - including an almost loving attitude toward the camp guards (in any case not direct hatred) which led to total resignation and a budding sense of irresponsibility and infantilism in many prisoners.

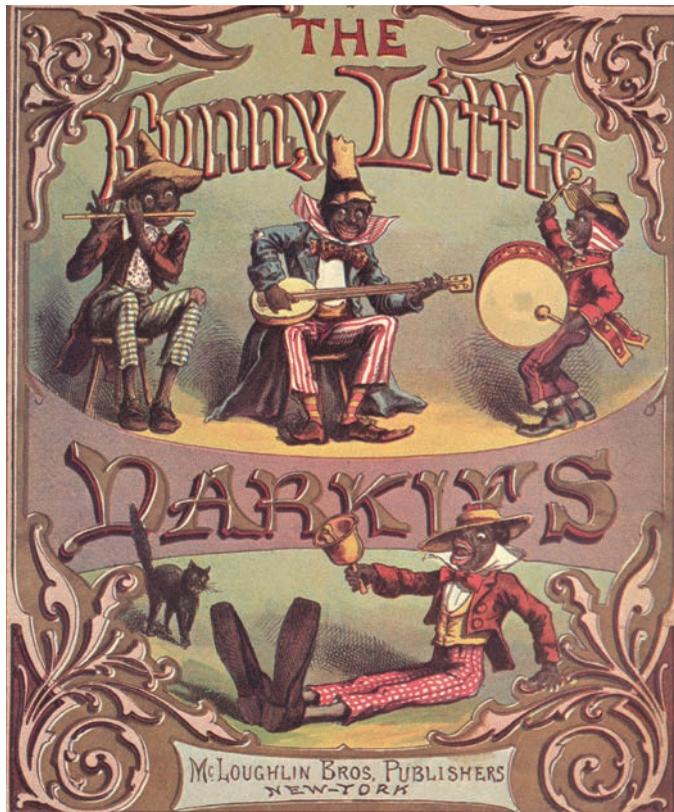
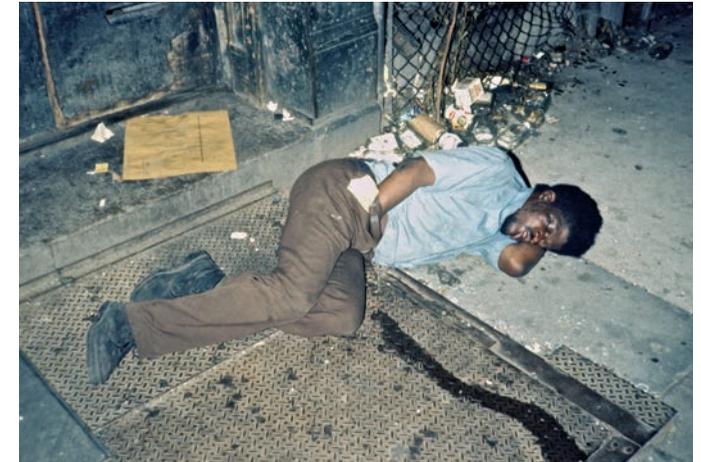
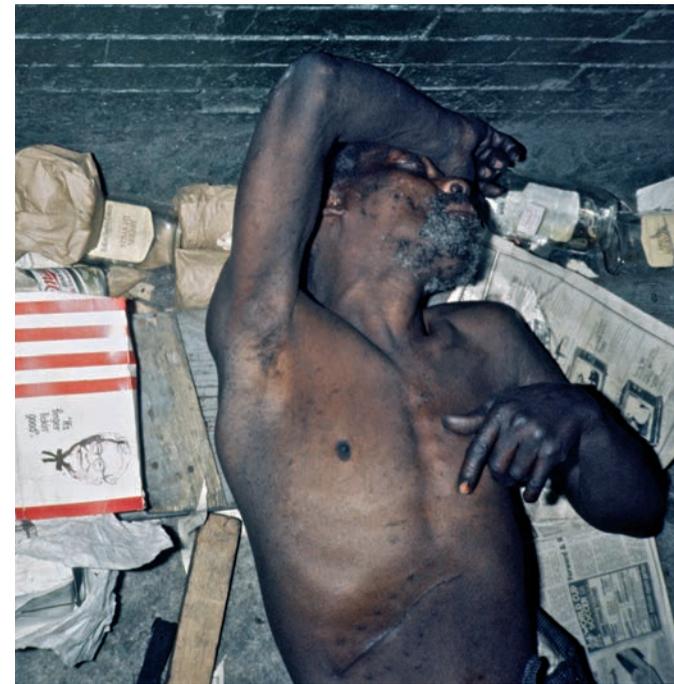
No matter how tempting such theories are for liberals in trying to explain the separate character of the American

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



The crippling of underclass children's minds always astonished me until I became aware of the closed ghetto system. Most small black children I meet are filled with zest for life. But later they seem to be exposed to a process of strangulation. They easily become depressed and withdraw into a shell as if to protect themselves from our all-pervading oppressive thinking about them. Very early they acquire our negative expectations of them, and from around fourth grade they begin to lose faith in themselves, their own abilities and future and become so aware of their closed system that they lose motivation and fall behind the whites in the school - exactly as we see it with our unloved brown children in Denmark. But the strongest indication of our oppression is without doubt the self-hatred. That self-hatred which makes ghetto children tear the hair out of their black dolls, or which makes them draw themselves in the corner of the paper, while white kids usually place themselves in the middle. That self-hatred which makes people react violently against their surroundings by throwing trash everywhere or engage in "backstabbing" (stab from behind) both verbally and literally. All people suffer from a little self-loathing, but the self-disdain in the American underclass is so severe in its depth that it helps confer upon it one of the world's highest rates of crime and family disintegration as well as perhaps the smallest degree of mutual trust. When we see how aggression as always in oppression more often is turned against fellow victims rather than against the oppressor ....when we experience the uncontrollable anger in American blacks, we begin to understand the effect of the closed system we are daily confining them to the ghetto ... or slavery here and now!

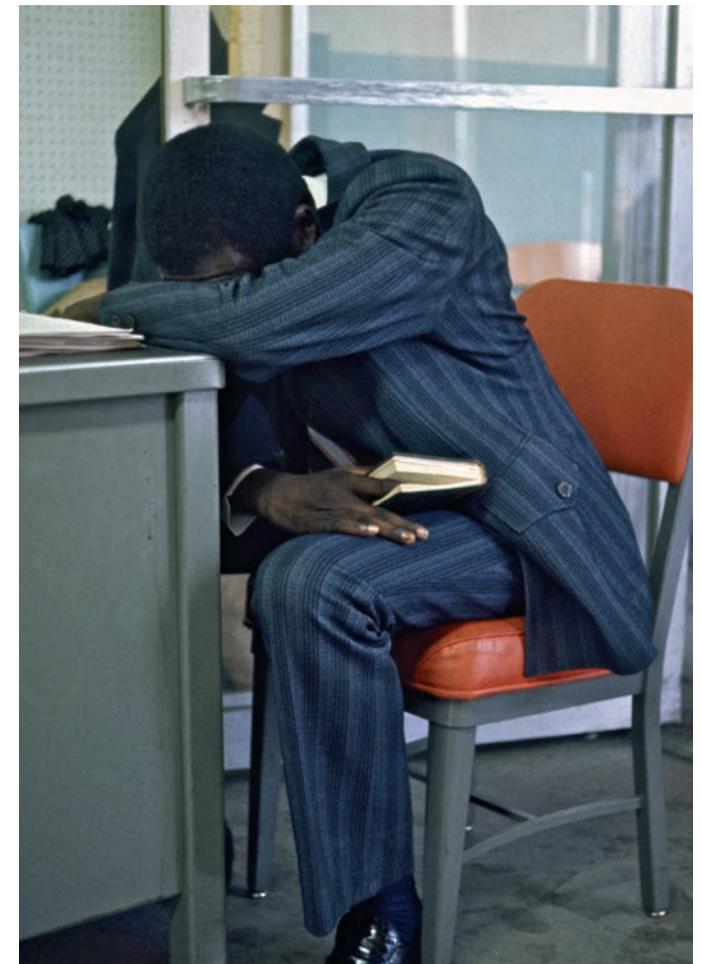




*Brother, what a price I paid!  
You stole my history,  
destroyed my culture,  
Cut off my tongue so I can't communicate.  
Then you humiliate, then you separate,  
hide my whole way of life  
so myself I should hate!*

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

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



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

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

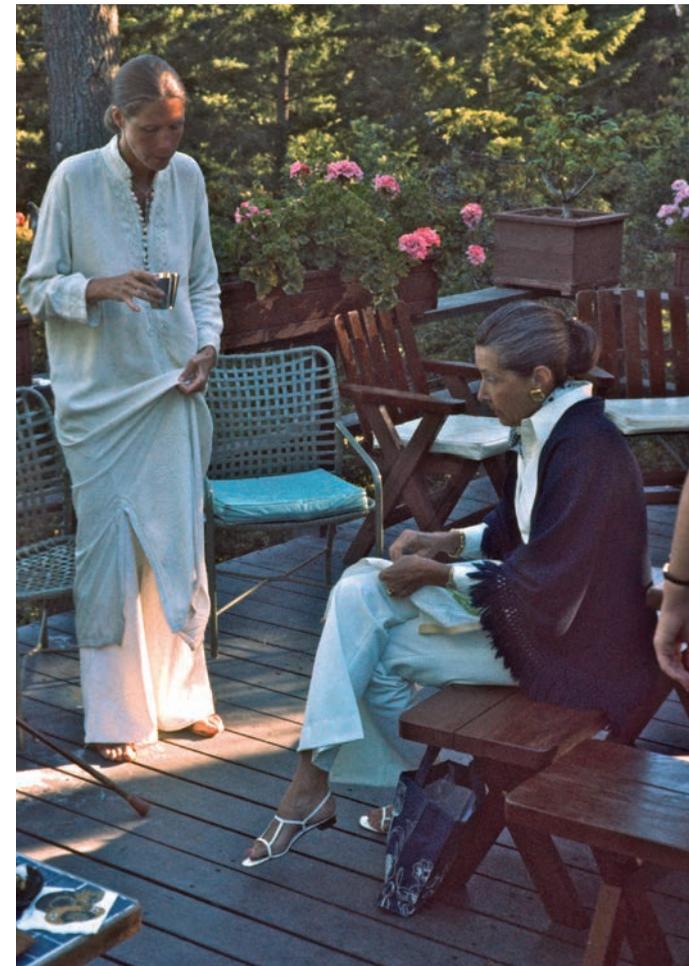
During my journey in the world's most mobile country with its seemingly unlimited opportunities, the existence of a closed system was a recurrent paradox for me. I could not accept the explanations about blacks' inherent inferiority which all white Americans carry in their innermost hearts. "Our ancestors came over dirt poor and made it. Why can't they?" A veil was however lifted for me when I came close to two such "poor" immigrants: Lidy Manselles from Haiti and Mrs. Pabst from Russia. It is not at all a coincidence that Lidy became my first black girlfriend. At first, American-born black women seemed to me like untouchables locked up behind an invisible barrier. Lidy clearly belonged to another, freer world. Never did that strike me so much as one day when we stood talking to an alcoholic on a doorstep in Harlem when all of a sudden Lidy burst out with contempt and condescension: "Why don't you get a job?" - an insensitivity which immediately destroyed the conversation. Later she even said something like "I hate them. I hate these lazy animals." I immediately felt that this was a clash far deeper than between two nationalities: it was the disdain of a free culture towards a deeply immured slave culture. For Lidy - although jet black and catholic - represented better than anyone the "white protestant work ethic." And she was no exception among those blacks who have arrived without chains. Through Lidy I gained access to the tightly knit West Indian community in Brooklyn. Like earlier immigrants, they work fanatically hard, save money, take pride in education and owning their own home, and universally speak of the importance of a strong family. With their sacrifice and fierce determination they are staunchly opposed to welfare in total contrast to the surrounding black communities where 40% are on welfare. Their neighborhoods are as clean and racist toward native blacks as Italian and Irish neighborhoods. In less than one generation - faster than most white immigrants - their income has reached a staggering 94% of the average American family income even including the many poor still arriving. Since 1% of the American population own or control more than 40% of the wealth, we may find that the West Indian immigrants are doing better than the majority of whites, even though they come from much poorer and more illiterate countries than most Europeans came from. In contrast, native blacks make only 56% of white income. Under Kennedy and Johnson, they were allowed a rate of progress which perhaps in 500 years would have given them equality, but with the conservative policies of Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, they are



today rapidly slipping backwards. Until the 1960's one third of all black professionals were in fact immigrants. In many elite universities, their descendants represent up to 85% of black students, although they make up only 6% of blacks in the United States. So why is it so hard for America's own blacks to get into Harvard, Yale, etc.? In any case, it is strong evidence of the impact of our American racism that these low-income islands with far fewer blacks than the United States can produce such a wealth of talent. Their historical slavery was basically similar to the American and they descended from the same tribes in Africa. So, what makes the black immigrants twice as successful as native blacks? Why do travelers to post-slavery countries usually conclude that West Indian and Latin American blacks seem "proud and fiercely independent" in comparison with the "crushed," "broken," and "dependent" blacks in the American underclass? Why is fear and hatred still the basic ingredient of the relationship between blacks and whites in America while lynchings, cross burnings and race riots as well as defense organizations such as the NAACP and the Panthers are totally unknown in Brazil? My explanation is that the whites disappeared from the West Indies after



slavery, which is why the blacks were given the freedom with black role models all around to rebuild the self-confidence that was shattered by slavery. But in the US, blacks continue to live in a white majority society, where with our negative thinking we are in power to define them and continue to crush their self-esteem. Therefore, black American parents cannot convincingly, like the West Indians and Jews, encourage their children with: "Yes, my child, it is a racist society, but you can still make it by working twice as hard as others!" Only people who believe in themselves can do that. The initiative and ingenuity of black immigrants is not crushed by our psychologically destructive double-edged sword of liberal condescending generosity and reactionary racist cruelty - which defines effective slavery. They are too proud to accept the first and have not been trained for a century to be crushed by the second. Their psychology is not shaped by American racism, and therefore encourages them to make resistance in the same way the Jews of Europe often did well, despite anti-Semitism. Mrs. Pabst had arrived just like Lidy - broke, but not broken - with a background which sent her directly to the



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



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





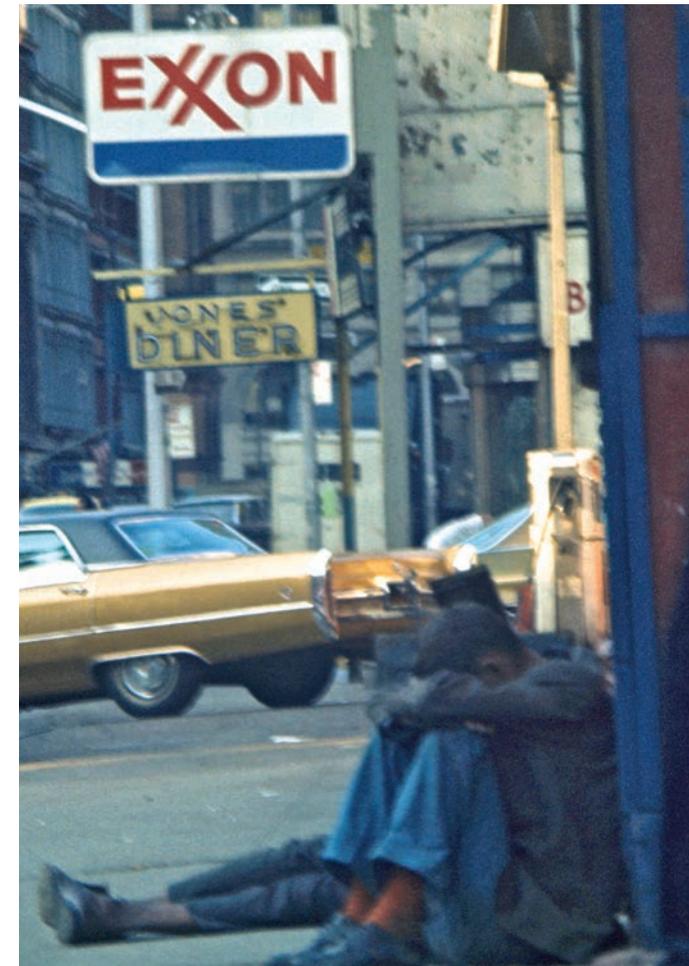


It is by no means only the underclass and the unemployed who are driven into alcoholism. Time and again I experienced alcoholism and pill abuse in the same ghastly proportions in the upper class. I began to realize that wherever the master-slave relationship is found neither master nor slave is really happy. Neither role permits either to become fully human and therefore serves to cripple and paralyze their minds and behavior. Even when I got to stay with the Rockefellers, one of the most affluent families in the world, I saw this pattern. In the United States, they are commonly looked up to, and I had seen tear-jerking cover stories in Life about the happy marriage between Jay Rockefeller and Senator Percy's daughter, Sharon. But overseas the Rockefellers and their EXXON oil empire have a reputation for being one of the most exploitative and murderous families in the world, killing 51 strikers in Colorado including women and children in 1914, or overthrowing governments with CIA help, most notoriously the installation of the murdering, torturing Shah of Iran to avoid nationalization of their oil wells, which led to the Islamic counter-revolution. I was therefore quite surprised to find a big gap between their deeds and the warm,

compassionate, and hospitable nature of Jay Rockefeller. The bottles immediately came out and I sat in the kitchen getting drunk with him. We got a call from his uncle, Nelson, who was just being installed as Vice President, spending \$35,000 on a seven-foot mink-covered bed for his new suite in Washington. Nevertheless, this family has also been exposed to the system's (or the underclass's) counter violence. Sharon's twin sister had been killed a few years before in a brutal axe murder. But that upper-class violence against the underclass is of far more alarming proportions, I was reminded the next morning after the hangover, when Rockefeller called me up to his office. He had promised to look at the grant application I always carried in the hope that people would give me a little money for film. But I had completely forgotten a sentence in the application about "the Rockefeller clan's brutal slaughter of 41 prisoners in Attica." Needless to say I got neither "a dime for the bank nor a penny to spend." But when I wandered out the highway that morning I carried a new insight with me: the underclass syndrome of murder and alcoholism is but a mirror of the ruling class. Two days later I stayed with this



woman in a shack smack up against an EXXON refinery. I don't know whether her son coughed all the time from her lack of money for heating oil or from the constant fumes from the plant. But I do know that EXXON through such pollution made \$4 billion in profit and gave only 28 million to tax-deductible "charities." And since spend billions in



climate change denial destroying the future life for millions of the world's poor. (Read in the afterword about how Rockefeller's daughter, Valerie, pictured here, and four other Rockefeller children since reacted to my show and my description of the family here).

## John 8: 1-11

In Columbia, Maryland, I got to live with a white woman who had in every single respect copied a playboy millionaire's life-style. She drove me around in her Jaguar, had mink furs in her wardrobe and a big fur-covered bed that I once fell out of, as it was completely round in the best Hollywood style. She reminded me of a black ghetto superfly-Cadillac type, with a wild imagined sex drive which was so evidently only an expression of something she had to live up to that it made me, at least, completely impotent. Having been in America only four months, I was still very prudish. One of the things Europeans are alienated by in America is the perpetual talk about money, power, and sex, three words used comparatively little in language and mentality in Denmark. Especially sex seems to preoccupy Americans, and their language is studded with words like "fuck."

One evening when I went for a walk with the woman along the lake, three cars suddenly pulled up. In the first sat some drunken people. From the next, two men with guns jumped out. I got so scared that I tried to slink away, but my friend recognized her neighbor in the first car, the composer Burt Bacharach. He was so drunk he couldn't find his way home, so we were asked to show the way and got in the car. The only one of them who was sober enough to talk began asking me questions. He seemed very young, and as I was a bit gloomy that night because of my despairing relationship with this woman, I didn't feel like answering him. Then he explained that he was Senator Tunney from California, the woman next to him was Ethel Kennedy, and the man with a glass of whisky in his hand was Ted Kennedy. That changed my mood and my friend suddenly became all enthusiasm and whispered in my ear something about how fantastic the Kennedys were and that we should stay with them. Burt Bacharach had fallen asleep, so we kept circling around the lake with the Secret Service right behind us in the worst drunk-driving spree I had been on in a long time. Ted had his shirt open and was in a sad state. Ethel looked even more miserable, and I could find no resemblance to news pictures I had seen of her. Since I'm not writing for the National Enquirer I leave out some details, but when we finally arrived at Burt Bacharach's house we stayed onto drink with them.

Kennedy had just introduced his national Health Insurance Plan, which would bring health care up to the level of Scandinavia. He had made shocking speeches in Congress

about how the U.S.A. "trails 17 other nations in life expectancy, 15 other nations in death rates for middle-aged males, 12 others for infant mortality. If infant mortality was as low in America as it is in Sweden, 50,000 fewer American babies would have died last year." Even Europe's poorest country, Albania, had more hospital beds per capita, and the Washington Post had announced that more than two million unnecessary operations were done entirely for profit in the U.S.A., killing as many as 24,000 annually. So I knew I was sitting with a pioneer (or even a missionary) who could save thousands of American lives if he could get his law passed. I asked him what the opposition's arguments could possibly be. He answered: "... hic... hic" Then I asked what the position of American doctors was. He answered in a bit more detail: "... mumble... hic... hic..." Then I was satisfied, With such feeble opposition, it seemed the bill would be passed. The next day, after the hangover had passed, my friend, who had flirted unsuccessfully with Ted, suddenly surprised me by muttering something very negative about him with a reference to Chappaquiddick.

The Kennedy incident has since brought me into more homes than anything else. When I am interested in staying with someone I am hitching with, I usually tell them about this and similar experiences. And the reaction is almost always the same: "Oh, so you know Kennedy? Don't you feel like coming home to stay with us to night?" Everybody wants to get closer to the Kennedys. For the Kennedys are the personification of the American trinity of money, power, and sex. Having "worked their way up" to enormous wealth, they have in addition reached the pinnacle of political power and - handsome and young - have used it to date women like Marilyn Monroe. They have reached the stars. But they have made one mistake. They have betrayed the American creed of success by - within the very limited American framework - working for the poor and the blacks. You don't get hung on the wall of every black home without having betrayed master-slave society at least to some extent. Thus, it becomes more imperative to vote against a man, not for his drinking, which is fairly accepted, but for the accidental death it caused, than to vote for a brilliant politician whose bills could save thousands of lives. Or even more sickening: to vote for a "sober, God-fearing" president responsible for killing and maiming millions of Vietnamese.



At the same time, all Americans are affected by the Kennedy mystique, so this experience helps me among both his enemies and his warmest supporters. Never have I had this demonstrated so clearly as in the last ten days by telling the same story in two widely different places. Two weeks ago I got to live with a banker in Alabama who invited me to be guest speaker at the local Lions Club, which he chaired. He wanted to shock his friends by con-fronting about 50 hard-core Wallace supporters with a long-haired "hippie." I had no idea what to say. I felt it was my duty to give my opinion as diplomatically as possible on their race policy, but as soon as I mentioned the word "black" the banker jumped up, saying that they didn't want to hear about that. Then I tried to talk about the Vietnam War by mentioning the German occupation of Denmark and the parallels to Vietnam, but they didn't want to hear that either. People sat with stiff faces and tight lips and radiated a hostility and hatred toward me which I had never felt with such force before. Then I suddenly got the idea to tell them my Kennedy experience — and the night was saved. People gave me thunderous applause and old ladies came up to me, warmly grabbed my arm, and said, "We knew Kennedy was really like that. That's what we've always said down here." And others added, "Well, now you must see why Wallace is the best man." Four different people came over and said that after my stay with the banker I was to be sure to come and stay with them. From that day the town opened up to me. It was as if a white tornado had cleansed it of the reserve and distrust I always meet in small-town Alabama. I can't help liking these people in the South. They remind me so much of the people in my village in Denmark. It is exactly the same reserve, the same skepticism and conservatism, the same sluggishness, that suddenly, when you push the right button, can change into an incredible human warmth.

