Remember when I said that this was a crucial time for African-American men? Well, sistas, if 1991 was crucial for them, 1992 (and the years following) is looking to be a hell of a year for us.

Women of color all over America are being faced with a lot of obstacles and barriers lately. One of which is this not-so-new phenomenon which I call “uterus watch”. Sounds shocking? Well, don’t be too surprised. It all started [well, probably not for the first time, but the public was first made aware of it] when the sister in California was ordered by a judge to become sterile for allegedly abusing drugs and her children. Now, any mother should be punished for child abuse and drug abuse, but what about the fathers, who, in most of these situations, are not there for their families? Are judges going to order them to become sterile as well? If that happened, the planet would soon be barren.

Some may say that decision was for the best—after all, she was a single mother on welfare and another child would be a burden on her and the state anyway. You’ll read more about the sister in California in Krista Franklin’s article later in the magazine, but just be aware that, to our knowledge, New Jersey has adopted a bill requiring single mothers on welfare to agree to get a birth control implant called Norplant before they can receive any aid. And our own state of Ohio is trying to enter a similar proposal. I don’t mean to alarm anyone, but this sounds like a subtle form of genocide to me. Don’t get me wrong, I know the majority of mothers on welfare are white, but do you really think they’re going to force white women in America to stop having children?

We also are faced lately with the question of Black Feminism. Let us not be fooled. Just because we recognize the mistreatment, oppression, and disregard for African-American women by African-American men, does not make us feminists. I don’t know about you, but from what I see in my family, the women seem to be “runnin’ thangs”. But don’t take this in the Western meaning as henpecking. To put it rather bluntly, we don’t take any mess. I think most brothers understand that—which is probably why some wander in other directions, but that’s another story. No wonder, in the movie Roots, Kizzy was dumfounded when Miss Ann was comparing slavery to [white] male-female relationships: “…like men are smarter than women—it’s just the natural way of things, Kizzy.”

It has been said that in some pre-colonial African societies, women and men were regarded as equal. And though there were obvious physical differences, both extremes of gender strengths were thought to be just as important as they other. I truly believe that belief has been somewhat carried over in the African-American com-
munity, even though sometimes it appears that media have created some untrue images of African-American women over the years.

In one instance, American media have made our generation believe that no women played any important role in the struggle for African-American rights and equality in this country. Even Kwame Ture said that, the major movers and shakers of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee were women. Amy Jacques Garvey, wife of Marcus Garvey, was just as strong and steadfast as he, not settling for any nonsense—like Harriet Tubman. And look at Queen mother Moore. Oh, Queen Mother! A world traveler she has spent basically all of her life fighting for monetary reparations of African people throughout the diaspora long before Martin Luther King was pushed into the spotlight as the spokesman for civil rights. And she didn’t take any mess either! She said what she had to say no matter who didn’t agree.

Maybe that’s why no television news broadcast that I had seen pointed her out as she stood behind Nelson Mandela as a part of the welcoming crew when he arrived in the states. Yet they sought out and interviewed Coretta Scott King—all respect is due to her, but why not get other African-American women’s perspectives?

Western society is basically sexist. There’s no getting around it. Knowing this. It is also inevitable that African-American men (and women, in some cases) will buy into that ideology to get ahead—thinking that it’s the “American way.” But something tells me that is not the traditional African way, and we need to study into that to correct ourselves when we begin to get caught up in defining and stereotyping roles of African-American women, which are, naturally, unsuitable to us.
Badagri, Nigeria. West Africa. I was standing inside the Slave Relics House before the grave marker of Chief Sumbo Mobee of Boikoh, who died on Oct. 16, 1983. I had just been told he was a seller of slaves. I was able to touch shackles and chains. My guide, sculptor Bissi Fakeye, even allowed me to photograph him as he posed bent over a rusted, circular drinking trough that had been used to “water” soon to be enslaved captives.
My second sojourn in West Africa was proving more profound than the first. For any American of African descent, traveling in Africa can only be described as a pilgrimage. I am convinced the experience is one all of us should strive to obtain at least once in one’s lifetime. On my first visit to Nigeria, I had come face to face with our reality as so-called “minority people” here in America as I crawled on hands and knees through the bat-and-insect-infested blackness of Ogbunike cave. We are African-Americans today because our ancestors were unable to flee to the sanctuary of an Ogbunike cave. We are descended from the one African in ten who survived the Middle Passage.

I was not dreaming. I was in Africa. I was walking ancestral African earth. My teachers and my readings had prepared me well. Yet, the actual experience of “being” in Africa transcends description. The experience rendered my words inadequate. During that first visit to Nigeria, I had been introduced to a then 102-year-old village woman. When told I was visiting from America, she asked my hosts how I had gotten there. She welcomed me home as a son of the village returned after a long absence.

Now, I had returned to Agbururile, near Aba, to visit with Great Grandmother once again. She was 104 years of African Igbo wisdom. The poet in me soared beyond confining words as she looked into my eyes asking about my “people on the other side.” I left Nigeria, bound for Ghana, continuing my search for the Africa to be found deep inside myself—the Africa hidden inside a kidnapped people’s lore.

In Ghana, I again confronted our ex-slave past. It was hot. We drove along the narrow coast road in silence, in anticipation Elmina and Cape Coast Castles are museums today. As Elmina Castle appeared on the sea-line horizon, I thought about those captives who saw this place in another time; a time lost in the harmattan of our racial memory. At Elmina, we entered the Portuguese Catholic church where the confessional doubled as a hidden platform to slave buyers viewing prospective slaves. I was not dreaming. The Portuguese governor selected held hostage women from a bedroom balcony overlooking the female dungeons. Holocaust.

The stench of death still lingers down in the dungeons of Cape Coast Castle. Our guide informed us that up to 1500 men were doomed in these dungeons built beneath the English Anglican church. He called it “Phillip Quarco’s church.” Trying to cover their shame, the English ordained the son of the African slave trader and made him pastor of their church will always remember stepping back into the light only to be startled by the sound of the surreal sight of vultures circling overhead.

More than anything, West Africa gave me a much deeper and fuller sense of myself. I was moved most by the faces—familiar faces. There is no way to explain that warm feeling when you recognize the faces. The faces highlighted the sheer folly of the identity debate still raging here in America. We grope for something to call ourselves Descended from African people, as African-Americans, we are an African people still. Indeed, it is Africa that defines our very uniqueness as Americans. In Africa, there
was no confusion when I stood before a woman looking into a mirror image of my own mother’s face.

A black poet, I return home to Africa to become one with the ancestral voices I hear whispering in my inner ear. I arrive in Senegal on metal wings and prayers. I was in the land of Djembe drums and tall, graceful blue-black people. I was in the land of Cheikh Anta Diop. Author of African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality, Diop had placed black people at the center of human development. He reconnected Africa to the history of Egypt. He almost single-handedly restored in us the power of black hands.

In Senegal, I became the first African-American to make the annual pilgrimage to Diop’s home village of Thiaytou, deep in the hinterland, near Dlourbel. As our bus lumbered through the soft-sand brown West African sahel, I marveled at the flat terrain dotted with small villages and the mighty Baobab trees. In my mind’s eye, I can still see the huge, majestic Baobab trees standing, anchoring that distant line where earth meets sky. Those giant trees seemed an appropriate symbol of African strength, as well as a fitting metaphor capturing the essence of Cheikh Anta’s sturdy, steadfast will to master a hostile environment. I looked from the bus window and saw epic poetry rooted in the massive trunks of the Baobab.

For many in the village, I became their first real encounter with one returned home from the “other side.” I realized I was an unofficial ambassador for African-American people. At one point, I was asked to speak on our behalf before the gathered pilgrims. Through my own tears, I explained to them that I was one descended from those Africans shipped through Goree Island’s infamous Slave House “Door of No Return.” They murmured their affirmation. Their cries of “Alhumdulilah!” (Praise be to God!) assured me I could finally lay my burden down.

