

CARTON 1:13

PERSONAL

CORRESPONDENCE

1966-2004

BRODY, KNUTE O.
BROWN, MARIE
LEARNER, MICHAEL
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Subj: **FW: New Postage Stamp featuring women of color**
Date: Wednesday, July 28, 2004 1:08:22 PM
From: patscott09@comcast.net
To: docdmh@aol.com, Avonkirkland@aol.com, Carolix8@aol.com, eelinson@tsoft.net, gxian@aol.com, gxian@aol.com, LBibbs1191@aol.com, marita_rivero@wgbh.org, mtervalon@earthlink.net, hardinc@msn.com, rblack@uchicago.edu, RobertA648@aol.com, RChrisman@cox.net, rchrisman@mail.unomaha.edu., R938Brooks@aol.com, Rberta@infoasis.com, walriley@pacbell.net, Bmwowmb@aol.com

fyi

-----Original Message-----

From: Laurence Holder [mailto:laurence.holder@verizon.net]

Sent: Thursday, July 08, 2004 5:04 PM

To: AA2289@aol.com; TJack97713@aol.com; 'Marmarra McKinney'; 'sharon mcgruder'; DDcd724@aol.com; 'Paul Carter Harrison'; WRHS32@aol.com

Subject: FW: New Postage Stamp featuring women of color

FYI

Unfortunately Breast Cancer knows no color. This is for all women.

Subject: New Stamp featuring women of color

Breast Cancer Stamp



All right EVERYONE, lets do this !!!!! We need those of you who are great at forwarding information to your e-mail network. Please read and pass this on. It would be wonderful if 2004 were the year a cure for breast cancer were found!!!! This

is one e-mail you should be glad to pass on. The notion that we could raise \$35 million by buying a book of stamps is powerful!

As you may be aware, the US Postal Service recently released its new "Fund the Cure" stamp to help fund breast cancer research. The stamp was designed by Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, Maryland. It is important that we take a stand against this disease that affects so many of our mothers, sisters and friends.

Instead of the routine 37 cents for a stamp, this one costs 40 cents. The additional 3 cents will go to breast cancer research. A "normal" book costs \$7.40. This one is only \$8.00. It takes a few minutes in line at the Post Office and means so much. If all stamps are sold, it will raise an additional \$35,000,000 for this vital research.

Just as important as the money is our support. What a statement it would make if the stamp outsold the lottery this week. What a statement it would make that we care. I would urge you to do two things TODAY:

1. Go out and purchase some of these stamps.
2. E-mail your friends to do the same. We all know women and their families whose lives are turned upside-down by breast cancer. It takes so little to do so much in this drive. I think we can all afford the additional 60 cents the new book costs.

Please help & pass **this on**

THE **BLACK**SCHOLAR

Journal of Black Studies and Research

P.O. BOX 2869 • OAKLAND, CA • 94609 • (510) 547-6633 • FAX (510) 547-6679

5/24/94

Marie —

Here is The memoir I mentioned. I think it could be edited into a nice magazine piece, as well as serving as a sample chapter for Toni's book proposal. What do you think?

Robert

P.S. Toni knows I'm sending this to you, so feel free to contact her directly.

PART I Beginnings

Chapter 1: The Cosmopolitan Tennis Club - early childhood, relationship with Daddy

Chapter 2: West Virginia - Summers in the South, introduction of family members

Chapter 3: 10 years old - Major event; going to Columbia's demonstration school; dance, French, carpentry, theater

Chapter 4: Prospect Avenue - life in the Bronx of the 1940's & 1950s
St. Augustine Church, Girl Scouts, Uncles, Mother and her books;
boyfriends

Chapter 5: childhood ends, my father's death
Conclusion/summary end of part I

PART II Wandering

Chapter 6: Polio; a year in hospitals & rehab centers

Chapter 7: Fisk, honor house - 2 tragedies, classes at Fisk - teachers -
leaving - lost in New York

Chapter 8: leaving America forever - the year in Paris

Chapter 9: return to the U.S., Los Angeles, Ted & me - the boys
the move to Berkeley - Berkeley in the 60s & 70s
conclusion/summary end of part II

Part III - At Home in Berkeley

Chapter 10 - The House on Oregon Street - the house; left politics
Third World Women's Alliance - the Black Panther Party - Berkeley Black
Caucus

Chapter 11: Politics in Berkeley - The Co-op - BCA - Loni, Eve, Michi

Chapter 12: Creature comforts - the YWCA and Santa Barbara Rd
conclusion/summary end of part III

PART IV - Another Start

Chapter 13: Seminary - Unitarian Universalists - false start

Chapter 13: polio - again

Chapter 14: the pen

???

They respected people of principle who were willing to go to jail for their beliefs, but it was not their way. For them, commitment to hard work, to loyalty, and even to tradition, reflected their expectation that the larger society would open doors of opportunity to deserving black people, once they came to know them. Sometimes I am relieved that most of them did not live to see their dreams betrayed.

Insert A

Here in San Francisco over forty years later, as blocks of sunlight on the wall stretch and blur with evening; I can afford to linger over my memories of the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club - to savor and appreciate them. Life at the club was a delight, but it ended abruptly for me; I never went back there after Daddy was killed in an automobile accident in 1951, two weeks before my 16th birthday. Mother and I survived badly, neither sharing our grief nor fully accepting the fact of Daddy's death.