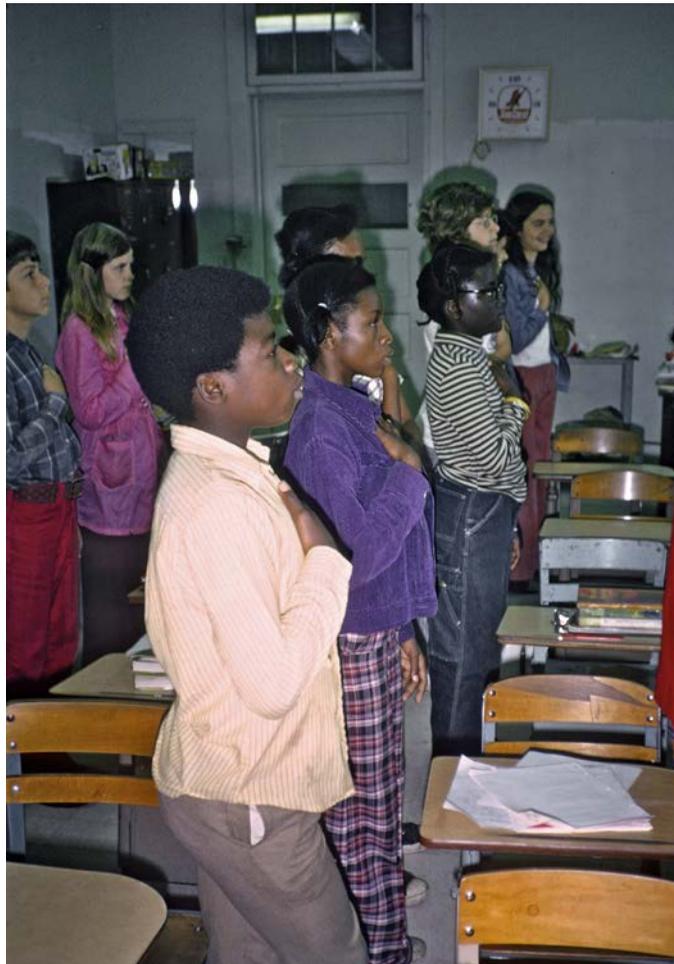
A couple of days after that evening, I hitch-hiked straight to Boston. It takes only 24 hours and I make these contrast-journeys all the time in order to see things clearly.



It is a real shock each time you leave the sedate, sober-minded South and come up here to wallow in cocktail parties at Cambridge with intellectuals from all over the world, famous neurologists and economists and Harvard professors and so on. They spend hours discussing the inner essence of nothingness — or so it seems when you've just arrived from the South. We often start foolish discussions where I passionately defend the South because I really love it despite its human oppression. But then yesterday something happened which took me by surprise. I was standing in a bar in Cambridge telling a half-drunk guy about my travel experiences. Suddenly he picked up his ears when I got to the Kennedy story. He listened carefully and asked one detailed question after another, as if to find out whether it was the real Kennedy. Then he took my hand and said, "That was really fantastic to hear. I'm Ted Kennedy's cousin. My name is John Fitzgerald and I live in Dedham. From now on, you're a welcome guest in our family. Do you want to come home and stay with us tonight?" He then told me that he had just received his annual check from Rose Kennedy, the clan's leader, so therefore I should just order whatever I wanted from the bar, for now we were going out to paint the town red together. I've just barely gotten over the hangover. It all seems so unbelievable to me, since it is only one week and three days ago that I told exactly the same story in Alabama — probably without changing a word — and was just as warmly received.

The only one in America my Kennedy experience apparently didn't make an impression on was Ted Kennedy. When I saw him at a meeting in New York this fall I went right past the bodyguards and said something like "Hey, you remember me from that night...?" But Ted just stared at me like he didn't know what I was talking about.

*Letter to American friend*



Kennedy supported the integration of black and white school children, which was one of the most significant results of the civil rights struggle. That he like many other better-off liberals did not allow his own children to integrate, helped to sabotage the intent of integration and created resentment among poor whites, who could not afford private schools. Seeing the conditions of American schools was perhaps the most shocking aspect of my journey. Never had I heard such a litter of brainwashing phrases, like “Men treasure freedom above all else,” combined with an almost total omission of black history. The totalitarian “pledging allegiance” to “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” stood in glaring contrast to the state of slavery being hammered into black children in these dilapidated plywood-windowed “ghetto schools.” Everywhere I saw the violent struggles in the cities as desperate blacks tried to break out of their forced segregation by sending their children by bus to schools in white neighborhoods, hoping to give them an equal education. When soldiers have to escort children on every bus and furious stone-throwing whites be kept behind barricades to protect the black children, we teach them on their first day out in the white world that Ku Klux Klan is at the heart of every white .... as I erroneously wrote back then. Since then, in my work with the KKK, I learned that the children of the KKK are often the only whites in all black schools, as they are too poor to move away from black neighborhoods. Yet “black schools” is precisely what many Danish parents who as self-righteous young people in the 70’s loudly condemned the American racism when they saw my slideshow, today themselves flee from.





Black American ghetto school children recorded on tape, but today the conversation could just as well have been recorded among brown ghetto children in Europe:

- *We should be friends to white people. Like Mary, she's my friend and she's white.*
- *Wait until you grow up and she'll be out of this world!*
- *How do you know she'll be out of this world?*
- *She won't be out of the world, but out of this country.*
- *Out of this country or out of this ghetto?*
- *Out of this country, ghetto, or anything...*
- *She will still be my friend.*
- *She might turn against you. They might brainwash her.*
- *A white person is still a human being!*
- *But why... How come they treat a black person as if he an animal?*
- *We must have done something wrong!*

I could only conclude when listening to such conversations of 7 and 8 year old children that many of them see not only their ghetto, but even their country as a closed system – and worse – are blaming themselves for it. When asked: “Where are you from?” brown children born in Denmark will e.g. typically say “Turkey”. Like blacks they have internalized our yearlong divisive rhetoric with the message “You are unwanted and not part of our values.”

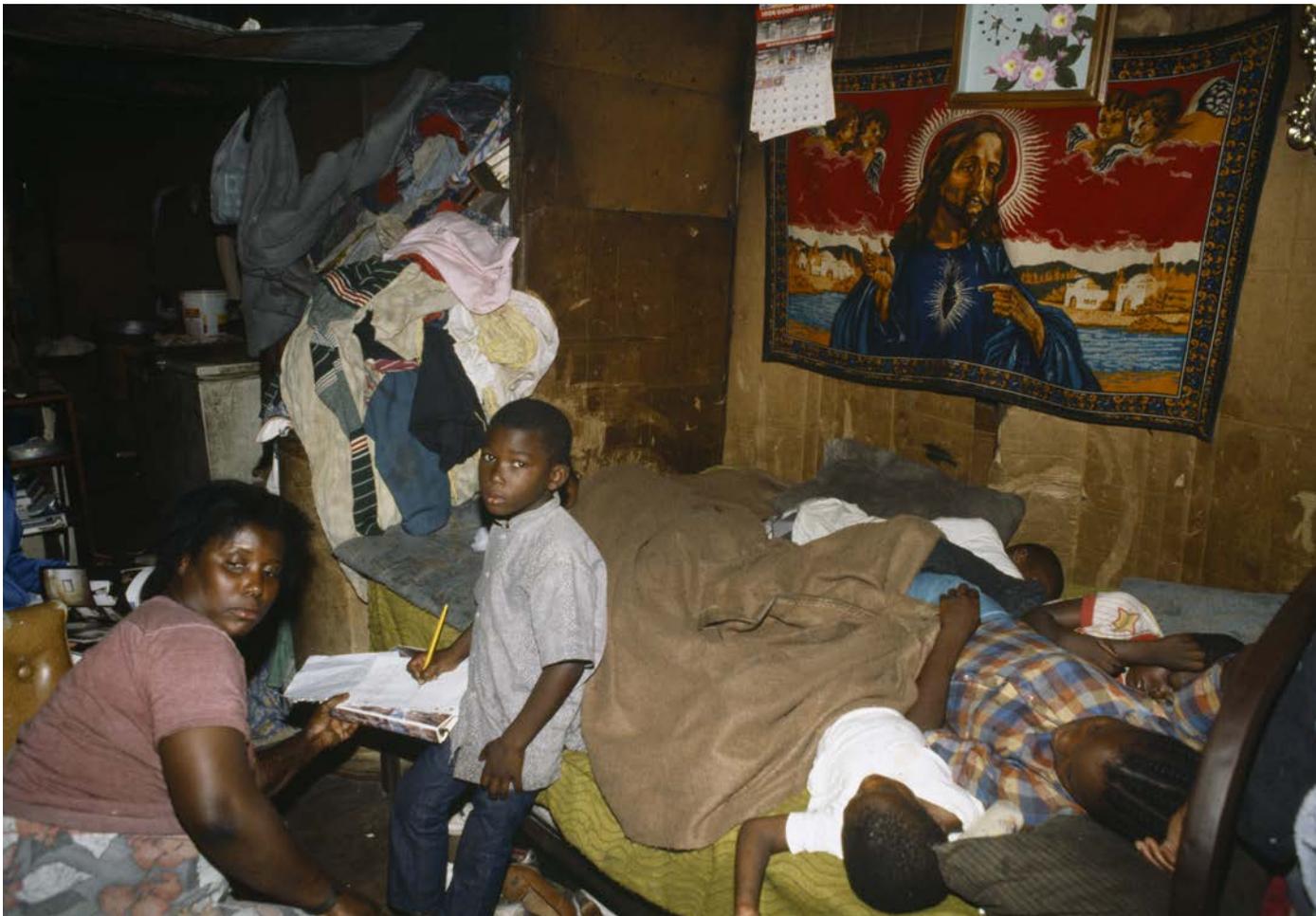
When you are constantly told that you do not belong, it is not surprising that many ghetto parents are opposed to integrated schooling despite their knowledge that ghetto schools do not work. Being educationally deprived in your own ghetto schools is to be preferred for the illusion of belonging to mainstream society with the deprivation you also must suffer here. For it is a sad fact that even in integrated schools, we kill the spirit and motivation of the children we have marginalized. Everywhere in the world, teachers are creating pupils to fit the image and the expectation they already have of them. If you take a random sample of a class and tell the teachers that these pupils are “potential academic spurters” then this group will after a year or two live up to the expectation as a result of the special treatment the teacher unconsciously gives it. In a master-slave society the one expected to become the slave (useless) will thus be given an inferior education, with black or white teachers or segregation or integration making no great difference.

This “innocent” discrimination has disastrous consequences those places where we divide the pupils up into “slow” and “bright” tracks, which are naturally a reflection of class society outside. How damaging such a discrimination is for a child’s self-concept was shown when a computer by mistake put all the so-called “slow” children into the “bright” lass and vice versa, with the result that a year later, when the mistake was discovered, they found that the slow pupils were behaving as though they were bright and the bright pupils were behaving as though they were stupid – the beginning of ghettoization. Constantly I met teachers and even principals who referred to their ghetto pupils as “animals.” To the point where I saw even young children thinking of themselves as rats.

That the image the teacher has of a child becomes the image this child adopts and later tries to live up to, I felt clearly in my own school. I spoke a rural dialect, which sounded “dumb” and “nonverbal” in the ears of teachers in the larger city, where they spoke “correct” Danish. As a result, they unconsciously avoided me and little by little I became introverted with occasional sudden explosions of “dumb” behavior; I lost all desire for learning and consistently scored 30 to 50% lower than the other pupils. Finally, I was forced to drop out, which eventually made me into a streetwise vagabond. Had I in addition to my ADHD been black or brown in a racist society where we subconsciously try to keep such “unteachables” out of sight till they became “behavioral untouchables,” I could easily have ended up not only “streetwise,” but also a “criminal,” “addict,” “prostitute,” “welfare loafer” or any of the roles disposable society finds it fitting to mold its undesirables into.

To avoid the accusation of being master-slave society’s whip-hand, teachers constantly find new ways of putting the blame on their pupils. The liberals say that the ghetto child’s “lack of motivation” and “impaired learning ability” is due to being “culturally deprived” by coming from homes with no more books than could be found in slave cabins ...or in a Turkish or Arab peasant home. Could it be that the teachers themselves have been trapped in a closed system and thereby have become such excellent oppressors with their “Our schools are not bad, but we get bad students” or “Poor little things” which hurt and crush the children?





If there is any doubt left it is worth remembering that highly motivated and politically and socially aware teachers in the schools of the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims did bring their ghetto kids up to national (white) standards in the same way as Muslim private schools in Denmark can. The phenomenon is also known in societies permeated by oppressive collective thinking towards other vulnerable groups. Women from girls' schools in America, where they are protected from society's sexism, e.g. do better in life than women from integrated schools. If some of us find it difficult facing our own racism, let's not forget how few men 50 years ago saw themselves as sexists. Yet the fact that we crushed the girls with our attitudes is revealed by the statistics from those years of how many women we "forced" away from higher education by giving them emotional blocks preventing them from becoming doctors, lawyers, etc.

When parallel in the US and Europe we see the 4th grade syndrome in our marginalized black and brown children, we must conclude: Either we must have help to process our racism, or they must be protected from us in non-integrated

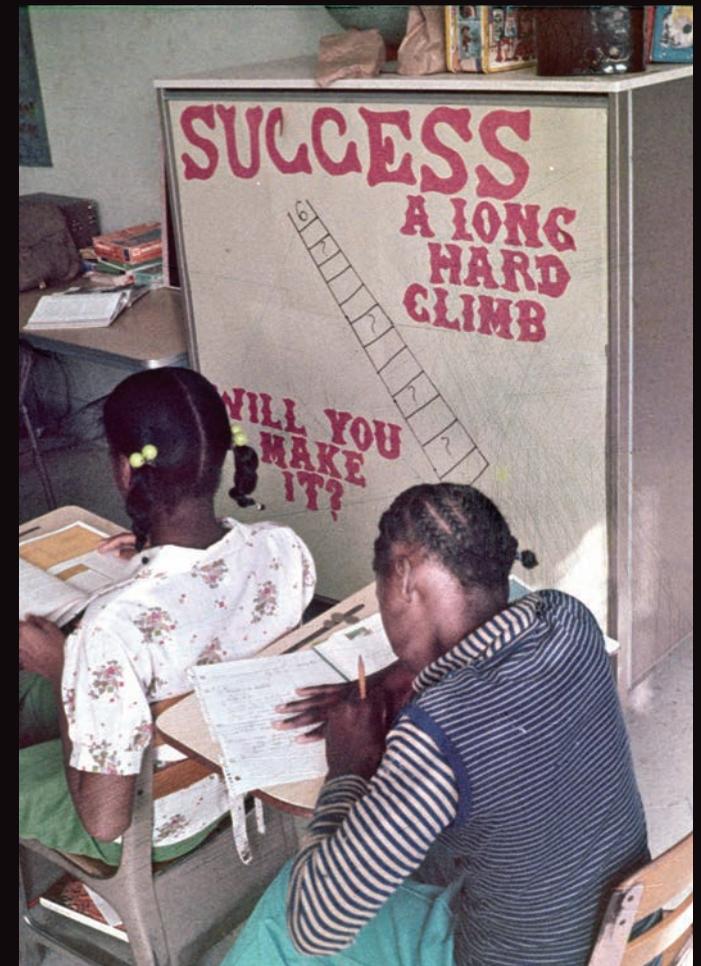
schools with highly committed and conscious teachers who as "saving angels" can restore the sense of self-worth and identity that we so early steal from them. Unfortunately, I find myself an active part of this racism when, for example after a long period of teaching in mostly white universities, I have internalized the students' thinking. Frequently I then catch myself in racist thinking about "blacks", just as I do in similar isolation in Denmark about those we there label "Muslims". With the racist's reproachful and distancing thinking with a penchant for finding fault with "the others", I thus help to shape our outcasts with a defeatist and hostile attitude - again in the blindness of my white privilege.

For blindness it is when we outwardly demand integration, but in our inner thinking "distance ourselves from", fear and consequently crush those we should integrate with. In Los Angeles I saw a beautiful case of racial solidarity when West Indian immigrant students formed an organization to aid and try to motivate native blacks not to drop out of high school and college. In other words - a historical repetition of the underground railroad where free blacks helped people out of slavery.

The extent to which we are all victims of this oppression is shown in this picture of a group of black teenagers. There are no whites among them. The girl was adopted as a baby by blacks in the ghetto and has therefore been brought up to be black: to behave black, to think black, and to dress like blacks. She has hardly anything in common with whites and cannot even speak our language. In white homes, I see the opposite. Black and white, Palestinian and Jew, native and immigrant, male and female, heterosexual and gay in all patterns of oppression both parties suffer severe injury when our parents early recreate in us the patterns they themselves received from their parents. Both parties are robbed of both ability and desire later to behave in a human way towards the other side. Deep down we give up and conclude that it is absurd ethnic alchemy to try to integrate what repels each other like oil and water. The frantic efforts of the liberals to shake these two elements so much together that they split into smaller particles for a short time is just a futile attempt to give oppression a human face - like voting for Obama while trapped in the massive apartheid in black and white hearts. So is there any hope at all? Yes, even the worst racists I often heard say, "I wish we could adopt all black children so they can become like us." Although they in typical racist fashion again look for the fault in "the others", it is not an expression of racial hatred. Just like when Europeans rejoice when "Muslims" convert to Christianity but forget that it is their different culture we react negatively to. Strongest I see this awkward hope in white students in American universities when they relate how, in liberal guilt, they try to reach out to black students. But all the time they are held back by reactionary guilt towards all the warnings of their parents in childhood, e.g. hearing the clicks of the car door locks when they drove too close to a black neighborhood. It is frightening to betray the love of our parents, whom they in the back of their minds feel are pulling the opposite way. So, when they out of love reach forward to blacks, they are out of love pulled backwards. They become clumsy and patronizing towards the blacks, who immediately react with anger and hostility as they have gone through a similar oppression. This re-stimulate the white fear - now the fear of being rejected. Thus, the oppressor and the oppressed constantly "create" each other since none of us are free. The cocktail of white guilt and fear create the anger and hostility of internalized racism among blacks, which in turn creates more white fear and guilt, etc. The worst racism today is thus not created by powerless hate, but in the name of love - to protect our



children from what we ourselves were taught to fear. When I take whites to black parties in the USA or brown parties in Denmark, I often see them burst into tears in guilt over suddenly experiencing "the others" as real human beings after having for long unconsciously demonized them. Our tears reveal that we are all victims of racism.





The more I learned about the crippling and self-perpetuating effect of being ostracized, the harder it was for me to condemn whites for our racism. Even for me, and African and Caribbean immigrants, who were not molded by our master-culture, it was not always possible to respond in a human way towards those who are trapped in a pariah culture. The clumsy behavior of whites towards blacks in the US, and since towards “Muslims” in Europe, became especially understandable when I compared it to my own difficulties in being fully human towards those locked up in the homosexual ghetto by my heterosexual society.

My attitude toward gays had been basically “liberal”. Although I had subconsciously forced them as effectively underground in my rural Danish childhood as they are in Saudi Arabia, I had not been shaped by overtly hateful attitudes towards them. Thus, I did not have to meet many self-hating gays in the closet on the American highways to realize that I felt it as a moral duty for me to become active in the world’s first open gay movement in San Francisco. There I soon learned from more “liberated” gays that liberals are true liberation’s most insidious enemy. Our deep sense of heterosexual superiority remains untouched by our concern for the “plight” of gay people. We appear to concede so much with our condescending “we must accept homosexuals” while the liberal “we” invariably excludes the very minority whose integration is being urged. We leave the oppressed to struggle not only against genuinely expressed bigotry and hatred, but also “sympathy” and “understanding” - “tolerance” extended to something regrettable rather than normal.

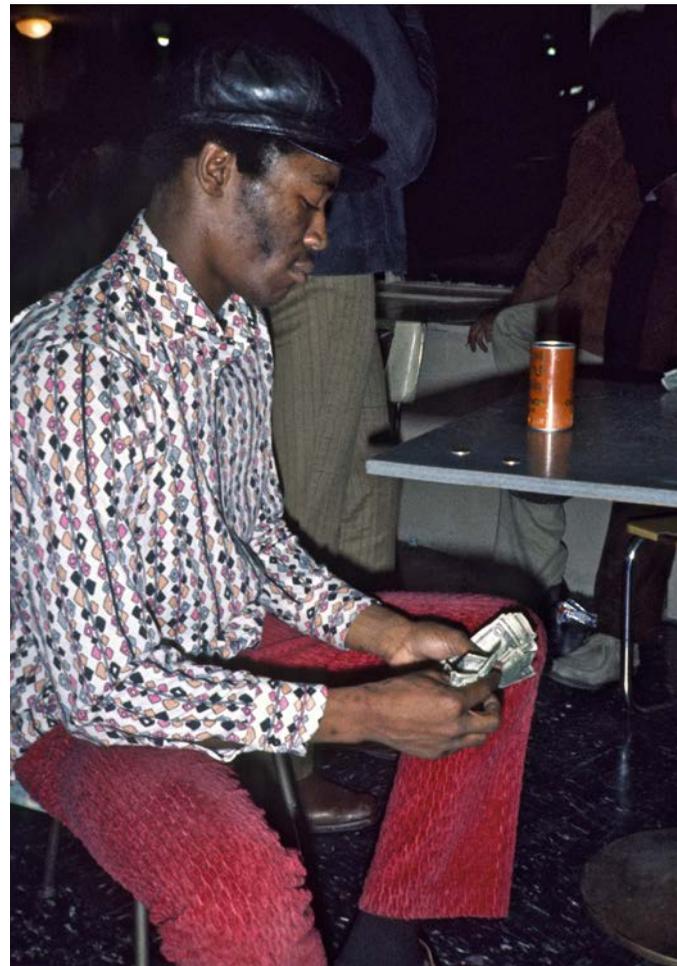
After such indoctrination “we” feel as insecure, uneasy, and threatened by “them” as whites feel threatened by the blacks / browns, and it becomes more convenient for us to keep them in ghettos. Some Americans saw gay ghettos like San Francisco and New Orleans as expressions of a tolerant and free society. As with the old Jewish ghettos in Europe, it is just the opposite. When we for centuries prevented gays from responding freely, kissing and holding hands in an open atmosphere without fear, made laws against them in most states, make them loathe homosexuality before reaching adulthood so that they adopt and internalize straight people’s definition of good and bad, when we forced gays and lesbians throughout their lives into painful, futile attempts to straighten their lives with the same crippling effect on their self-image as when blacks straightened their hair to “pass” or merely survive, - then we will eventually force them into similar segregated ghettos, complete with riots and subcultures.

At times I could hardly distinguish one ghetto from the other. Hitch-hiking in Baltimore’s black ghetto late one night to find a place to stay I was picked up by a beautiful black woman, which surprised me as black women never picked me up. She invited me to her luxurious home outside the city. She was one of the few Americans well-read in Danish literature, and with this common interest we got involved in a deep intellectual conversation after which she invited me to share her silk bed upstairs. Not until she started kissing me did her beard stubble tell me she was a drag queen. When I later told the story to American men they would usually burst out with nausea: “What did you do? Did you jump out the window?” Indeed, soon afterward two men, believing they had picked up a female prostitute, killed such a transsexual. For me Willie instead became a dear friend, introducing me to that special subculture of the LGBTQ ghetto which has conquered self-hatred and inferiority by living entirely by the closed system’s own rules, flaunting its contempt for the world outside. To meet these proud transgenders and queers was for me a happy surprise since they did not live the half-life of cringing servility I had met previously on the road. There was a genuine counterculture and is therefore oppressed like the black subcultures. Time and again I saw how police in San Francisco assaulted my drag friend Tania. Two drag queens were killed by police while I lived there.



Oppression also drives many transgenders into drugs and prostitution, thus mirroring the most obvious end result of black oppression. When a social system treats a minority with contempt and hostility, in the end those within this ghetto become so conscious of its closed system that they go one further and exaggerate their perceived “difference.” And so the vicious circle of oppression is completed as the sub-culture now visibly seems to “justify” society’s contempt for it. In this way the “ghetto of the ghetto” is created as the “nice”, conformist gays and lesbians often feel that the drag, transsexual, and other special LGBTQ sub-cultures spoil it for them in their relationship to the straight world.