The village Marabout (Holy man) called me “a son of the village returned home after a forced absence.” I felt no sense of rejection. Rather, I felt a sense of belonging. Europeans present during our tour of Elmina and I was somewhat taken aback by my inability to mask my hostility. When I stood looking out the open “Door of No Return” in the Slave House on Goree Island, however, I experienced a tranquility, a serenity that was simply overwhelming. I stood in awe of my own sense of my Greater Self in its process of becoming. I understood, concretely, the devastation African people have survived. Without bitterness or tears, I felt my wounded and weary soul being healed.

I looked out over that ocean and realized we are no longer destined to be a people rendered “weeds in the garden of life.” During my flight back to the States, I meditated on the notion that we have evolved from having been transported in the holds of slave ships to being seated in a cushioned seat inside the latest jumbo jet over the Atlantic. Deep in black thought, I heard voices of the 150 million Africans who died during the middle passage calling my name. When I arrived back on American soil, feeling like Harriet Tubman must have felt whenever she made her way back south, I knew the words that would soon flame out of my pen would not be solely my own.

Africa. Our ancestors are knocking at the door of our silence. We must unlock the key to the door. I returned to this still strange, yet familiar land of my birth knowing we are a people who have stories to tell.
Who said one’s blackness is determined by their skin tone?

By Dorienne

Being a very fair-skinned African-American I find it very irritating that some African-Americans and whites do not see me as being black enough. What gives them the right to determine my blackness? I know how I was raised, just like any other African-American who was taught who they are and what they are. I do not feel as though I must prove it, but just let my feelings be known.

Both of my parents are African-Americans. I am not a product of a bi-racial relationship as many would like to think I am. When asked what is my race, and I proudly say African-American, people are so ready to say “Well one of your parents must be white, right?” No! I like everyone else have many races flowing in my blood, but this does not mean I am something other than black. Just because my skin is not black (literally), and my hair is not much more coarse than it does not mean I am not black. Blackness comes from within, and many forget this. My mind and soul are black. I myself am tired of hearing the “white guilt” jokes from people of my own race. How can we unite as a people if we divide ourselves by skin color? I also get tired of whites talking about “niggers” in my presence. When I inform them that I am one of those “niggers” they want to tell me: “not you, the other ones.” What other ones? I am one of those “other ones”, and I let them know of the greatness of my African ancestors. Do not misunderstand me, many can tell my race by just looking at me and this helps a lot. But it becomes tiring when I’m constantly asked what my race is.

On Whoopi Goldberg’s HBO special she made a joke about the movie “Jungle Fever.” She was talking about how Flipper’s wife was upset about him sleeping with a white woman. Then Whoopi said, “Has she (his wife) looked in the mirror lately.” I found this to be very offensive. Who gave her the right to determine this woman’s blackness just by looking at the color of her skin? I see myself looking just as black as Whoopi herself. I know who and what I am, I love being black and I love black people. I am proud to have learned about African civilizations and how highly developed they were. It makes me so proud to be able to say these were my people—intelligent, creative, and beautiful. It also makes me very upset that Whites exploited them and then took everything from them to claim as their own.

Within our race, we have many different skin tones and hair types. We must not close our minds just because some of our people are different. I never felt that I was trapped in the wrong color, just that others were trapped in the wrong mentality. I am very proud of my heritage and will always be proud. I just want my people to see me as I am, an African-American woman, and mother of the next generation. Someone who is proud of her race and people.
Paying Homage

Queen Mother Moore
(A Poetic Tribute)

Dr. John Arthur Moore
Ethiopian Warrior Woman,
Mother of all of Africa’s dispersed children,
Spirit Queen of the universe.

An ancient instrumented,
Drumming and chanting agemn pre-stated:
"MAY GOD THE AFRICAN
Make PREPARATIONS for REPARATIONS”

Prophecies, wisdom, profoundly deliberating:
"Visualize, De-Colonize”
"Africanize, De-Negrize.”
"Mobilize, my brothers- with your sisters!"

Red, Black and Green
On the Scene,
Position for Transition
Revolution is in evolution.

Valiant Freedom Fighters,
Melaniplite Garveyite,
Queen Mother Audley Moore
Opened up the door.

History we vow
Organize, Politics
Educate REAPPROVE.
Don’t wait

A Poetry Tribute to
Queen Mother Moore

Queen Mother Moore and her traveling companion.
And as the struggle continues
We salute your loyal power
For leading us in the hour of our birth
Into the people's movement
Queen Mother of us all - QUEEN MOTHER AUDLEY MOORE

by Aleea Barnes-Hardee

Royal Female Highness
for Queen Mother Moore

Warrior woman
African queen
A sister in struggle
From her to eternity
Fighting for a cause.

Queen Mother
In this life
We should
Give you more
Of what you've
Given us...self
Of our true worth.


"warrior queen"

My brother, better mind how you walk on de cross
De young lamb must find de way
For your foot might slip, and you 'lould git lost
De young lamb must find de way

"Speak, Garvey, Speak!"

The hall
is filled with people,
The atmosphere is electric
I can see it now,
as if I were there,
I see you,
that pistol cocked away in your purse,
another concealed in your bosom,
everyone had come prepared.
Freedom was there
on this night,
even the police knew
to leave well enough alone.

"Africa for the African, at home and abroad!"
Black Star Line.
Garvey
said, "Up you might race,
accomplish what you will..."
you were there,
you stood... no more
you dared.
in Muscle Schools, in New Orleans,
in Los Angeles, in Chicago, in New York,
in London, at the U.N.,
you cried, you organized.
black, republican, communist.
Ethiopian Woman: Mt. Addis Ababa.
Republic of New Africa.
you said, "fifteen cents
an hour,"
It was just like slavery
you told us, "I ain't hakin' for no bell, I demand reparations!"

the road from New Iberia
is long.
Warrior Queen road.
Queen Mother Yes Kantewa's road.
Herbert and Shoemaker's road.
Herb Henry's African men's road.
hard winding road.
Queen mother didn't have to change your name because you were already a
Mother road.
you have been saying
"We Africans!"
for a long time.
African.

for Queen Mother Audley Moore, (1898-)

by mwatana u. okatub
Keita Sa'ad
The first word to come out of most people's mouths when asked to describe Keita Sa'ad is "mommma."

A full-figured yet shapely woman always with a head cover on and seldom without some piece of brightly colored African clothing on, whether the festive colors and happy Senegalese patterns or earthy Ethiopian printed garb. Keita unmistakably looks like an African "momma" in every sense of the word. A good friend of Keita's and former Kent State student Afeni Shakur Mack describes her as "a momma, a big sister and a friend all rolled up in one."

To those who know her, her outer image is more than a head cover and colorful African fabrics. It is a true reflection of her way of life as a Muslim woman and as an African woman.

"She lives by her philosophy," said Nikki Marchmon vice president of Black United Students, of which Sa'ad is the African Affairs chairwoman. "Everything that she would tell someone else to do she does herself. She lives by her words."

"Yes, African Affairs chair WOMAN Sa'ad said with an attitude. "I don't mind having a sex," she said.

Seeming somewhat frustrated with the entire concept, Sa'ad chuckled when asked her views on black feminism.

"I think that it still has to be developed as a concept," she answered. "Feminism is a white woman's movement. That's a fight between her and her man," she said bluntly.

She says she believes the white feminist movement, which she calls materialistic, is not going to benefit the African woman in any way.

She feels this way mainly because, in her words, white women in the movement just want to hold the positions of their oppressors—the very men they are fighting against, and because most of the time white feminists end up attracted to men who represent the opposite of their oppressors—men of color.

"We done burned our bras, and now they're walkin' around with our men" she exclaimed. "We had their men when we didn't want them. We had the work place when we didn't want it, and what they want we've had for 2000 years!"

