Twilah Scarborough

TWILAH SAYS. . .

Coming of age

IN THE SPIRIT
Coming Of Age

I can remember at 16 I desperately wanted to be 18. Couldn't wait to reach that magical age that seemed to represent freedom — the age that signaled I was a woman who could move and be in the world as I chose.

"Huh" When I turn 18, not a soul will be able to tell me anything. Not how to be, where to be nor what time to be there. Yes... on my own."

How naively we came to adulthood.

How unreal is our vision of what it truly means to be grown. Coming of age has noting to do with a number. It's not reaching 18, 21, 40 or even 60. Coming of age means coming face to face with reality, with yourself. Coming of age means accepting the challenge that is your life.

Some folks never do it.

It's mainly the vagaries, the ups and downs, of day-to-day living that perplex us. We grow up not understanding that life is a pastiche of experiences. That you can't live and not be touched by joy and pain, by hopefulness and depression.

At times you feel you can touch the sky, at times you feel totally confounded and out of control. Life is an emotional experience, but we don't learn that essential fact in school.

One of the most difficult aspects of maturing is choosing the experiences we carry forward in consciousness, choosing how we see them and how we let them stay inside us.

Many of our problems are rooted in unresolved issues from the past. And we can't move forward positively while we're burdened with anger and resentment.

We aren't free to fly, to be all we can be, until we let go of negativity from the past.

Forgive your parents, old lovers, friends, all the folks you feel have done you wrong. No matter how deep the hurt, work at letting it go, at blessing it and releasing it.

Your conscious feelings also color your life in either nourishing or destructive ways. Your thoughts can heal you, or they can cause accients, allergies, cancer and spiritual death. It's a law: your thoughts are boomerangs that come back at you as reality.

Coming of age is a challenge, but it's also a delicious thing-the awakening of the wonderfulness that is you. It's accepting yourself as you really are.

It's seeing yourself clearly, getting past the ways others characterize you. If I had accepted what some "Significant others' in my life have said about me, I'd never come out of the house, would never believe I have something special to contribute to this world.

Coming of age is daring to be yourself — to unfold as magnificent, unique you. It's acknowledging and building on your strengths and challenging yourself where you feel vulnerable, because you know that's the only way to build muscle, to grow strong.

Coming of age is accepting the struggle to move beyond your fears and your silence — to thrive.

Coming of age means taking charge of your health, wealth, loving, home and community. It means taking responsibility for the condition of Black American.

It's not letting outside forces dictate your experiences, It means expanding your awareness of who you really are and of your importance in this world — as an individual and as part of a majestic people. It's being determined to give up anything that limits your power.

No matter how tough our formative years were, we never faced the pitfalls and obstacles threatening the forward movement of youngsters today. I'm glad I'm not 16.

The support systems that sustained us — family, community, schools-are crumbling beneath our young.

Just like you, I'm tired of the statistics that point to the pain of Black America. Tired of hearing that more Black men are in prisons than on college campuses.

Tired of hearing that half our teenage girls are mothers, that crime and drugs and miseducation are laying deathtraps for our youths.

Our Task, as the middle generation, is to make secure both our elders and our young, our history and our future. Sisters, brothers, it's time to rise, to come of age, to take charge of our lives, and to link arms with others who are committed to the uplifting of our people.

The continuing pain in Black America depends on our lack of maturity, on you and me standing still. So we must tithe more than money. We must give our time to organizations whose mission it is to uplift Black people.

Coming of age means getting smart about ourselves, about people.

Coming of age means getting smart about ourselves, about our individual and collective needs. More than anything, it is about our individual and collective needs, More than anything, it is about commitment, about being determined to step into the light, to become empowered individually and collectively, without hesitation. Now.

FOR OUR TOMORROWS
Let's have and hold on to
The positive ways of thinking.
LOVE YA!!!