In the same way the strong subculture in the black ghetto is a thorn in the side of better-off blacks (and better-off browns in Europe). Both minorities try to make themselves deserving that we will integrate with them, but all the time we use the pathological image of this subculture to stereotype them all. Sensitive to this aspect, the upper ghetto tends to view the lower ghetto with a sense of shame rather than as proof of their common oppression. So strong are tensions between the upper and the lower ghetto that I often had to choose sides, which was not difficult after all I had seen of the suffering in the lower ghetto and the resulting contempt from both the upper ghetto and from whites. The more I began to understand the lower ghetto, the more I understood the very dynamics of oppression in our system. The lower ghetto is for many whites an incomprehensible world of criminals, pimps, gang members, traffickers, prostitutes, and addicts. Since they live in a closed system, their acts are desperate and disclose a pattern of absolute contempt for the rest of society, of which they know they will never become a part. The pool rooms are their meeting place, the luxury cars their status symbol, black/brown cultural nationalism

or Islamism their inflammatory community and identity, the brotherly handshake and the sophisticated “jive” or “walla” talk their communication. “Backstabbing” may be as common as the brotherly handshake. But when you have learned these rules and a certain technique for survival in this culture you cannot help but get to love these, our children of pain, more than any others in society. For to meet humaneness in the midst of brutal surroundings will always seem more overwhelming and encouraging than to meet it among people who were protected from the pain of life. When this underworld nevertheless provokes us, it is not least because it constitutes an enormously exaggerated and distorted mirror image of ourselves. Without understanding and respecting this frightening culture, we are incapable of acknowledging the oppressive and violent aspects of ourselves which we see reflected in these uncomfortable images here. For they do not show any “black” or “brown” culture, but our own state of mind in all its present brutality. Here are all the tendencies of our system stripped down to a ghastly caricature: the competitive spirit, the race for status symbols, the male chauvinism, and not least master-slave relationship.

Wherever in the world the master-slave relationship exists there will be within the slave-culture further divisions into new master-slave relationships. Where any such relationship exists between people you will know that these people are not free, for such a relationship can only exist in a closed system. In the underclass such slavery is seen most clearly in the relationship between pimp and prostitute. The black prostitute is totally subjugated by the pimp and cringes mentally at his feet in deep veneration. The pimp, however, is not only executioner, but also a victim in the greater system in which he becomes the new slave driver who sees to it that the merchandise is delivered to the slave master, - the white man. His tool is no longer the whip, but the pimp stick made from twisted coat hangers. Even though the pimps, like businesspeople in the larger society, can act quite inhuman, it is important to remember that they, like the capitalists, do business according to well-defined rules and laws which are beyond their control.

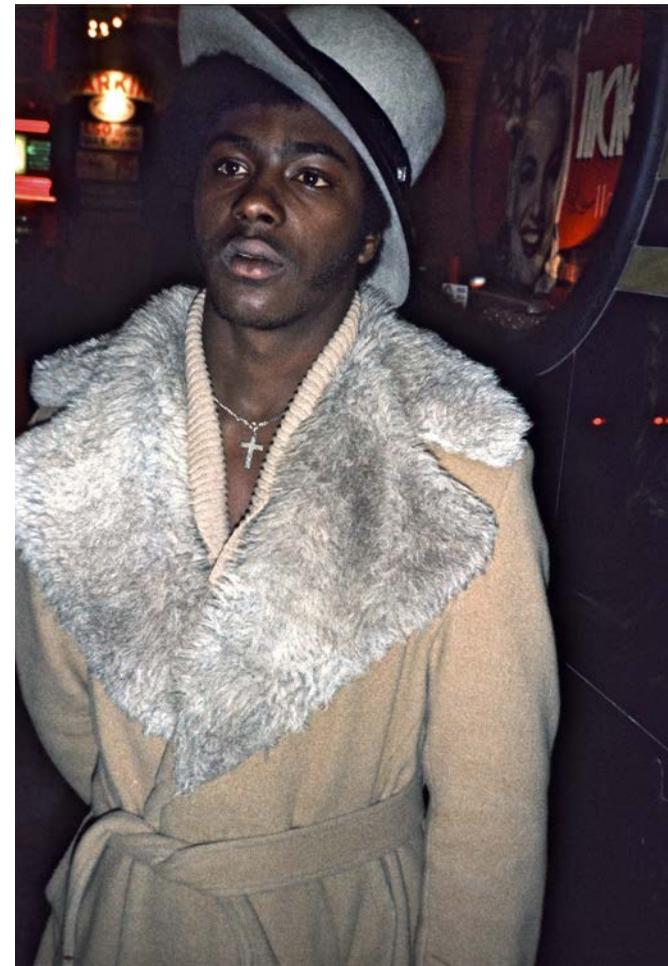
These laws are laid down in "The Book," an unwritten "Adam Smith" or business manual which has been passed down from pimp to pimp for generations and which almost can be seen as an extension of such manuals as it describes the under system in the larger economic system. Woe to the pimp who doesn't follow the regulations! Just like the larger capitalists, they have their daily board meetings with the other pimps, where they not only discuss how to keep wages down, but also exchange technical details concerning the manipulation of their "ho's." In the same way they establish their employees' working hours which they call "git down-time." You can usually tell which ho's belong to a "mack-man" and which are "outlaws" since all the organized ho's get out on the street at exactly the same time every night, while the independent "outlaws" come and leave as they feel like it. As they were the ultimate losers in the multiple layers of exploitation, I always felt immensely close to black prostitutes, who often gave me hospitality (although naturally they were only the "outlaws"). As I was one of the few men in their lives with whom they did not have either a sexual or business-type relationship, they could express towards me that humanity which had not yet been destroyed by their harsh exploitation.

One reason we got along so well was no doubt that they were compelled to know every detail of "the system" in the lower ghetto in order to stay free of pimps, while I as an outlaw (or vagabond) in the greater society had gradually



acquired a certain knowledge about it in order to survive in it. We had therefore in widely different ways arrived at a common outlook. As the parallel between the super-structure and the substructure was so evident, it was easy for them to see the inner dynamics of the combined system which caused their double oppression: racism and sexism. For the relationship between pimp and prostitute is in many ways just a wildly exaggerated model of the relationship between man and woman in the lower-ghetto (or even in society at large) in which one of the man's many "hustles" consist of obtaining "broad money" from defenseless women in return for protection against her being "hit on" by other men's sexual aggression. In such a society a woman to a horrifying degree sees a man as at best a mere object for obtaining money and luxury. She is often very straight-forward about her desire to "marry a rich man." She is often very straight-forward about her desire to "marry a rich man."

This fast ghetto-escape to affluence and security was shocking for me as I had rarely seen such selfish traits in Danish women - perhaps because in a more egalitarian

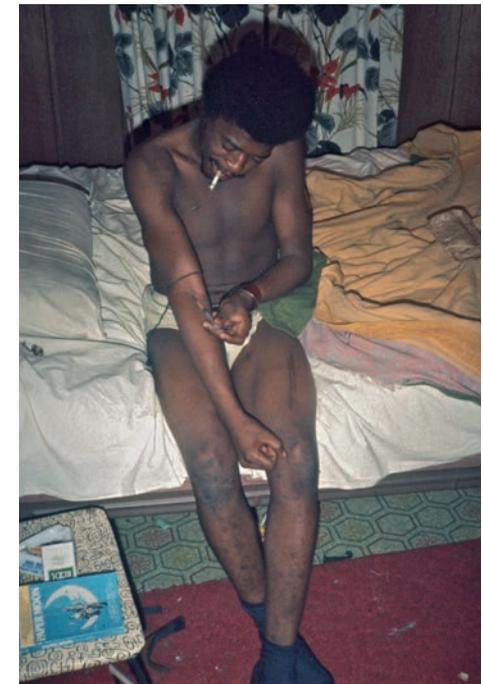
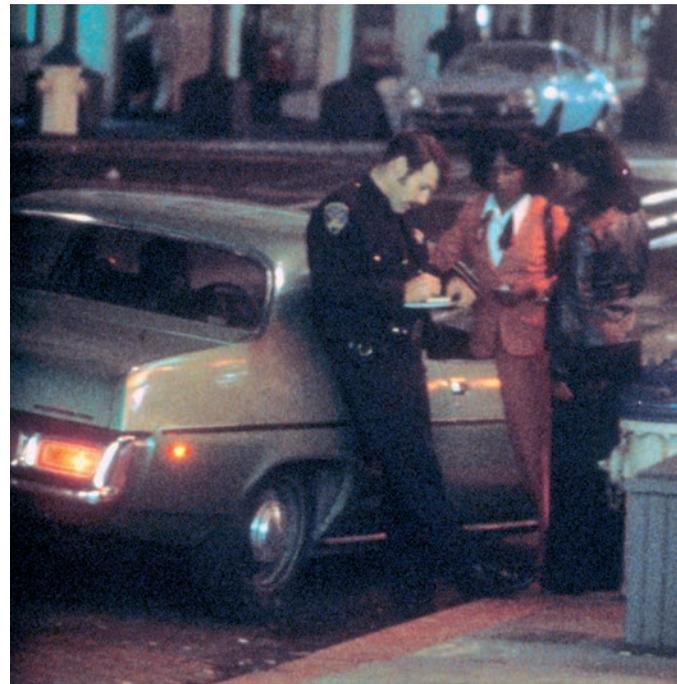


welfare state such exploitation between the sexes doesn't make the same sense. The prostitution involved in buying women with status and wealth shows especially clearly in the American upper-class and underclass. Within its closed system the underclass has been instilled with the same admiration for "sharp" pimps and "righteous hustlers" in fine "threads" as people in the larger society are taught to have for successful maverick capitalists. Such flashy pimps and hustlers apparently "making it" are dangerous role models for ghetto children attracting them to the street institution at the age of 8 or 9 years old, but, like the nouveau riche capitalist, they are also pitiful erratic figures continuously manipulating everyone with no time to become lax or their empire will collapse.

I learned this especially when I worked for a whole year in a church that tried to organize the prostitutes into a union that would protect them from both the brutal police raids and the pimps.







Among the prostitutes who made the strongest impression on me was Geegurtha who was in the midst of a struggle to get out of this slavery. When I first met her, she had just been in prison and was almost totally destroyed by narcotics and violence. Her daughter was born an addict but was saved through blood transfusions. During the five years Geegurtha was a prostitute she saw nothing of her daughter. But through an enormous effort Geegurtha has become "uphabilitated." The motherly love she has since given - expressed in this photo which I love so much - is so moving and miraculous for me when I recall Geegurtha from those days when she was a wreck. She became manager of the clinic which once helped her and majored in psychology in college.



I was deeply moved by this sunshine story with all the odds I had seen against black motherly love. And fatherly love fares just as badly. This man, who let me share his bed in a one-room shack in Florida, was shooting up the first thing in the morning. Because he was unable to kick his habit, his family life had deteriorated and he was in deep pain from not being allowed to be with his child. Another mother I lived with had also been an addict, but was now "clean" and put all her motherly love into giving her two children a good religious upbringing. But when I came back a year later, I was told she was sentenced to 25 years in prison for armed robbery. The American slogan that "the family that prays together stays together" did not hold true. For people we confine to a closed system will usually take the fastest road out - often minutes before they were about to make it - because they to such a degree have internalized our white racist expectations of them that they have no trust in their own ability to succeed in ordinary ways. Most people understand why a prisoner with seven years left of a sentence takes the chance and escapes instead of patiently waiting to get out of hell in a legal way. Not until I one day nearly became ghettoized myself instead of living the privileged vagabond life in ghettos, was I able to feel how the closed system functions exactly like a prison in which you have neither the psychic surplus nor the means to invest in a seven-year education which may bring you out of that stifling oppression in the conventional way. All ghetto acts are therefore desperate and with short-term goals determined by the fact that you already live in a prison. For such people no prison or any kind of punishment will be a sufficient deterrent.





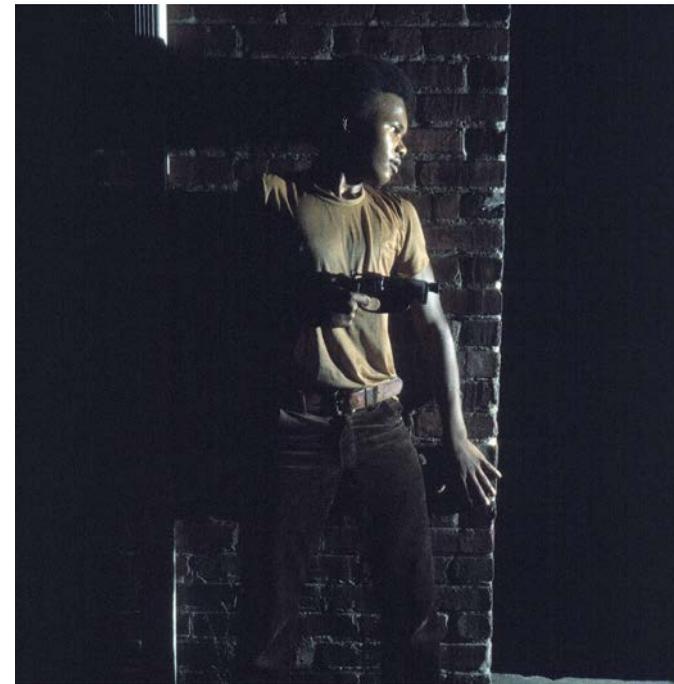


Criminal escapes such as robbery and fraud are no more typical of the shortsightedness than the more lawful escape attempts constantly referred to in racist stereotyping. The climate of death and fear kills long-term trust in the future and makes it easier to buy a Cadillac (in 1970) than to begin saving money in order to someday move out of your rotten shack. Coming from a welfare state, I found it ironic constantly hearing contemptuous white Americans refer to this so-called “low black gratification threshold,” while their own lives seemed so completely tied up in a shortsighted tax revolt, trying to heap all kinds of BMW’s, yachts and unnecessary gadgets over their own threshold. When you refuse to pay for the common good you certainly invite criminals to your house. A country deserves the criminals it produces.



The ghetto criminal directly challenging these inequalities is the most misunderstood and unduly feared person in white America. He is actually of little danger to whites as more than 95% of U.S. crime is white on white or black on black. In Africa, criminals impressed me by working together in highly organized groups. They would go for the wealthiest homes regardless of color, spend days researching when guards were off duty, poison the dogs earlier in the day and at night, so it was said, blow “witch powder” into the house, causing the whole family to fall asleep and thereby avoiding bodily harm. With the family in deep sleep they would empty the entire house and even have a party in it.

The contrasting disorganized state of the black American criminal indicates a state of slavery as much as the futile American slave rebellions did. I can take dubious pride in having participated in several muggings simply because my friends did not let me know about them beforehand and in fact had not even nurtured any plans themselves. When they saw prey they acted on the spur of the moment in a vicious cocktail of deep-seated hate and self-hatred rather than actual need. Just as colonized children everywhere will steal from you when you show them “master”-kindness, I found that the adult “rip-offs,” “stealers,” and even “strong-arm studs” were overwhelmed by Shakespearean motives: *“I am one, my liege, whom the vile blows and buffets of the world have so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.”* (Macbeth, Act 3)



*Freddy’s dead, that’s what I said.  
Let the Man rap a plan,  
say he would send him home,  
but his hope was a rope  
and he should have known.  
Why can’t we brothers protect one another?  
No one’s serious and it makes me furious.  
Everybody misused him,  
ripped him off and abused him  
another junkie plan, pushing dope for the man...*

When you live long enough in these surroundings, you easily feel that conspiracy against the ghetto which our prisoners are talking about. As with oppressors all over the world, our racism manifests itself psychologically in a “divide and rule” need. All my life I have heard black American children pick on each other with “you act white”, “you are not really black”, with almost the same hateful words I hear today in brown children in Denmark: “you are too Danish”, “you are not really a Muslim”, “whore” (about girls who dress “too Danish” or different than the excluded group). Just as the blacks demean each other with “oreo”, “coconut”, Muslim students already test and measure each other in 8th grade with “you smell of pork” or “your sister is a Dane fucker”. Upper ghetto is pitted against lower ghetto, gang against gang, family against family, even brother against brother. When I lived with this 15-year-old boy, Willie Hurt, and his mother in Richmond, Virginia, his 13-year-old brother lay in the hospital, hit in a gang fight by the brother’s bullet, which penetrated his head and made him blind. Nevertheless, I followed the



Willie Hurt in the streets two days after the tragedy on his new expeditions. Many of these gangs were once destroyed by heroin; the press disclosed that the police had sold heroin and flooded the ghetto with it at a time when some gangs had become politicized. It is again the divide and rule policy being used against a colonized people to further fragment it. Yet I know whites well enough to believe that except for a few FBI-“Cointelpro” programs there is no planned conspiracy against the blacks. There is no need for it, for our daily “innocent” racism, our daily activities and master-race vibrations function as effectively as the most well-plotted conspiracy. When I visited the world’s richest man, Paul Getty’s luxury home, I saw among his favorite motifs an artistic depiction of the oppressed fighting themselves.



# Among Eloi and Morlocks

(Luke 9: 3-5)

In North Carolina a millionaire I often stayed with loaned me one of his cars, a big Buick, so that I could get out to the most deserted back roads where it is impossible to hitchhike. After having seen much poverty throughout the day, I got to Wilmington that evening. I had heard that there had been racial disturbances in the town, so I felt like getting to know it a bit better. As always when I come to a new town, I started from the bottom by going into the worst neighborhoods. I parked the car far away since you cannot communicate with people if you roll up in a car. I grabbed my shoulder bag and walked down the street as if I had just hitchhiked into town, and then went over to one of the worst black bars on one of the main streets. I love these dingy combination bar-and-grills with the small jars of pickled pigs' feet and pepper, and often sit in such a bar for hours. There is always something happening. But this evening things went wrong.

It was around eleven o'clock and completely dark when I got to the place. There was the usual crowd of half-criminal types outside: the hustlers. They often look mean and dangerous in their sunglasses, but they are not that bad if you treat them right. I really love them, because it is such a challenge for me to find the human being behind

the sunglasses. It's either win or lose; if you make a wrong move it can mean death. Like all criminals, they are actually extremely timid and therefore react spontaneously and nervously. I use as a rule of thumb that the darker their sunglasses, the more afraid they are of me and of each other. But as soon as you gain their trust and the sunglasses are removed over a glass of beer or a joint, they show themselves to be fantastic people and will do anything for you. That's why I always seek them out first when I come into a new town since they have lots of contacts. I am always completely honest with them and don't pretend to be anything but what I am, never trying, for example, to imitate their language or to use the common white sentimentality about "we are brothers" and all that crap they have heard so often from whites. One must remember how paranoid they are and that they have no faith in whites in general, or their own people, or themselves. They have been trampled on all their lives and that oppression can not be overcome through any phony "brother" talk. But by speaking absolutely honestly you can show them in various ways who you really are, and what you want, you can overcome their suspicion. They need to know who they are dealing with. It is, for instance, this strong desire that makes many blacks prefer the Southern racist over

the Northern liberal, for with the racist they know where they stand and can respect him for his honesty, while the liberal always says one thing and does another. With my pictures and my detailed descriptions of what I have done in other ghettos, it is usually not difficult to convince them of my identity (whenever I know myself what my identity is). They are never totally convinced that I am not an undercover cop, yet they almost always take the chance. Every person has a need to be human in this social system and there is always a risk involved in that. If you let the mask fall, you risk being hurt. Both the capitalist and the criminal are in their everyday life so strongly deformed by the roles dictated for them by the system that they have an unspeakable urge toward human kindness. This urge they have a chance to express with the vagabond, who stands completely outside the system. In order to get something to eat or a place to stay, the vagabond must always talk to the "good" (the humane) in the capitalist or the criminal and when he first realizes that this is always possible, then he can no longer condemn them as "capitalists" or "criminals," but concludes that they all have possibilities for acting in accordance with a system other than the one that usually directs them. Thus, the vagabond instead begins to condemn the system he always has to struggle

against in order to survive. Therefore, even the worst criminals usually take that chance with me, and gradually, as the worst distrust subsides, and some beers go down, we can fall quite in love with each other in mutual admiration of the roles we usually play. They are always interested in what I have learned from other criminals, and the more "hustles" I describe, the closer we are bound to each other. But in the exchange of ways to "cop" (the word that covers everything the criminal needs, whether it is a bag of heroin, a car, a gun, a woman, or wine), I always emphasize putting it in a political context. Often the events we are exposed to in the course of such a night become increasingly criminal. I know that in order to get a place to sleep toward morning, I have to convince them that I am with them all the way. So the first night in a new town I usually don't get much sleep; but in this way I gain a foothold in other social circles of the ghetto, since the criminal's sisters, brothers, parents, and friends are not necessarily criminals themselves.

But this night in Wilmington something went wrong. I received the same hostile vibrations from the people outside the bar as I always get, but there was no possibility of breaking the ice. No matter what I said, it didn't get through. They started making threats and said, "We're



militants, get your ass out of here or you're a dead man." I was so stunned that my survival philosophy didn't work that I went all weak in the knees. I felt suddenly that I had no control over events and gave up. I walked a bit farther down the main street, but to get back to the car without passing them again, I turned off to the right through an unlit "project" - as these municipal poorhouses are called. But just as I turned in there, I noticed that they had started after me. Apparently they perceived this to be their territory. I made the mistake of running further in in order to hide from them. I hid under a bush and saw that they were suddenly all over, about a dozen of them. I started shaking, I was so shocked at this development. I realized that I didn't stand a chance and ran out into a dark alley to surrender. I was immediately surrounded, knives and guns pointing at me from all sides. From that moment I don't remember exactly what happened, just that I began rattling off a lot of words. I said, among other things, something like that they should wait just two minutes, look at my pictures and hear why I was there, and if they didn't like it, they could kill me then. I don't know if that was what tipped the balance, but after much yelling and screaming about what they should do with me, what finally happened was that they led me out to the main street with guns and knives in my hack. I was shaking at the thought that someone might pull the trigger by accident. They said that I should walk straight up the road until I was out of town. In order to get back to town, I now had to walk two miles out and then two miles back on a parallel street. I thought about calling a taxi or the police, but gave up the idea. I had no money for a taxi and felt it was wrong to use the police. If I was seen with the cops, they would really be convinced that I was not on their side. So in the darkness I ran from tree to tree down the parallel street to avoid being seen from cars, as it could be my attackers in the cars. The scene was exactly like the movie "In the Heat of the Night" - only racially reversed.

I got back without a scratch and roared out of town at full speed. I had had enough of staying in the ghetto for that night. I have since tried to analyze what I did wrong that evening. There is no doubt that I failed because I was dishonest with the criminals. I pretended to be a poor vagabond who needed a place to sleep, but in fact I was not poor, as the car was hidden nearby and I knew all along that if necessary I could sleep in the car that night. I had not been completely honest with them and therefore could not make the positive impression that would open them up. I



had made the same mistake as the feudal lord who comes riding along in his comfortable coach with shining lanterns and thus carries with him his own light and his own darkness. He enjoys his security and the light which is cast on the immediate surroundings, but he does not understand that the strong glare dazzles him and prevents him from seeing the stars, which the poor peasant wandering on foot and without a lamp is able to see perfectly clearly and to use as a guide.