After contracting polio a year later, my active, athletic life changed dramatically. Over the next few decades, flight and adventures carried me to Nashville, New Orleans, Paris, Los Angeles, and finally to Berkeley - the community I still think of as home. With a full collection of memories to draw upon, and ample time for reflection, I have begun to fulfill the obligation of survivors; to record and place our lives in useful and meaningful context for our children and for the future.

#

For those of us who reject their methods, and often their lives in the process, we might remember that they were survivors of the worst period of lynching in our country's history. They controlled and transformed their anger (for they must have had much) into determination to improve themselves as individuals, and provide opportunities for their families - which most of them did. Their faith may have been misplaced, but their example of noble engagement with life in the face of scathing prejudice and exclusion, is extraordinary. I am thankful for their infectious laughter, scrupulous honesty, intense loyalty, and faith in the future. For them, tennis was the epitome of sportsmanship and character-building. The Cosmolitan Tennis Club was the place where they lived up to their own high standards. The world they left has become more complicated and more cynical, but the example of their lives convinces me that their values must have a place in our future.

Toni Vincent 460 Francisco St. #304 San Francisco, CA 94133 415/391-9186

May 19, 1994

Dear Bob,

I really appreciate your encouragement and assistance. It has gotten me moving on my story. I have done a little revising and attempted to make the first chapter have an ending.

I'm enclosing a tentative outline of the book which I hope will emerge in the next few months. As I may have mentioned to you earlier, this project began as an effort to come to terms with my father's death which apparently I never grieved properly when he died so many years ago. Consequently, I have done some work on each of the first five chapters, but have only given a little thought to the other parts of this outline.

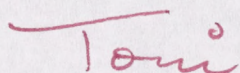
The process has been very cathartic, and it has actually helped me remember things that I thought were lost forever. My sons and other young people have been pressing me to write about some of the events on the outline, and I myself have gotten interested in seeing where it all will go.

I'm not really satisfied with my effort to "round out" the first episode and make it into a self-contained story in a page or two - maybe because that is the work of the next four chapters. I'm enclosing alternative page 25s because I can't seem to decide what I am doing.

Even though I'm sure there is room for more revision of the Tennis Club, I would like to concentrate on the next four chapters because I am certain that there will be some juggling between those parts to make the whole thing coherent. At that point, it should be self-contained as a unit.

I think I am asking you if the enclosed is sufficient to submit to an agent or a publisher with the hope of publication.

Thanks for your time and interest;



Toni

Toni Vincent 460 Francisco St. #304 San Francisco, CA 94133 415/391-9186

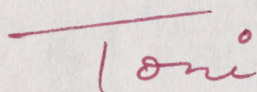
May 4, 1994

Dear Bob,

Thanks for agreeing to read my story. I need all the encouragement I can garner. As much as I love writing, I seem to have a million other calls on my time.

I look forward to your responses and criticisms, and hope to hear from you soon.

Keepin' On,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Toni". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Toni

A wonderful memoir of her father and
girlhood at ~~some~~ ^{some} ~~points~~ ^{points} club. It is
Lovingly & beautifully written

In 1929
Her Dad was a founder of the ^{Cornet tennis}
Club on ^{Hill} ~~in~~ ^{Union} ~~the~~ ^{town}
more or less grown up then with
her Dad and his buddies

Nearly another ending: what became of
The Club, the father & mother, the
little girl (who grew into ~~woman~~ ^{woman} ~~study~~
by radio)

(2 paras)

Come back to present ^{her} flashback

Toni Vincent
460 Francisco Street Apartment # 304
San Francisco, California 94133
415/391-9186
(6945 words)

The Cosmopolitan Tennis Club

by Toni Vincent

I have lived in my San Francisco apartment only 5 years, but I've spent more time in it than any place else. More than the Oregon street house in Berkeley, where I lived for 16 years; more than the one on Santa Barbara Road, which I had to give up when I got sick; and more than the house I took for granted during my first sixteen years (until Daddy's accident) in the Bronx. I miss my back yard and my gardens, but North Beach is a wonderful part of San Francisco; it makes up for some of the shortcomings of city life. I don't get around too easily now; not since the post-polio. It took me two years to realize that I couldn't (physically), continue to live on Santa Barbara Road in Berkeley, and move to San Francisco. The eighteen steps up to the front door and the terraced backyard at the Berkeley house, were a source of growing frustration. Fortunately, the apartment is easy. I like the floor plan, particularly its spacious living room and the large south facing windows. My friends think I have a green thumb, it's just that plants and I both thrive in this sun-drenched sanctuary. If

I ever manage to build a house, it will follow this blueprint pretty closely. I pour over house plans constantly; drawing and re-drawing them all the time. It is something of a hobby for me; perhaps an obsession, or a useful subterfuge.

Sometimes the sun streaming through my windows, framing angled blocks of light along the walls, reminds me of the women's locker room at the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club in Harlem. I spent much of my early childhood at the club with my dad, while Mother was at school, or studying. Daddy and I relished going to the Clubhouse; any excuse to spend an entire day there was eagerly seized.

The Cosmopolitan Tennis Club was a glorious, green palace to me, from when I was just a toddler. It was full of unknown rooms, long passages, hidden storage areas, exotic furnishings, and fabulous smells. Located in a fancy part of Harlem called Sugar Hill, the clubhouse was a lucky find for Daddy and his buddies. The former owners never dreamed there was a group of black men in 1929, interested enough in tennis to take the property off their hands. It must have been a very imposing country club at one time. I remember it as a sprawling, dark green, wooden building on a tree-lined street of handsome brownstone houses with wrought iron fences on Convent Avenue.