Bettye Moss

IF YOU ASK ME

By Bettye Moss

Smile-Orchids

Smile of the Week Orchids — Reader Marian Scarborough of Ashburton Street nominates these good neighbors for Orchids.

Orangee James, the personable receptionist who always wears a cheery smile and has a business-like attitude, whenever you enter the Personnel Division, Baltimore City Public Schools. It makes visiting that division a pleasant experience.

Also, Esther James, the pleasant secretary, wears a cheery smile too whenever you enter the Monitoring Office, Baltimore Public Schools. It makes visiting that office a delightful experience.

Mailbag — Mrs. Mary Lou Bright, Box 284, Greenpond, S.C. writes:

In your Sept. 19, 1987 "About People" you said please remember Mrs. Gwen deCecillio. I would love to write to her. She taught me Art at old Douglass High School back in 1950-51. She was a wonderful art teacher. Mrs. deCecilio would often speak of her husband who at that time enjoyed hunting etc. Please try to get me her address.

Editor's Note — We're passing your address on to Mrs. deCecilio.

* * *

Please help this column identify persons who deserve Orchids for their cheery smiles and pleasant dispositions. Write Smiles, If You Ask Me, Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN, P.O. Box 1857, Baltimore, Md. 212203.

Hospital Smiles

Last week's stay at University Hospital provided an opportunity for this writer to observe a number of caring employees at work.

Typical of them, Mrs. Nancy Gilmer, a 15-year employee in the Nutrition Department.

She volunteered she is an AFRO reader and attends Israel Baptist Church on Milton Avenue.

Lots of sunshine in the voice of Mrs. Thelma Erwin, a nursing assistant and 24-year employee. She is organist at New Zion Hill Baptist Church.

* * *

And . . . in the voice of Nursing Assistant Ms. Dianna Diggs. She's a CCB grad and a member, sings on the choir of Metropolitan Baptist Church.

City-In-A-City

University Hospital — the correct name is University of Maryland Medical System — occupies a large tract of prime downtown real estate bounded by Baltimore Street on the North; Greene on the East; Lombard on the South.

The 13-story building includes a north and south sections. It is a private, non-profit corporation that includes University of Maryland Hospital, University of Maryland Cancer Center and Shock Trauma Center.

Over 3,000 persons are employed. UMMS prides itself on providing equal employment Opportunities to all qualified persons and boasts it serves without regard to race, sex, religion, color, national origin, age and physical or mental handicap.

Chief Executive and president is Dr. Morton I. Rapoport. His pleasant manner sets the tone for staffers. Often he takes time to look in on patients and say hello.

One of Dr. Rapoport's secretaries, Mrs. Chris Hankins, a 10-year employee, has lots of sunshine in her voice. She's a member of Good Shepherd Baptist Church.

They Care Too

More caring employees met, Doris Schwabland, at the hospital since 1964. Also, Mrs. Nancy Farmer, Assistant Director of Volunteer Services, and Dwight Bunker, laboratory assistant for 15 years.

Cuff note: Mr. Bunker sold AFRO's . . . 200 copies each week in his native Greensboro, N.C. and later in Mt. Airy, N.C. He recalls the route helped meet his high school expenses.

* * *

UMMS ranking black employee is Everard O. Rutledge, Senior Vice-President Operations.

Dr. Elijah Saunders is head of Infectious Diseases.

Cuff Notes: The hospital makes special arrangements for children under 10 to visit relatives.

There is a special television room where they may greet their favorite patient. The hospital's in-house television station gives helpful hints for patients and provides photos of employees at work.

About people

Love note: Invitations in the mail this week announce the engagement of Trudie Edwards and Richard Mitchell. She's the anesthetist at Hopkins and Greater Baltimore Medical Center. He's the contractor.

They will exchange vows on Sunday, April 24 at Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church. Her son, Spencer Keith Edwards, will give her away. His son, Richard, Jr., will be best man.

