Baltimore's native son-photographer comes home

Roland Freeman strives to catch black culture on film

By Sue Williams
AFRO Staff Writer

Roland Freeman is coming home . . . at least for a while.

The 44-year-old freelance photographer, who has won international acclaim for his work, is bringing his exhibit, "Southern Roads-City Pavements" to the Baltimore Museum of Art from July 14 through Septmeber 6. Baltimore, his home, is the first stop on a three year national and international tour, and Freeman is the first black photographer to have his work exhibited at the prestigious museum.

Sitting in a hot and stuffy downtown restaurant, Freeman explained, between swallows of food, that he has had a mission behind his work ever since he began serious photography in the mid-1960's, during the Civil Rights movement.

By 1965, he had quit his job as a counselor of sorts for the unemployable at a Washinton, D.C. firm, wanting his freedom to do what he wanted to do.

He was taking pictures, he recalls, for the historic March on Washington organized by the late Martin Luther King, Jr.

Roland L. Freeman

He had arrived on the grounds of the Lincoln Memorial early that morning, about 5 a.m., and just watched the buses roll in from all over the country. First one, then five, then hundreds. There were buses and people all over the place.

"I never forgave myself for not being as great a photographer at that time as I should have been," he said softly. "I had never seen so many black people, and the rest of the day, I just walked around with a big lump in my throat."

He took pictures, but he could not capture the deep emotions about the entire experience — and about being black — that he was feeling. He decided he would become the best photographer this side of the Atlantic, and he would capture, for posterity, black life, black culture, black feelings.

He began a exhaustive study of every major black photographer he could think of and whose work he liked. Hours were spent in the Library of Congress, poring over books of pictures, seeing which technique produced which effects. His interest even spurred the interest of Library workers who picked up his sincerity. And after he felt he had learned what he had to learn, he began life, so to speak. He has travelled throughout the south and has been in major Eastern cities, picking up traces and evidences of black culture, seeking to show through his photos the similarity of the two lifestyles, urban and rural, the merging of culture despite the absence of dirt roads or the bustle of technical machinery.

And that is how "Southern Roads-City Pavements" came to be born.

Although this writer received a very strong directive to steer away from the person and to concentrate on the pictures and the mission behind them, ("The way I want you to handle this," he said, "is just to say a little bit about me and a lot about the pictures . . .") it really is not possible to understand the works of the man without understanding the man himself.

Roland Freeman was born in Baltimore during the Great Depression, and spent his boyhood days learning the survival techniques every ghetto child has to learn.

He suffered mild abuse at the hands of older, more experienced acquaintances until one day, tired of being bullied around, he "went crazy" on a few guys who tried to intimidate him. After that, with the reputation of being "crazy," nobody bothered him, and the creative and inquisitive child was left alone to explore the world he found so fascinating.

Some of his fondest memories were those he spent in the streets of Baltimore with the all-too familiar "Arabers," friendly and worldly black men who sold everything from tooth-picks to green beans on old wooden carts drawn by bedgraggled, but proud, horses.

As an eight-year-old child, Freeman was not only fascinated by the wisdom of the Rabers themselves but by the response of the neighborhood residents to them. As much as he sold, he listened and absorbed the many stories he heard on those old carts, not knowing why, really, but keeping the words and the images close to his heart.

At the age of 12, he was sent by his mother to a tobacco farm in Charles County, Maryland, where again he was infused by the experiences around him. The feel of the soil, the ruggedness of the life, all of which happened to be black, made impressions on him equally as powerful as had those of the Arabers.

He returned to Baltimore for a short while before joining the Air Force. It was there that his mind was filled for the first time with ideas of black liberation and black culture in ways that jostled his very soul. His renaissance there, not unlike the intellectual and spiritual renaissance experienced by men such as W. E. B. DuBois and Richard Wright, put ideas in his mind about himself, his mission in life, and the people around him that were incompatible with the life he had known in the States before he left. Those ideas, however, were the very ones that helped shape his quest for understanding and documenting blackness in a way that would be forever known.

By the time Freeman saw the hundreds of thousands of black people on the lawn of the Lincoln Memorial that August day in 1963, equipped with a small but workable camera and an emotional state that would not rest, the experiences of his past had finally found a way to be manifested. It was black culture and black life that fascinated him, the folk ways and folk traditions that had helped the race get from one generation to the next. And he decided, on that hot summer day, that he would capture that life on film. He finally said to himself that he was a photographer and he began, at that point, to make the declaration a reality.