Sa'ad's philosophy, which Marchmon was referring to, is one that has developed from years of experience. After having raised two teen-age children, being married five times and returning to school all before the age of 36, it would be fair to say that Sister Sa'ad's life has played an important role in shaping her outlook on life.

GROWING UP

"I had a very hard life," Sa'ad said about growing up in Cleveland. She was raised in a close-knit matriarchal family, which to most would not appear to make life very hard. But according to Sa'ad, because she didn't have a strong male influence in her childhood, she always got a woman's perspective on discipline when she got into trouble. "It also made me a
teen-age mother," Sa'ad said was the result of too much motherly discipline. Her daughter India was born when she was 16.

However, contrary to scary statistics and horror stories of teen-age motherhood, Sa'ad said being a young mother was not as sad as people may perceive it to be.

"It wasn't easy," Sa'ad said, "But it didn't seem like it was harder than living."

Sa'ad does admit, though, that both she and her first husband, India's father, were too young and perhaps infatuated with each other. At least it appears she was with him.

"He was sooo cute," sister Shafiee said with a wide grin on her face. "How can someone be so fine but such an asshole?" she asked, reflecting on her first love who was only a year and a half older than she was when they married.

MEN, MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

This two-and-a-half year marriage and her second marriage were common-law marriages. The other three were marriages under Islamic law.

"I've never been married according to the American system—I never want to," Sa'ad said. "I'm not an American-centered person," she would say later.

Even after five marriages, Sa'ad wouldn't mind marrying again. "I do want to get married again," she said. "I believe in marriage."

In fact, she advises everyone to marry. She believes marriage is healthy.

"Marriage gives you the opportunity to have a mirror for your actions. I think everybody should get married," she advised.

In between the break up with India's father and her second marriage, Sa'ad supported herself and her daughter by singing and dancing in the nightclubs around Cleveland.

No, it's not something she's ashamed of at all. Actually, looking at her face as she reminisces about those days, makes you think her nightclub days may have been the most fun she's had in her life.

"I miss that time," she said as she reflected on the days when she was known to the club-goers as "Little Keita."

Though her nightlife somewhat faded away (she still parties) and she became a housewife for the years it took to raise her children and return to school, those years were probably the most fulfilling for Sa'ad.

Her second husband and father of her 14-year-old son Sharif was a white Jewish man.

"My ex-husband was a freak of nature," Sa'ad said about her white husband who apparently was not like most white men.

"Marriage gives you the opportunity to have a mirror for your actions. I think everybody should get married."

"From the time he was 17, he never had a white girlfriend," Sa'ad said.

Strangely enough, the time when she was with this man was when she began to grow spiritually and discover herself. Her husband used to hold study groups where they studied all the major belief systems. It was through these study sessions that Sa'ad realized that Islam was her religion.

"The more I started to read the precepts of Islam, the more I started to see that I was a Muslim," Sa'ad said.

However, she didn't just discover this for the first time with her husband. She can remember her grandmother telling her stories that had been handed down from her grandparents. Sa'ad said those stories actually matched the materials she had later started reading about Islam.

"Islam was not only my belief but my heritage," she affirmed with confidence.

Now Keita is passing these principles on to her two children but not in the fashion most parents teach their children. Sister Sa'ad was never one to sit down and just give her children advice. Her mother never did that with her. Instead she just sets the example of how they should behave and is confident that her children will follow.

"I try to make my whole life her advice," she said when asked how she would advise her 20-year-old daughter on marriage and relationships.

Her daughter India is living in Cleveland with her boyfriend who she is about to marry. He is a Muslim, but he is also white.

"Her boyfriend is really nice," Sa'ad said. "I like him a lot. He's kind to her."

But being nice and kind are not the only things to consider in interracial relationships, according to Sa'ad. The individual's belief system, Keita stressed, is what's important.

"People cannot help whether they are black or white," Sa'ad said. "What they can help is how they relate to the universe and creation."

"The belief system has to be in tune. That's going to be the ultimate thing you're going to have to choose sides with."

REARING OFFSPRING

Her son Sharif, who is a product of interracial marriage, is also the child Keita feels closest to perhaps because she almost died giving birth to him, and he almost died being born.

"I really think our souls mingled," Sa'ad said about the very moment she thought she would lose her life and her son would lose his brand new life.

Fourteen-year-old Sharif is living in Kent with his mother. He was attending public school in Cleveland and recently in Kent before his mother realized that no American school system was good
enough for her son, or for most African-American young men for that matter. For that reason, she has decided to pull Sharif out of the schools and teach him at home.

When he was in the Cleveland school system, Sharif and many other African-American young men who were labeled "incorrigible" had to attend Saturday detention as punishment. Sa'ad said when she found out that the students just sat in a room doing nothing for four hours, she realized they were training these young people, including her son, to be accustomed to a prisonlike environment.

"Since a lot of young black men are not from the mainstream, the school system is not built for them," Sa'ad said.

And let her tell it, her son is definitely not of the mainstream.

"He wasn't 'massa's little boy,'" sister Sa'ad said about her son when he entered the Kent school system. She said school officials would constantly complain about her son because "he addressed them Afrocentrically."

So now she's teaching him at home during all of the spare time she and her son have. Their sessions are usually in the morning before she goes to class, during her office hours in the BUS office or when she comes home in the evenings. Right now, she's teaching him African politics and political leaders, French, religious studies, American history, algebra, astronomy and literature. Included in his readings is F. Scott Fitzgerald. She said she chose Fitzgerald for a reason.

"I want him to see the way white people in this country see themselves," Sa'ad said. "These aren't the same people that were the slave holders," she said about the characters in Fitzgerald's works.

**GOING TO SCHOOL...**

In 1987, sister Sa'ad decided to attend college. She started at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland. She then transferred to Kent State in the spring of 1990. Finally a senior, she will graduate from Kent with a dual degree in anthropology and Pan-African Studies. With that, she hopes to spend the rest of her life studying it, Sa'ad said. "I don't have the same preoccupations as an 18-year old freshman."

Sa'ad is also the oldest undergraduate executive board member of Black United Students. She holds the African Affairs chair even though she initially ran for president of the organization.

"I'm so glad I lost!," Keita exclaimed about losing the presidency to Maleea Johnson. "The African Affairs chair gives me more opportunity to do what I want to do without having to go through the bureaucracy."

Since she's officially taken office, she's been responsible for bringing a number of Afrocentric programs to campus. Some of them include: a discussion on the 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada, an African holistic health workshop and African Heritage Day, which she says should encourage African (and African-American) students to wear African clothing and just be proud to display their African heritage.

It looks like sister Sa'ad is going to make it. Every student has to struggle through classes juggle activities and eventually face the outside world. So does Keita. But she's ahead of most of us because she's already faced the outside world. And she doesn't have any less of a struggle through college as any other student (actually she may have more of a struggle). But she may be lucky in that she has two things to guide her: her spirituality and her determination to become an example to African people of the next generation.
Dear Editor,

There is a problem. I have denied this problem and gone too long ignoring its existence. Fear is the central to any problem, since the easiest way to alleviate fear is through ignoring its presence. Therefore, by ignoring a problem, isolating fear, it can be covered with a blank space and removed from sight, mind and memory.

The blank space is not blank at all, it is white, and the fear it serves to cover up, or better defined, and white, is isolated from defeat. Though I haven’t examined closely yet the facts behind Afrocentric perspectives on white supremacy, I feel it speaks a great truth—Africans are frightened and have a problem which demands attention and resolution. I don’t speak for all the European Africans. I speak for myself, for I am the only one whom I know is standing a plan, a place for education, for understanding on my own part, and plan for truthful, open peace without ignorance or defeat.

