—Mitchell properties

(Continued from Page A1)

year, donating $110,000 to pay off a loan that was overdue, are now once again banding together to support the family.

Heading the effort is Delegate Elijah Cummings, D-Baltimore and other Black leaders to forestall the auction.

"We have already received over 35 calls this morning from those wishing to contribute to save the Mitchell properties," said Cummings.

"The first objective is to save the civil rights museum. We can't afford to lose it because it's not only important to those here in Baltimore, but to our people across the country. Our history here is disappearing."

"The second objective is to save the law offices of the Mitchells. It too is of historical value because it is one of the very few Black law offices in the country that has lasted over ten years."

During the past year the Mitchells have come under financial crises that have called the community into action. The $110,000 previously raised to save the Mitchell home was raised in just three weeks.

The other six buildings up for auction are currently residential structures.

Delegate Cummings recognized that the Mitchell family has gone though tremendous hardships during the past couple of years.

"Pressure has been substantial on the family recently, but the Mitchells are strong willed, and they fought hard to help people like me to become who we are, and for that reason we must continue to lift them up," said Cummings.

"We can't and won't stand by and watch this family which has done so much for all of us go under. We are going to move very fast to contact those who know how important this project is."

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

The 77th Founders' Day celebration for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will be observed by the Baltimore Alumnae Chapter, Saturday, Jan. 27. The luncheon affair will be held at The Forum, 4210 Primrose Ave and will begin at 11 a.m.

Panel participants are the Hon. Kweisi Mfume, U.S. Congressman from Md; Georgia Goslee, Attorney at Law; and Jewell Jackson McCabe, national president of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. Call 944-8996.

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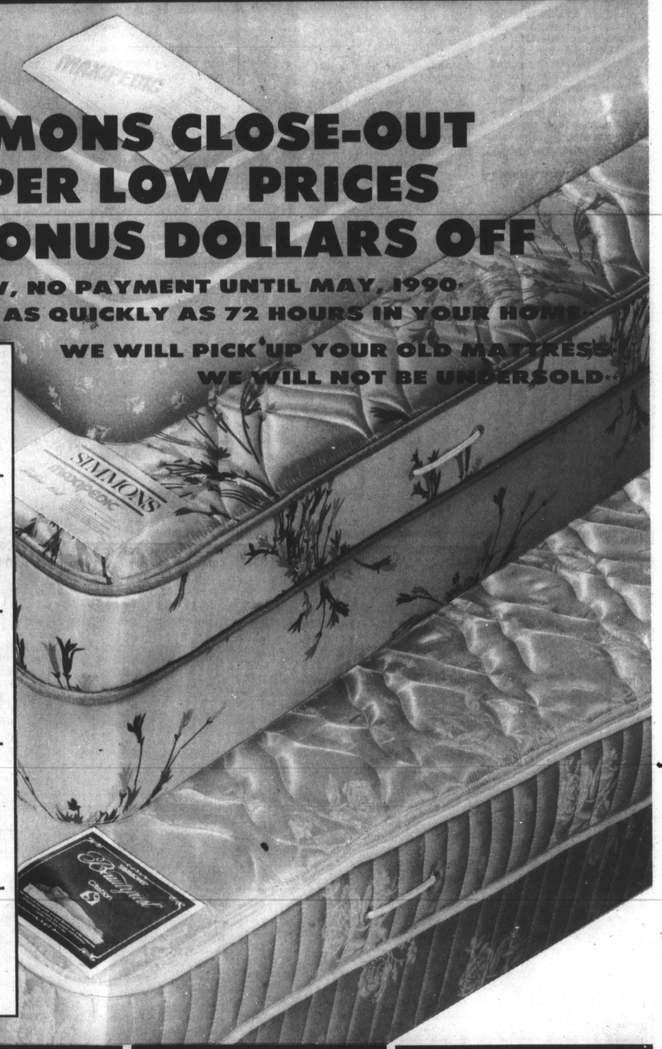

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METRO PROFILE

■ Lifestyle B2
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Saturday, January 20, 1990

Love's What You Make It

JUST STARTING

"A Poor Black Wedding," featuring Angela Brown Lee and Joseph B. Lee, III, is opulent in respect, friendship and love.

By Delfield S. Yoes, III
AFRO Staff Writer

Very early on we are exposed to the ethereal visions of love conjured by cinema and the whimsical lyrics of love balladeers and we often take these dreamy love lies to heart and act accordingly while we look for love, usually in all the wrong places.

Crippled by these grand images of romance, we are forced to deal with the reality of love; and the reality is, our search for the love of a lifetime is sometimes haunted by disappointment, failure and emotional violence. And when the war of the hearts gets a bit too bloody we begin to beg for mercy, making feeble utterances like, "it's not supposed to be like this," and "baby why you want to treat me so bad?"