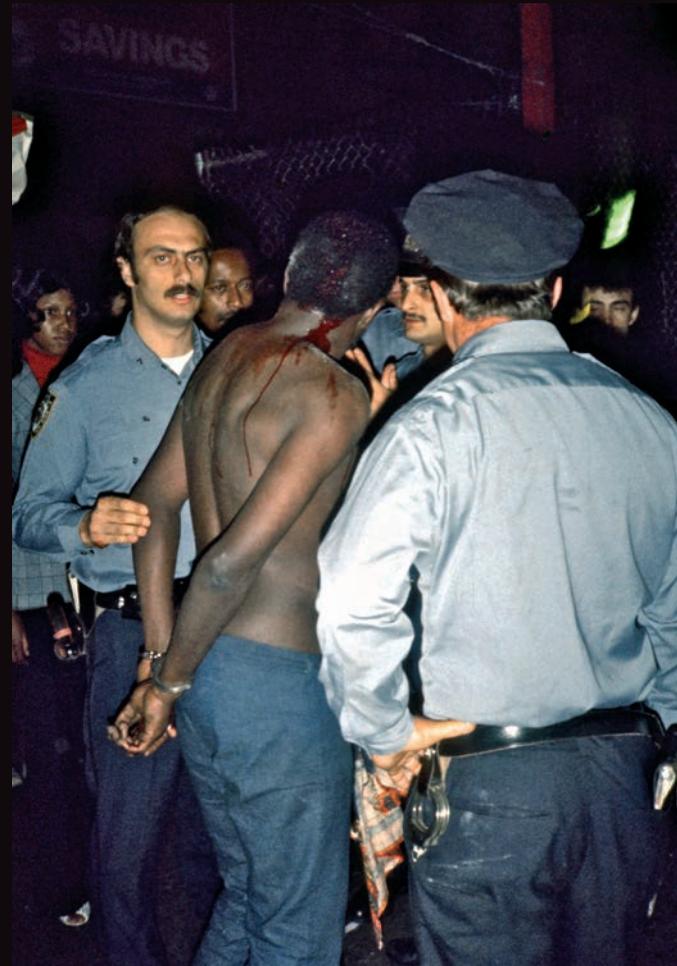
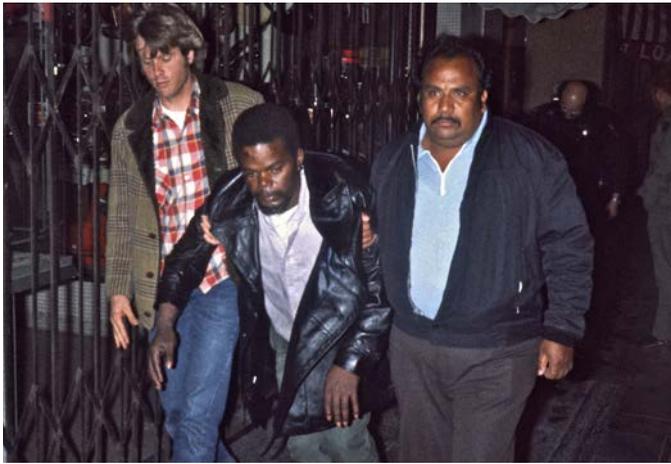
I then drove out to a white community nearby. After this grim experience I began to feel that something fantastic would happen that night. That's how it almost always goes when you travel: when you are the most down, you will be the highest up right afterward. So fatalistic have I become on this point that when two weeks earlier I stood in shirt sleeves freezing in a snowstorm for hours on a back road in West Virginia, unable to get a lift, I became completely convinced that something good would come out of it, and sure enough, that same evening I landed at the Rockefellers'. If as a vagabond you are not possessed of this fatalism you are lost, for just by virtue of your conviction you are able to communicate such strong positive energy that you yourself are actually helping to create a favorable situation. Anyhow, when I stepped into a bar on Wrightsville Beach that night, I was not totally taken by surprise by what happened. I had been standing there alone for some time when a very sweet young woman came over and pulled my beard and wanted to know who I was. Then things happened pretty fast and she began pouring a lot of wine into me. When, as a vagabond, you stand completely alone in the world, you are very weak in such situations and fall in love incredibly easily. But when only an hour earlier you have been closer to death than ever before, then this falling in love takes on such violent dimensions that it becomes totally overwhelming. Any human being who had shown me warmth that night, I would have bound myself to forever. One of the first things

she asked me was if I had a place to live. When I said no, she immediately said that I should move in with her. She would give me all the money I needed and a gasoline credit card for the car. It turned out that she belonged to one of America's richest families, who own the Schlitz brewery. I will never forget that night. Usually I am impotent the first night with a new woman, but the violent experience was still so much with me that I was thinking more about that, and therefore everything went as it should. It was exactly the same as that time in New Orleans when a woman and I witnessed one of our friends kill another while we played pool, and afterward went home and made love all night long. Sex and violence are probably very intimately connected. On the whole, I feel that many of my love affairs in the U.S.A. have been brought about by a violent experience - or have resulted in one. My love for this country could be of the same nature. That night we fell so much in love with each other that she started talking right away about getting married. When we got married we would receive \$50,000, and thereafter \$30,000 a year. "I want to have a child with you," she said. During the first days of myself was so convinced that I was getting married that I started writing to all my friends that "now I had finally found the right one."

I was fascinated by her and her upperclass nature. She spent money as if it were water. The first week we spent hundreds of dollars and she had to telegraph her father in Europe for more money. I enjoyed going to the finest restaurants, eating lobster and steak, which felt good after several months of "soul food." But I still insisted on continuing my exploring and drove out in the car in the daytime to photograph the poverty and hunger in eastern North Carolina. An expert on geophagy (dirt eating) had told me about the hunger in the area. During the day I photographed hunger, and at night I gorged myself on steaks. Every other day I spent with my fiancée on a nearby island, which was only for rich people. There was a guard on the bridge to prevent blacks and other poor outcasts from getting out there. We lived in a lovely big villa and lay on the beach all day loafing. It was here I first began to lose interest in her, as I was simply bored to death. In the beginning she took a certain interest in my "hobby," but gradually it became clear that she perceived blacks as subhuman. I have often fallen in love with Southern racists because of their exoticism and charming dialect and my own fascination with the person behind the master/slave relationship, but it

slowly dawned on me that you cannot base a marriage on such a fascination. I began to feel that our child would be more the product of violence than of love. When I asked what she would do if we drifted apart, she said, "Don't worry, I've got enough money, I can get an abortion any time." She was still madly in love with me, but I was starting to get my feet hack on the ground. So when shortly afterward she had to travel to the Galapagos Islands to look at turtles and wanted to take me with her, I at first felt very tempted, but nevertheless said no. It would be good to get her at a little distance and cool off. She asked me to come hack for her birthday, which I promised to do. I hitchhiked a couple of thousand miles to get back on that day and arrived just around noon and thought she would be happy. But she just lay on her bed and was totally cold. She had had a good vacation with the turtles, but had begun to feel that we weren't suited for each other. In the end she had gone to Ecuador to get an abortion. Now she had no feelings left for me, she said. I was both deeply hurt and very relieved at the same time, said farewell and went back into the ghetto in Wilmington to have another try at getting to live there. I went into the same bar, but this time in the daytime and bought a round of Schlitz for the people there with the money I had left from my days of luxury. And this time I succeeded in being accepted and there was chatter and talk and a warmth without equal. It was at that time that Schlitz started their new ad campaign with the slogan "Only love is better than Schlitz." Every time I saw it around the country I thought of Wilmington, and its violent racial hatred.

#### *Summary of letters*



*You explained it to me, I must admit,  
a long rap about »no knock«  
being legislated for the people you've always hated  
in this hell-hole you/we call home.  
NO KNOCK the man will say to protect people from  
themselves. Who's going to protect me from you ?  
No knocking, head rocking, enter shocking, shooting,  
cursing, killing, crying, lying and being white.  
NO KNOCK told my brother Fred Hampton  
bullet holes all over the place.  
But if you're a wise »no knocker you'll tell your  
knocking' lackeys no knock on my brother's head  
no knock on in my sisters head  
and double lock your door  
because someone may be NO KNOCKING... For you!*

The crime of the poor - like the exploitation by the rich - is almost impossible to photograph. You can take pictures of the result, but rarely of the process itself. Usually I would be with criminals for days before photographing them. In order to survive among them it was a deadly necessity that I always had faith in the inner goodness of these children of anger, directing myself toward the human being inside and away from the role the system normally forced them to model their lives on. By photographing their shady activities I was relating more to their environmental side and thus betraying the trust they had given me. I always wanted to photograph crime as seen from the point of view of the criminal, but to photograph I had to set myself at a distance and so was no longer "one of them." Recording the system's violence was easier than photographing its counter-violence. Here I was caught in a shoot-out between police and criminals in Harlem. A policeman rushed over and used my doorway as a firing position whereby I suddenly found myself photographically on the side of the police. On such occasions I began to understand the brutal but all-too-human reactions of the police. Their racist attitudes and lack of understanding of the ghetto's

reactions is one of the reasons for the angry charges of police brutality. Society has trained the police to expect the worst instead of communicating with the good in people. Therefore, they shoot before they question. In general, I find it to be an act of violence to carry weapons into a ghetto, since this shows that you have no faith in the people of the ghetto, which breeds counter-violence. In my first two years in America I had still internalized the white fear - the main ingredient of all racism. So, until I learned non-violent communication and positive inner thinking about fellow human beings, I was constantly beaten down by blacks. The police in advance build on the negative in people and thereby encourage it. If they instead arrived unarmed with open faces, they would have a chance to foster the positive sides I always managed to find in even the worst types "who will kill for a dollar" - or a camera. Thus, the police build up a climate of fear on both sides which makes brutality inevitable. Until today's tell-tale video revelations, most of it was sanctioned by white authorities. Many states passed laws authorizing the police to break into people's homes without knocking. Many innocent people have been killed in this way.



## Black Lives Matter: James' and Barbara's love

One day I saw in the New York times a picture of Mayor Lindsay presenting a bouquet of flowers to a “heroic” police officer in a hospital bed. It said that he had been shot down while “entering an apartment.” I decided to find out what was actually behind this incident and nosed around the Bronx for several days to find the relatives and the apartment where it all took place. Little by little I found out what had happened. James and Barbara were a young black couple who lived in the worst neighborhood in the U.S.A. around Fox Street in the South Bronx. One day they heard burglars on the roof and called the police. Two plain-clothes officers arrived at the apartment and kicked in the door without knocking. James thought it was the burglars who were breaking in, and he shot at the door, but was then himself killed by the police. Barbara ran screaming into the neighbor's apartment. When I went to the 41st Precinct police station they confirmed the story and admitted that “there had been a little mistake,” but James of course “was asking for it, being in possession of an unregistered gun.”

I was by now so used to this kind of American logic that I did not feel any particular indignation toward the officer. I just felt that he was wrong. Since I had spent so much time finding out the facts of the case. I might as well go to the funeral, too. I rushed around town trying to borrow a nice shirt and arrived at the funeral home in the morning about an hour before the services. I took some pictures of James in the coffin. He was very handsome. I admired the fine job the undertaker had done with plastic to plug up the bullet holes. Black undertakers are sheer artists in this field; even people who have had their eyes torn out they can get to look perfectly normal. Since black bodies arrive in all possible colors and conditions, they use almost the entire color spectrum in plastic materials. James did not make any particular impression on me; I had already seen so many young black corpses. The only thing I wondered about was that there wasn't any floral wreath from the police. I waited about an hour, which was to be the last normal hour that day. Not more than ten people came to the funeral, all of them surprised at seeing a white man there. A young guy whispered to me that he thought it was a little unbecoming for a white man to be present at this particular funeral. Then suddenly I heard terrible screams from the front hall and saw three men bringing Barbara in. Her legs were dragging along the floor. She was incapable of walking. I could not see her face, but she was a tall, beautiful, light-skinned young woman. Her screams made

me shudder. Never before had I heard such excruciating and pain-filled screams. When she reached the coffin, it became unbearable. It was the first and only time in America I was unable to photograph. I had taken pictures with tears running down my cheeks, but had always kept myself at such a great distance from the suffering that I was able to record it. When Barbara came up to the coffin, she threw herself down into it. She lay on top of James and screamed so it cut through marrow and bone. I could only make out the words, “James, wake up, wake up!” again and again. The others tried to pull her away, but Barbara didn't notice anything but James. I was at this point completely convinced that James would rise up in the coffin. I have seen much suffering in America, but I have often perceived in the midst of the suffering a certain hypocrisy or even shallowness, which enabled me to distance myself from it. Barbara knocked my feet completely out from under me. Everything began to spin before my eyes. It must have been at that point that I suddenly rushed weeping out of the funeral home. I ran for blocks just to get away. My crying was completely uncontrollable. I staggered down through Simpson and Prospect Streets, where nine out of ten die an unnatural death. Robbers and the usual street criminals stood in the doorways, but I just staggered on without noticing them, stumbling over garbage cans and broken bottles. It was a wonder that no one mugged me, but they must have thought I had just been mugged.

When I got to James' and Barbara's apartment building, still crying, I asked some children if there was anyone up in the apartment “of the man who was shot the other day.” They asked if I didn't mean the man who was shot in the building across the street last night. No, it was in this building, I said. But they had not heard that anyone had been shot in their building. They lived on the third floor and James and Barbara lived on the sixth floor. I went up to the apartment, which now stood empty.

Robbers had already ransacked it, and there were only bits of paper and small things scattered around on the floor. The emptiness of the apartment made me sob even harder. There were bullet holes all over in the living room wall where James had been sitting, but there were only two in the door which the police had kicked open.

There were three locks on the door like everywhere in New York, as well as a thick iron bar set fast in the floor



- a safety precaution the police themselves recommend that people use to avoid having their doors sprung open by criminals. James and Barbara had been so scared of criminals that they had put double steel bars on their windows although it was six stories up and there was no fire escape outside. Down in the courtyard there was a three-foot pile of garbage people had thrown out of their windows.

Here James and Barbara had lived since they were sixteen with their now four-year-old daughter. After a couple of hours I ventured out of the apartment. I had cried so much that I had a splitting headache, and all the way into Manhattan the weeping kept coming back in waves. When I came to a movie theater on the West Side, I wandered in without really knowing what I was doing. It was at that time that movies directed by blacks were being produced for the first time in history. The film was called “Sounder” and was about a poor family in Louisiana in the 1930's. There was an overwhelming sense of love and togetherness in the family, but in the end the father was taken away by the white authorities and sent to a work camp for having

stolen a piece of meat. The film was made in Hollywood and romanticized the poverty; after several years in a work camp, the father came back to the family, so the film would have a happy ending.

This wasn't the kind of poverty I had met up with in the South. The only time I cried in the movie was when I saw things that reminded me all too much of James and Barbara. Afterward I wandered over in the direction of Broadway. An old black woman whom I had stayed with in the North Bronx the night before had given me ten dollars so I could get some nice clothes for the funeral. She had at first not trusted me and had spent several hours calling various police stations asking them what was the idea of sending an undercover cop to her house. But when after half a day she had assured herself that I was not a police agent, she was so happy that she gave me the ten dollars, and I had to promise to come stay with her again, and she telephoned to Alaska so I could talk with her daughter who lived up there. Now I still had a little money left over and went in my strange state of mind straight into another movie theater on Broadway and saw “Farewell,

Uncle Tom.” It was a harrowing film about slavery. It was made by non-Americans (in Italy), so it didn’t romanticize slavery. You saw how the slaves were sold at auction, the instruments of torture that were used, and you saw how men were sold away from their wives and children. It was frightful. How could all this have been allowed to happen only a hundred years ago? At some points in the film I almost threw up. I looked around the cinema repeatedly, as I was afraid that there would be blacks in there, but there were only two people in the whole theater besides me. When I got outside, there was a young black guy hanging around with sunglasses on. I stood for a long time looking him in the eyes, and I couldn’t understand why he didn’t knock me down.

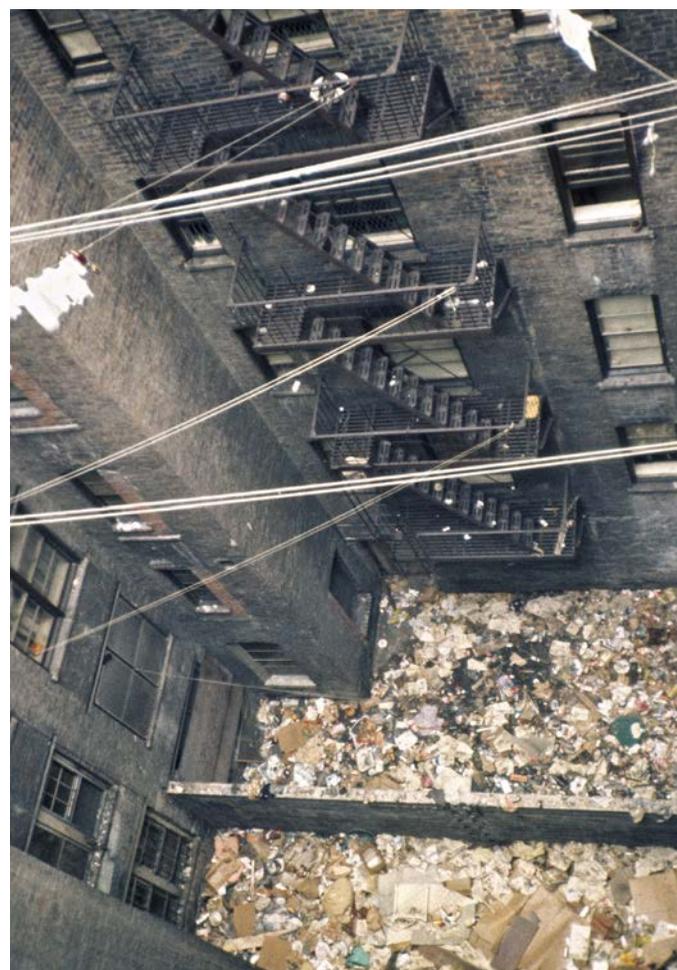
For days afterward I was a wreck. I will never forget that day. It stands completely blank in my diary. A whole year went by before I pulled myself together and sought Barbara out. But when I came to the kitchen at the veterans’ hospital where she worked, an old black woman was sent out to talk to me. She told me that she was Barbara’s guardian, since Barbara had not been normal since the funeral. She had become very withdrawn and never spoke any more. I asked her what Barbara had been like before James’ death. She went into deep thought for a moment and then told me with tears in her eyes about the four years when James and Barbara had worked together there in the kitchen. They had always been happy, singing, and a real joy to the kitchen personnel. They had never missed a day of work, always came in together and always left together at the end of the day. But she wouldn’t let me see Barbara, for Barbara did not wish to see anyone.

Another year went by before I sent a letter to Barbara from somewhere in the South. I assumed that by now Barbara had gotten over her husband’s murder. When I again went to the kitchen, the same elderly woman met me. It was as if time had not passed at all, and we just continued where we left off. She sighed deeply and looked into my eyes. “Barbara has gone insane,” she said.

Barbara kept coming up in my thoughts wherever I traveled. But another event came to make just as strong an impression on me. Somewhere in Florida an unhappy white woman had climbed up a water tower and stood on the edge, about to commit suicide. But she couldn’t make herself jump. It was in a ghetto area and a large crowd of people, most of them black, gathered at the foot of

the tower. The police and fire department were trying to persuade the woman not to jump, while the crowd shouted for her to jump. I was totally unable to comprehend it. I shouted as loud as I could: “Stop it, stop it, please, let the poor woman live.” But their shouts grew louder. It was the worst and most sickening mass hysteria I had ever experienced. Then suddenly it hit me that the screams sounded like Barbara’s on that unforgettable morning. I started getting weak in the knees and rushed off, just as fast as at the funeral home. In five years I will try to contact Barbara once more. I must see her face again some day!

*Summary of letters*



On the day I became one with the suffering I could no longer depict it. The scream from people in the closed system drowns in a vacuum towards the world outside. A white policeman beating a black woman was shot down in hurt and anger by a young man from a roof. In retaliation, 5,000 officers are now marching through the ghetto in a power display to intimidate our oppressed Every time a policeman is killed by a black sniper the entire apparatus of colonial power is set in motion in this way.

But there is a deeper tragedy underlying these sad police murders. This 26-year-old widow of the deceased officer comes as he did from the poorest white strata of society. Even though cannot excuse their brutality, one can very well understand it - exploited and downtrodden as these

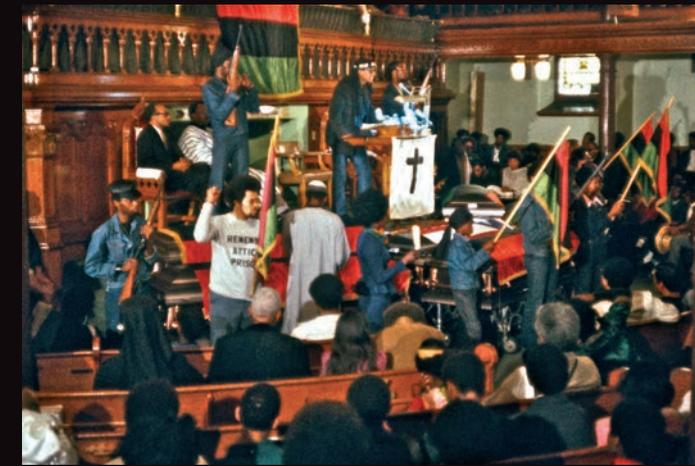
whites have often been themselves, and with such grim prospects in life that they had no choice but to join the ranks of the old slave-drivers. The racism and limited trust in fellow beings that a poor under stimulated upbringing has instilled in them is exacerbated by their nervousness by being occupying forces in a culture to which they do not belong.

It has become so common to just attack and attack the police, but we forget that they are just as much the victims of the system as they are its representatives. We look at their narrow lips and hardened faces and despair. One can only infer that they will forever be marked with bitterness, hatred, and apprehension. But did they sit deliberately and create these faces?

Or did their lives force their faces into masks like closed visors tightening their faces into a perverted distortion of humanity? Yes, it is difficult to create a more just society, for to even see the possibility for change means to have faith in the inner goodness of humanity and in your everyday life to be able to look beyond the distress patterns paralyzing us everywhere. Our duty is to change this system of our joint accumulated pain so people can become fully human all over the world - and thereby also save the planet from the worst of all our oppressions: the climate destruction of our environment and the livelihoods of our children's future. I know that I could not have survived among all these strange people in America if I had not had a strong faith in the best of people. If not, the worst would have gotten the upper hand - and I would have been obliterated.



My journey has taught me that I can no longer hate any single person or group or even class of people — not even the worst exploiters. If I said that I hated the Rockefeller family I would quite simply not be honest now that I know some of its members. Certainly it is true that Nelson Rockefeller ordered the massacre at Attica and murdered 41 inmates who were only demanding prison reform. But even though I was present at the mass funeral and heard the armed Black Panthers in the church shout “death to Rockefeller, jail the rich, free the poor” — and even though I knew several of their relatives among the weeping families — and even though I once again saw the color of blood in the African-American flag... yes, even then I was not capable of hating Rockefeller. For I know that there behind the role he was brought up to perform and believe in within the system, is concealed a human being who, under other conditions, would not have become a murderer in a desperate attempt to keep the inmates of the ghetto in place. If we understand that the underclass is murdering and robbing because of its environment, we must also logically acknowledge that the upper class in its actions, thinking, and tradition is slavebound by its milieu. The more I let myself become brainwashed into the upper class, the more its actions started to seem valid and understandable to me.



*The survivors in Attica: (Photo: New York State Police)*

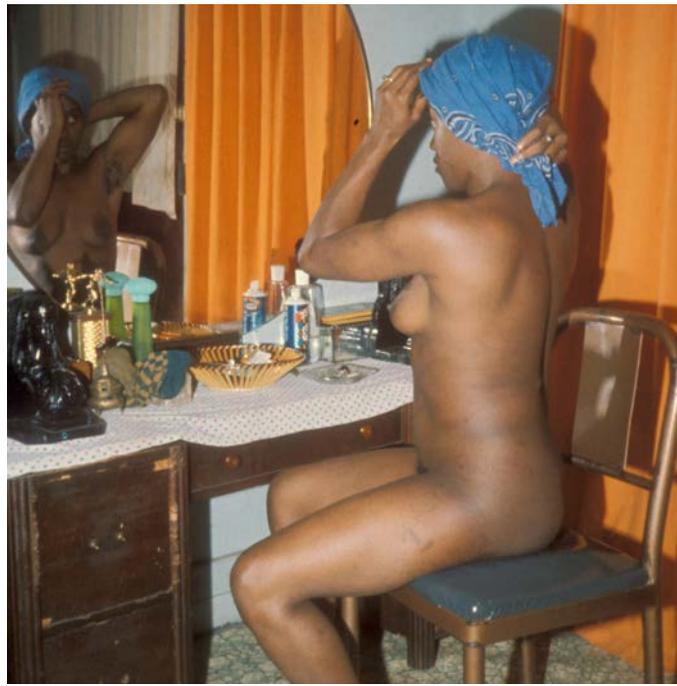
I would be dishonest if I tried to conceal that I have come to like the people I've met from America's upper class. When I condemn the upper class it is really a condemnation of the system which created these classes, and which teaches their members to rob and murder — not only in the U.S.A., but also in the Third World; — a system so strong and inhuman that it cannot be changed through attacking its symbols. If I had hated the Rockefellers as symbols, I would have denied them the humaneness they had shown me as a vagabond, under conditions not dictated by the system.