—Nicholas P. Trænkner,
Undergraduate English Major

Response:

Dear Nicholas,

Being able to listen to that truth and concur that fear that you spoke of in your letter says a lot for you as a white man in America. You may have been aware that you just had your first freedom membership in what I call the “White Boy Club USA.” As a white male, you are automatically destined to rule this country—only have to subscribe to the ruler of the club. You have just broken one of the fundamental rules of the club by admitting your fear.

If you are truly no longer a member of the “White Boy USA” club, you have no reason to fear criticism from your white friends, family members, and most importantly, the anger and frustration of other people of color. As you said, any one in their right mind when confronted with a physical or emotional threat, will defend him or her self—whether they are black or white, and whether they fight back with arms or with words. We at UHURU are fighting back with words.

If you, and your white brothers and sisters who feel the same way you do, truly want to know the truth, I have a few suggestions.

1) READ. Don’t just read the words, but try to be as open as possible, so that you can understand what these authors are saying.

2) LISTEN. When you hear African-Americans speaking on a subject, ask yourself if they are speaking well in the country and where it stems from. Also, listen and try to understand our ideas for getting out of it.

3) Most importantly, TEACH. Teach what you learn to your white friends who sincerely have a concern about equality and justice for the oppressed people. Don’t be fooled by the words of the white boy heroes who are just rebelling against the system because it’s trendy. Use your basic common sense to distinguish who is sincere and who is not.

I hope you, at least give your hearing a foundation to build on. We at UHURU do not have all the answers by a long shot, but we do have an adventurous spirit, which is the first to feel the effects of racism, inequality and the ignorance you wish so much to reverse. And we thank you.

—M. Ambrister, Senior

The government wants to keep the economy under control by forcing low income women to undergo infertility birth control implants. What are your views on this?

“It’s another attempt by the government for the systematic and slow Practice of genociding African-Americans. If such a law was passed, we would be exhibiting a totalitarian and unconstitutional invasion of personal freedom. The money spent to institute this program could be redistributed to education, the provisioning of condemnations and other contraceptive means to combat poorly planned pregnancies.

The welfare system, the way it is today only stratifies the pregnancy problem. For the more children one has, the more welfare benefits that person also receives. People are not cleft, they could not be told nor made to breed or not to breed. The way to nip something in the bud is to pull it out by its roots, not cut off the flower.”

—Eric Cleveland

“Despite the government’s power to stop at our doors, sisters—regardless of the verbiage that makes forced five-year ‘sterilization’ mandatory.

—Leatrice Toole, Mother by choice, Sociology

"It’s another individual tactic to institutionalize and eliminate American society. The government stemmizes welfare recipients as taking advantage of the system. Don’t you realize that’s what they want us to believe? They should educate and liberate, not implant spirit killers.

—Diana Phillips, Sociology

Women are not animals that should be at the mercy of the government; they are pets that we have to spay. The people who we should sterilize are the ones who are in ‘higher places’ who have through their ways, put the women where they want. They say let them have children and raise them to know that will make the change through numbers. REVOLT! REJECT UNCLE SAM!”

—Mike Rambaud

“Government-allowed sterilization for low-income African-American, Native-American or Caucasian women is a raw deal. NOW. Parenthood should be an option allowed to all women by choice—not accident. Birth control is never looking percent effective, and yet the government will pay for a sterilization procedure...and not provide them with affordable abortion options. The government’s power stops at our doors, sisters—regardless of the verbiage that makes forced five-year ‘sterilization’ mandatory.”

—Leatrice Toole, Mother by choice, Sociology

"One of the worst things about this society is that we’re conditioned to think of everything in terms of its monetary value. A woman’s choice to have children is based on so many more issues than just the economic issue, granted it is an important consideration. A low-income woman has just as much right as any other woman to give her gift of life and share this with whoever she chooses.

—Anonymous

"Women are not animals that should be at the mercy of the government; they are pets that we have to spay. The people who we should sterilize are the ones who are in ‘higher places’ who have through their ways, put the women where they want. They say let them have children and raise them to know that will make the change through numbers. REVOLT! REJECT UNCLE SAM!”

—Mike Rambaud

"One of the worst things about this society is that we’re conditioned to think of everything in terms of its monetary value. A woman’s choice to have children is based on so many more issues than just the economic issue, granted it is an important consideration. A low-income woman has just as much right as any other woman to give her gift of life and share this with whoever she chooses."

—Carlaene

"In New Jersey, a bill was passed for women on welfare with more than two children to get an implant. I see the good side of having low-income women having an implant. But only because the situations of our society is bad, not naturally; it goes against the laws of the life source, and it’s not the right answer. The government will pay for an implant, but they won’t pay for an abortion. The government will give federal aid to mothers who can’t work, but they want it at the same time. They won’t pay for the mother to send her children to day care so she could do something like get an education. What they are doing is to keep the cycle to be kept. But they aren’t able to keep up with it. I see the government slowly trying to cover up their own tracks. It’s a little too late; we map what we now.

—Angela Gauthier
Within our culture, mothers have always carried responsibilities outside of raising their children. They worked, managed households, took care of the elders in their family and sometimes took care of other people’s kids. Often times, they did all this while still in their 20s.

Today’s young mother still has responsibilities, but they may not be the same as those for our mothers or grandmothers. One added responsibility for young mothers in the ‘90s is school. No longer do sisters think that because they have a baby, college is out of the picture.

Here are three sisters who have children from as young as newborns to as old as school-age and wouldn’t give up their educations for anything. One has chosen to put her education on hold to devote more time to taking care of her infant; another has jumped right back into school soon after she had her baby; and another decided to enter college when her son entered elementary school but just had another baby not too long ago. Two are married, and the other is going it alone with help from her family and boyfriend.

Though their situations are different, and they have different levels of problems and obstacles, they still have one basic thing in common—they are all part of a new generation of young mothers who are aware of their responsibilities to themselves and their families.
"It's the biggest most important job I've ever had in my life"

Amina Okantah

We see many sisters who, once they have had a child in the middle of their college educations, return immediately to school—courageously managing both school and taking care of a newborn. Their reasons for doing so may vary. Perhaps they feel their college education is too important to interrupt. Some probably can’t quit for fear of losing scholarships, loans or other financial aid.

But 26-year-old Amina Okantah decided to put her new family before her college education, feeling that one load at a time was enough for her.

"Not only do I have my baby to care for, but I have a husband, a household and a marriage that all require 100 percent of my commitment," she explained, adding that she will not completely neglect her education either. "I will return to school to graduate. I could have graduated in 1991, but I have chosen to have my family settled first before I return to college."

When Amina became pregnant, it was in the middle of the Spring semester of 1991. She was a few semesters away from graduating from Kent State with a degree in psychology. She decided to sit out of school for the rest of the semester until she thinks her daughter, Jamila Te-Shemau, will be ready to be left with a babysitter.

Amina was ready for motherhood. "I felt like a mother the moment I found out I was pregnant," she said. And from that moment on, Amina began to prepare mentally and physically to bring a new life into the world.

"Through the whole pregnancy I had to cleanse my body and my spirit," she said, as then five-month-old Jamila suckled her mother, kicking her feet and scratching her head with her newly divorced fingernails.

For starters, she knew she wanted to have natural childbirth with a midwife. She also wanted to have the baby at home rather than in a hospital or a midwife’s clinic, but her parents and her husband objected. So she remained under a midwife’s care while she carried, and delivered in the midwife’s clinic.

That preparation wasn't in vain, either. She didn’t reverse her habits after Jamila was born. In fact, she said she and her husband discussed how they were going to live and what kind of a life they wanted their daughter to have. Everything from her name to the types of foods she would eat were more or less planned by Amina and her husband.

"If I named her Ann, that would be totally unacceptable to him—that would be a serious conflict between me and him. With that there’s no compromise," Amina said. The names Jamila and Te-Shemau mean "beautiful" and "Upper Egypt."