My territory was the small patch of sunlight in front of the shed at the foot of the steps down to the courts. Inside the shed, propped against the wall, was a heavy roller which pressed the sand

and flattened the courts. Next to it was a funny-shaped bucket on wheels that had a little paintbrush on the bottom. From time to time, it was filled with white paint and Mr. Wilson rolled it along the ground to mark the lines on the tennis courts. A pile of sand sat at the side of the shed. Against the wall of the apartment building next door, and out of the way of tennis players, I had the shed and the sandpile to myself for hours on end. My toys were tennis balls, the cans they come in, and sometimes little pencils with no erasers that were used for bridge scores. They made great fences and posts for my sand architecture. My very first and most favorite memories are of playing contentedly in my sandpile at the tennis club.

I never saw any other children at the club, except when there were tournaments and the place was packed with people. Even then, the only one I recall was a boy named Billy who was a good deal older than I was. Still, I did not feel any lack of playmates. As an only child, I was accustomed to playing alone, and I had an active imagination to keep me company. Most of the men at the club didn't have children, or if they did, their wives took care of them.

Disapproving neighbors thought that my mother "...had no business going to school when she had a child to raise." and that Daddy shouldn't, "...drag that child all over the place with him." In any case, they believed that the tennis clubhouse was not a proper place for a young child to spend much time. There was a vague litany of admonitions which began, "You shouldn't allow that child

to..." that were pointed in our direction. They objected to my playing in the sand all day long, or being on my own so much. Daddy never argued with them; he just used his judgment and did what he thought was best. I was grateful for his independence and my opportunity to spend time at the tennis Club. One day, when I was about three, I was allowed to go to the bathroom on my own. That was when I discovered the Ladies Locker Room.

Five steps below the clubhouse proper, the locker room windows were nearly at sidewalk level. Perhaps that is why they were stained glass. They weren't fancy, just amber colored squares and sections of circles set into wrinkled glass. It gave the room a constant feeling of sunshine, even on cloudy days. The furnishings in the room were faded rattan chairs and sofas with thick innerspring cushions. Tall metal lockers lined one wall, one atop the other, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. On the opposite wall was the most astonishing sight of all - a giant photograph of a scene from a city block with lots of people looking out of windows or standing in doorways. The picture went clear up to the ceiling, at least eight feet high. It stretched from one wall to another, perhaps fifteen feet across. Individual people standing on the street were just a few inches tall, an intriguing size for an adult to be, from a small child's perspective. The mural was the most fascinating thing I had ever seen. I could walk right up and examine each person in great detail. Some of them looked sort of familiar, but I couldn't place them. All of them looked happy; even the man with no legs on the little scooter that had roller-

skate wheels. One man wore a sweeping Zoot suit, with a chain going from his vest pocket to his pants pocket. On his head was a wide, elegant, white hat. There was a lady with a baby in her arms. They all seemed to know each other. I wanted to be on this block. I wanted to live in a neighborhood where everyone stood around smiling, and everyone knew everyone else. This mural had me spellbound. I must have stayed in the Ladies Locker Room for a long time, because someone came to see if I was all right. Someone was always rushing me out of that room. I wanted to stay there forever. It was the most magical place I had encountered in my young life. After that, on rainy days, I would ask if I could play in the Ladies Locker room. It was chilly, the wooden floor was dirty and full of splinters; but it was worth it, just to spend some time on the street with all the smiling people.

When I outgrew the sandpile, I still liked to hang out with my dad and his buddies at the Tennis Club. Some of them had been school athletes at Bluefield State college in West Virginia with him. Daddy was a four-letter man whose exploits on the football field, baseball diamond, and basketball court, were the talk of his friends over a beer - well into my adolescence. Most of Daddy's friends were like him, poor, rural boys who could play ball and who found in that skill, their opportunity for an education. Many of them seemed to have worked on the railroad as porters or waiters during school vacations. My uncle Kyle was still a Pullman porter twenty years later, despite his Master's degree in business. There was a wonderful camaraderie among my father's friends, which I was

aware of, even as a child. They were sophisticated, for country boys, from traveling extensively across the United States. Some had even traveled the world in the uniform of Uncle Sam.

Women rarely came to the club. Only once do I ever remember seeing anyone in the Ladies Locker Room. I had noticed two women volleying balls on the #2 court one Saturday morning, from my vantage point at the sandpile, but I quickly forgot about them. Later, I startled them both when I bounded up the locker room steps and dashed through the door. They were talking and laughing in the dressing area, where one whole wall was a large mirror. I was surprised to see them there and a little annoyed too. They had turned on the overhead light in the dressing room, causing the room to glow pink from the color of the walls. It changed all the lighting in the Locker room. Strings of smoke climbed the air from lipstick stained cigarettes in ash trays. I was angry that they were there. I didn't like them laughing and smoking in the Ladies Locker Room, and the light didn't look right with them there.