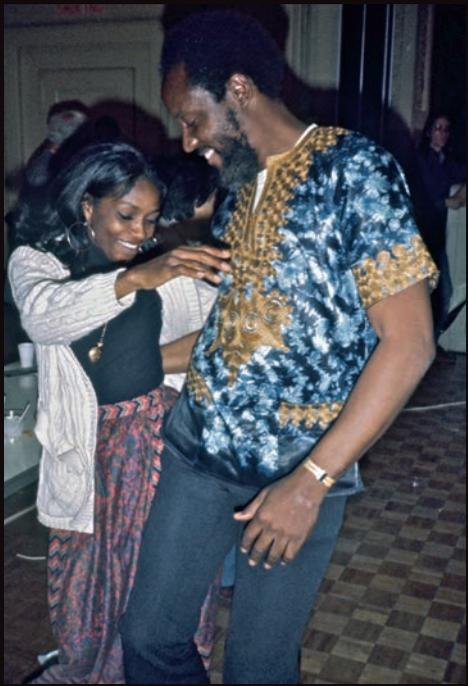
The longer I wandered as a vagabond in this system, the more I lost the desire to ever again become a part of it. Everywhere the system had given people a false face. The more distinctly these contorted masks outlined themselves for me, the stronger was my urge to penetrate in behind them and look out through their narrow eye holes. It was never any beautiful sight: just hatred and fear and distrustfulness. I did not wish to become a part of that hatred. I learned that it is easier for people to condemn and hate than to understand. For hatred is based on one-sided and simplified considerations and most people are so absorbed in the pain

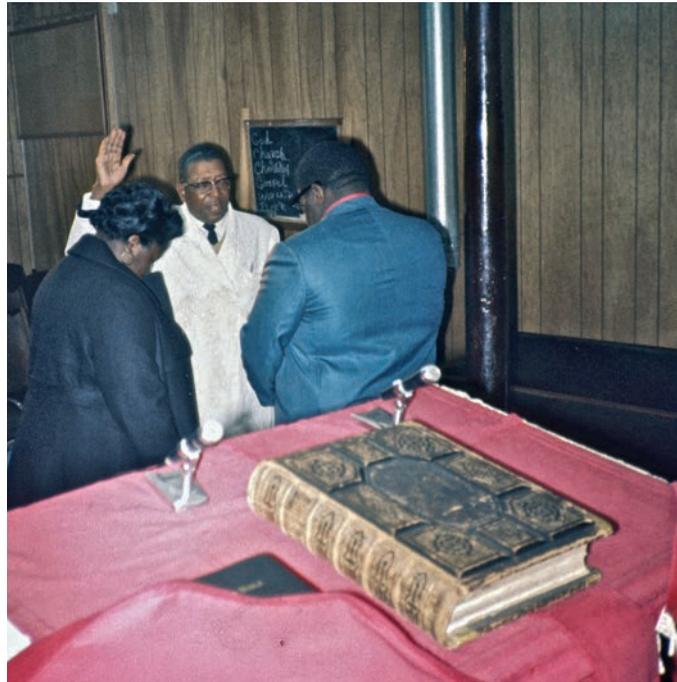
of not being able to live up to the norms of their milieu that it is easier for them to reduce reality to symbols rather than understand it. It is far easier when reading a book like this one to hate whites than to try and comprehend us, because in that way we avoid fighting that part of the system which is to be found in ourselves. Not until we realize how we ourselves are a part of the oppression can we understand, condemn and change the forces which dehumanize us all.

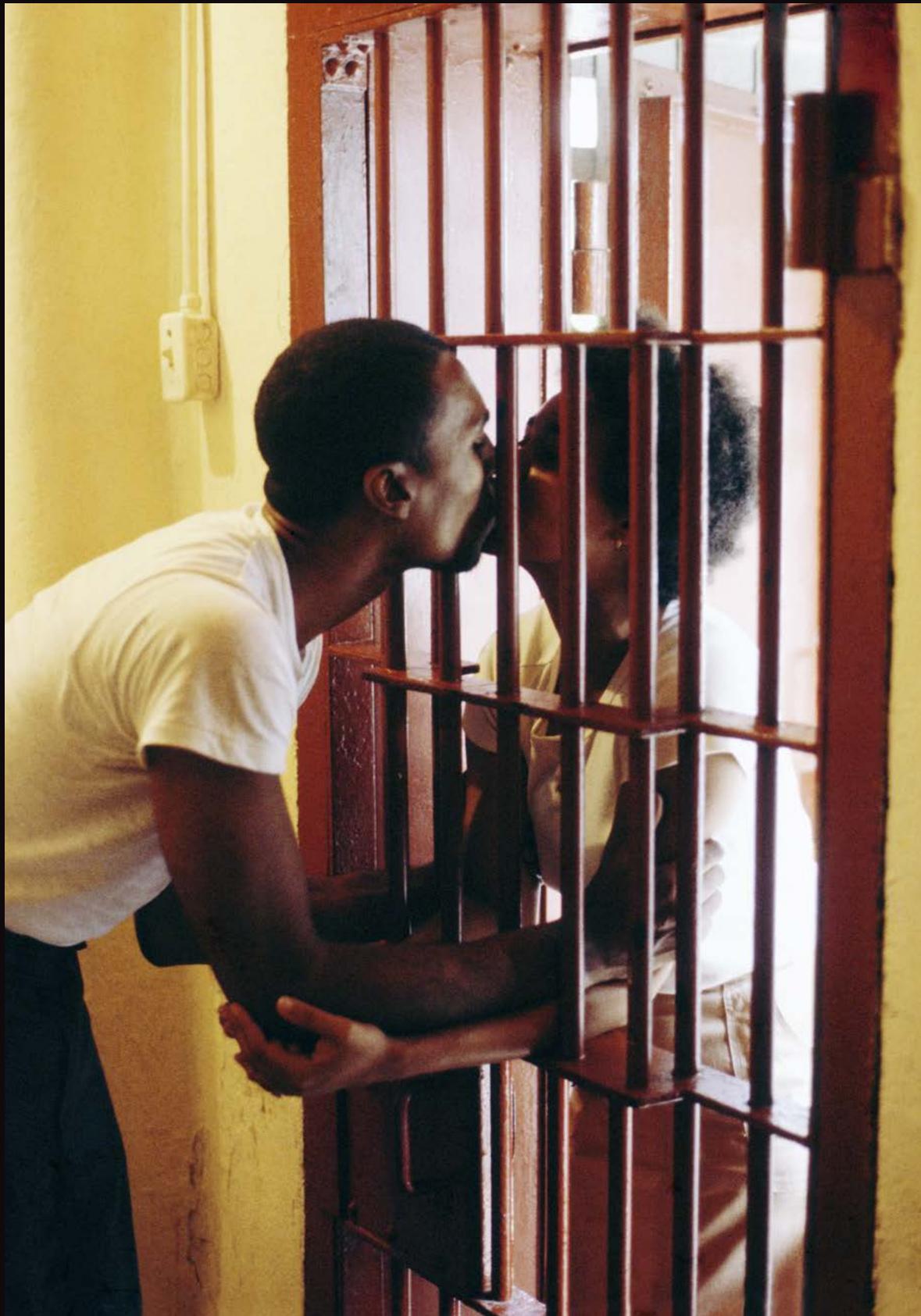
In my journey I was able to survive outside the system, because I always sought the human being behind the false facade. But everywhere behind these facades I saw the defeat of love. The more these threads connecting people in a wholesome society were missing, the more petrified and impenetrable seemed the masks I always had to penetrate to survive. But even within this oppression it is possible to find many shades of humanity. Even though love between people has been killed in this system — we all know that love can shoot up through the asphalt whenever... wherever...











## Ghetto love

*“There is no love like ghetto love”.*

After four years of vagabonding in the ghetto I ended up getting married to it. Annie is the only woman I recall having taken an initiative with. As she was sitting there in a restaurant in New York - irresistibly beautiful - it was evident from our first glances that we needed each other. Both easy victims: she knew nobody, having just returned from ten years of exile in England to attend her mother's funeral, and I was in one of my depressed periods of vagabonding. We were both children of ministers and had in different ways rebelled against our backgrounds. She was deeply moved by my photos and wanted to help me publicize them. She had a strong literary bent and a far greater intellectual breadth of view than I, so I soon became very dependent on her to make the pieces in my puzzle fall into place.

Annie had to a large degree freed herself in her exile from the master-slave mentality which makes marriage almost insupportable for those few unfortunate Americans who fall in love athwart the realities of the closed system. For “intermarriage” is indeed a subversive act. Even liberals grope for an answer when the question comes: “Would you want your daughter to marry one?” I usually found common segregationists starting conversations with, “I don't care whether people are white, black, purple, or green...” Ten sentences later they would be sworn enemies of “intermarriage.” Yet until it was prohibited in 1691, there were plenty of intermarriages between white and black indentured servants, and prior to the reduction of blacks to slavery the “poor white” hatred of them was unknown. In most other countries, even post-slavery countries like Cuba and Brazil, there is nothing resembling the fanaticism of Americans towards intermarriage. Although I come from a conservative rural area I cannot recall having heard a single negative remark in my childhood about the frequent international marriages of Danes to African students. On the contrary I sensed a strong solidarity and even envy towards those moving to distant lands. But in America no interracial marriage can be viewed as simply a natural union. In Hollywood, black promoters wanted to invest a lot of money to publicize my slideshow, but first they wanted me to take out the section on my wife: “It destroys your message, makes you look like just another liberal.” Many blacks and liberals will for the same reason fall away in this chapter. A black woman was furious after seeing my slideshow with photos of several naked black women

(unaware as she was of my Danish culture in which nudity is highly cultivated: family beaches and inner city parks are packed with nudes barely minutes after the sun breaks through). “Aren't you aware of how irresponsible you have been having had relationships with all these mentally unbalanced women? Aren't you aware that slavery makes us all mentally ill?” She hit the core question: How can I interfere as a neutral in a master-slave society without becoming a part of the problem? And yet she made the same mistake as most Americans of automatically assuming that a photo of a naked woman equals a sexual relationship with her. She need not really worry, for unlike what I found among black women in most of Africa, the black American woman has developed enormous defense mechanisms against the white man in response to centuries of abuse. Although I spent most of my time in black communities, more than 90% of the women who invited me to share their beds were white. But the suspicion of the white male sexual exploiter naturally always hung over me in my journey. Walking at night in ghettos in the deep South young men would ask, “Sir, you want me to get you a woman?”

I am fairly convinced that most women would not have offered me hospitality if they had not sensed the non-aggressive component in me. Since I always saw my vagabonding as a passive role and thus neither avoided nor initiated sexual relations I think it is interesting to analyze what actually happened when I came close to women. After a few days, if we got along well together, white women would express sexual aggression. But even if we became intimate and embraced each other, usually nothing more would happen with the black underclass woman, especially in the South. It was as if something misfired in us both - a shared acknowledgement that this was too big a historical abscess to puncture. She could not avoid consciously or unconsciously signaling that this was a relationship between a free and an unfree person, which immediately gave me the feeling of being just another in the row of white sexual exploiters. Most of my sexual and long-lasting relationships with black women were therefore with women from the middle class or the West Indies who, although more conservative than white and underclass women I met, had nevertheless freed themselves from this slavery to a higher degree. Some Americans would say that if you are aware that certain people live in slavery you should not as a privileged white get yourself into such intimate situations where a sexual relationship or “intermarriage” could arise.

But slavery is a product of not associating with a group completely freely as equals, thereby isolating and crippling it.

Annie was one of my exceptions with the underclass. For although her surface seemed very “middle class” after her long leave, she was in her fundamental outlook marked by her underclass upbringing. Such a relationship could probably have worked with much trust and effort by both partners, but because of my racism, sexism, and above all that unseeing “innocence” which will always be the ultimate privilege of the ruling class, this wasn’t what happened. Instead it became such a painful crushing defeat for me that I for instance couldn’t reconcile it with my original book. Even the beginning went wrong. We got married Friday the 13th of September, with no place to live.

A maid let us spend our honeymoon in the luxury apartment of the South African consul who had been called home by his apartheid regime. Afterwards we ended up in the worst area of the ghetto. We had hardly paid the first month’s rent before all Annie’s savings were stolen. We lived on the fifth floor of a building with only prostitutes, destitutes, addicts and welfare mothers. Annie had not lived in underclass culture since her childhood and it was a terrible shock for her to end up here. Due to her looks and the place we lived she was constantly “hit on” by pimps and hustlers, who tried to recruit her. When I had to hitchhike away for some days Annie was kidnapped by a prostitution ring who forced her at gun point to strip naked while they played Russian roulette with her “to break her in.” At night she managed to flee through a bathroom window without clothes out into the city streets. When I came home she was lying dissolved in tears and pain. The attacks of the pimps continued, and it didn’t help matters that I was white. One day a pimp scornfully threw a handful of money at Annie on the bus. With my old vagabond habits I picked it up. Annie was furious with me and wouldn’t talk to me for a week. There were violence and screams and frantic pain in the building day and night. Several times in the beginning I tried to intervene between pimps and the ho’s they were beating. There was also a pyromaniac. Almost every night during the first months we were woken up by the fire alarm and saw flames burst out from the adjoining apartments. We were so prepared that we had everything packed all the time. The first thing I would grab was a suitcase with all the thousands of slides for this book. One night when we were all standing half-naked in nightclothes on the street I asked



Annie to keep an eye on the suitcase while I photographed the fire, but she didn’t hear me in the noise and when we got back to the apartment. it had been left behind. I rushed down to the street and found the suitcase still standing there. Everyone in the building called it a true miracle as nobody had ever seen any valuables left on the street for even one minute without being snatched.

The psychological pressure was at first worse on Annie than on me. We tried to get welfare in order to move, but got only \$7. Almost every night she lay in tears and despair. In the first months when I still had some psychic surplus left I tried to penetrate into the world which had so evidently disintegrated for her. Like most of my other relationships in America, this one was due to violence. We had met each other as a result of the murder of her mother; and a few months afterward her stepfather was found staggering down the street mortally wounded by a knife. A horrifying pattern from her childhood began to appear for me in these tear-filled nights. When her 16-year-old mother had given birth to her and a twin sister it was seen as such a sin in the minister’s family that the mother had been sent up North and Annie down to an aunt in Biloxi, Mississippi. All Annie recalls from these first four years was the drunken aunt always lying in her shack, while Annie sat alone outside in the sand. One day she almost choked to death on a chicken bone and struggled desperate and alone. Nobody came to help her. The grandparents discovered the neglect and took her back to Philadelphia, Mississippi, where she received a rigorous fundamentalist upbringing. All display of joy, dance, and play was punished. Often she was hung by leather straps around her wrists in the outhouse and whipped to a jelly. On the way home from school there was almost daily rock-throwing between the black and the white kids. One day the white kids turned German shepherds on them and Annie was severely bitten. Two of these white children later joined the Ku Klux Klan, and one of them, Jim Bailey from Annie’s street, was the one who later

murdered three civil rights workers in 1964.

After this Klan violence, with parades of burning crosses through Annie’s street, she fled up North and later went into exile. Since she was the first black to integrate the town’s library, she never dared to return. The more these tearful nights revealed, the more shocked I was. She was incredibly sensitive and one night I recall her crying at the thought of “the white conspiracy” which had kept her and the other black school kids ignorant about the murder of six million Jews.

Finally Annie managed to get a temporary office job in the Bureau of Architecture where she took care of bills from construction companies. She caused great turmoil by discovering one swindle and fraud after another. With her unusual flypaper memory she could detect how the construction companies had months before sent bills for the same job but in different wording. For years these Mafiosi had ripped off the city. Every day she came home and told me about how she had just saved the city \$90,000 or the like. When her job ended, her boss told her she could write any recommendation she desired: he would sign it. But we ourselves still had no money and it was as if this corrupt atmosphere helped to further break down our morale. When the rich steal, why shouldn’t we? When we one day found a purse with \$80 in it in the hallway, it took us a long time to decide to give it back to the owner a welfare mother. When she opened her door she grabbed the purse without a word, with a contemptuous look as if to say, “You must be fools, trying to be better than others here.” From that moment everything slipped more and more in a criminal direction. It had been our idea that I should use the time to write a book. Annie and others felt that I ought to write about my ghetto experiences with the eyes of a foreigner. In the beginning I sat day after day in front of a blank sheet of paper, but it was impossible for me to get a word down in that violent and nerve-wracking atmosphere.

Gradually we both lost our self-confidence and I gave up. The less surplus we had, the less hope, the more violent did the atmosphere become between us. Little by little Annie started to drink in response to my increasing insensitivity. She began to nag me for being nothing but a naive liberal. These endless nights are more than anything the reason for attacks on liberals (or myself) in this book. For the first time in my journey I began to lose faith in blacks - to

look at their actuality rather than potential. I was becoming Americanized, had become a victim of the master-slave mentality. The more I lost faith in people (and my own future), the more I seethed with hatred and anger. To avoid the unendurable atmosphere with Annie, I began to spend most of my time on the street. The more powerless I became, the more dismal my prospect, the more she lost faith in me. One night she shouted, “You can’t even provide! You hear, blue-eyed nigger, provide!” What was even worse was that although I constantly tried to get work I started blaming myself. I did nothing but stand in line. In the mornings I sat and lay in line in the blood bank to get \$5. Every day at 11:00 for eight months I stood in an hour-long soup line and at night I would often eat in a church. The rest of the day I would stand in line to get work, which was impossible as I had no skills. If I got there at four in the morning I sometimes succeeded in being hired for a day to throw advertisements in the affluent suburbs for \$2 an hour.

After a while I gave up and spent more and more time with the criminals in the street. I was never involved in any large-scale criminal activity, but it was clearly moving in that direction. One night when a guy was telling me shakily that his brother had just been murdered in Chicago I just replied coldly, “What caliber pistol?” Only afterwards did it dawn on me how deep I had slipped down. During the time I lived with Annie eight people had been murdered on our block, some of them acquaintances. Theresa, who had so often given me free food in her coffee shop, was murdered one day by a customer who couldn’t pay his bill of \$1.41. Sometimes even the walls in our



hallway were smeared with blood. When I came home late at night Annie would often be lying in a fog of tears and booze. I hardly cared any more. In the end for fear of the destructive quarrels I would not come home until she was asleep. Our sex life, like everything else, disintegrated.

Finally I harbored such hatred for both blacks and whites around me that I became afraid of myself. One night when Annie had been drinking I became so desperate that I aimed a blow at her in the darkness. The next morning she had a black eye like everyone else in the building had had. Having never before laid a hand on a person, I was shaken. I had a sudden fear that I would end up killing her one day. The only way I could break the ghettoization was flight. We managed to get a tiny room for Annie in a white home outside the ghetto. After that I went straight for the highway. The highway I knew meant security and safety, recreation and freedom. For four years I had lived an escapist privileged vagabond life in ghettos without being affected. When I became a part of the ghetto, I was destroyed in less than a year, had ended up hating blacks, had lost faith in everything, and had seen the worst parts of my character begin to control my behavior. One of these was an increasing selfishness and aggressive callousness in my relationship to women. It was no coincidence that I immediately entered a period of conspicuous consumption of “girls” with my friend Tony in North Carolina. I had no inhibitions left. And yet I was not exactly a horn seducer. Time and again Tony whispered to me, “Hey, why don’t you make a move?” and time and again he ended up having to drive my date home prematurely. And then every night there were disturbing obstacles. One night I couldn’t get home with my date because of a shootout in the street. Another night we all went to see Earth, Wind and Fire in Chapel Hill and I used my white privilege to “con” my way in for free as I never had money. This so irritated Bob, who drove the car, that on the way home he suddenly stopped and said, “Hey, man, you gotta get out, understand?” Since Bob was a double murderer, having killed both his wife and her lover, and everybody knew he boiled inside, nobody tried to intervene and I had to get out in the frosty night in the middle of nowhere.

An essential tool in dating is the car. Since I couldn’t take my dates for a ride I instead invited them for what I loved most of all in the world: hitchhiking. It was these trips more than anything else which made me aware of



my sex-ploitative frame of mind. I had lived with blacks so often that I paid hardly any heed to being “on the wrong side of the tracks,” but to hitchhike with a black woman quickly shakes one into “place” again, especially if one is as ignorant as I had managed to remain about the additional master-slave relationship of men to women. Because of my vagabond attitude that the driver should be “entertained,” if the driver was a woman or a gay man, I would sit in front to make conversation, whereas if it was a straight man I would make the woman sit next to him, even if she didn’t want to. The reactions from the white male drivers were terrifying. If they didn’t content themselves with psychological torture of the women, they would use direct physical encroachment. Although most of those I hitchhiked with were well-dressed daughters of professors and doctors in the North and had the education and trust in their surroundings which made them - unlike ghetto women - even dare to go on such a trip with a white, they were considered as nothing but easy sexual prey or even whores. Several times lustful drivers violently tried to push me out. For some of these women it was their first chance to see their country. Most didn’t even last to the state line. One

lasted 4,000 miles through Canada and the Grand Canyon - then broke down in a hysterical fit which almost had us both arrested. I was still enormously out of balance after my ghettoization and I decided I needed to recreate myself in a calm family atmosphere. After having lived in a couple of white homes I searched back to the most harmonious and stable married couple I could recall having seen in the underclass: Leon and Cheryl in Augusta, Georgia. Their love and devotion to each other had been so enriching and contagious that I often thought of them in the course of my own abortive ghetto love as living proof to myself that real ghetto love could thrive. While I had lived in their home I had had peace and support, enabling me day after day to hitchhike out to explore the poverty in the area. But when I came to their house I immediately felt something had changed. Leon asked me in, but he was not happy. He seemed to be in a trance as he told me his wife had died from a disease which was curable but which they had not had money to get under proper treatment before it was too late. Leon had not recovered from the loss. He never went out of his house which stood right next to the elite medical school in Augusta. All day long he sat on the blue shag carpet in front of his little stereo as if it were an altar, listening to music while staring at a photo of Cheryl above.



Some days he sang love songs throughout the day, putting her name in them. Once in a while he would scream out in the room: “I want you! I want to hold you. I want to be with you again ... We must unite, be one... I want to die... die... “ Never have I seen a man’s love for a woman so intense. At most once a day would he turn around and communicate with me, and then only to tell me about how he wanted to join Cheryl in heaven. Sometimes when he stared directly at me with this empty look as if I were not there my eyes would fill with tears. I felt a deep understanding for him, yet couldn’t express it. In the evenings he lay in his room. His mother or another woman would bring us cooked food in the two weeks I stayed there. This depressing experience made me look deeper into myself. I became determined to go back to Annie, and later she returned with me to Denmark. Our relationship had suffered too much, so after a while we separated. We achieved a good working relationship and she helped translate parts of this book and all of the film.

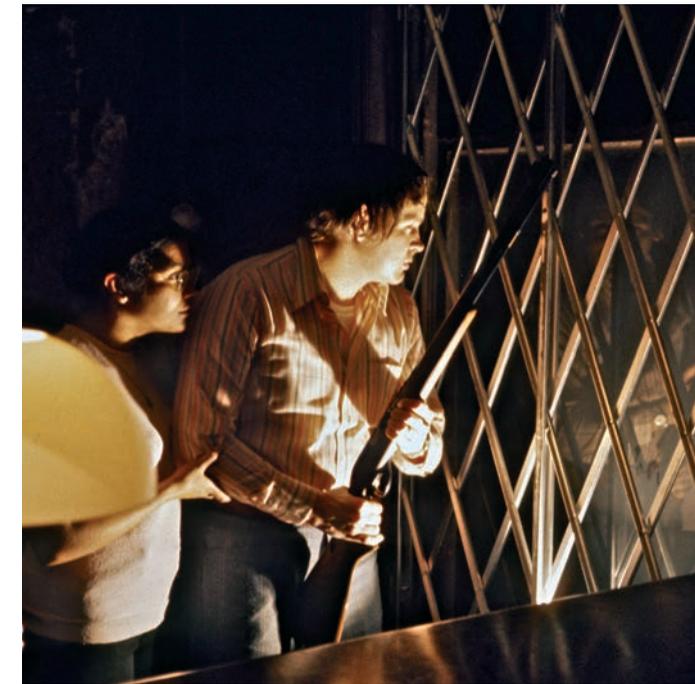
Three years later I traveled all over America to give or show this book to all those friends who made it possible. One of them was naturally Leon, who had helped me so much and was one of those I had in mind to come and help run the show in Europe. But when I came to his screen door with the book under my arm, a strange woman answered my knock. No, Leon didn’t live there any more. He was shot three years ago - by a white man. All afternoon his mother showed me the photo album with Leon and Cheryl’s pictures and told me tearfully about their three happy years together. We sat sobbing in each other’s arms on the front porch. I know that Leon and Cheryl are united again. “There is no love like ghetto love.”