I'll never forgive myself for not being as great a photographer as I should have been . . .

The espousals of some sophisticates who have criticized the Arabers, calling them everything from degenerates to out right crooks, have enraged Freeman, who considers the remarks an attack on him personally, as well as on his friends and relatives who earned an honset living by selling merchandise off the old wooden carts.

More importantly, he considers the attempts to banish the Arabers from the streets a threat to the preservation of black culture, an evidence in the flesh of the traditions that have made black culture what it is, are about to die off as quietly as an extinct animal species.

The death process, he says, is occurring everywhere, in the Deep South as well as on the streets of Baltimore, and it is taking with it valuable information that deserves to be preserved.

With those thoughts in mind, Freeman has sought to capture in his photographs very specific stories of black life. Many of the picutres show poor, rural life, as well as poor urban life, a fact which has caused many blacks to criticize him for a one-sided view of black life.

But Freeman shrugs off the criticisms with a remembrance of his own poor, ghetto life.

"I grew up in the ghetto," he says, "and even though we were poor, we had a good time.

"There is a warmth and a kindness in ghetto life that I know, and that's what my pictures show."

He says that he has not travelled a great deal to the West Coast to study black life there, because he says, "the similarities are so striking. Black life in the East, the South, the North is so similar, that if you can just capture the culture in one place, you basically have it."

He says he expects the similarities to become evident in the foreign countries he will visit with this photo exhibit, including Africa, the Caribbean and South America.

Notwithstanding the criticism, "Southern Roads-City Pavements" is sure to draw reactions from all those who see it. Freeman wants young people to see it, so that they can see their culture growing up in the city. Freeman later sought to capture the warmth and richness and so that they can know without a doubt that they can be whatever they want to be. He wants all kinds of people to come out to an open forum on July 14, beginning at 6:30 p.m., to discuss black life and to make a contribution to this love of blackness he has.

He wants somebody to understand, finally, his quest and his whole reason for being here.

Freeman photo

BALTIMORE LIFE — among blacks was not much different than that the photographer found in rural back - countries of the Deep South. "Whether we're talking about Southern roads or city pavements," Freeman said, "black life is filled with similarities."

Freeman photo

THE ARABBERS — a familiar sight to Baltimoreans, first made an impression on Freeman when he was a young boy of the Arabbers' life as it relates to black culture through photo studies.

Local man chalks up at USO

"I come to USO to enjoy its recreational services. Where else can you go and play pool all day, watch TV and do so many other things?" questions L - Cpl. Brian D. Owens, USMC, of Baltimore, Maryland.

Like other USO centers, Camp Schwab USO in Okinawa provides servicemen and women with a place to relax.

The center enables U.S. military personnel with a chance to watch movies, use the snack bar, and meet with the staff and other servicemen and women.

Although Schwab USO is involved in both informal education and intercultural understanding programs, other events involve less serious activities.

These features include peanut eating contest, talent contest and athletic competitions.

By incorporating these activities into its monthly programs, the USO stimulates U.S. servicemen and women both mentally and physically.

Founded in 1941, the USO is a non - profit organization whose exclusive mission is to improve the morale and ensure the well - being of our country's servicemen and women. Today the USO serves the needs of over 2 million military personnel and their 3 million dependents.

L-Cpl. Brian D. Owens

Many minority group young people are getting a boost toward higher education from a publicly-supported fund.

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Other food chains may save Pantry Pride workers

See column 2

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Ex-boxer executed, dumped in river

Carver teacher defendant says witnesses lied

A 28-year-old man who is charged with killing a Carver High School teacher on January 14, testified Thursday that the state witnesses had lied and he did not kill Mrs. Ethel Mae Bond.

Johnny Lee Daniels, of the 2800 block of Bowers Ave., spent the day on the witness stand. He is accused of shooting Mrs. Bond in the throat, chest and left thigh, as she attempted to open the front door of her West Lexington Street home.

Mrs. Bond had been employed with the Department of Education for 26 years and had been teaching at Carver for 10 years. She had served as chairman of the West Baltimore Community Health Care Corporation, where Daniels was working.

A co-worker of Daniels, Ralph Johnson testified earlier at the trial that Daniels admitted to the killing and threatened to kill him and his wife if he told anyone.