* * *

Mrs. Allie Lyles Clift, the retired Coppin State College professor, returned last week from a "glorious" three weeks in the South Pacific.

She was with a tour group which visited Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia. One of the highlights of the trip was a visit to the Sydney, Australia opera house and crossing of the harbor bridge in this city of 4 million people.

* * *

Sick list: Glad you're better hellos to these good neighbors. Mrs. Philathea Carter Hall, who has been confined for a month; to Mrs. Julia McDaniel, who had surgery at St. Agnes Hospital.

Her physician — hubby, Dr. Robert McDaniel, entered Kernan Hospital this week with hip ailment.

Route for the Birds!

Once again, the baseball season and the JFX construction season are getting into gear. And once again, we're doing our very best to make your trips to Memorial Stadium as fast and painless as possible. It pretty much boils down to one simple direction: If you're using the JFX, take the Cold Spring Lane exit.

Fans coming in from the north can opt for the JFX or choose one of these alternate routes: Loch Raven Boulevard, Charles Street, or Roland Avenue. By the way, for your convenience, we've beefed up the number of Orioles direction signs along each alternate route to Memorial Stadium.

If you're driving from downtown, it's best to avoid the JFX altogether. Coming from Washington, D.C. or other points south, take I-95 to I-395, to Conway Street and follow the stadium route signs.

And just to be on the safe side, leave home 10 or 15 minutes early. If you have any questions, phone us at JFX-I-N-F-O (539-4636). Follow these directions, and you should enjoy reasonably clear sailing. And you can save your energy for really important things. Like cheering, stomping and yelling yourself hoarse.

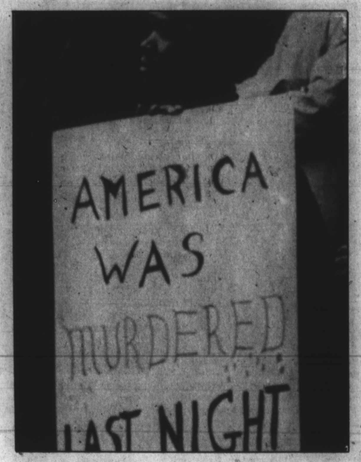
JFX!

Driving you crazy for a while, but it'll be worth it!

A nation in flames

Civil disobedience in the year 1968

WHEN DAWN BROKE over the black communities many areas look ed like bombed out sections of a war zone.



The political philosophy of black nationalism means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community; no more.

MALCOLM X

Twenty years ago this week, the nation erupted in violence as thousands of citizens took to the streets to protest the slaying of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

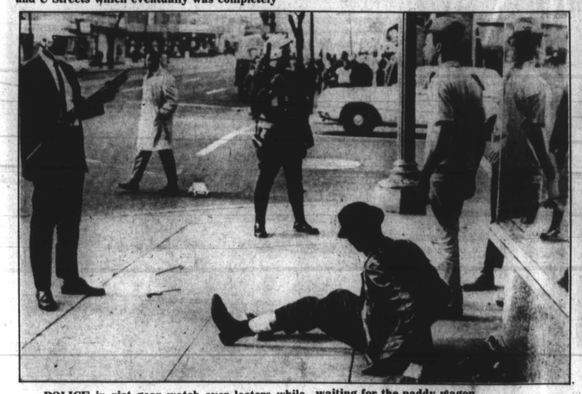
In a spontaneous uprising, blacks in Washington, Baltimore, Newark, Detroit and several smaller cities expressed their rage and anger at the senseless murder of the national leader.

Next Tuesday the AFRO will begin a month-long retrospective and examination of the riots—their causes and their results.

Did the black community grow and benefit from the civil insurrections? Are we closer as a national community twenty years later?

Read the AFRO all next month as we try to answer these questions.