Daddy loved all sports and taught me to play his favorites. His best game was tennis. He became a champion in the un-segregated New York State Amateur Competitions after all his school boy athletics were over. In 1929, he and three friends incorporated the club, and purchased The Cosmopolitan Tennis Club, hoping the sport would become more popular among black people. Every year, he went on tour to the Negro colleges, playing demonstration matches and encouraging interest in the game. The other driving force of

the club was Mr. (Fred) Johnson, the legendary, one-armed, tennis coach, who was a joy to watch in action. A dark, chocolate-brown man in his sixties with nearly white hair, Mr. Johnson was lithe and wiry, his "whites" always spotless, with razor-sharp creases. He sported a snowy baseball cap with green sunglasses attached to the visor. Even when he was playing tennis, a wrinkled, hand rolled cigarette - scarcely long enough to put his fingers around - rested on the corner of his lower lip. He moved lightly on his feet, appearing wherever necessary to hit the ball, but never showed the slightest exertion. Mr. Johnson was the picture of grace; a lesson in balance and understated power. I could never understand how he tossed a ball in the air with his stub and fired the bullet serves he made famous. He taught me some pointers when I first started playing, that seemed amazing to my seven year old mind. Early on, I came to realize how sweet and subtle the game of tennis can be; though at first, I could barely manage was to hold on to my racquet - which seemed nearly as big as I was.

The clubhouse was my first schoolhouse; I loved hearing discussions about baseball (the Negro Leagues), pro-ball (white man's baseball), politics, Jim Crow, Roosevelt, the war, inflation, Ethiopia, Paul Robeson, etc. - of Daddy and his friends. Even more than the content, I loved the music and the cadence of their talk. The deep heavy voice of Mr. Hudson which could make the chairs and tables vibrate when he spoke with emotion; the crackly voice of Uncle Kyle which reminded me of crushed cellophane; Mr. Johnson's gentle Southern drawl, whose sparse words, taut with wisdom, had to

find their way around his ever present stub of a cigarette. As an adolescent, I found myself searching for the kind of men my father and his friends were. I couldn't find them on the streets of New York, nor was I able to recognize them when I went to Fisk as a freshman from the Bronx.

Daddy once told me that when he was a boy in West Virginia, he wanted, more than anything, to be a coal miner. His Dad had worked in the mines, all of his older brothers worked there, and it was a high paying job for a black man. When he reached the age of 16, young Lewis was able to work in the pits during his summer vacation, and he eagerly awaited the opportunity. He told me how excited he was to get his denim coveralls, his metal cap with the lamp on it and go down into the mine - carrying a pick and a lantern - with the men in the elevator. He also said that on his very first day, as they descended into the deepening darkness, he began to have doubts. He didn't realize that it would be so cold or so damp in the mines. He had never been so chilled, or felt so helpless, as he did down in the pit. The long caves were too shallow to stand in; you could only kneel and crawl through their dank chambers. The timbers that held the roof of the mine in place, sometimes collapsed, and it was just a matter of luck who might find himself beneath a falling slab, or a broken timber. The air was foul from organic gases and too many people in a small place. It was a terrifying experience. After that summer, Daddy went back to school, preoccupied with thoughts of escape from the mines. In 1928 at the age of 18, the week he graduated from

Bluefield High School in Institute, WVA - Lewis Hickman went to New York City in search of a better life.

A hardworking black youth could find a job as a waiter or doorman in the city, even during the Depression. Daddy took a room at the Grampion, a modest hotel near Lenox Avenue, where he met a variety of traveling performers, and got a taste of city life in Harlem. The following summer, Mother's high school graduation present from her family was a trip to New York city. There, she was reunited with her beau, the High School Football Hero. Eugenia Goff and Lewis Hickman married secretly that Autumn of 1929, before she, the brainy one, went to back to Charleston to attend WVA State College. Daddy stayed in New York, looking (I imagine) to find his fortune. It took another four years before Mother finished school, returned to New York to permanently join my father and find work. Characteristic of their faith in education, they agreed to have Daddy go back to WVA to go to college after Mother finished. It was a wise, but unusual move. When Daddy finished school, he returned to New York for good, and they finally took up married life together. Mother enrolled immediately in Columbia University Graduate School, and Daddy got a job with the Welfare Department as a Social Worker.

For all of my growing up years, this is the work my father did. He seemed particularly well suited for the job; a patient, gregarious, instantly likable man whose company was sought by all ages and all types of people. His presence always brought a broad smile when he

entered a room. He was adopted as surrogate father by many of the boys in our neighborhood in the Bronx. I was sometimes jealous of the kids who would come to our house to ask if "...Mr. Hickman could come out to play." He felt it his duty to teach all small children to throw a ball, not shove it. First he would have to show them how to watch the ball; keeping their eyes on it when they tossed it, following it in flight. Then they would learn to catch a ball; not simply let it fall in their hand. Later, they would use the whole arm in throwing, taking advantage of its full range of motion, and that of the shoulder. Finally, when they developed a smooth, graceful throwing action which involved the legs and torso, as well as the shoulder, the elbow and the wrist, Daddy would compliment and applaud them. I experienced with him, some paternal pride when his proteges achieved the joy of throwing a catching a ball with that sweet, elegant, seamless harmony of body, glove and missile.

I considered myself a lucky child. I adored my father, and was the apple of his eye. His constant helper; he taught me to work the Victory Garden, and allowed me to help with his chores around our house. When I was four years old, I tried to capture my delight with the miracle of string beans and potatoes coming out of the ground by photographing Daddy's summer harvest. I remember someone saying, "You shouldn't allow that child play with a camera." Thankfully, the advice was ignored. One lone, giant, string bean was all that was recognizable in my lopsided snapshot, but Daddy put it on display in his den, right next to his tennis trophies.