Daniels, who is being held without bail told the jury he was with Johnson the night Mrs. Bond was killed and had let him use his brother's gun, but did not know he was going to kill someone.

He told the jury, "It shook me up when I heard Mrs. Bond had been shot. I asked him (Ralph Johnson) why he did it and he said Johnny wait until all this is over and I will tell you."

Daniels testified that he was at work when police and homicide detectives came to the center to arrest Johnson. Assistant State's Attorney Jim Salkin asked the defendant why did he leave work after hearing Johnson had been arrested.

Salkin showed a time card to the jury and said usually Daniels left his job at 3 p.m. but after seeing the police at the center, he left at 3 p.m.

Clarence Bond, husband of Mrs. Ethel Bond, also works at the West Baltimore Community Health Care Corporation. He testified that the man charged with his wife's death gave him a ride home after he had been told his wife had been shot.

Andy Young says black cops will make the difference

PHOTO by Roman Hankewycz

BLACK LAW OFFICERS have made a difference, says Andy Young, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Young (R) is shown with Bishop Robinson, deputy commissioner of police for Baltimore City. See story on page 7.

3,000 Pantry Priders may keep jobs

In a meeting with Gov. Harry Hughes on Thursday, July 16, executives of five food supermarket chains told him they plan to purchase and keep open approximately 25 of the 41 Pantry Pride stores the corporation is planning to close down in Maryland.

If this program is implemented, it would be good news for Pantry Pride employees. Some 4,000 of them had faced loss of jobs before the food executives met with Hughes.

If the Pantry Pride outlets are absorbed by other chains at least 3,000 former Pantry Pride workers would be hired to man the stores to be re-opened.

Before the positive news from the Governor's office on Thursday, here is how Pantry Pride workers and customers took to the food chain's closings.

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

"They're just taking each day as it comes, one day at a time," said Mitchell Glansburg, a central headquarters employee of Patnry Pride, Inc.

Glansburg, who said he had been sent up to Baltimore by company headquarters to help supervise the projected closings of area Pantry Pride stores.

Although an assistant manager asked reporters to leave the store, Glansburg said that "their (employee) morale has dropped, but they really haven't been saying too much."

"The rumors about Giant foods, (which may take over some area Pantry Pride stores and retain the workers), created a little bit of hope that they'll be able to keep their jobs," added Glansburg.

Outside the store, shoppers appeared as resigned as store personnel to the fate of the supermarket.

"I can always go up to Food-a-Rama," said Audrey Johnson, of the 2300 block Reisterstown Road. "I won't really miss the place." She added that the decision to shut down the stores surprised her.

But some customers say that the store's closing will be a loss to their community.

Denise Dowtin, of the 2900 block Garrison Blvd., said that she shops at the store every two weeks. She said that she will miss the low prices.

"It's an asset to this community," said Yvonne Leonard, of the 1900 block Chelsea Rd. "It's a good idea to have some kind of competition—it kept the prices low."

According to Lisa Goddard, a spokesperson for the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. home offices of Pantry Pride, those low prices may have been responsible for the closings.

"Recently there has been a lot of competition with the price wars," she said. "Major brands such as Giant and Grand Union lowered their prices, and we had to lower our prices to the point where the profit margin was almost nothing."

Continued on page 2

Man, 25, last seen on McCulloh Street before vanishing

By Patricia Tatum
AFRO Staff Writer

Baltimore County Police are investigating the July 11 murder of a 25-year-old West Baltimore man, whose body was found floating in the back river of Baltimore County.

Funeral services for Joseph Carroll, Jr., of 4310 Seminole Avenue, were Thursday evening at the New Elizabeth Baptist Church. Burial will be at 11 a.m. Friday at Arbutus Memorial Park.

Sgt. Richard Heaps, of the Baltimore County Police, said Carroll was last seen alive at about 7 p.m., July 10 in the 2000 block of McCulloh Street. Carroll's fully clothed body was found floating in the Back river of the Essex district about 200 yards from Virginia Avenue, he said.

A man, fishing with his family, told police he spotted the body at about 7:20 a.m. Heaps declined to release the fisherman's name.

Carroll's body was taken to the State Medical Examiner's office where an autopsy was performed about three hours after his body was recovered from the river.

A spokeswoman for the medical examiner's office said Carroll died from gun shot wounds to the head and from multiple stab wounds to the left chest.