To the Okantahs, an African name without an Afrocentric lifestyle is useless, so practicing an Afrocentric lifestyle themselves, they inevitably plan on raising Jamila the same way. Although for the first three years or so, it may be easy to instill culture and African identity in Jamila, Amina is a little worried how much of that will stay with her once she enters school and begins to socialize with other children whose parents don’t raise their children Afrocentrically. Realizing this Amina said she and her husband plan to enroll Jamila in one of the few Afrocentric private schools that are popping up in a scattered parts of the country. They have considered one in Atlanta.

As if peer pressure won’t be enough for Jamila, Amina is also concerned about grandparent pressure. Like many young Afrocentric people, their parents may not completely agree with many aspects of their children’s lifestyles. Amina said her mother was somewhat disappointed when she told her Jamila would not be allowed to eat meat.

"My mom said: That’s so mean; your kids aren’t gonna have hamburgers and hotdogs!" Amina said.

And while Jamila is too young to understand holidays, it may also be a strain on the Okantahs to explain to their families that they don’t have to buy Christmas presents for Jamila because they don’t celebrate Christmas. They also have to warn their families not to buy Jamila pumpkins and candy corn for Halloween, and that
a new Easter dress for Jamila won't be necessary because they don't take part in those holidays either.

This rejection of Western values and holidays is all part of the way Amina has agreed to live her life and how she wishes to raise her daughter and other children she may have in the future. While she says that her new family's spiritual beliefs are persona, all of the values that she plans to instill in Jamila are included in her religion.

"All of that to me is religion." Amina stated. "We live the African culture."

"I never wanted to be married"

Cheryl Hale...

A few years after graduating high school in 1980, Cheryl Hale had her first child at 21 with her high school beau. They never married, and they eventually went their separate ways—with Cheryl taking their son Tony and moving from her native Cleveland to Columbus.

In 1987, realizing that she was really not making much progress in Columbus, she decided to come back home and try to enroll in college. She never followed through with that attempt to go to school, though. She felt she wasn't ready.

"I wasn't ready to come to school, but at the same time, I wasn't doing anything," Cheryl said.

So after three years of working at a restaurant in downtown Cleveland, she tried again in 1990 and enrolled at Kent State University as an aerospace technology major. Her major now is undecided. Whatever her major, Cheryl [has] decided that her moving around from city to city is at rest for now. She is really proud of eight-year-old Tony for adjusting to changing schools and having to readjust every time they moved.

“He had friends there (in Columbus), and it was like snatching him out,” she said, appearing to feel a little guilty for having to move her son around so much. “But he likes it here, he's made new friends; he's got his own room.”

One of the reasons for her deciding to come to Kent was her current boyfriend. Cheryl said that his studious nature caught her attention and made her think about her own education.

"I can really say that (he) was my influence in coming back to school," Cheryl said.

Because Cheryl said her boyfriend always had his head in a book, she couldn't help but catch on to his habits.

"(It was) forcing me to read and study more and more—it’s like I had no choice," she admitted.

Even though her classes are scheduled during the time Tony is in school, there are times she has to take him along to the library so she can get her studying done. Keeping an eight-year-old boy calm and occupied in a library may be hard to do, but Cheryl said he surprisingly is not that much of a handful.

"(I have to tell him) Tony, don't be runnin' around," she said. "But I have to give it to him because he's really made an adjustment."

Another reason for her decision to settle down for now is a new addition to her family. As of September of this year, Tony now has a little brother named Tyler—one more thing for him to get used to. But Cheryl promises that this time things will be different.

"The next time I move it'll be planned," she promised. "I think it'll be a little smoother (this time) because Tony was with my mom a lot where Tyler probably won't be with my mom a lot," Cheryl said, remembering how much Tony had gotten attached to his grandmother.

For both children, their grandmother is the only other parent figure they've grown to know.

“Tony never really knew his dad even though his dad had access to him," Cheryl said.

She had once attempted to let Tony spend some time with his father, who was living in Youngstown with his own new family. That Thanksgiving visit, however ended up a disappointment. During the time Tony and his father were supposed to be becoming acquainted with one another, his father promised him a bike—and he never delivered. And that was a few years ago.

Neither Tony nor Cheryl have seen him...
since.

"He'll pop up again one day," Cheryl said, rather nonchalantly. But until then, she has decided it is best for her to remain on her own—without a husband. Even though she has a boyfriend, she doesn't think marriage is in their plans. Marriage is probably too late for her.

"Probably because I already have kids, I've lived the married life, so to speak," she explained. "Actually, I would prefer doing it myself."

"I've got bigger and better things to do with my life"

Angela Maxey...

Picture a woman: tired and stressed, nine months pregnant and overdue, walking around campus with a backpack full of books. Now picture a sister named Angela Maxey.

It must have been a miracle. Angela's baby was due on April 25, 1991, but she carried it all the way through the 14th of May because she had finals to take. And as if that wasn't enough, she jumped right into summer school a month after Raymond Lamar was born, and is (still) taking a full load of classes this year! She's decided not to let anything get in the way of finishing her senior year at Kent State, so she can walk out of this school with a degree in secondary education with a minor in computer science.

Throughout our history, African women have often resumed work activities less than a week after delivering a baby. Twenty-two-year-old Angela is proof that the strength of African mothers is still alive today.

"I was supposed to stop school, but I had finals to take," Angela said, rather matter-of-factly.

There were inevitably some labor complications, since she carried Raymond over term. Angela said she spent three days in painful labor. She experienced the complications partly because the first hospital she went to when she started labor sent her home too early—even though she knew her water had broken.

"They were sending me home, but I was in labor," Angela explained. "The doctor yelled at me. He didn't have to treat us the way he did."

After dealing with that small-town hospital, they decided to go to another hospital in Angela's hometown, Canton, OH. After the third day of painful labor, Raymond was born, but with a heart murmur, jaundice, a liver defect which causes the skin to yellow and has to be treated with ultraviolet rays, and an infection because he had been inside his mother for too long. So she and the baby had to stay in the hospital a week after he was born.

"It was a trying time," was all Angela could say about those 10 days that to any mother would seem like an eternity—waiting to hear if her baby would survive. And through all of the pain and anticipation, her husband, George, a 20-year-old junior at KSU, could do nothing but be there.

"I couldn't do anything for her (while she was in so much pain)," George sadly admitted. "She was there for me more than I was for her."

Otherwise, Angela and George share as much of the responsibility of caring for Raymond as possible. They have a system where when Raymond's not in day care, one will watch him while the other is in class. There was, however, one time when Angela had to take Raymond to class with her. It was a math class, and the instructor, a woman instructor, allowed her to bring Raymond along. But that might not have been a good idea, Angela said, because everyone in the class paid more attention to the baby than math—including the instructor! "She couldn't teach class because they were so busy trying to play with him!" Angela exclaimed, giggling.

But once seeing Raymond's bright, wide smile like that of his mother, no one would be able to resist playing with such a friendly baby, who both his parents say "love women especially!"

In the tradition of African motherhood, Angela is fulfilling her duty as a mother and taking care of her other responsibilities—like graduating. And looking back on it all, Angela has no regrets. Nor does she view young motherhood, and marriage for that matter, as a burden she wished she didn't have to bear.

"It's definitely happiness; I wouldn't trade it for anything in world," she said about motherhood. "You can't beat this, man."
By Krista Franklin

For many children of color, a clear understanding about themselves and the society that they are growing up in is not passed down to them from their parents. Drowning in ambiguities and half-truths, they struggle in their teenage and adult years, to survive a system that was not designed for their success or survival. Suffering from alienation and confusion, many of these children grow up, not to be productive individuals in their communities, but diseased individuals in the society that helped to create them.