Once, we refinished the five sets of wooden venetian blinds at our house in the Bronx, a massive undertaking. We had to cut away all the cords, remove each slat from the tattered fabric harness, and wash them carefully by hand, arranging them in flat rows so they would not warp. When they were dry, we varnished first one side, then the other. Finally, we re-placed them in new cloth tape, and added new cords, threading them carefully through the holes in the slats. This was a painstaking job, one that most adults shrank from. Daddy broke it down into simple, easily accomplished tasks, and showed me what to do. I never remember him being impatient, even though in my enthusiasm, I must have made some blunders. On another occasion, Daddy rented a huge, noisy machine and refinished the parquet floors of our living room and Den. I, of course, wanted to help. Daddy tied scraps of old blankets to my shoes, so I could wax the floors by running and frolicking through the rooms. He showed me how to wash windows with kerosene and water, reaching every tiny spot in the corners with a damp sponge and polishing them to a squeaky, brilliant shine with old newspapers.

By club standards, my father was informal in his style and his dress. A muscular, athletic man, he moved quickly and could often feint out his tennis opponents with startling speed. Daddy was a fierce, single-minded, competitor on any playing field; in stark contrast to his gentle demeanor in other settings. He was playful, and loved to clown, often making himself the butt of his jokes. He liked to imitate famous entertainers of his day, especially Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan. Before I was five, he taught me to tap

the time step, and do few simple dance routines. He enjoyed performing. Needless to say, I was his most appreciative audience. He sometimes did the "Sand," a sliding step that changed the mood of sharp, staccato, metal taps in our simple act. He always wore tweed sports jackets and slacks, never a suit, but always with a shirt and tie. I remember the rough texture of wool against my cheek, and the faint smell of tobacco from his jacket when I sat on his lap, as a toddler. Sometimes, exhausted from a hard day's play at the sandpile, I would seek him out from the crowd around him, climb onto his knee, take a sip from his glass of beer, and immediately begin to doze; lulled by the ebb and flow of the men's deep voices, and comforted by the circle of safety that enveloped me. When I was soundly asleep, Daddy would carry me carefully to his car; my head snuggled against his arm, feet swinging limply like pendulums from the knee - weighted down by stiff, white, high-topped shoes of childhood. He would lay me down in the back seat of his 1939 Buick, and cover me with the quilt that lived in the car. Then he would drive us north on Convent Ave, veering generally northeast through the maze of irregular streets until Convent met and became St. Nicholas Place. There, a right turn put him on 155th St. which led to and across the Harlem River to the Bronx. Once across the bridge, he was on 161st Street, and out of the congestion of bridge traffic. He continued East on 161st street until he reached the wide thoroughfare of Boston Road. There he turned left, staying on Boston Road until he made a right at 169th, moving downhill the three short blocks to Prospect Avenue where he made another right and parked in front of our 3 story apartment

house in the middle of the block.

One Christmastime, when I was about seven, Mother and I went to Daddy's Office party at the Welfare Department. Desks and chairs were arranged to make an impromptu stage, and there were musical and other performances by different people on the staff. Daddy did a Mexican hat dance in full vaquero outfit while his Mexican co-worker played the guitar. The story line for this production was someone relating a dream with assorted improbable sequences. Daddy had several parts, but he closed the show doing a bubble dance in drag; wearing a wig made from floor mops, a brassiere filled with tennis balls, and one of Mother's old dresses. In my early life I developed a distorted view of "jobs" - assuming they all included raucous parties, outrageous costumes, and silly amateur performances for entertainment.

Daddy was on friendly terms with his all his co-workers, mostly Jewish and Italian New Yorkers. He played tennis with some of his work friends, but they didn't go to the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club. They played together in public parks and even participated in the amateur tennis tournaments that the City of New York sponsored. One year, Daddy and Mr. Marrati, from his office, won a trophy in the doubles category of the city tournament.

The big social event of the year for my parents, was the West Virginia State Alumni Dance at Small's Paradise on 125th St. I knew when it was coming by the excitement about it at our house.

Daddy and Mother both had books of tickets that they sold to their friends. People would come by, or phone to make sure they had reservations for tables. A popular dance band like Count Basie or Jimmie Lunceford would play the music. Aunt Gladys and Aunt Margaret and all of their friends went too. Just about all the adults that my parents knew, went to this event.

I would have to stay at home, cared for by one of the elder "Aunts" who sometimes babysat for my parents. They would be warned not to let me "get into anything," for I had gained a reputation by convincing my caretaker that I knew how to bake a cake with the electric mixer when I was three. I would spend the evening watching Mother and Daddy make their last minute preparations for this event. Our house would smell like face powder and cologne and after-shave lotion. Mother would carry a fresh flower, to be pinned on her gown at the very last minute. I would try to imagine what "Small's Paradise" would be like with Mother and Daddy and all the grown-ups having a fancy party. Mother wore a long, shiny dress that went down to the floor. She put her hair in an "upsweep" which was like a curly crown around the top her head with a pompadour in front. She also wore a necklace and earrings, or maybe a brooch; something rare for Mother. Daddy wore a black "tux" with a bright colored cummerbund around his waist and a bow tie. One year, Daddy had to deliver something to Small's before the dance began, and I had a chance to go with him. Even though it was early, the air of festivity was unmistakable. Colorful crepe paper streamers were draped around the hall and a large sign

welcoming West Virginia State College Alumni stood at the entry. A few early revelers had arrived and were dashing across the polished wooden floor, putting last minute touches of the decorations or arranging plaques or marking lists. It was like a bustling fairyland. Pretty women in colorful gowns drifted by, while musicians sat at the bandstand and tested their instruments. Everything was in a state of anticipation. I only stood at the doorway and watched, but I was convinced that this was the most important and elegant event on earth. I couldn't wait until I was old enough to go to a party at Small's Paradise.