Heaps said county police homicide squad members have talked to several of Carroll's acquaintances, but a motive for the slaying has not been established. Carroll's wallet was missing when his body was discovered making robbery a possible motive, he said.

No weapons have been recovered by police, Heaps said. No suspects have been arrested in the case.

Carroll, an unemployed construction worker, loved to joke and tease, his mother, Mrs. Eloise Carroll said. She said she last saw Carroll alive the Tuesday before his death, when he visited Mrs. Carroll at her Edmondson Avenue home.

Joseph Carroll Jr.

"He was always smiling and he loved to play with me a lot," she said.

Mrs. Carroll said the police have not told her much about her son's death, only that they are investigating the case. She said Carroll's body was identified through his fingerprints.

A native of Baltimore, Carroll attended the city's public schools. He also was a member of Job Corps for two years and was an amateur boxer.

Along with his mother, Carroll is survived by his father, Joseph Carroll Sr.; two sons, Joseph Carroll III and DeAndre Carroll, all of Baltimore; five sisters, Castina Dorsey of North Carolina, Cynthia Carroll, Theresa Carroll, Paulette Carroll and Dina Carroll; two brothers, Alonzo Carroll and Joe Carroll, all of Baltimore; and six aunts and seven uncles.

AFRO Clean Blockers get to work

Still time to register!

By Ida Peters

Enthusiasm is running high among the 175 blocks in every part of Baltimore City actively working in the 1981 AFRO Clean Block Program.

More than 1,600 workers were rewarded for extra effort and attended the Hippodrome Theatre this past Wednesday to see Isaac Hayes in "Escape From New York", courtesy of J.F. Theatres.

Captains, Co-Captains and Advisors are especially proud of their new AFRO-KOOL Clean Block T-Shirts made possible by a grant from the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company.

Today, (Friday), Clean Block leaders are meeting at Dunbar High School where they were greeted by Mrs. Julia Woodland, principal. They were also entertained by The Amazing Josini, magician and ventriloquist.

Complaints from Advisors center around the fact that they are cleaning up their alleys and yards but are having a hard time getting various city agencies to respond.

A second major problem in Clean Block areas are folks who wait to clean out yards and basements after workers have staged a major clean up. Tempers are running high in those blocks because it seems to be especially mean for people who will defy a whole neighborhood trying to get clean.

Good Neighbors this week who added to the AFRO Prize Fund to bring the total to $4,522.30 were

Continued on page 2

(Photo by Roman Hankewycz.- Mrs. Kathy Parrott, Baltimore teacher and AFRO Clean Block assistant models new AFRO - KOOL T-Shirts being worn by Captains, Co-Captains and Advisors. Blocks receive shirts when they register their blocks.

He's concerned about bus service

Brailey finally meets with MTA officials

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

Although the Mass Transit Administration has refused to comment on results of a meeting held between company officials and Del. Troy Brailey, D-40, Brailey told the AFRO that "the meeting was a success."

Brailey had called for a meeting with the MTA to discuss charges made by bus drivers that their vehicles were unsafe. Drivers had complained of bald tires, faulty brakes and air conditioning, and broken speedometers.

The delegate had called for a General Assembly investigation of the conditions, but, following the Monday meeting, he said that "we will hold off on an investigation until the problems I specified have been rectified."

MTA official Keith Rawlinson was curt when questioned, and said that the company and Brailey had struck an agreement by which only Brailey would discuss the meeting with reporters.

He added, however, that "(it) was a fruitful meeting, and we were pleased with the results."

According to Brailey, L.A. Kimball, MTA administration, admitted that all of the charges did hold water, but that the company suffered from a lack of qualified mechanics. He said that a training program to correct the problem was currently underway.

Kimball, according to Brailey, also blameu the recent state hiring freeze for a lack of skilled workers to repair and maintain the buses.

Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union were present at the meeting, and officials of the union, which represents drivers and mechanics, agreed that they were satisfied with the results.

Brailey said that he planned on giving the MTA three months to repair the busses.

Another Mrs. AFRO

MRS. AFRO this week is Mrs. Mary A. Humphries, mother of Del. Margaret H. Murphy. Photos and story of her July 19 birthday party will be featured in the AFRO's Special Going on 90, Birthday Edition coming soon. How about your Mom or Dad? Are they "going on 90", age 89 or 90 same as the AFRO? Let us know. Call 728 - 8200 so they can be in the Special AFRO. (See Page 28)