AFRO'S 1972 PRIZE WINNING YULE STORY

"Christmas In The Ghetto Like Any Other Day"

By MARIE M. P. COOKE

The setting is a sixth-floor two-room apartment in a near-condemned housing project on 180th St., New York. It's 10 p.m., Christmas Eve 1972 and a distressed 34-year-old mother of four holds her new-born baby against her breast. The woman, rocking her babe, looks at a dime-store picture on the wall of the Virgin Mary and begins to think.

'No Lawd, she wondered, "the Virgin Mary couldn't have known that things would still be the same in this day and time. No, they ain't no better. . .sugar coatin' here and there, but no better.

"That baby Jesus, did He know He was being born into a world where people can't even live together as brothers and sisters? While He was in that manager, you think He could have been thinkin' the world would be divided into two parts. . .black. . .white?"

Holding her child tighter, the woman continues to think out loud.

"And there ain't no love in this here world. Now they call it 'Black is beautiful; or 'love your brother', brothers don't love brothers. Just you look out there, junkies stealing from us "brothers and sisters", stealing for dope. . .killin' for dope.

* * *

"Brothers and sisters killin' each other. Is that love? Call that 'black and beautiful? That's jive, Lawd.

"I feel so miserable, I want to cry me a river. But I'm a stubborn, strong, proud, black woman and I won't shed another tear over something that ain't gonna change. I've seen my share of hard times and things ain't never gonna get no worse.

"I've go to move on, 'cause you won't let me be weak. I've got to be loving, because You won't let me be hatin'.

"I've go to move on, 'cause you won't let me stand still. Got to be black. . .can't be white."

Still staring into the eyes of the Virgin Mary on the wall, she's puzzled. She winders how she will tell her little ones why there are no gifts for them on Christmas morning.

* * *

"Yea, when the sun comes up and my children get up, I'm just gonna tell them that no Santa Claus slid down Baby Jesus' chimney with a bag full of trains, dolls and bikes.

"Gonna tell them that things just ain't no different now than they were back then; that the baby Jesus had to be born in a stable with a bunch of animals because they said there was 'no room' in the inn.

"Gonna tell them that in this world they live in where white is right and black is. . .well you know, that in this world where there's hate and more hate. . .and more hate, that Christmas in the ghetto is just like any other day."

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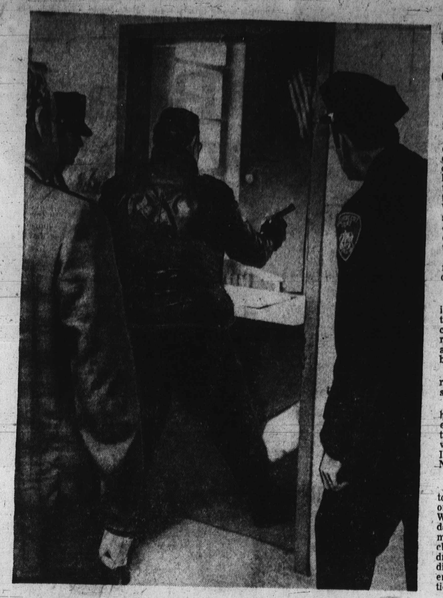

ON THE SPOT—One of several photos taken by NEWS AMERICAN photographer Paul Whyte during Western High School incident last Wednesday. Accompanying story tells of bravery of photographer who is Marine vet. Photo was taken os officer John Scales, with gun in hand, entered office where Robert L. Lewis Jr., the berserk custodian, later slain, weilded knife and held girl hostage. (NEWS AMERICAN PHOTO)

—Photogs

(Continued from Page B-16)

feet away from the shooting and there is always the chance of bullets ricocheting."

Viewers of WBAL's exclusive documentary on the event done by Johnson could see the lanky Whyte like a cat moving across the screen to get more pictures as police were firing. While a more sensible person would have ducked for cover, Whyte jumped at the opportunity to be first with the best pictures.

And Johnson held his camera steady throughout the ordeal.

* * *

Whyte served three years in the Marines as a photographer. He did not see combat action. He is married to a college sweetheart and has a seven-month-old baby girl.