One of my favorite activities was standing on the toilet seat in the bathroom and watching Daddy shave. This was one of his all time, greatest performances. He began by tapping out a syncopated beat, with his hands, feet, comb, shaving brush or anything at hand. Then he would put a towel into the bathroom basin, and run hot water over it until he could barely handle it, all the time keeping up his drumbeat. He then squeezed out the water and wrapped the steaming towel around his face. While the steam softened his beard (that was what he told me it did), he would swish his shaving brush (never missing a beat) in a mug with a cake of soap in it. This would raise a lather that he would slap on his face in rhythmic strokes that would have me laughing. As silly and repetitive as this ritual was, it never failed to leave me in stitches. Occasionally, Daddy would comb his hair over one eye, hold a piece of his comb over his upper lip, and do a "Hitler speech." His mimicking German and ridicule of the Fuhrer was only

one of several variations of his shaving performance.

In 1943, when I was 8 years old, Mother, Daddy and I were invited to dinner at the home of Daddy's co-worker, Mr. Panelli. They lived in an apartment building on the other side of Crotona Park, in a neighborhood that always had colorful street festivals on Catholic holidays. It was only about six blocks from our house, but we drove there and parked in front. We climbed the stairs to the third floor and rang the bell. Rosa, Mr. Panelli's wife welcomed us heartily. Mr. Panelli's mother, who didn't speak any English, greeted us by smiling and nodding her head in a shy, friendly way. Their apartment was crowded with dark, polished furniture and small, intriguing figurines sitting on crocheted doilies. Little pieces of lace were everywhere, covering every surface and pinned to the arms and backs of the sofa and chairs. Cut-glass pendants hung from all the lamps and candle holders, flashing sparks of light from every direction. Imposing portraits of family members in thick, oval frames stared at us from every wall. We sat in the livingroom while the grown-ups made polite conversation, and I looked at the formidable, relatives surrounding us. The smell of garlic, and olive oil filled the little apartment. To me, that meant spaghetti and meatballs.

Soon Rosa went into the kitchen and quickly returned, informing us that dinner was ready. We sat at the big dining room table, on tall chairs with velvet seats. Dozens of things were on the table, all resting on the frothy white tablecloth which was, itself, on

top of another table cloth. Two large glass candelabras sat prominently near the ends of the table, each with 5 tall candles. There were dishes of several sizes for every person, two or three glasses each, more silverware than we needed, napkins, pitchers, saltshakers, and on and on. I had never seen so many things on a table for just eating dinner. Everyone looked cheery in the soft light of the candles.

Rosa entered with a large china bowl full of salad greens and an oily dressing. It was unfamiliar, but tasted good. The grown-ups had red wine in one of their tall, stem glasses and water in the other. I had water from a large stem glass too. It all felt very wonderful and foreign and special. There was spaghetti and crusty Italian bread with white, saltless butter. The grown-ups moved from their stiff formal attitudes, to friendliness, then to hearty laughter.

Suddenly, in the midst of our happy occasion; a shrill, piercing sound shot through the night air, freezing everyone at once. We all recognized the familiar air raid siren, and began turning off lights. I blew out the candles. Daddy was an air raid warden, so he had to report to his precinct. It wasn't far away, he could walk there from here. They would have extra helmets and first aid kits, since his equipment was still at home. He gave Mother and me a quick kiss and was off. When our eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, Rosa Panneli went to the windows and raised all the shades. We all stared into the unlit night streets. Only an

occasional quick glow of someone's cigarette, broke the eerie darkness. We sat on the window sill by the fire escape, watching the dark street and the rest of the city, waiting in darkness around us. Stars began to spray the sky with tiny dots of light. They were clear and brilliant, brighter than I had ever seen them before. I felt deeply contented; somehow connected to everyone in all the houses, with all the people peering into the dark streets below and all those staring at the dazzling sky above. The air raid had united us all, in fear and in our dependence upon one another. Here we sat, in darkness together under a resplendent display of heavenly majesty. I felt a surge of happiness, knowing that I was part of this world of varied peoples in a great city under one vast and glorious, star strewn sky.

In wintertime, the four tennis courts at the club were hosed down and allowed to freeze; making a huge, protected, skating rink. I was about five when learned the sport. Even on weekends, fewer than a dozen people might show up to skate. Sometimes I would be the only person on the ice, free to create my own moves or practice those I had seen at Rockefeller Center. I spent the short winter days, learning figure eights, flying through the air and defying gravity, attempting to imitate the graceful actions of Sonja Heini. I loved the sensation of spinning from forward to backward to forward again; allowing the momentum of my body to carry me along, while I leapt and turned, and learned to make it all seem effortless. Best of all was that magic moment, after a jump, when the blade touched the ice imperceptibly, carrying you backward as

you skimmed the surface of the ice like drifting snow, or a creature no longer bound to ties on Earth, but borne on air alone. Later, exhausted and frosty, going inside the clubhouse with its embossed radiators, sawdust-covered floors and steaming cocoa, all the delicious winter smells of the club; damp wool, old cigarette smoke, sweet tobacco, stale beer, Cuban cigars, cocoa and hearty human society cheered my heart and warmed me to the bone.