But today there is a new breed of mother who is seeking to annihilate this confusion by teaching their children the stories of their ancestors and the history of the country they are growing up in. Many of these women were victims of the miseducation that plagues children of color today, however, after re-educating themselves they have come to a new awareness which enables them to pass this awareness on to their children. Through a true education of history, these women are working to redirect the values of an otherwise valueless generation by putting their children back on the path that was abandoned so long ago in the land of rape and money.

"I'll give her the information The truth"

Dina Harley...

Dina Harley, a senior Pan-African Studies major, is one of those mothers who is working to keep her child free from the mental and physical diseases that plague other children of color. She even went so far as to have a midwife instead of a doctor and kept her birthing experience as close to natural as possible.

 "I had a midwife and I did it in a birthing room at St. Luke's Hospital. I didn't have a doctor. There was a certified nurse midwife and a nurse and I had two of my friends with me," Dina said. "It was the most painful experience in my life, but it was also the most rewarding."

To continue in the natural tradition that then-4-month old Amber Chenoa entered the world, Dina breast-feeds as opposed to bottle-feeding. She says that she will try to keep Amber's developing years as chemical-free as possible, listing the absence of sugar as a focal point.

 "I'm not going to give her sugar because that's probably the most addicting drug in the world," she said, while Amber nodded to sleep on her lap. "It's not pure, it's refined. They (manufacturers) try to make you think that it's the sugar cane you're eating, but it's not."

Dina, who is both African-American and Native American, gave her daughter a name that
would reflect her culture and help to give her daughter direction. Amber's middle name Chenoa, is a Native American word meaning “peace and tranquility.” Dina says that she will rear her with a solid foundation based on her diverse heritage.

"I'm going to teach her a lot of Native American philosophy (about) Grandmother Moon, Grandfather Sky, Great Spirit and all things being related," she said.

Dina believes that it will be these ideologies that will help her daughter to have a greater respect and sensitivity toward the world around her.

“When you look at it like that then you have more respect. I'll teach her (that) all things are your brothers and sisters. Just because they don't look exactly like you—some of them might have four legs, some of them might have wings—but they are still creatures of the same energy that created you, and you respect everything.”

Along with respect about her environment, Dina wants Amber to be free from the materialism that seems to destroy many people of color. By teaching her about inner peace and the importance of being proud of who she is, Dina hopes to rid her daughter from greed.

“I will try to instill in Amber's mind that materialism is not God. You don't need things to be successful and happy in life, but you do need substance, your personality and peace within.”

While Dina has strong political beliefs about her culture and the history of American oppression on both sides of her heritage, it is not her intention to force these beliefs on her daughter. Although Amber will be taught a full history about her ancestors and her country, it will ultimately be her decision about how she chooses to live.

However, Dina is not concerned about what her daughter's priorities will be once she comes of age.

"I'll help her to form her opinions if she wants. I will give her the information—the truth—because people don't give you the truth on a daily basis, especially not in America," she said. "And I feel that once she has the truth, there is only one decision to make—freedom."

"I try to instill...a sense of oneness with other black people"

Barbara Miller...

Like Dina, Barbara Miller, a senior sociology major, is rearing her five-year-old daughter with a cultural foundation and an understanding of the politics of American history as it relates to her people. Ashley, who began her kindergarten year this past August, went to school on the first day with a note explaining that she did not pledge allegiance to the American flag.

“She (Ashley) doesn’t salute the flag. She doesn’t get up and say the pledge of allegiance (and) she understands why, as much as a five-year-old can understand,” Barbara said. “She understands that this country never did anything for her to pledge her allegiance to it.”

So, each day when the other children stand to recite their allegiance to their country, Ashley remains seated. However, contrary to what one might believe, her silent protest has not caused her any problems with her classmates. Barbara believes that the children’s age may have something to do with that and said that when she gets a little older, then she may deal with differences of opinion.

During some of the quality time that Barbara spends with her daughter daily, she teaches Ashley...
the importance of unifying herself with other African people, as well as learning to be proud of her culture. To be consistent with these ideas, she says that she will not perm Ashley’s hair and instills in her mind that “nappy” is pretty.

“I try to instill a sense of Africanness and a sense of oneness with other Black people, as well as with humanity as a whole,” Barbara said.

Ashley attends cultural programs with her mother which helps her to understand the principles of this oneness that her mother talks about. Barbara believes that much of what she teaches Ashley has already begun to affect how she lives her life.

“(Sometimes) I’ll ask her, ‘Ashley, what is the most important thing that you can do in life?’ and she’ll say, ‘Serve God by helping Black people,’” Barbara says proudly.

Television time, which monopolizes the majority of many children’s schedules, is monitored for Ashley. Along with some prime-time programs, there are certain cartoons she is not permitted to watch. “Looney Tunes”, along with “Tom and Jerry” are cartoons that are carefully monitored, and “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” is not permitted altogether.

“(The Turtles) is entirely too violent, it doesn’t make any sense for a cartoon to be that violent. Also, I think it’s a slap in the face to Asian people. They have these ninja turtles that are a part of Asian culture, but they all have European names,” Barbara said.

“Looney Tunes” and “Tom and Jerry” are permitted only when they do not have stereotypical racial images, like Mammy and the African pygmies. Cartoons about the Tazmanian devil are also frowned on in the Miller home.

“She can’t watch the Tazmanian Devil cause she knows who the Tazmanians were. She will tell you that the Europeans killed all of those Black people off and they’re making fun of them, So we can’t watch that.”

Barbara credits her family, as well as her boyfriend (who she says is “more of a father to my child then a lot of fathers are to their own children”) and his family for assisting her in rearing Ashley. She does not believe in the concept that she has had to rear her daughter alone.

“I’m not really rearing her alone in the African family,” Barbara says. “Out of that tradition is the extended family. If I need money, clothing, whatever, my mom, my dad and my sisters are always there. So, it’s not really like you’re doing it alone as long as you have that african extended family network going.”

The issue of conscious motherhood among women of color may be a new phenomenon for future generations of children. A steady inculcation of truth may be what will crumble the structure of one-sided, Eurocentric education and cultural self-hatred.
The Southwestern Company

Luring Us in With False Hopes?

By Michael Lawrence Dale

A summer job is often considered a part of the college experience. Kent State University is no exception. Every spring semester, several companies come to Kent State to recruit potential summer employees. But beware! For ye may be deceived. Last spring (1991), 14 African-American students were recruited by the South Western Company and for most of these recruits, it turned out to be a most unrewarding summer. The South Western Company used the naivete of these students for its own monetary gain. The Company mislead the students in many ways and made it appear as if the job that lay ahead would be a “piece of cake.”

The South Western Company first drew in the recruits by telling them that they had the opportunity to own and run their own businesses. After the recruits were drawn in, they learned what the company actually was. The recruits also learned different aspects of what they were required to do. Basically, the students were to go door-to-door selling books. Hell of a businesses, right?

The group of recruits from Kent State, as well as other African-American students from various colleges, was called “The New Number One.” Before “The New Number One” actually started selling these books, they had to go through a training process. They were required to car pool to Nashville, Tenn. for sales school. But before leaving Kent, the recruits met weekly for what sophomore Toya Alexander described as “motivational meetings.”

“The purpose of these meetings was to pump us up in an effort to build our self-esteem, but only telling us the good side of the program an not the bad.”

Toya dropped from the program before leaving Kent due to the lack of information provided. She asked one of the recruiters, Lucien Stephens, who is also a student sales manager now going into his third year as a student manager for the company, what would happen if she didn’t sell any books. He told her, “I never had anyone who didn’t sell any books, so don’t worry about it.”

Don’t worry about it! These students are asked to go hundreds of miles away from their homes without a clue as to where they would be selling, and this man is telling them not to worry about it! Unfortunately, many of the recruits did not worry about it. The recruits only looked forward to the exciting summer that lay ahead of them, as described by the recruiter prior to their departure. Upon Toya dropping from the program, Lucien used his flattery tactic to convince her to stay. “Toya, you’re right for this, one of the best people that we have.”