Even if we are lucky enough to discover "real love" or anything remotely resembling it, these days it would seem doomed to die a fiery death, for you see, we are living in the "badlands of love."

Take your pick, AIDS, a 50 percent divorce rate, videotape dating services, "976" phone lines; amor is less. The only love that seemed to thrive during the 80's was the love of money. Love took a serious thrashing during the, "era of greed" and in all honesty, it doesn't look very good for the 90's.

That sure is a whole bunch of cynicism to swallow, huh? Well, as desperate as the situation sounds, there are still a lot of folks, believe it or not, who still believe in the virtues of love and marriage. There are still some people who believe two heads and two hearts are better than one and for them the power of love is very real.

Angela and Joseph Lee were married in October 1989 and Lucy and James Berry took their vows in August 1969. These couples are different in many ways, yet they both understand that there are no magic answers to making love work, but they have created their own brand of magic by working at their relationships everyday—together.

The Berrys and the Lees are living proof love can work and indeed people can live together and love together without killing each other. Here is a tale of two loves.

THE REAL THING

When Joe Lee decided to create his wedding program in the form of a movie script, it had a cast of characters featuring, wicked mother-in-laws, Duke Ellington at the piano, a Zulu tribe, a Masai tribe, and the poetry of the legendary Gwendolyn Brooks.

"A Poor Black Wedding," captured Joe's sense of humor and his strong Afrocentric attitude, however when he and Angela P. Brown exchanged vows on October 14, 1989, there would be no script to guide them.

Angela, a 21-year-old administrative assistant for the brokerage firm of Alex Brown and Sons, Inc. and Joe, a 24-year-old disc jockey for Morgan State University's radio station, WEAA, met while attending a local broadcasting school.

Joe and Angie dated for about two years before they came to the conclusion they wanted to live together and they lived together for exactly one year prior to their marriage, often debating the moral questions of "living in sin."

However, they both agree that their friendship and their marriage have benefited from the one year "rehearsal," although marriage may not have been in their plans initially.

"A lot of planning went into us living together, but I wasn't thinking of marriage then, I just wanted to see if we were compatible," explains Joe.

While we're on the topic of the "C" word...

Angie is from Whitestone, Virginia, the proverbial tiny southern town with a population of 200. She is charming, warm, very polite and Angie could be considered quite an organized person. Politically she's passive, musically; Prince and the Jacksons, Janet and Michael are among her pop preferences.

And then there's Joe. He's from Baltimore, which is a little bit bigger than Whitestone. Joe seldom pulls any punches on any subject, has a no holds barred sense of humor and let's just say Joe could not be considered an organized person. Politics is how Joe earned the nickname, "Joe Black"— Amandla! Awethu! (Power to the People) and musically there's only one way to go and one way to get there; Coltrane to Birdland, straight ahead.

Perfect match? In a way yes, because instead of being clones, Angie and Joe lend balance to each other, compliment one another and that's what relationships that work are all about.

"We didn't get married just out of love for each other, we feel an obligation to strengthen the ties of the Black family; love, devotion and friendship is the basis of our Black family," declares Joe. But, even the best friendships have their moments, so what triggers tension between the Lees?

"Most of our arguments start because of stress from our conflicting schedules," says Angie.

"She nags," says Joe. "He thinks he knows it all," says Angie.

"She always misplaces my belongings," says Joe. "I'm always being accused of moving his stuff," says Angie.

"She's very nurturing, independent and extremely good at decision making, she possesses a certain natural nobility," says Joe.

"He's a strong, intelligent Black man," says Angie.

Good and bad, give and take, that's what marriage is, a constant compromise.

Anyone can look great when all is calm, but whether or not a couple can weather the inevitable storms inherent in creating a life long union is the real test of real love.

On the back page of Angela and Joe's Poor Black Wedding program is a poem of profound elegance and strength by Gwendolyn Brooks, titled, "A Black Wedding Song."

"This love is a rich cry over the devilries and the death. A weapon-song. Keep it strong....Here is your wedding day. Here is your launch. Come to your wedding song....I wish you the daily forgiveness of each other. For war comes in from the world and puzzles a darling duet-tangles tongues, tears hearts, mashes minds; There will be the need to forgive. I wish you Black jewels of Love. Come to your wedding song." -Gwendolyn Brooks.

Joe and Angie may share "a love supreme," but Joe's "musicianship" has a lot to be desired.

THE LIVINGSTONE LEGACY

If Steven Spielberg, the maker of celluloid dreamscapes knew anything about Black folks, or better yet, if Spielberg was Black and wanted to make an epic love story about Black folks, filled with old-fashioned romance, it would probably look something like the courtship and 20-year marriage of Lucy and James Berry.