Mr. Hudson, a huge, light-skinned man over 6'4" and weighing at least 250 pounds, had a deep, booming voice which immediately drew your attention and interest. Besides that, he had a photographic memory and was a history buff. I remember my Dad once telling me that Mr. Hudson was a skilled machinist; but I always saw him in dark suits and vests, silk ties, and wing-tipped shoes. He was one of my favorite of Daddy's friends; an excellent card player, who was always in demand as a bridge partner. Whenever he saw me, he stopped what he was doing to ask me what I had learned in school that day. Whatever I told him, he knew more about it than anyone. "What they teach you at that school of yours today?" he would bark. "Oh," I would murmured, "today we learned about the French Revolution." "Did they tell you about the Tennis Court meeting of the Third Estate, in 1789?" He began a low, guttural laugh at the joke of the meeting place. "Do they teach you about the Jacobins, how they got rid of the king? Yeah, they got rid of the king," he repeated. "Do you learn about Santa Domingo, and the French colonies in the New World? Do they teach you that Toussaint L'Ouverture led the slaves in Santa Domingo in the only successful

revolution to overturn slavery in the world?" These questions were rhetorical, and served as introduction to a short history lesson by Mr. Hudson. He liked to tell about Mackandal, the great orator, a chief from Guinea, who attempted an unsuccessful revolt of Haitian slaves in 1751. Then he told of some of the Haitians who had fought in the American Revolution, such as the mulatto Rigaud who had been a non-commissioned officer in the French Army which fought with the Americans. "Freedom tasted good to them," he chuckled, when he had finished his short lecture. "They went back to Haiti and raised Hell over there!" Everyone listening got a good laugh from Mr. Hudson's account of Toussaint and of his unexpected success in overturning the French in freeing Haiti from European domination. "The French tricked old Toussaint," Mr. Hudson concluded, "they agreed to have talks with him, then when he went to France, they put him in prison. They tricked Toussaint, and threw him in jail" His voice dropped as the lesson ended.

Once in a while, I saw Mr. Hudson on his feet; a massive figure, restlessly rearing back on his heels as if to keep his great bulk from toppling. Most of the time he was at the Bridge table; usually in the middle of a masterful maneuver with his cards. His intense conversations with me, were (I suspect) designed to trick his adversaries into thinking that he wasn't too absorbed in the game; for as soon as he finished his history lesson, out of nowhere, he would slap an unexpected trump on the table and noisily - with much cigarette smoke and laughter - change the course of the game. I thought it was all great fun; the card game, the laughter,

the history and even the cigarette smoke.

When you entered the Cosmopolitan Tennis club, you came into a large room with card tables and chairs on your right, and a long bar, with stools on your left. I remember it most fondly, full of deep voiced men, drinking beer, smoking, laughing, playing bridge, and arguing noisily about politics. When you walked past the bar room, you entered a huge grandstand with an unobstructed view of the courts beyond. Chairs and tables were arranged so you could watch tennis matches from there, as well as from the bleachers outside. To the right, down the long grandstand hall, was a Ping-Pong table which they all called table tennis. If you made another sharp right, you were in an area about the size of the barroom which had a billiard table with racks of pool cues and other equipment. Mr. Wilson's room was adjacent to the billiard room. In the other direction, that is, down the left end of the grand hall, were the stairs to the court area. At a little landing down four steps, was the door to the ladies locker room, down a few more, my shed and the tennis courts.

Mr. Johnson's room was off limits to me, as was most of the clubhouse, but once I found myself there when I showed up for a tennis lesson and couldn't find anyone. I went around the huge empty building calling his name, when I heard a faint, raspy voice calling, "Ah'm in here Shugar, but Ah'm sick today." I followed the voice, opened the door to his forbidden chamber, and saw a small figure lying on an army cot with the covers pulled up under

his chin. His eyes were watery, the whites bloodshot and dirty looking. The room reeked of camphor and tobacco. I moved inside. "We'll have to do that lesson another day," he said looking weaker than I could ever imagine him. "I'm sorry you're sick," I said, "Can I get you something?" I was struck by the sparseness of his room. It looked like the barracks of an army camp, but the large room dwarfed his single cot, the small dresser and the tiny table and chair against the wall. Everything looked very old, especially the brown photographs on the dresser, and a whole group of pictures and newspaper clippings pinned to the wall. I was dying to get a closer look. "You can han me my medicine, if you would," he requested weakly. I had a legitimate excuse to look around, though I spotted the Vicks cough medicine he wanted, immediately. "Do you need a spoon?" I asked, bringing the ancient bottle of cough medicine closer to him. "Naw, I don't need one; thank you kindly." He was tired and I knew it was time to leave, but I was curious about by the sun-faded simplicity of Mr. Johnson's living space. I almost asked if I could open the bottle for him, but then I remembered that he could do everything with his stump. I wanted to see those photographs, there were some tennis trophies on some of them, but I turned to leave. "Bye, Mr. Johnson," I said as I went through the door. "Get well soon and I'll see you next week."

At dinner that night, I told my folks that Mr. Johnson was ill, and that I had missed a tennis lesson. I wondered if a doctor had been to see him. I told them about his fascinating, dingy room, and the old photographs. They listened quietly until I finished. Then

Daddy told me in no uncertain terms that I should not go into Mr. Johnson's room, that it was no place for me to be hanging around. Mother agreed. Their tone of voice made it clear that this was not a matter for further discussion. As an eight year old, I thought they were telling me to respect Mr. Johnson's privacy by not prying into his personal photographs, nor going into his room. That seemed like a good and reasonable idea. It still does.

For my father and the other men at the club, it was not only a place for socializing, it represented a way of life. There was strict decorum at the club; for instance no one was allowed on the courts unless they were in whites. If you weren't playing tennis, you were always "sharp." Sportsmanship and correct form were basic; their values included work, humor, competence, and self-reliance. They were almost military in their approach to the running of the club; and took pride in the perfection of ordinary skills. When I was twelve, having learned from experts, I could fold a perfect Windsor knot or spit-shine leather boots (a skill wasted on me, as I lived in sneakers), with a rhythmic snap of the cloth - a technique which my Dad had developed as a musical talent.