*Written with the help of my ex-wife in her hospital bed. Annie died after a long period of health problems in 2002 in Denmark.*



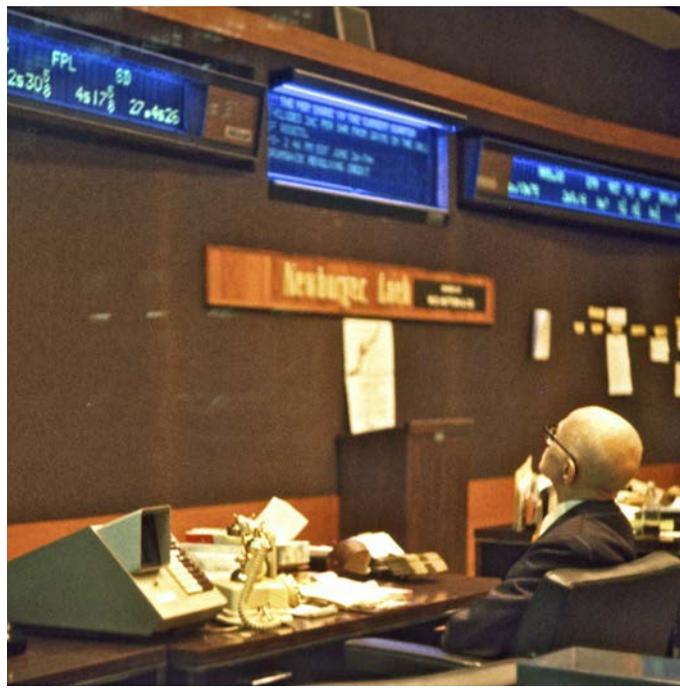
A society where love and mutual connection have been killed is not a beautiful sight. Even the church escapes the social ethics of Christ and betrays the outcasts. That these then betray the church is no wonder. It often happens that angry ghetto youngsters arrive in white churches just before the collection plate is passed round and force the churchgoers at gunpoint to give to the truly love-hungry. Wherever we cast our fellow citizens out in ghettoization and perdition through white flight, our towering empty symbols of charity are left empty on borrowed time with smashed mosaic windows. In Baltimore, the Danish Seamen's Church, in which I often found some peace of mind, had to close because Alphonso and my other friends in the neighboring houses were constantly robbing it. A despairing minister in Chicago told me that they were closing his church because the congregation was plundered every Sunday. In a ghetto in Denmark, a "Christian priest was expelled by Muslim thugs", as it was called in the hateful media, when our brown Danish youth in exactly the same way expressed the pain and anger of feeling rejected by white flight. The only difference between them and the children of pain in the USA, I found out when I did a reconciliation workshop for them and the few remaining whites in the ghetto, is how exemplary they still behave in Europe. In some American cities there are armed guards or police on every floor of hotels to protect the guests. Trains on the subways of New York and Chicago carry both uniformed and plainclothes cops, and still people are being murdered and raped before the eyes of panic-stricken passengers who dare not try and help. Tourists return to Europe with "American neck" from continually sending

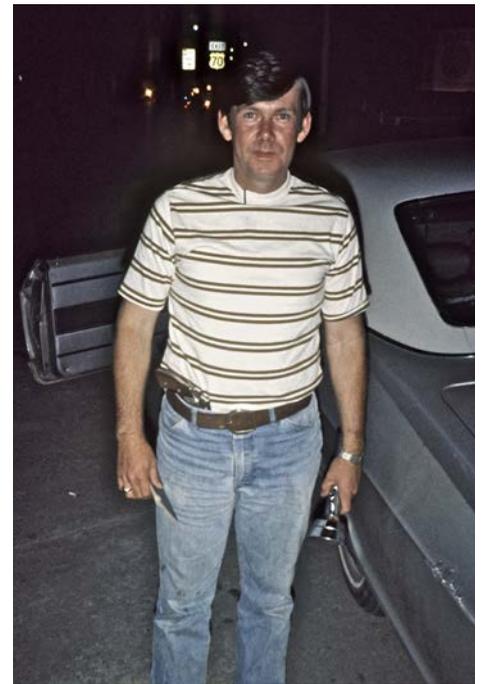
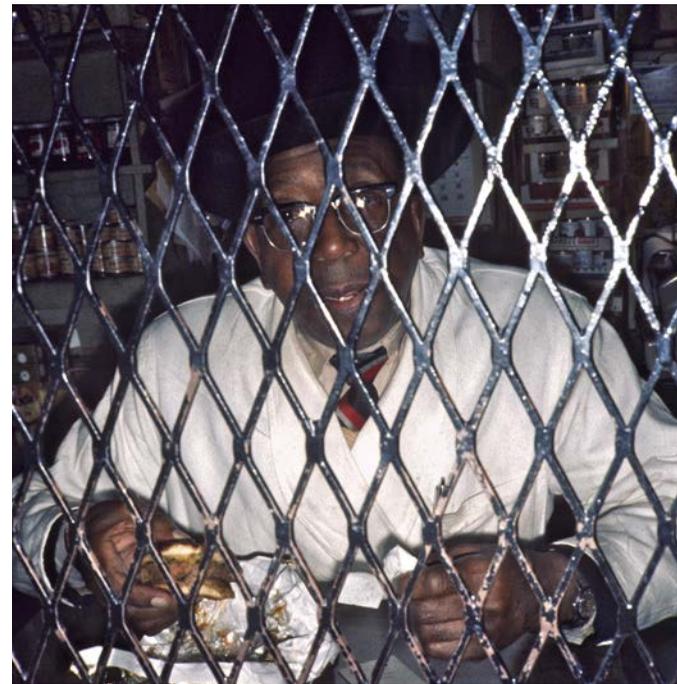
anxious glances back over their shoulders. A Nigerian student I met in Philadelphia's ghetto was so panic-stricken over conditions there that she tried to be sent home "to safety" before the end of her studies. Her statement would not have surprised me if it were not for the fact that she had just lived through the civil war in Biafra. The confinement of the underclass is dehumanizing for all. In five of the homes I lived in there were armed robberies twice in the period I was there. Society spends billions to cure the ill instead of educating us about the suffering our racism inflicts on ourselves. We intuitively feel that we are in the process of digging our own grave, but are unable to do anything about it and therefore turn it into a trench. A manufacturer I lived with had made a fortune making military equipment, but turned the entire production into alarms and tear gas guns, perhaps because the country wasted so much on war out in the world that the "war on poverty" at home had to be abandoned. The more we struggle for 'freedom' without mutual respect, the more we cut ourselves off from it, and many today must live behind steel barred fortification. Slowly but steadily the iron curtain closes in on America. You walk into stores and find yourself inside closed steel cages. The wealthy can afford more discreetly to invest billions in invisible electronic fortifications between themselves and the ghetto. The more electronic rays replace trust, the more the system closes itself. The fear paralyzes people, and many are trained in the use of weapons from childhood. Many homes arm themselves to death to "defend themselves against the niggers," as a suburban Michigan family said. I don't know what is most shocking: that our children of anger feel so psychologically marginalized that they can kill for a dollar - or that millions of Americans are prepared to take a human life just to defend their TV. Even teachers are often assaulted in front of their students. My friend Jeff, mentioned in the Detroit letter page 183, has as a high school teacher in the years since we met learned not to interfere when his students sit and polish their guns in class. As a lecturer, I often came to support his admirable efforts to be a saving angel for the bleeding ghetto children. But when after all these years the only student he managed to get accepted at Harvard, just before graduation was killed in the class by stray bullets from gangs in the street, Jeff gave up and fled in 2005 over to me in Copenhagen. A brief relief, for only three years later, gang wars also here broke out among our own marginalized people, now forcing Danes on the same flight from their own creations.



The more cars, the more weapons, the more fortresses, the more military buildup ... the more the private industry enrich itself on this systematic subversion of society. The higher the barriers big business constructs between people, the more it manages to kill the love between people, and the more stock prices rise on Wall Street ... and in the process we become insensitive to or begin to rationalize our views on e.g. this hungry woman on the street outside the Stock Exchange...

Nowhere have I found the art of rationalizing poverty and racism mastered to such a degree (not least by the intellectuals) as in America.





When we humans do not fortify justice, it becomes necessary to justify force. The more we try to shoot out a short cut to freedom and security, the more our actions in flight and desperation begin to resemble those of the ghetto. Just as those trapped in the ghetto look for quick escapes into awe-inspiring luxury cars and violence, we ourselves escape from the problems by the use of even more awe-inspiring tanks and military violence against the ghetto instead of changing the attitudes within ourselves that create the ghetto. How really free are we in God's own country, when thousands of people must view the Statue of Liberty from behind barred and grated windows? Her watchful gaze - which always looked the other way from the enslavement of blacks - is increasingly being replaced by Big Brother's ever-present eye. Under the pretext of fighting crime and terrorism, we constantly violate the Constitution in fear and alienation. In Denmark, too, we are repeatedly restricting our own freedom with new and stricter terrorist legislation for fear of those we have marginalized. In one respect America is dangerously close to totalitarianism. Everywhere it is swarming with secret police. Nobody, absolutely nobody, except those like me who have hitchhiked around in big and small American towns, have any idea how many of these plainclothes police there really are. Always were they frisking me. Even in small sleepy towns in the South I could, on occasion, discover up to twenty in a single night. The more the system closes, the more trust and hope in the actions and values of the whole of society are disappearing. Fear is superseding reason and stifling concern and compassion for fellow people. The criminal and repressive escape

acts are spreading in the poisonous ghettoization to the entire population, which is gradually being corrupted and influenced by the violence it perpetrates against the black ghetto. A ghetto cannot be eliminated from the inside; it is created and perpetuated by outside forces. Paralyzed by fear and violence, our entire society begins to assume the character of a ghetto; the population becomes increasingly aware that it is operating in a closed system: a system in which we have lost our imagined freedom of action. A system whose prolonged expulsion of our unwanted in enormous ghettos has long since become so institutionalized and irreversible that it seems to us quite natural, because for generations it has shaped and crippled us to such an extent that we can neither imagine alternatives. .. nor (in the short run) be able to live with them if we could. And so the entire society becomes a closed system in the same way the South was before 1865 and before 1954 - a system which in spite of its liberals and activists was unable to change from within. Northern outside interference in the Southern closed system did not break the circle. It only found a new, higher level of balance, raising the median black income in the South from 45% to 55% of white income. We whites have the power to eliminate the ghettos through a change of attitude, but as long as we passively allow ourselves to be captured by the enslaving pattern of well-coordinated oppression, I see no possibility that this will happen. We do not understand the underclass monster, we continuously create - and therefore turn our backs to it - and destroy our own society in the process.







My journey through this social jungle had automatically led me into the ultimate closed system - the prison in which I now met again the three underclass robbers who five years earlier had attacked me on my arrival in the country. While society had slowly closed like a vise around me, these people meanwhile had opened up to me and had (through my own ghettoization) become a part of myself. I now understood that they had had no real choice: their freedom was one-dimensional. Their choice then, of whether or not to make me a victim, is indicative of the white choice: Should we stop oppressing an unredeemed people in order not to run the risk of ending up ourselves in a repressive kind of prison? Or have we lost the freedom to choose in a system where "life's design is already made"? Even if we were to grant billions of dollars for slum clearance, better schools, and jobs in an attempt to unlock those imprisoned in the ghetto, to them it would just be one more case of humiliating crumbs from above. It will only aggravate the self-image of those we disposed of and now half-heartedly try to reclaim - and they will bite the hands which feed them. Our great liberal open hand will soon suffer a quick conservative pull-back. No, we can't just pay off our racism! Even in the best years of liberal tokenism, 1960-67, \$348 billion was spent on war, \$27 billion on space exploration, and only \$2 billion on aid to ghetto areas. It is no surprise that the underclass burned down the ghettos in contempt! Such a helping hand from above will unintentionally function just as the American penal system does. Here 95% of the money is used to dispose of the unwanted and infernalize them, and only 5% is spent on paternalistic

"rehabilitation" of the waste product which took years to produce. Most inmates are so wrecked by the prison system that afterwards they can never adjust to society outside again and therefore return to prison. Millions of people who need psychiatric treatment as a result of the ghetto's institutionalized, chronic, and self-perpetuating pathology are in our system being locked up instead of getting treatment. 25% of prison inmates are mentally retarded because of their impoverished backgrounds and lead poisoning. Almost half of the inmates are black, although they make up only 13% of the community outside. When in addition it is proven (by the New York Times) that blacks on average receive twice as long sentences as whites for the same offense, you begin to understand why many blacks see themselves as political prisoners.

It may seem that I present blacks as helpless victims, but how else will we see the executioner in ourselves. Throughout this book our racist subconsciousness has tried to disclaim responsibility by thinking that the problem, after all, is probably due to black innate inferiority. But we forget that black West Indian immigrants, who were not forced to internalize our racism, are doing just as well as whites in America. So when native blacks - deeply shaped by our racism - have only half the white income and make up more than half of all prison inmates, yes, then they are as a matter of fact helpless victims of our racism. The images of broken and apathetic people in this book are not the images our oppressed - struggling to maintain a little dignity - like to see of themselves. But oppression always has more human defeats than heroes, and if we do not understand those who are too weak to resist, how will we ever realize how destructive our racism is? These prisoners did resist. What made them choose our ultimate punishment was not actual need or hunger, but uncontrollable anger - a vicious cocktail of hatred and self-hatred which made them despise everything. They are only the visible symptoms of our oppression, for their anger is shared by all black Americans. Their anger constantly comes out and defeats them, makes them stumble where others easily succeed, - and instead of looking at the cause of their anger we then blame their lack of success on themselves. We don't understand the ghetto monster we create - therefore turn our backs to it, put it in prison or perhaps one day concentration camps - and destroy our own society in the process.



But let us not forget that for those who can adjust to this gulag-system, our society from inside our barred windows and fear-ridden deserted streets can be experienced as the freest in the world. A book like this will be greeted with open arms because the system is so strong and massive in its oppression that all criticism is lost upon it and becomes entertainment or religious escape. Only when the system meets organized resistance does it come down on you hard - as I saw it with my best friend in California - Popeye Jackson. By the time I met Popeye, I had reached the end of my journey. As a vagabond I loved the freedom to lose myself in the individual person, and naively believed that I could keep myself free of racism. But now I began to feel that my vagabonding had been a privileged white flight like so many others. The conceptual framework I am here using had become a necessary hope and means for me to survive in a world of oppression, but I now realized that there were other truths and more spiritual ways of perceiving human life as well. I felt that I was exploiting the suffering with my camera and it was beginning to make me sick since I sensed my own growing racism. It is not pleasant to discover negative thinking in oneself, but racism is not a voluntary matter in a racist society, and I knew I was more than just a racist. So rather than feeling ashamed, my racism made me feel part of America and I had to take responsibility for it by becoming an active anti-racist and helping to change the country I had come to love. The more I had come to love America, the harder it was just to remain a silent observer of its self-destruction. While I had photographed, dozens of my friends had gone off to prison - friends who had acted in protest against the system, many without thinking



about it - while I had just been thinking and photographing without acting. Therefore, I put my camera away and began to work with Popeye. He proved to me that also the victim is more than just a victim and capable of offering resistance. Popeye was proud of his lower ghetto background and always dressed in typical hustler fashion. He was for me the personification of the underclass with all its openness, violence, sexism, beautiful culture, generosity - all the things we in Europe consider stereotypically American. Popeye had himself been on a long journey. He was only 10 years old when he first went to jail and afterwards spent 19 years in prison. During the long confinement Popeye's political consciousness matured, and through Marxism he felt he could free himself from the intensified self-hatred that imprisonment usually gives.



He did not want Marxism to be just an individual psychological escape or purely analytical system as it is for so many European students but began organizing the other inmates into the United Prisoners Union of which he later became president. He felt that it is only possible to escape the ghetto by collectively changing the entire system. He quickly became a well-known figure and was, for instance, chosen as a mediator between the Hearst family and the S.L.A., the terrorist group who kidnapped Patricia Hearst and the media. Popeye's influence on the prison inmates increased and I was told that the police had tried to get him back in prison by planting dope in his car just as on occasion they had threatened him with death. Working in the Union we became closer and closer bound to each other. When he saw the big holes in my shoes, he one day gave

me a pair of boots without a word. Though I had stopped photographing, he persuaded me to take these pictures to the prison newspaper. I promised never to tell how I smuggled the camera in, but since the closet gay sheriff Hongisto is now dead, I can today reveal that it was Hongisto who illegally jailed me in appreciation for my work in the gay movement. Here it made a deep impression on me to see how Popeye constantly tried to organize the inmates under these inhuman conditions that stifled all private life, and where the system used almost any means to break people down. Exactly because I was totally paralyzed myself in these surroundings, it made an indelibly strong impression on me to see how Popeye got the other inmates to read political literature even though it was impossible to imagine how anyone could read in this ominous noise and constant fear. Many inmates told me that Popeye had made a similar impression on them, because he was not a "fake intellectual revolutionary," but clearly one of their own. Although an extremely promising organizer, Popeye was naturally not without severe human failings that disturbed many of the volunteers in our group, particularly the women. They had learned a lesson from the naive left of the 60's, which had romantically embraced all kinds of rapists as the "avant garde of the revolution." Some of them left our group because of Popeye's sexism. I had severe clashes with them over these issues, because I felt that their views were just another form of racism - a modern up-to-date radical way of saying: I don't like the underclass. "If you think a man can come out of 300 years of slavery and 19 years of prison as an angel, you are fools. Even Martin Luther King was sexist, Coretta says today. If you think that a man should be denied a powerful leadership role until, he in every respect lives up to white liberal norms, then you are as powerful an enemy of affirmative action as the worst Southern racist. If you turn your backs on Popeye now, then it is not their racism which forces him back into a ghetto, but yours," I said. Having myself ended up in the sexist trap (page 274), I was a great defender of Popeye. But thereby I was also betraying him: just as whites do not put enough pressure on each other's racism, I and the other men in the group did not try to change Popeye's sexism, if only to allow him to be a more powerful organizer. Having myself ended up in the sexist trap, I was a great defender of Popeye. But thereby I was also betraying him: just as whites do not put enough pressure on each other's racism, I and the other men in the group did not try to change Popeye's sexism, if only to allow him to be a more powerful organizer.





Outside the prison an effective campaign was started to get Popeye released, and at long last he was freed. We threw a big “back in the world” party for him. Popeye had often warned me against FBI-infiltrators among the members of the Union. Having always trusted anybody I met in my vagabonding, I took his warnings lightly as normal ghetto paranoia. For some reason I had difficulty imagining anybody I knew being secret police. Therefore it totally knocked me out to experience the terror the system utilized against Popeye’s union and to realize that one of my friends whom I had most faith in indeed was from the secret police. It was Sara Jane Moore, who was a bit older than the others, and whom we thought was a nice, sympathetic, although slightly confused, housewife from the suburbs. It therefore shocked us when suddenly in the newspapers she openly confessed that she was a spy for the FBI, but now had pangs of conscience because during our work she had been converted to Popeye’s views. Two months later she was close to changing world history, when she attempted to shoot President Ford on Union Square. She had such terrible torment over what she had brought about by her FBI work that she wanted to get revenge on the FBI by assassinating the very head of the system, as she said. Billy, one of my neighbors in the building where I lived with the transvestites and who was dating the leader of the gay movement, Harvey Milk’s lover Joe, knocked the gun out of Sara Jane’s hand and saved the president’s life. Billy was therefore invited to the White House but was turned down when Milk made him openly confess that he was gay. (After 32 years in prison, Sara Jane was released in 2007 and I was contacted by film and TV companies who were to use my pictures of her).

So what had happened between these two episodes, which could throw her so off balance? Saturday night, a couple of days after our party, Popeye was scheduled to come over to select the prison pictures for our paper. He called up, however, and said he did not have time as he was going to

a meeting. We arranged that I should come to the meeting later in the evening and drive home with him. Only two hours beforehand I got a phone call asking me not to go home with Popeye. If I had not received that phone call, I would not have been in a position to watch the news next evening:

*“Good Evening, this is the Sunday edition of the eleven o’clock Eyewitness News. The San Francisco Police continue their investigation into the execution-style slaying of prison reformer Popeye Jackson, who was head of the United Prisoners Union. Jackson was sitting in a car with Sally Voye, a school teacher from Vallejo, when the shooting took place 2:45 Sunday morning. Police say they died immediately.*

*- Now, like many of you I love dogs. I am concerned about them. That’s why I feed my dogs Alpo. Because meat is a dog’s natural food. That’s what they love most. And Alpo’s meat dinner has beef products that are really good for them. Not a speck of cereal. Not a better dog food in the world.*

*(Police): Reports indicate that the killer first fired a shot that smashed a window of the car. The first bullet hit Miss Voye and then Jackson. The gunman was not there to rob the people. Wallets were intact.*

*This sounds like an execution-style slaying?*

*- You could call it that. We’re working on that as a possible theory. We have to rule out robbery.*

*- Police say a number of people went to their windows when they heard the shots. Police will begin questioning them tomorrow to find the killer.*

*- Here’s how it starts. You see someone take that first mouth-watering bite and you’ve just got to get a taste for yourself. In this world there’s only one fried chicken that always tastes so finger lickin’ good: And you’ve got to say HEY! It’s a Kentucky Fried Chicken day!”*