According to sophomore Michelle Dale, a fashion merchandising major and one of several South Western victims, the recruiter said things of this nature to all the recruits. But according to Lucien, “Most of the students should not have been there; they weren’t qualified.”

But they should have been qualified. After all, the reason the recruits traveled to Nashville was so that they would be qualified. So either way, the company caused the problems the recruits had by either overly exaggerating their jobs or by poorly training the recruits. And training may not have been the problem.

At the end of the semester, the recruits still did not know where they would be selling over the
summer. Being a sales manager, Lucien is required to help recruit students, oversee the "motivational meetings," be there for the recruit if problems arise and act as the liaison between the recruit and the company.

The recruits were required to travel to Nashville, Tenn. by car pool for sales school at the end of the semester. However, it was the recruits responsibility to organize and pay for the car pool. They were also required to pay for their own hotel while in sales school. The company paid for nothing.

In sales school, the recruits were taught several things. According to Michelle, they were taught what to do only in the perfect sales scenario.

We didn't learn the what if. We were never taught how to deal with any serious problems that may occur.

Lucien disagrees. "I'll never tell a student that this would be easy."

The recruits were taught a number of different sales talks, which Michelle said the company stressed as being the most important thing.

Certainly not the rigors of having to work 12-hour days and told not to go home until you have worked that full day.

Of course all of this was taught in the context of how exciting the job was going to be, Michelle said. The recruits learned basic sales procedures. Many of the recruits said sales school was actually fun. It should at least be fun, considering well over $250 of their money enabled them to be there. During sales school, the recruits were taught briefly how to seek housing, Michelle said. Again they made it sound like this was the easiest part of the job," she said.

Many of the recruits were told by Lucien that if they had problems finding housing to "get out there and use that sales talk," said Tyra Eikelburger a junior criminal justice major.

"They (South Western) wanted us to ask the same people that we were trying to sell books to if they would give us a place to stay."

And they were actually taught to do this in this so-called sales school. In the midst of all the hype given to the recruits in sales school and after the recruits had already paid their money to be there, it was finally, yet briefly mentioned, that this job was not for everyone Lucien said the students were aware of the risks. "In sales school we also talked about problems students could have."

Again, the recruits had to make their own arrangements getting from Nashville to their sales locality after finally finding out where they would be sent. The recruits were to go door-to-door in designated sales localities selling these books. They were also supposed to use some of the money from their customers down payments to pay for their own living expenses and send at least 60 percent of the down payments to the company in Nashville, according to senior industrial design major Benson Willoc, Benson dropped out because he said he was frustrated with Lucien's unclear explanations of the program.

Michelle complains, "They told us all we needed was money to get through sales school and (to our locality), but not that we needed it to get through the first few weeks of work."

If the recruits did not sell any books for days or even weeks, they had no money for their living expenses. The recruits also had to pay $280 for a sales kit, which was to show potential customers the books they could purchase. It did not matter if the recruits sold any books because South Western still made money from the recruits. At the end of the summer, the customers received their books and the recruits received their money.

Of the 14 African-American recruits from Kent State, only four finished the program. Most left the program for housing reasons and because of their frustration with the sales manager.

According to Lucien, housing was not a problem. Sixty percent of all recruits find housing on the first day, he said. Finding a place is no big deal. It should only take about two hours.

And it is that attitude conveyed to the recruits that led to so many problems—that it was so easy. The recruits were given the impression that South Western would either provide them with adequate housing or give them a referral list where previous recruits had stayed. The company did neither.

Benson said he was encouraged to sleep in someone's basement if he had to. Michelle would have been forced to sleep in a bus terminal when she first arrived in her sales locality "had it not been by the grace of God that I had a cousin, coincidentally, who lived in East Orange, N.J. I would have been in big trouble."

Both Tyra and Dorcia Ford, a sophomore pre-medicine major, were placed in sales localities that had never been worked before. However, they had all been told in sales school that they would be placed in localities that had been worked by previous recruits.

Partly because of this, Tyra also had a problem finding a place to stay. "How can you be an effective salesperson if you're worrying about where you're going to live?"

Dorcia said she was never told that she would not have a place to stay. "I got the impression that the sales manager and the company would find me a place to stay." When Dorcia finally got a place to stay, she found herself in a violent situation with her roommate. She could not stay there for too long. All of the recruits, with the exception of two, were placed in New Jersey.

Lucien, who was supposed to be there to assist the recruits, was said to be unavailable. Dorcia is currently being pursued by the company to pay air mail bills, which the company set up for the recruits to use to try and contact their sales managers. She was trying to contact Lucien because of the problems that she was having, but he never returned her messages. "I really had a hard time getting in touch with him... I didn't
see any student managers for two days after I got to New Jersey." Benson said he also had problems contacting Lucien. "He was definitely eluding me," Tyra said, "I didn't see Lucien for a week after I got to New Jersey." Lucien claims none of the students had problems contacting him.

Once the recruits finally got in contact with Lucien to tell him that they were dropping from the program, he used his sales talk that he obviously learned in sales school. Lucien tried to convince Dorcia not to leave or even call home to let her parents know about the problems that she was having. He said to her, "You're just jumping the gun." According to Dorcia, he sent her parents a letter stating that she was doing fine, and if she calls home, give her a pep talk Michelle's and Tyra's parents were sent similar letters, while at the same time, Lucien was telling Michelle, "You don't want to be a quitter; give it a little time... you don't want your family to think you're a quitter."

Benson said that the sales manager was trying to put him through a guilt trip. "Be loyal to your company...be dedicated to your cause." What is with these mind games that South Western is teaching its student sales managers to play?

Another thing that caught some of the students by surprise was that recruits selling in New Jersey were required to have a selling license. The company did not make the recruits aware of this. It was brought to Benson's attention when a potential customer asked to see his license. "I thought she was talking about driver's license." He eventually got his license, of course he paid for it, prior to dropping from the program. Former KSU student Stephanie Price was escorted home by the South Orange Police Department in New Jersey for selling without a license.

Not all of South Western's recruits were completely unhappy with their experience with the company. Junior sociology and city and urban planning major Jumionne Jean-Charles and junior psychology major Jennifer Rolle were two of the recruits that did not drop from the program. They both plan to return and work for South Western over the summer. Jumionne was placed in Temple Hills, Md. and Jennifer in Suitland, Md.

Although they received the same information as the rest of the recruits, they said that they did not have any problems finding a place to stay. Jumionne said, referring to not knowing where she would be placed, "Not knowing was part of the excitement." Jumionne looked at her experience as a challenge. "It makes you think how to solve your own problems as they arise and makes you deal with feelings that you never thought that you had." Both Jumionne and Jennifer agree that it is hard work. "I can't stress how hard the work was but I was determined not to quit," Jumionne said.

Jennifer also feels the program offered her a good learning experience. "I didn't really like it, and it was hard work, but it was a good learning experience." The two did so well for South Western, they were both rewarded a trip to the Bahamas.

It is good that Jennifer and Jumionne did not have a bad summer, but what about the other recruits that did? True enough, this job is not for everyone, but if South Western had at least asked its recruits to really consider whether or not this was right for them and told them the risks involved, these bad experiences could have been avoided—not to mention all of the money that the recruits and their parents lost. Instead, they chose not to discuss the risks and filled these students' heads with false information, overly exaggerated all of the fulfillment that they would receive and how much money that they would make over the summer. The time these students spent working for South Western could have been time spent earning money at home. Remember, just because someone may look like us, does not mean that they will look out for us. Do not fall victim to South Western. Let there never again be "The New Number One" at Kent State University.

_Michael Lawrence Dale is the Uhuru Investigative reporter_
Tamra Ellis

our ears have been so spoiled by the ready-quick-fast-food music produced from expensive and unnecessary studio equipment that we don’t know what to do when we hear somebody who can actually sing!