With a student body of 600 in 1965, idyllic Livingstone College, located in Salisbury, N.C., was the classic small Black college. It was a down home away from down home, where teachers became surrogate parents.

On Sundays, the gentlemen wore a coat and tie and the ladies wore a hat and gloves and of course young ladies did not wear pants. It was a college where "everybody knew everybody." But, Lucy Thornton, an English major whose parents actually met and fell in love at Livingstone in the 40's and James Berry, a 6'7" basketball star at the school, didn't formally meet until their junior year, 1967, during a Bible study class.

"But things did not materialize that year,' according to James. No, things didn't start off with a big bang in that Bible study class, but patience was indeed a virtue, because that next year, their senior year turned out to be the year for the future Mr. and Mrs. Berry.

The first day of our senior year we saw each other at Livingstone's canteen..." says Lucy and the rest as they say was... you know. "Your senior year is the year you make your statement, the year you make decisions about the future," claims James. There were other decisions and statements being made in 1968; statements about race, class, culture, war and freedom.

20 YEARS

Towing the line. The Berrys marriage is a partnership and friendship that has lasted 20 years . . . and counting.

The students and faculty of Livingstone may have been one big happy family, but they were still living in the midst of the most volatile decade of our Nation's history and in April 1968, the Black community in America exploded.

When Dr. King was assassinated in April of '68, the Livingstone campus was devastated. "We wore black and white and we marched through Salisbury, which was a very racist town. "We were all in shock; everyone just wanted to get home as soon as possible," states Lucy. Lucy and James made it through those difficult days and graduated from Livingstone in 1968, they became engaged in July 1969 and married in August.

Nobody but the Berry's know what they talked about, or what they drank at the Livingstone canteen the first day of their senior year, but whatever happened, their romance moved from nowhere, to mesmerizing, in no time. What specifically did James and Lucy see in each other at Livingstone?

Lucy on James: "Besides being tall, dark and handsome, he was a gentleman; he still is. He's a good guy, a hard worker and family oriented.

James on Lucy: "She's very beautiful, intelligent, outgoing, creative. I thought she would make a good companion and mother."

After they were married in '69, they settled in Baltimore and in 1970 their first and only child was born. Stephanie Rene Berry was born April 20, 1970 and at 19, she is probably everything James and Lucy Berry prayed for and more.

Straight out of Livingstone. After a slow start at college, the Berrys wasted little time in tying the knot after things finally started rolling romantically.

Stephanie, statuesque (six feet tall) and attractive, is a third year political science major and an honor student at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA., but she's spending her junior year as an exchange student at the University of East Anglia in England. She has enjoyed Europe so much, she plans on eventually living there permanently. As you would imagine her parents have some misgivings about this aspiration of Stephanie's.

"We want her to be close by, but we respect her ability to make a decision. We have mixed emotions, but we want her to do whatever she wants to do," explains James.

Lucy and James Berry are great friends, have a great marriage and a great daughter and they both have strong opinions on why their marriage works so well, and why so many others don't.

Both Lucy and James work in the Baltimore City Public School system; Lucy is media director for Chinquapin Middle School and James is a special education teacher at Northern High School. But, "We both have interests that are strictly our interests," says Lucy.

Besides teaching, James is a master barber and is in the army reserve. He still plays a little basketball as well, fondly attempting to recapture his glory days at Livingstone, like the day he blocked three (count 'em 1-2-3) of Earl "The Pearl" Monroe's shots! (James modestly claims that "The Pearl" was just off that day.)

Lucy is a columnist for the Dayton Defender, a newspaper out of Dayton, OH., a zealous collector of African-American literature and she has over 100 Black films. Lucy Berry is also the creator of a collection of Afrocentric dolls called "Liquorice Stick Kids." Her dolls have been featured in several publications locally and nationally, including the AFRO and one of Lucy's most famous patrons was the late fashion designer, the great Patrick Kelly.

"You have to know who you are — being human you have conflicts, but you learn to deal with them in a constructive manner," explains Lucy. Says James, "You have to respect one another's feelings, treat each other as human beings and individuals." Indeed. James Berry is a very "laid back" individual and Lucy Berry is anything but, she is quite, "enthusiastic."

"In most cases the wife tries to change the husband, or vice-versa, but that's not how it should be. The change should be coming together, not going apart," comments Lucy.

Watching, listening to the Berrys is a study in paradox, but somehow the contrasts mesh together harmoniously. "Love means many different things and has many different levels," Lucy says, then she looks to her husband, "I love you like I loved you at Livingstone and I grew to respect you as well," she says. James Berry doesn't say anything, he doesn't have to.

The Lees have been married only a few short months; they will learn a lot about themselves and each other and they will discover much as the years go on. The Berrys have been married 20 years, but because they still see the wonder in things and are still discovering, their marriage is still "new" as well.

To the Lees and the Berrys; long live their love.