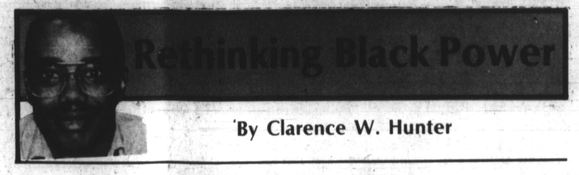
LOOTERS in front of the Safeway Store at 14th and U Streets which eventually was completely gutted by fire.



POLICE in riot gear watch over looters while waiting for the paddy wagon.

A CAR DEALER located in the heart of the District was just one of the many victims of rioters during the 1968 disturbances following the death of Martin Luther King.

All photos courtesy of Howard University



Rethinking Black Power

By Clarence W. Hunter

Losing one's Soul

Strategy is better than strength.
HAUSA LEGEND

This coming Monday is April 4. It will not be a day I will be celebrating because you do not celebrate the death of a hero and a great man.

I will, however, remember — remember what Dr. Martin Luther King meant to me and what his murder did to my life and the lives of the people in this town. I will go about my daily chores quietly and honor the man who helped shape who and what I am today.

I really had not planned to write anything about the 20th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King. I thought the fact that I and my friends remembered the man and said a little prayer for him would be enough. But a gentleman sitting nearby at my usual luncheon hangout was talking about D.C. and the '68 riots. It started me remembering what I was doing the day King was shot and where I was that week afterwards.

And how my life changed.

I had never followed closely the fight for civil rights or Dr. King's efforts. I was young and my priorities were different. I didn't know, nor did I care that what went on with the Freedom rides or the battles in Montgomery or Selma affected me. I never thought that I would benefit from what they fought and died for and I could not be convinced that I would have to take up the banner and continue the fight, whether we as a people were victorious or not.

I sat there glued to the television realizing how much I had absorbed by watching the evening news. I cried, I got mad and I wanted to go out into the street and destroy along with the rest of my people who in their anger destroyed what it had taken us years to build.

I knew I would never be the same again.

It was a week of change. It was a week where as I walked the street saw the beginnings of the National Guard roll into the city and take control of a situation which had been contrary to the teachings of King. Words like "Burn Baby Burn" echoed the street and Metro — then called D.C. Transit — established a signal which warned them of danger. The city looked like all the war movies I had ever seen. We were the enemy all of us and somewhere deep in my soul I knew that the men who carried those guns would not hesitate to use them.

When I returned to school we discovered that the Guard had turned it into an armed camp. Our anger had cooled but the hate was there and the grief quite evident. Yet we discovered when we did return to school that the men who served in the Guard were every bit as scared as we were. They (at least the black ones) were every bit as angry and every bit as bitter as we were. How dare they, their eyes said. How dare they take away one of the few things which bound us together.

But I saw something else as well. I saw sadness and desperation. I saw what I was beginning to wonder myself at 15 years old. Why burn your home? Why burn the community in which you live and leave unscarred the source of your hate? True, the anger was uncontrolled, sparked by grief but what happens afterwards.

I have seen what has happened afterwards. Twenty years later, H Street, Anacostia, Shaw, 7th Street, Georgia Avenue and 14th and U Street areas still bear the scars, although they are beginning to rise from the ashes of the flames we ourselves set. We solved nothing burning the city. We cut off our nose to spite our face thinking — in our grief — we were showing the powers of be what we thought of them.

We showed them nothing.

Gone was our own economic base. Gone was the glory and shine which was the District's black community. Gone was the one thing that bound us together and made us proud — our sense of community.

I look again and I see the blank expressions on the faces of mothers barely 16. I look again and I see teens dealing drugs. I look again and I see only two movie theaters east of Connecticut Avenue and no economic development in places where it counts — in Anacostia. I look again and I see the Green Line being the last second to be built — for the people who need it the most.

I see all this and I wonder what has the riots done for us and to us?

We have gained so much in the fight for civil rights. But the riots tore something from our souls which I don't think we can ever get back unless something equally as tragic happens.