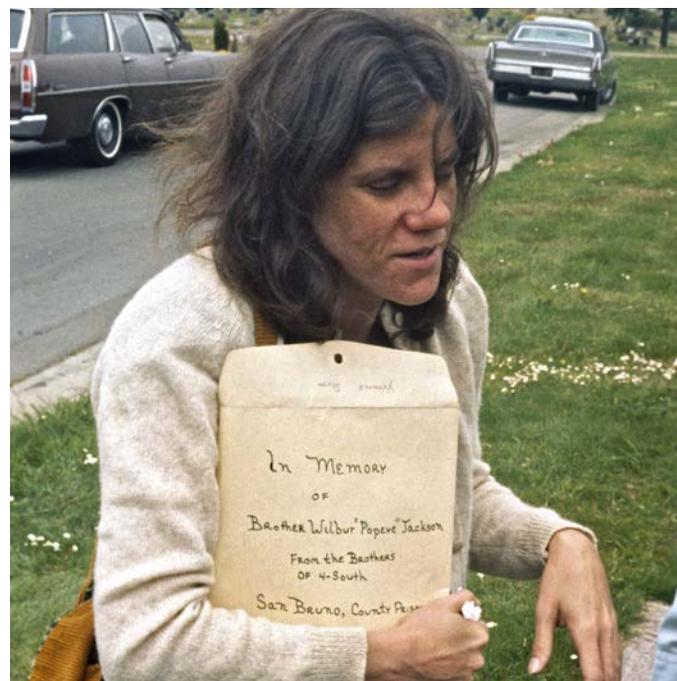
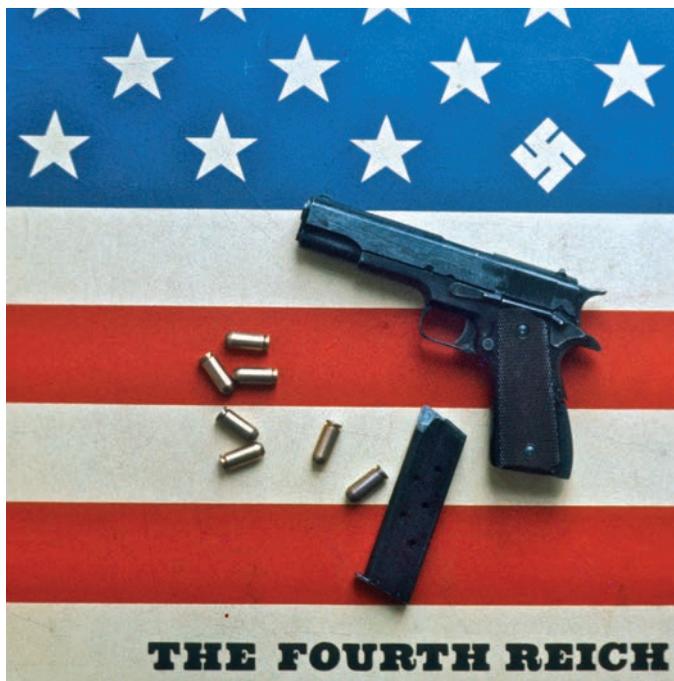
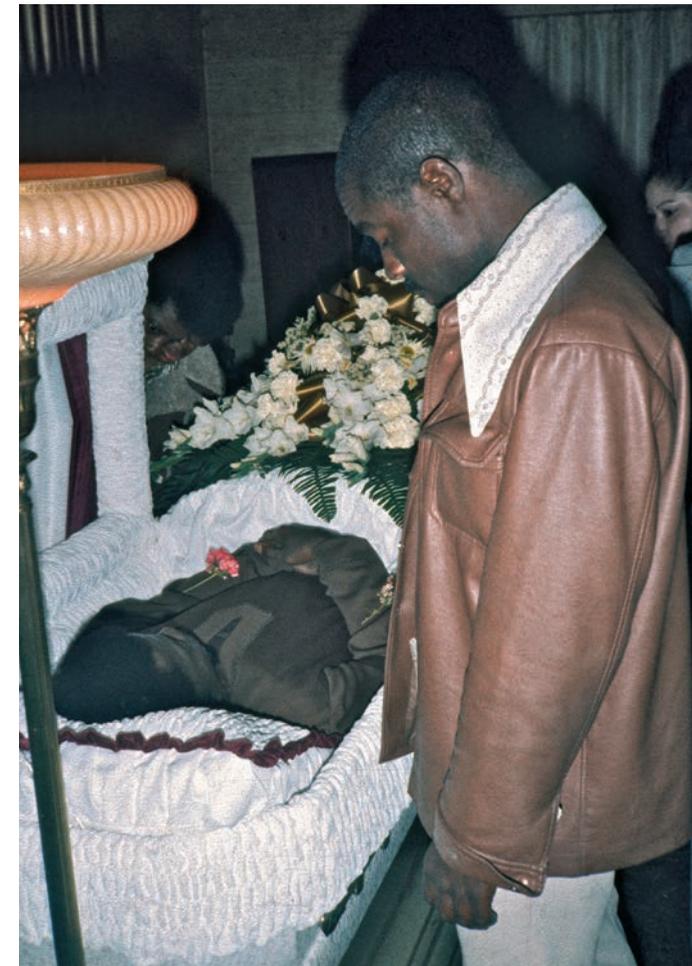
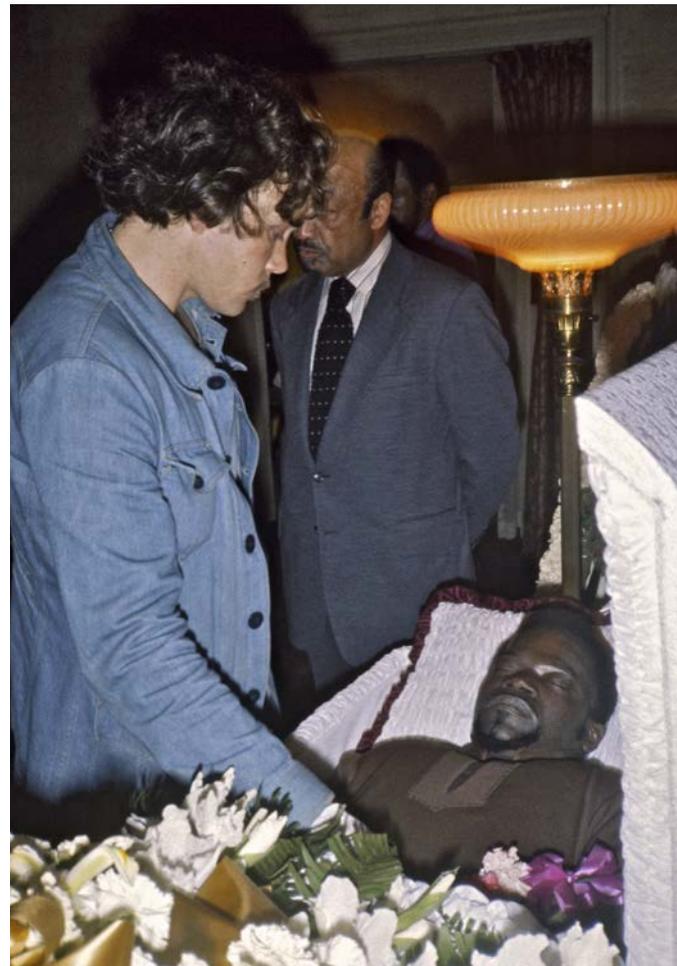
Although it was my best friend I saw lying in a pool of blood on TV only a few hours after I myself would have driven home with him on that disastrous night, I was unable to cry the first four days - so unreal did it all seem to me in this peculiar American mixture of dog food and fried chicken commercials. The system with its media can do anything totally unimpeded, for it is capable of making us forget in the next instant what we have just seen.

Not until the funeral did it dawn on me what had happened and I totally broke down in tears. Then I had also come to realize that Sally, whom I liked so much, who worked with ghetto kids and prisoners though she was from the safe suburbs, and who even had tried to work on Popeye’s sexism - then it dawned on me that this fantastic woman had also been murdered for no other reason than that she would have been a witness to the assassination. And naturally I also knew what my destiny would have been if I had been with them that night.

Here is Sally seen with Popeye a few days before their murder. It has still not been established who assassinated them but now since Sara Jane Moore has been sentenced to life and in an interview with Playboy has given her harrowing account of her work for the FBI and how the FBI began threatening her life when they realized she was being converted to Popeye’s ideas, few of us have any doubts. Popeye had often warned me of ex-convicts who could have struck special early release deals with police. But Popeye was never afraid of dying and the San Francisco Chronicle later revealed that police previously had threatened to kill him. In his last article, which he wrote while I was with him in prison, he said: “We ought not to fear death. We are the convicted class and only through revolution can we win our freedom and the freedom of all oppressed people in the world.”

At the funeral (where I was the only photographer invited by his family) his many union workers and prison friends - Indians, blacks, Chicanos and whites - kissed him farewell, while others will only be able to get “back in the world” to see his tomb a generation from now. His mother, who every single week during the 19 years had brought him cake in prison, suffered a total breakdown in front of the coffin.



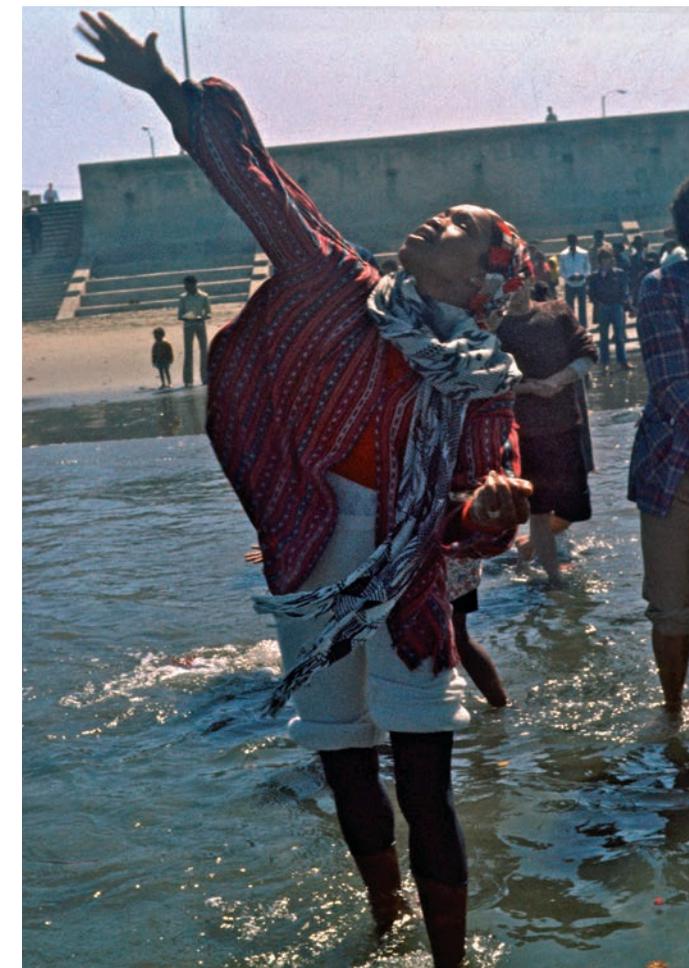
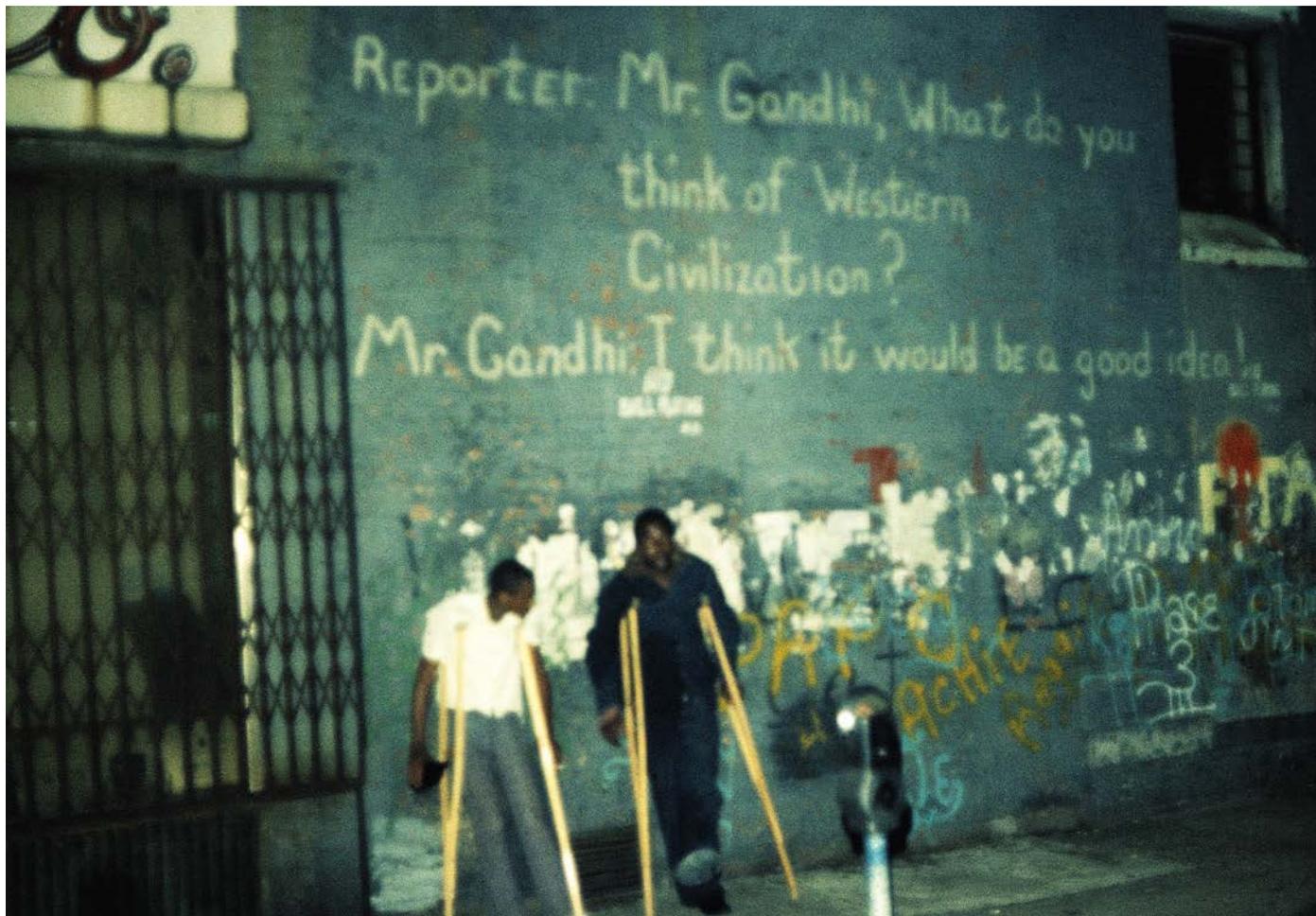


*There is a man  
who stands in all our way.  
And his greedy hands  
reach out across the world.  
But if we slay this man  
we will have peace in this land  
and this glorious struggle  
will be done.*

*And what we want is just to have  
what we need  
and to live in peace with dignity.  
But these few old men,  
no they won't break or bend  
so it's only through their death  
that we'll be free.*

*And if we dare to fight  
for what, for what we want  
sparing none  
who are standing in our way:  
The fight is hard  
and long  
but we can't, we can't go wrong,  
for our liberation will be won.*

*And we can meet again  
if we do not die  
for that is the price  
that might be paid,  
But if we pass this way  
we shall meet some day,  
we shall meet again  
if we do not die...*



But how long... how long... ?  
 Popeye was the last friend I wanted to say goodbye to in this way. With the murder of Sally and Popeye I could take it no longer and fled the country. All my feelings and senses had been killed. I had lost 12 of my best friends in the senseless American violence, and numerous others had disappeared into prison for life. I loved the American people more than any other I had ever known. I wished in the end to become a part of it and did not mean to leave the country.

The human warmth I had encountered everywhere, which immediately had invited other immigrants in with open arms, was a fresh breeze in my life after the detachment and reticence I had known in Europe. But the warmth and openness of the Americans stood in such glaring contrast to the cruel and inhuman ghetto system that had grown out of their own deep pain. I had been on the highest peaks and I had been in the deepest shadowy depths with one foot in the grave of America. Everywhere it hurt me to see the increasing fossilization and fortification this warmth and openness is

subject to - a warmth from which I could still benefit as a foreigner, but which has long ago petrified into fear, hatred, and bitterness towards fellow-Americans, who live more isolated and in greater alienation from each other than any other people I know of.

But the violence goes on - the violence against all oppressed people. With our own ghettoization of the world's poorest and most exposed people through our climate racism and unfair trade policies we kill more each year than were killed in World War II and will drive millions toward our shores as refugees. Yet another body are we ready to cover up, but just how many are we prepared to dispose of in our fear of a deeper personal change which better serves the interests of the entire world population. This man was murdered where I lived in New York right across from a ghetto mural (seen behind the shroud) which he perhaps never paid attention to and perhaps was unable to read. On a late evening we find at the same wall two crippled veterans who have been out defending "Western civilization" - and who now have to beg in the streets.

The scene is changing. The colonized peoples - their backs to the wall - now must serve as colonizers and oppressors and are sent out over the oceans they came from. Our inhumanity has come full circle. We have finally managed to create them in our civilization's own sanguinary image. Yet another child has been killed in the ghetto violence - five years old. The ring is closing. How much more suffering are we still going to witness - or to cause? We don't know. Once again a black mother must throw her child in the ocean - as she did from the slave ships 400 years ago... the lifetime of our system... The ocean shall lead her back to the shores her ancestors once came from when we needed them. We throw our uncertainty in the ocean with the ashes of our victim....

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

*Ship Ahoy! Ship Ahoy!...  
Can't you feel the motion of the ocean ?  
Can't you feel the cold wind blowing by?  
We're just... we're just... .  
riding on the waves...  
riding on the waves...*



## A personal afterword

*Beyond the ideas of right or wrong there is a field.  
I shall meet you there.*

Muhammed Rumi, Muslim poet 1207-1273

Since this hook was first published in Europe, I have had many inquiries from readers about what came out of it. I sailed back to Denmark with 15,000 pictures. I was terribly disillusioned and had no confidence that anything would come out of the photos. Yet after all the misery I had known in America, it was luxurious to experience the security people here enjoyed in times of recession. I suddenly realized to what a degree I had been molded by this institutionalized security that enabled me to survive where others often could not. I presented a slideshow in my father's church for local people. They were shocked. Soon I had invitations from schools all over the country. A newspaper organized tours with thousands of people lining up to see the show. The government donated the use of a theater free of charge for a summer. A publisher asked me to remake the show into a book - adding that it could make me a millionaire. I therefore had a lawyer set up a foundation to ensure that the money would be channeled into constructive programs. First I was dragged to the international book fair in Frankfurt, "put up on the block" and sold to several countries before I had even written the book. I still used my old vagabond principle of "saying yes", but soon discovered that in the business world I had to say no. The publisher wanted to sell the book to an American publisher. This I categorically rejected. America was a holy land for me. I wished to return as a vagabond and did not want a book to destroy my anonymity. I wrote the book in two weeks. Annie, who often came around to visit me, recalling how I had been completely paralyzed during our ghettoization, was astonished seeing my sudden writing ability: "I had given up all hope that anything creative would ever come out of you."

The first 10,000 books sold out in two weeks. I sent a long letter to all my friends in America about the success. Tony was so moved that he called me up crying to congratulate me. I invited him over to help run the show and later, when a number of other blacks joined us, we formed the work collective American Pictures. We used the show to educate people about the increasing racism in Europe towards foreign workers, but with the strong emotional effect the show had on Europeans, it naturally caught the interest of the left and the Eastern bloc. Readers in Russian papers lamented all their "stupid French gangster movies" and

asked why they couldn't see American Pictures. We felt, however, that it was our duty to clean up our own mess in the West - to see the beam in our own eye. Yet with our open house and volunteers from all over the world living with us we were vulnerable to outside influence. One West German volunteer whom we loved for his warmth, wit and hard dedicated work turned out to be an East German spy and was later exchanged in the big spy-swap to East Germany along with the West German Chancellor Willie Brandt's private secretary.

The furious development transforming me in two years from vagabond to a tiny pawn in the international power game threw me into confusion and depression. I began to use lawyers to prevent the book, which I had come to see as a Frankenstein monster, from being published in more countries. As a result more than 8 years went by before I was ready to publish it in more countries - including the U.S. What I reacted most against was the increasing realization that it was the "system" I had been against as a vagabond which earned most on my "story", publishers, media, transportation, lawyers, etc, while there was hardly anything left over for the poverty projects we had set up. It is easy for any artist to have success based on voyeurism and exploitation of the poor. What matters is to make a success of the success: a success for the poor themselves! This, I soon learned, is a much more difficult and long-lasting process. I was just one more example of the sick American dream about the poor immigrant, arriving with \$40 in my pocket and "working my way from rags to riches". No matter what the intention is of the millionaire, who sits with a Godlike "right" to determine how to use the profit, any form of charity can only be indulgence. However, with the help of the many volunteers who joined the work collective, American Pictures gradually found a somewhat responsible path. With hardly any salary we are usually housed and fed "barefoot style" by teachers and organizers in the countries we tour in - or even fed at home by the many visitors coming to my apartment - so that everyone connected feels involved in increasing the funds for the projects we started in Africa. This has proved a rewarding way of converting guilt-inspired charity into a commitment of genuine solidarity.

## REUNION WITH AMERICA

*(From a Danish newspaper article)*

It is one of the most euphoric moments in my life to get back to America to present the show. American Pictures describes the shadow-sides of the country, but, as with war veterans, I find that it is these very sides I had first repressed, so that I had slowly developed a rosy image of America. It is a bit terrifying how quickly the human mind can repress the suffering, and I realize that I must get in touch with it again in order not to lose my commitment. But the change from vagabond to some kind of multi-national show-business man does not easily permit that. You stand with a foot in each camp and constantly have to redefine yourself in your new surroundings. Your sense of time is completely different. As a vagabond in New York I could spend days or weeks waiting for Danish friends to send me 25-øre coins that worked as subway tokens in order to get around this only city in America in which you can't hitchhike. Now I gladly pay 90 cents not to have to worry about being arrested, but the guilt and fear still ride with me in the subway. And I still jump each time I pass a newspaper in a garbage can although I can now afford to buy one. The loss of the more human side of the vagabond role seems even more sad. I now chuck the beggars a dollar in my rush to 400 waiting students in the university, although I know it is human togetherness the beggar needs. Where before nothing seemed more essential than listening to people I was with in the moment, I now have a commitment to somebody I don't even know. I choose the audience, but with some salty remarks about the insane idea of spending \$800 to fly a foreigner halfway around the globe to show them people they can go out and see in their own town. Yet, in my busy insensitivity I can hardly see the suffering in society any more myself. I must bitterly admit what I always felt before, that you should never trust a person who is inside the system about those who are pushed outside, for they simply don't exist for him/her.

Thus what I am trying to say may even be counterproductive. In interviews with commercial media - more accountable to "salability" than educational content - my "message" constantly drowns in commercials or is censored out, so people only remember the sensational aspects of a white man "surviving in black ghettos" for five years, etc. In other words, it plays into their racism, making the ghettos and blacks look really dangerous. Thus the

system seems to absorb my product with astonishing speed. One of the first shows is in Jane Fonda's home, where a black guest turns out to be a Hollywood promoter and immediately wants to "blow it up big". First he wants to get feedback and financial backing and invites Marvin Gaye, Jesse Jackson, Muhammad Ali's family along with people from CBS and NBC for a special screening. I overhear a casual remark from the NBC man: "If we take out the leftist slant we've got a new "Roots" here," and recall the warnings from civil rights groups in the universities: "For God's sake, don't let the big networks buy it." The next days I spend in air-conditioned luxurious skyscraper offices in Beverly Hills among cigar-smoking promoters and lawyers. They have a big map with 76 cities where they estimate the show will "make a profit". They have already made up a list of famous film stars to be invited to the Hollywood premiere and sit calculating with profit and loss tables how much money they should put into P.R. All along they take it for granted that I am interested in success and try to exploit the ambivalence and vanity I, like most people, have in such a situation: "We'll make you a superstar!" Suddenly I realize I am being tempted to betray all the people in the show - selling them out by making mere entertainment of them. I ask the promoters to give me a month to get around to all the people and get their feelings. They ask me for a meeting place in the South so they can fly a vice president of Universal Pictures out to see the show. I tell them I will send the address later, but am already so frightened by all the prospects that I know I will not meet with him. While the question revolves in my head whether I have already become a court jester of "the haves" or "the system", I take off.

Traveling around to visit my friends in a car also affects my previous vagabond love for America, which now seems like an endless, unexciting succession of repetitions- Burger Kings, Holiday Inns, gas stations with noise from empty TV game shows, facades concealing equally stereotypical human types, whom I in my auto-loneliness have no desire to contact and hardly can communicate with. Many Europeans tell me that until they read my book they never had any desire to see America. My intense longing hack for America, the warm feelings the word America each time roused during my absence, are gone now that I have become "Americanized" with a car, with motels "sanitized for your protection," with travelers' checks and with an emotionally



*With Kandy and Selma in Windhook, Namibia.*

uncharged "benign neglect" relationship to the people around me. I suddenly pity all those Americans who in this way have been confined from seeing the real beauty of their country.

But the reunion with my old friends makes the first revisit a deeply emotional experience: the mutual joy when they find themselves in the hook, their surprise that something came out of the casual way I had photographed. If there is electricity, they see the show in their old rotten shacks. To be able to transport equipment worth \$10,000 into the more unsafe ghetto areas, I have dumped trash all over it, torn up the inside of the car, scraped off exterior paint, and heat up the car.

Lecturing for two years in ignorance about how the depicted poor would themselves perceive it, it is urgent for me to get feedback from all the involved persons and get their approval of spending the money in Africa. To my surprise even the children are quiet during five hours when I nervously show it the first time for a group of welfare mothers. "Why surprised? It is their world and future you are describing." Afterward I am moved to tears when they all stand in silence embracing each other, and I deeply hope the show can one day help make their future better.