Before joining the marines he was just a high school dropout.

After completing his hitch in the service he earned his A.B. degree at the University of Maryland where he graduated in 1971. Immediately he he joined the News American's staff.

* * *

WBAL's Assignment editor, Byron Roberts, called on Johnson to film the Western High School incident. The husky six-foot cameraman returned with exclusive footage of such drama that WBAL immediately fed it to their parent network, NBC, for national exposure.

Johnson's camera details how police tried to coax the custodian to free his hostage, 16-year-old student Tressa Griggs, and to surrender.

In poignant color, viewers watch the girl as she walks to freedom, sobbing hysterically, and then see police opening fire on Lewis. Shooting 15 times from point blank range, seven officers felled the custodian with eight bullets causing 14 wounds.

* * *

Johnson, father of a 4-year-old girl, had a different Vietnam experience than Whyte. He saw plenty of combat action as a photographer and was wounded during one engagement. After completing his three year service obligation, he moved to Baltimore where he joined the WBAL news team.

Of the event, Johnson said, "When the police started shooting I was really scared. I have never seen anything like that before, even in Vietnam."

Both men credit their marine experience for helping them keep their cool while 'under fire.'

—AFRO carrier

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AFRO both 'By running and walking," he says.

The trip is about a mile, he adds, and he got to this reporter's desk at 3:15 p.m. the day of our interview.

"I pick up from 150 to 200 papers on Tuesdays and 300 on Fridays.

"I have two boys who help me carry and sell the papers: Kendell Ricks, 14, and Carl Kent, 13."

The boys get a nickel each for selling a copy of the AFRO, while the paper gets the other 3.15.

If a boy sells 50 papers at this rate, he earns $2.50 for himself.

* * *

Occasionally, Darryl says, he has problems with other boys who try to mugs him and take his — and the AFRO's — money.

He is a resourceful lad, however, and told this reporter how he handled one such situation.

"Some boys trapped me up at Mondawmin, so I called my mother, and she came up to get me with a club in her hand."

Other times, he says, he just outruns the would-be thieves.

* * *

Darryl lives on Stricker St., and more than that we cannot say — Baltimore's other papers have been known to try to woo away newsboys from AFRO for their own staff.

He resides with his mother he has problems with has one sister and four brothers.

They are: Carolym Brown, 19; Leroy Robinson, 15; Rodney Brown, 12; Wayne Bond, 16; and Elroy Robinson 14.

He is in the seventh grade at Housion-Woods Junior-Senior High School No. 181, and confides "I like school."

He likes 'all subjects, I like them all," but admits his favorites are math, English, geography and mechanical drawing.

He wants to be a mechanic someday, because "I want to fix up houses."

To help him achieve this goal, Darryl wants to go to Carver Vocational High School when he leaves junior high.

* * *

He has many hobbies, but likes to play baseball, basketball and kickball best.

The young, up-and-coming young businessman newsboy also likes to watch Westerns and police shows on TV and "all kinds" of movies.

"I don't like to watch the funnies in the movies, though," he smiled.

By the way...

by Joe Black

What can you say about a man like Jackie Robinson that hasn't been said before.

Sure, you can say he was a super star. Baseball's man of the hour. The guy who always seemed to win the game.

You can call him a man who was ahead of his time. A man of great courage, who kept his cool when a pitcher tried to dust him with a fastball. Or a runner tried to spike him. Or when fans called him dirty names, or devilled him with crank calls and hate mail.

It wasn't easy, of course, for a fighter like Jackie to turn the other cheek. To take a non-violent approach.

So you can say he was strong. Plenty strong in the sense he set aside an ego trip to try and alter an ingrained attitude.

Jackie Robinson accepted and absorbed humiliities, heartaches, and hurt because he was determined to prove that, if given a real opportunity, Black people could compete and work with Whites on an equal basis.

You can say he was a real brother. He was one. At the beginning of my baseball career, Jackie quietly kept pumping me full of the self-confidence I needed to be successful.

He also showed me the importance of doing "our thing," instead of merely "my thing."

What can you say about a man like Jackie Robinson who spends a lifetime making things a little better for his brothers?

I can say, he was my friend.

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