These men possessed a quiet dignity, a love of life and respect for accomplishment. They were hard working breadwinners who unhesitatingly accepted responsibility for themselves, their families, and even for the entire race. Some of younger ones went off to the wars in Ethiopia and Spain. I did not know their names, but I heard them discussed in solemn, respectful tones. Others

were called to serve in the new wars; they were the black G.I.s. who distinguished themselves in both Europe and Japan in World War II. Occasionally they spoke the almost unmentionable term, "war resisters," but this was not in the experience of these men. They respected people of principle who were willing to go to jail for their beliefs, but it was not their way. For them, commitment to hard work, to loyalty, and even to tradition, reflected their expectation that the larger society would open doors of opportunity to obviously deserving black people, once they came to know them. It was the very failure of this approach which spawned the militancy and impatience which my generation embraced.

For those of us who reject their tactics, and often their lives in the process, we might remember that they were the survivors of the worst period of lynching in our country's history. They controlled and transformed their anger (for they must have had much) into determination to improve themselves as individuals, and provide opportunities for their families - which most of them did. Their faith may have been misplaced, but their example of noble engagement with life in the face of scathing prejudice and exclusion, is extraordinary. I am thankful for their infectious love of laughter, their scrupulous honesty, and their trust in high ideals and hopes for the future. Their courage and decency provide the inspiration and example for my commitment to the continuing, and frequently disappointing, struggle for racial justice in these United States; a situation that all of us have inherited, and must deal with.

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL
OF AMERICA
9 Park Street
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02108

*prof dev.
file*

February 15, 1984

Professor Robert Allen,
Mills College

Dear Robert Allen,

Thank you in advance for your report on the Winant/Omi proposal,
which the department secretary tells me you put in the mail yesterday.

I am trying to take care of business matters as they come up,
since my last few days will be so hectic here, and so enclose our
check for your evaluation in advance of receiving the report itself.

I appreciate your support of this proposal (on the phone),
as well as your willingness to put your opinion in writing on such
short notice.

Sincerely yours,

Carol Baker

Carol Baker
Editor

Enclosure

INSTITUTE FOR LABOR AND MENTAL HEALTH

3137 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609 • (415) 653-6166, 654-9750

November 10, 1982

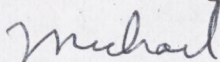
Dear Bob: *re Allen*

We at

The recent election results once again underscore the importance of psychological issues in dealing with politics. Developing a mass psychology to undermine powerlessness has been the central focus of the Institute, and our stress groups have been very effective in this regard. But we would like to talk about some of the broader political issues, integrating a social-psychological perspective, while simultaneously refining our political thinking.

So here's our plan: We will be holding a very informal pot-luck and discussion every Wednesday night at the Institute., from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. We will probably watch national news together and talk about it, and sometimes we will pick a particular focus for the discussion in advance and ask someone to make a brief presentation. But the basic idea is hanging out together and sharing in a discussion of these issues. Very informal. You are invited, and if there is someone else you think should be invited, give me a call and tell me. You don't have to come every week--just whenever you want. But do come, because I think your contribution will be valuable. This will be a relatively small group of good thinkers and activists, and I think you will enjoy it.

Warmest regards,



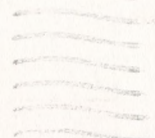
Dr. Michael Lerner
Executive Director

Institute for Labor and Mental Health

3137 Telegraph Avenue
Oakland, California 94609



NOV 12 1982



Robert Allen
P.O. Box 7106
S.F., Ca. 94120

NA

AB

201 East 165th Street
Bronx, New York
March 17, 1966

Mr. Knute O. Broady, Acting President
Stillman College
P.O. Drawer 1430
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Dear Mr. Broady:

Thank you for your kind letter of March 8th.

I must advise you that I am no longer a student at Columbia University in the field of mathematics. I am currently enrolled at the New School for Social Research here in New York where I am engaged in graduate study in sociology.

As it is my intention to undertake continuous study until I earn the Ph.D. (a process which may require several years), I will not be available for employment in the immediate future. Furthermore, even if I were available for employment I could not satisfy your request since my academic interests now lie in the field of sociology.

However, I wish to thank you for your inquiry, and I trust that you will be able to find a satisfactory person to fill the position.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Allen

STILLMAN COLLEGE

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THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
P. O. DRAWER 1430
TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA 35402

March 8, 1966

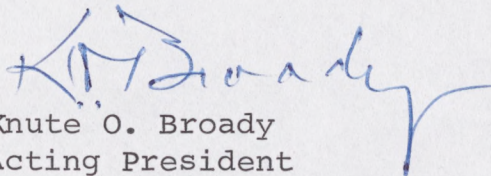
Mr. Robert Allen
Department of Anthropology
Columbia University
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Allen:

I have been informed by Mr. Kirk Jackson, who is in charge of placement at Atlanta University, that you may be interested in a college position in mathematics. Since you are a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, I believe, you might wish to serve as an Intern which, as you know, provides that one-fourth of your salary would be paid by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation.

If Stillman would perhaps provide the type of position you would like to have, I would appreciate your indicating such interest in order that I might list the courses you would be teaching and give you more specific information about the College.

Sincerely yours,


Knute O. Broady
Acting President

KOB:ml