For some it has become better: Virginia Pate, who had sewn quilts to prevent me from freezing in her shack (page 34) has now received a trailer from her son in the army. It is the fourth time I have been hack, but the first time I can really express my gratitude when I present her a copy of the book. I spend some days with Mary, whose house burned down, this time in her lovely 100 year old shack with both water and electricity and a piece of land. We still have the strong attraction toward each other and she expresses surprise, but also joy, that I have included the firebombing in the book after the indifference of the local police. (Later I stay with her in 1985. She is married to a white man, who is

so frightened by the earlier events that he always carries a pistol. They feel the narrow-mindedness has gotten worse and have both lost most of their friends and their jobs because of the marriage.)

Many of the people in the book are hard to find because their shacks have burned down from more natural causes: "stove fires," as at Anna King's (page 66), and Virginia Brown's (page 24), where sparks from the stove pipe caught the cardboard walls and severely burned the boy. The cover photo, of Martin Luther King's and Robert Kennedy's faded dream, also burned up in flames from the stove below. But the owners, Willie and Julia Williams are well in a nursing home, where everyone gathers around them when they are proudly handed the book, and the local press does a full-page story about how they ended up in a European book. Helen Wilson (page 92) also is better off, and I managed to trace her to a nearby town, where she now works in a meat factory.

Most of my friends, however, are worse off. The woman in Jacksonville (page 208) now lives in a wet rotten room - lonely and forsaken. Lefus Whitley (page 97) lies on the floor in his malodorous shack dead drunk. Linda's family (page 142) has disintegrated. The father lives alone in a shack. Their old shack was torn down when a white farmer wanted the land. Having no shoes he walks barefoot five miles every day. He is now an alcoholic and tells me about all the happy years when the family was together. Linda's mother is mentally ill and lives with a sister. Linda and her brother live with a foster mother so strict that she will not let me speak with her or take her to Disney World. (When I return in 1985 I arrive at a pool room late at night and a well-dressed black man steps out speaking with a foreign accent: "I had a dream about you. God has sent you. You're looking for Linda. Linda needs you." Without knowing her or me the mysterious man takes me to a joint in a town far away. There she is, totally wrecked by alcohol or dope. Her father had frozen to death on the road. I am shocked and saddened, drive off weeping for hours and sleep by the roadside somewhere that night.) At least five of the people have been murdered. 98-year-old Willie White, a few months after my idyllic photo (page 89), shot his wife at the fireplace and died himself three months later from sorrow. Sam (page 61 ) was beaten to death by police while in jail for being drunk. Daisy Thomas, mother of the sleeping children on page 68 was murdered in a family quarrel; Mike (page 178, right), who had stolen

money from his girlfriend, was killed by her. Others, such as Celia whom I was so fond of when I lived with her, have become murderers. She is now underground, impossible to find. Many others are in prison. The marriage between Linda and Lewis (page 202) broke up when he was sentenced to 16 years for armed robbery. And Larry, on page 249, who had just shot his brother when I lived with him, two weeks afterward shot another person and got 16 years before he was 16 years old. One of my dearest friends, Emely (page 129), committed suicide after a luxurious, but unhappy life with black servants. When I arrive at the plantation home her daughter has already heard about the show from friends on the West Coast. The playboy millionaire (page 130), who originally picked me up in his huge Winnebago, was so influenced by my vagabond philosophy: "Security is being on the road with no money," that he sold his business, drove his Jaguar out to Interstate 95, parked it and hitch-hiked off. He ended up in Africa, where he made his first black friend ever. His home town is 50% black. (He ended up spending seven years on the road).

Mrs. Barnett (page 122) has already heard about the show from Danish visitors, and when I tell her how amused Europeans are by her remark about how she misses the slaves, she laughs and says we have no basis for understanding it since we never had slavery. (This is not true. Danish slavery was as cruel as American - except for one interesting point: The Danish West Indies had forced integrated schooling to "prepare" the black children for freedom... more than a 100 years before America.) The banker in Alabama is even richer now and finds a nice "date" for me to show his friendship. She invites me to dinner in a private club on a mountain. Here the entire local elite is present, including the mayor. It is to become the emotional climax of my first revisit to America. During dinner I entertain my date with vagabond experiences, which greatly amuse her, and I bring up even my worst adventures. When I talk about the FBI's murder of my friend Popeye Jackson, however, she suddenly tries to quiet me down, whispering: "Don't you know you're sitting right next to the director of the FBI. Clarence Kelley?" My heart jumps right up to my throat. The man at my side is actually the chief of the FBI himself. For the next hour I am totally paralyzed with thoughts like "Did he order the murder of Popeye? He is at any rate responsible." This same day (it now seems almost predestined) I have bought a tape recorder and with a microphone in my sleeve and a bit



First revisit with Dorothy Williams and grandchild (page 136).

more wine I get up the courage to ask. He strongly denies the accusation, but admits that Sara Jane Moore was a paid informer. Gradually my feelings boil over and I shout things like "You murdered my friend Popeye!" I realize I have revealed too many details when in a somber tone he says, "Tell me, are you accusing me of murder?" Frightened, I beat a retreat, but when he gets up to talk to another FBI man in the corner, I get so scared that I persuade my date to make it look like we're going to the washroom, after which we disappear. My heart is pounding the rest of the night, but not for my date any more. Was it reality or illusion? She reassures me that Kelley really is on a visit to examine charges of police brutality against blacks. I wonder whose side he is on, being dined by the white elite in a private club to which blacks have no access? Again and again I hear his warm, calm, paternal voice, so convincing that at least I believe he can't have ordered the killing. The experience of meeting the human being behind the system, which I saw as a great conspiracy in the bitterness after Popeye's death, is so great that I can't fall asleep that night. A peculiar feeling of something higher up having brought us together brings me to deep calmness and contentedness over the ring having thus closed. Having fulfilled an inner desire to meet the human being behind the most impenetrable of the system's facades is an experience so strong and overwhelming that I must let this warm and amiable man answer my charges: "All I can tell you is that it is trumped up, blown out of proportion... You must take into consideration who makes up the FBI... look at me... could you imagine me killing anybody"? We are human beings like you and everyone else... We can't think of killing or giving orders for it. that you must understand... But as you know there are a lot of people who sit and make money inventing such stories. Yes, there are even people who make a living writing books about how the FBI assassinates people...

## FROM AMERICA TO AFRICA

In 1982 the designer of this book, Kitte Fennestad, and I went to Africa on a government grant to see the project we had helped finance in Zimbabwe; the Nyafaru school. The school's 1200 pupils used to walk eight hours daily until young Danish volunteers built dormitories. Zimbabwe's newspapers and radio had announced we would visit the remote mountain school, so we got a warm reception with speeches and a meal of fish from their new trout farm. In my own speech I linked the problems of black America to their own building of an integrated society, but clearly agricultural problems were more on their mind.

Later we hitchhiked all over Zimbabwe to find other projects we could support. Everywhere we met poor and badly dressed Danes building health clinics and schools under hopeless conditions, often dumped in the bush with no tools to start making bricks with the locals. Often hitchhiking all the way from Denmark they receive only \$340 a year. I envied them, but having long questioned my own deeper drive behind American Pictures, they forced me to ask myself if it wasn't the same Danish patronizing guilt that had driven these young Danes down here which for instance makes Danish tourists give visits to Harlem and San Quentin top priority on trips to America. And if so, could anything constructive come out of such racism (p. 11) ? Capital and know-how need to be transferred to the Third World, but what mechanism can prevent this encounter from destroying both partners? In America it is generally accepted that guilt is unconstructive in dealing with oppressed minorities. Not least because we assume that our ancestors were the oppressors, not us. But is guilt really negative when it dawns on us that we are ourselves the actual oppressors? Guilt is one of the cements that binds us together and keeps us human. If it occurs to you that you are doing something which is injuring someone else, guilt compels you to do something to fix it, to repair the bond. The failure to feel guilt is the basic flaw in the psychopath, who is capable of committing crimes of the vilest sort without remorse or contrition. American society seems more guilt-free than the Danish, but has it led to a more just society? Guilty fear (the fear of being caught) rather than guilt (which prevents you from beating up defenseless old ladies) much too often seems to restrain Americans from crime - and vice versa lead to a strong distrust of fellow citizens and call for law and order.



With Popeye. Six years after his 6-year old son was at the film opening.

Yet Americans seem more sensitive to guilt responses than Danes, but isn't it often as a rationalization for non-commitment -or fear that such "weakness" may lead the victim to manipulate you, to become "uppity"? Can guilt be used without leading to patronization and victimization? I cannot answer all these questions, but they must be raised. If these young Danes were driven by guilt their actual working conditions soon forced them either to give up or enter into more constructive relationships with the Africans in which both partners learned from each other on even terms - not in a one-way communication from "above". Thus - no matter how unconstructive guilt is in a daily relationship - it is often the spark leading you into a situation where genuine solidarity can be learned.

On the other hand, no matter how committed and solidaric when they arrive, I soon found that the official experts sent out by the Danish (and other) governments soon end up, through their high salaries, in a lifestyle similar to that of the local racist whites or the previous colonial masters, with three or four servants and guards to protect their Volvos, TVs and whisky. Their technical expertise can in no way make up for the destructiveness of the racism I everywhere saw them develop in such a paternalistic relationship.

The Danish barefoot workers told us about a project we ought to support since it fell within our requirement of self-help which can avoid making the country dependent.. To get to Batsiranai we had to walk 20 km through the bush. There was an incredible determination in the cooperative of 180 former freedom fighters, who had received a huge farm from the government, and they had great future plans about helping other Africans create for themselves more of the commercial farms which have made Zimbabwe the only food exporting African nation. We later gave them a tractor and farm machines and promised to invest in an irrigation system.

Americans often ask why we don't support America's poor instead. We feel it is important that we in Europe become conscious of our responsibility towards our former colonies. We kept our colonies out in our back yards while the USA took them home, but the result is the same. To avoid a worldwide catastrophe in the 21st century, it is essential that we pool all resources to reverse the rapidly increasing inequalities in the world. A harmonious integrated Zimbabwe may also serve as an attractive model for the liberal whites in South Africa. Recently we took a more active stance against apartheid by helping to start a nursing school for Namibian refugees in Angola.

#### FINAL REMARKS, 1985

After being invited to the film festival in Cannes and Los Angeles with our new movie adaptation of the show, I went hitch-hiking with my 2-year old son to let him meet the people and the country I had come to love.

The 7.000 mile trip to the old ghettos was heart warming. My son was spoiled with cookies, ice cream and affection from the people you are now familiar with in the book. But white America had changed. People had become more selfish without the surplus I met in the early 70's. Not only in relation to vagabonds, but especially in an aggravated intolerance toward the underclass. Everywhere drivers spoke a racist language I only rarely heard on my first journey and everywhere it seemed that my old liberal friends were now trapped in fear, looking for short-sighted solutions. As a result, conditions of the underclass have worsened almost everywhere which shocked me as I, through moving around in fancy university circles, had been deceived into believing that conditions had gradually improved. Yet in this new fear-ridden climate it is fruitless or even detrimental to try to reconstruct in white America's mind a sense of guilt which leads to constructive participation as it did in the Martin Luther King era. American Pictures apparently is a powerful awareness raising tool, but until I began to understand my Danish tendency to communicate on a level of intense guilt and pity, it was hard for me to break through in the more conservative colleges. Better-off blacks, long suffering from being seen as criminals, resisted as much being seen as victims. Both views deny their humanity and make the white feel superior.

Without fully understanding how whites too are victimized it was sometimes hard to make students understand why they need to care about this issue. One woman in Houston



*FBI director Clarence Kelley.*

related to the audience how her best girlfriend until fourth grade was black. Yet her parents were instilling in her such paranoia about blacks that she started isolating herself from her friend. She then watched how the black girl as a result of this initial rejection from mainstream society first turned resentful and later became a more and more angry person. Confronted with this seemingly irrational anger, the white girl's artificial paranoia now became real, and they grew further and further apart until they - like the rest of America - ended up in twin societies - one locked up in uncontrollable anger, the other in uncontrollable fear. It had given her emotional troubles and guilt feelings, which had never healed. Fear and guilt woven together will almost inevitably produce the opposite mix of self-hatred and hatred in the underclass. Both are illnesses. Yet the white one is left untreated and is allowed to cripple and kill all around, while the black one is sent to prison at the first symptoms.

At my first show for black ex-convicts in a halfway house I noticed that many of them would leave the room and come back throughout the show. Later they said: "Hatred and self-hatred, not actual need, made us go out and victimize people. Now we understand what brought us here and are trying to put a lid over these feelings in order to integrate into society. But your show suddenly rips off that lid and brings it all back. We can't succeed if we're eaten up by anger, so it is not constructive for us. But, please, show it to all those whites out there who gave us all this anger!"

I often hear from white spectators: "OK, I see racism is a problem, but blacks must also do something to better themselves." These underclass convicts demonstrate clearly that this is exactly what blacks are doing. When they realize how destructive their illness is they are trying desperately to put a protective shield around themselves to avoid being re-infected. Those who are able to do it most effectively often are able to succeed in the white corporate world. Often at too great a cost to themselves, the underclass feels.

Many blacks thus suffer from self-denial. A great number

- especially of more successful blacks - state that they are only able to make it through this book with an extraordinary amount of pain. And they want to "burn it afterwards." No matter how supportative they might be they feel that it is part of that white social disease which never allows them to fully heal. In racism seminars on the corporate level they will usually stick together with the white executives the first day, but all of a sudden their suppressed anger breaks out to the astonishment of their white companions who had always seen them as slick well-polished "nice" blacks.

This sad situation could to a large extent be avoided if we as whites started treating our illness. I say "we" not only because I myself am an American now. My empathy for white America stems from having myself experienced a growing racism over the years. I think that only a super human being could avoid being infected in the present equilibrium. You don't have to be white to be infected. African kids in American schools often develop the same fear patterns when confronted with the anger of underclass blacks. But having myself also experienced the anger and despair such racism produces (and I am not even black has made me FEEL (what I otherwise only intellectually would have understood) that white people must change. We are all victims of this oppression, but to insist that we are equally powerless is a veiled rationale for not seeing the executioner in ourselves.

When I last visited Sandra Johnson (bottom page 205) who is one of the few of my friends in the underclass who has "made it" and has a university degree, during the discussion of my book I was involved in a quarrel between her and her boyfriend, a West Indian. The Jamaican spoke to me in the usual "pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps" condescending immigrant tone and rather directly blamed the black Americans for not making it, being lazy, etc.

Suddenly Sandra furiously interrupted: "You West Indians will scrub floors and do anything to make it in this country. It may be that you end up as president of the Ford Foundation and in most black top positions around here (New York), or as the first black movie stars (Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte) or presidential candidates (Shirley Chisholm). But I would never for anything in the world break my ass for the white man in order to get there. You have no pride and even elect white prime ministers back home, who support Reagan."

Sandra revealed here perhaps the core of the problem. Civil rights leaders continue talking about how "more jobs" will lift up the underclass, but ignore the fact that some



*With my son Daniel hitch-hiking through America's ghettos.*

Americans are too proud to participate in a system on white terms. West Indians as "free blacks" do not constantly define themselves in relation to whites. The American underclass, on the other hand, has internalized the oppression, and is forced to offer resistance all the time of the kind well known during chattel slavery: "spit in the glass of water before serving it for the slave master."

One of my black friends once took me to a group therapy session for exposed underclass criminals, and asked them to mention one thing they liked about themselves. Not one could come up with a single positive thing. My friend later said, "Our internalized racism prevents us from seeing clearly, makes us react negatively not only to whites, but to ourselves as well. We constantly stumble in the same places where West Indians can come in and walk erect. We jam up at job interviews, are hostile to whites, are locked up in "get by" behavior of "shuffling", "ignorant", "cool" or "tough", patterns imposed on us through centuries of oppression. Being daily victims of attacks and humiliation, the re-stimulated patterns draw us to play out these behaviors on others. Our self oppression further stimulates the oppressive sides of whites, who are as locked up by such patterns as we are." The vicious circle of oppression seems without end. But one thing is certain: my friends' work is a futile uphill battle without my support as a white. We cannot, wait for the hurt we as whites daily inflict on the underclass, the human destruction which our "innocent" power breeds, to disappear into the blue some far-off day in the future, when the underclass gets its possible reconstruction through some "affirmative action".

America is hopelessly behind other nations when it comes to "affirmative action" programs. To allow a few underclass students into higher institutions does not affect the black/white power imbalance at all. "Affirmative action" would be to hand over free of charge 12% of all economic power, ownership and decision making to the black community. Unrealistic? Perhaps in America, but then look at a capitalist country like Malaysia in which a similar master/

slave society had developed between the Chinese and the Bumiputras. Yet it took only one major riot to convince them to give more than 30% of all ownership and decision making to the slave caste, the Bumiputras, whom the Chinese had always looked upon as incapable, lazy, unmotivated, failing in school, etc., etc. I think Americans at least ought to study what other countries are willing to do. In his book "The Underclass" Ken Auletta advocates that the underclass must go to school to learn some skills. This I can only approve of. But when he does not simultaneously demand that the entire white population be put in school to learn about their racism, all it amounts to is an immense affront to the underclass yet another case of blaming the victim. As long as we as whites are allowed to run around freely and commit our devastating crimes on minorities, we will continue to steal their self-worth and human dignity - and thereby destroy a part of our own humanity. Even this book can be seen as a part of this destruction, since most blacks indeed do not need to be confronted with the worst cases our oppression creates. For those of them who have given up hope for change it is more motivating to identify with blacks who have been able to succeed in spite of the oppression than to identify with those who confirm the destructive effect of" oppression. But is there any possibility that we as whites can become aware of our responsibility if we are not confronted with the victims of our racism? Although most of the photos in the book show blacks, it should now appear that it is not a book about blacks or "black culture." It is about whites and a white state of mind in all its present brutality.

Although - or because - racism in America is institutionalized and historically conditioned to a higher degree than in other countries very little is done to combat it. The blacks in our group were surprised to see the children in Danish high schools and elementary schools being taught the works of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Bobby Seale and Angela Davis. In response to the increasing racism in the 70s toward foreign workers, education on racism has received a high priority among Danish teachers. In America you are lucky in most white high schools to run into a sermon by King.

Therefore it is essential that white Americans receive intensive education on racism from the first day in school. Many today are aware of the necessity for this and have started anti-racism seminars. I can warmly recommend Dr.



*My book seller, Nathaniel, who like others of my sellers was murdered.*

Charles King from the Urban Crisis Center in Atlanta, who often follows up my shows with seminars. To see the relief and gratitude participants express afterwards is ample proof how oppressed whites are.

If such expertise was utilized to train educators in a great national effort I am confident that the white problem can one day be solved. As for the issue of poverty I am of course proposing the welfare state. Study after study shows that it is just too costly not to have welfare. A Minnesota study recently showed that for every dollar saved on prenatal health care you end up paying 3-4 dollars afterwards in homes for mentally retarded, prisons etc. It is therefore my clear feeling both with racism and poverty that Americans can solve these problems WITHOUT having to give up anything except their stubborn and rhetorical resistance.

Now that you have this book in your hands, I hope that for you my journey was not in vain. But I shall admit that I don't really know how best to tell you, the American reader, about the suffering I find in America.

The more I travel there, the more I feel how different our mentalities are - and how little I know or understand America. I know that as long as I can learn something from you, I will continue vagabonding there. What I hate about this book is the lack of personal touch with you preventing me from responding to your reactions and learning from them. Without this touch all the misunderstandings that are the result of people only seeing each other as distant categories, nationalities, sexes and races can continue thriving. I therefore hope that we one day will meet on a more human level - that you will pick me up hitchhiking (no matter what shape or color I come in) just as you are always welcome in my home or that we may meet in active struggle trying to change the conditions which keep us separate from our fellow beings.

For those of you who are on vacation in Europe, I want to mention that every night in the summer I run American Pictures in English in a little theater in my apartment,

where I also have open house for travelers. Here you can personally experience how blacks and whites, Palestinians and Jews, Irish Catholics and Protestants. South Africans and Cubans, radicals and reactionaries, gays and straights. handicapped, mentally ill, murderers and even East German spies can live and sleep together in great harmony when outside their oppressive environments.

My final word must be for my friends in the underclass. Lecturing around America constantly now I am able to see most of you regularly. With some exceptions most of you are even worse off than when I met you first. I wish the rest of society could share the pain of coming back to Nelly (page 198), whom I so often stayed with, only to find her evicted from her project, unable to pay her rent of \$59 a month. Now she is one of New York's growing number of homeless. Or the pain of coming back to sharecroppers like Will (left 84) still standing there 11 years later in the evenings after working 57 hours for \$35 a week although his "bossman" has now painted his shack white. Or the pain after a luxury evening in a university of picking up a beat up man in the rain -he had waited for days for a ride and a meal after having escaped a slave camp while others only made it out on crutches after the guards broke their legs. Or the pain of sitting in the silent shame of Gegurthas deeply religious family and learning how she - like most sunshine stories in the book (244) - didn't make it and now is underground. Or the pain of finding Alphonso (200) in prison again and the family broken up. I had to smuggle part of the book into the prison, so he could approve the text. Or the pain of not finding those 19 friends who like Alphonso's brother have been murdered.

I hope that I will never betray the trust you have given me. It is my hope that your pictures will inspire some social change (in the way Jacob Riis did). But let us not be blind to the enormous forces we are up against. Several American publishers wanted to publish this book, but none of them had a single black employee. In order to channel the profit into the black community rather than strengthen such institutionalized racism, I have decided to let those of you who need a job and an income (or your children and others from the huge army of unemployed black children) sell the book whichever way you see fit, on the street, on campuses, or from door to door in white communities. Many of you are already out there selling it.

When I delivered the first load of hooks to Alphonso,

who is now out of prison, I was happy to see that many of the street people on his corner had already read his copy and especially liked "Ghetto Love". So warm was their reception, so eager were they in helping Alphonso sell it, so large the crowd, that several cars full of police suddenly came howling up, charged me with "inciting a riot" and ran me right out of town. People in the Baltimore area who want to buy the book will usually be able to find Alphonso on the corner of Broadway and Eager. In Philadelphia you can get the hook from Dorothy, Renee and Larry Yates, in whose house I photographed page 264, on 4225 Filbert. In Hartford, CT. from Leslie Manselle (top 171) 195 Westminster St. In New York from Brenda Taylor (bottom right 205), 4-21 Astoria Blvd. Apt. 6E. In South Carolina from the 104 year old Scye Franklin and daughter (72) Route 1. Box 276, Cope. In North Carolina from Lefus Whitley, jr. (top left 242) Rt. 1, Box 609, Middlesex. Readers can here buy additional copies to be used for gifts and thus help the people who helped make the book. Alphonso brought up the idea that all of us who made such great sacrifices to compile the hook (the reader should also know about all the fun we had together) should some day be brought together for a big party. I love the idea. If we could get funding for a permanent theater for the show in New York we could use the grand opening as an occasion. In the meantime I hope that through this book I will be able to find some of the friends I lost touch with over the years, especially the street people with no addresses whom I all too often have had to refind in prison. No matter what prison you may be in I will hitchhike or otherwise get to it.

*With love Jacob Holdt.*

American Pictures Foundation would like to thank the following song writers and owners for the use of lyrics: page 53, 59, Holly Near. Redwood Records; page 291 Elaine Brown, Jobete; page 169, 174, 177, 179 Stuart Scharf. Takya Music; page 144, 19, 293, 294, The O'Jays, Mighty Three Music; page 220, Robert Flack, Frank Music Corp.; page 166, Neil Diamond, Prophet Music, Inc.; page 211, Jimmy Cliff, Island Music; page 63, Jimmy Cliff, PPX Enterprises, Inc.; page 159, Eugene McDaniels, Sidney Seidenberg; page 249, Curtis Mayfield, Warner Brothers; page 154, 157. Eugene Record, Unichappell Music; page 135, Bill Withers, Interior Music.



*With Tony Harris on stage for many years.*

Note, information on this page is not valid any more.

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Four large scale posters of the photos on page 120, 121, 198 or 270: \$6 each (\$20 for four)

Additional copies of this book: \$14 for paperback plus \$1 postage (bookstores 40% discount, hardcover \$18), two copies \$28 (no postage), four copies \$50 (no postage), sets of more than 25 for schools etc. \$8 each. Halfway houses and institutions for unemployed ghetto youth can buy large quantities for \$5 each (production price) to be sold on the street for \$10 or best offer.

For Britain £10 U.K. paperback, £12 U.K. hardcover.

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