Tamra Ellis is one of those voices that only comes around every once in a while, and when you hear it, what a relief! Whether you’re a serious music critic or not, there’s one sure way to tell if a singer is committed to her work—by the look on her face when she’s singing. When Tamra sat down at the old used piano in Beady’s Cafe in downtown Kent, and started singing one of her songs (which she wrote), it was obvious that she had transformed into a world of her own. A world where music was everything. Music probably is everything for 22-year-old Ellis. Music has been a part of her life since she was a three-year-old standing on a chair in her basement, singing with her four brothers and sisters.

Like most successful vocalists, Ellis, too, got her start in the church, while looking up to her mother who was choir director at Mt. Calvary 2nd Baptist Church in her hometown of Canton, Ohio.

"I watched my mother at church and I used to come home and imitate her," Tamra said. Despite her eagerness to start singing in the choir as early as three years old, she had to wait until she was older. She joined the choir at the age of five.

After years of school and local community talent shows, and singing in church choirs, Tamra landed at Kent State to study music. Her studies even sent her to Europe and Africa.

"Morocco was very deep," Tamra said. "After two days, everybody knew you. I felt like I was at home when I got to Morocco They treated me like a queen."

Not only did she receive the royal treatment in the Motherland, but her European hosts extended themselves for her as well, she said. Ellis reflected on her opera debut at a Florence cafe, the [Cafe Mingo], as she recalled, where she said the audience response to her singing was so overwhelming that some were brought to tears.

"Yes, [opera]. While at Kent, Ellis' voice training included everything from jazz to opera. Even with the variety of music styles she was trained in, Ellis still says her training at KSU wasn’t enough."

"It was a start," she said about the extent of her musical education at Kent.

To Ellis, the voice training at Kent’s school of music doesn’t allow for expression outside the boundaries of the curriculum, and therefore, she felt her creativity and urge to explore were stifled.

"I felt like I was in prison," she said about the frustration of not being allowed to sing like she wanted to. "[Let] me sing then, [let] me get up on stage!"

She strongly feels that this happens often with African-American students in the school of music at KSU, which may be the reason why she thinks there aren’t many of us in the school of music as it is.

"No African-American stays here too long in the school of music," she said. "It’s just that bad."

That’s partly why Ellis made the decision to leave school this semester, and concentrate on her career without the help of KSU, but side-by-side with her manager and husband-to-be Madry Ellis (Tamra uses his name as her stage name).

Neither Madry nor Tamra have a problem with mixing business with pleasure in their case. In fact, Madry said being with his wife-to-be in both an intimate and professional manner is healthy for him.

"She’s a perfectionist. She brings out the best in me," he said. "Since I’ve been with her my grades have gotten better, just my overall performance has gotten better."

Already, she has been in the studio and produced a demo with three singles which she wrote herself called "You Keep Drawing me Back?"; "Dry Eyes"; and "Don’t You Leave."
To Be
To be woman is...
A wonder way to be.
I can be soft, sexy, delicately feminine and sensitive
without appearing weak—as a man would
I can be hard, cold, strong and distant
without appearing "un lady-like", as some might say
I can give birth to a generation
Of prophets or fools; noble men or thieves
Whatever they may be, I will always be
The one looked to for criticism or praise
A pout of my lips, a sad-eyed stare
Will make you shiver
As would my firm glare or rigid, regal posture
I hold my head up high and proud
As a woman
Yet I smile with ever so much softness
Looking down at my child
Snuggled against my breast
She receives the nurturing which will help her grow
Into a healthy warrior

by Jinida Ojilwawh

Sisters
Let's take a look at one another
And let's remember our Black African Mothers

They molded us
Into what we are today
They guided us
And showed us the way

They gave us our dignity
Our pride
Be not ashamed, my Sister
Show your face, Do not hide

Let's stick together
For there is a bond
Even our Brothers cannot break
Because it is strong

But let us not forget
Our Black Brothers
They struggled with us
They gave us our children
And their love
As the man above

Yes, my sister
We have overcome
But the battle is not over
There's much to be done

So, let's take a look at one another
And remember our Black African Mothers

by Tiffany Pierce
Ode to the Black Woman

"When In Time"

When in time our hearts do meet,
the saints will sing in chords so sweet.
When in touch my passions do cry,
our life is born and all doubts die.
When in thought our minds do agree
like matching hearts which honors thee.
When in harmony our lives do blend,
only eternity equals the time I will spend.
When in prayer to the Lord we do praise,
for the love and spirit together we raise.
When in love emotions do soar,
step to me... step with me into heaven's door.
When in time our feelings do share,
my unchallenged loyalty to you I will spare.

by Michael L. Dale

You Look Like
You Have No Clue

Sista so blonde
I was goin blind
said nappy
was just not right
called me Medusa
with some friends around
but at least my God ain't white.

by Hamida Kinge

America Eats Its Young

Clinton ran it down once
but we lost it somewhere
between the frantic rumps
shakin hips
and outrageously furious funk
the memory of the mothership
we never connected
another Star Line flight
intercepted
children of the stolen
with no way home
stranded on barren soil and
graves of ancestral bones
A land made rich off
Broken Black Spirits
and Trails of Tears
we live our lives with no
memory of past years
just the desperation
of a hostile Black nation
who pump rounds into each other
as acts of suicide undercover
never even realizing
that another nigga dead
leaves no guilt on a devil's head
and Uncle Sam thrives
on the taste of chocolate hides
keepin pale-faced children stupid
by pumping them full of redwhite&blue lies.
Subliminal fascist phrases
are subtly dispersed
while welfare mentalities
grow worse & worse.
American education
makes an apathetic nation
and all school lessons learned
are relayed in genocidal terms.
Sistas walk city streets like whores
while brown babyfaced boys
fight white man's wars.
Black girls wear trophies of assimilation like scars
gold chains, gold teeth and dope dealer's cars
Hiding the dollar signs in their eyes
behind colored contacts
and the kinks of the forgotten continent
behind red and blonde hair dyes.
Caramel-colored kids' blood
pours into ghetto gutters
and the conscious are forced to watch
13-year-old's play "mothers."
Everyday on tv
It's the niggas you see
in jail, smokin base and
knockin Black women in the face.
Imitating the descendants of
the Biblical lost race;
Lady Liberty laughs
as Mother Africa gasps
while her children of the lost nation
die & suffer under the fists of Satan.

by Krista Franklin
1792 or 1992:
Will Poor Women of Color Be
Forced to Become Sterile

Krista Franklin

"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shown, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpation, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security."

Declaration of Independence,
July 4, 1776
The experiences of the African woman in America have been very unique and significant ones. While all Africans were brought to the shore, of America to be used as a free labor force in the development of a new and stable economy, the role of the African woman was a dual one. Not only was she used alongside her male counterparts in the fields and Big Houses of white people nationwide, her womb was used as an incubator to perpetuate that free labor force. African women were encouraged, and often forced, to have several children so the slave master could have more slaves to work his land or sell to other landowners. They were not much more than slave machines. And because of their ability to produce more slaves, their property value was usually increased. African children born in this newly "discovered" country were to inherit the status of their mothers - that of a slave - and were usually sold from one plantation to another at the whims of capitalist slave owners. The African woman's body was Property and her seed profit.

White men maintained the system of slavery by intellectualizing it. White, "civilized," American Christians distorted the concept of their slave system in such a way that it was perceived as a system designed to benefit the so-called "savage" Africans. White masters "took care" of African women at the cheapest cost, made sure African men were kept immobile and emasculated and used African children to assist in the development of an industry that would never benefit them.

Americans would like to believe that after 1865, African women no longer had to bear several children for the profit of white men. That they no longer had to suffer through late night sexual assaults or to endure the brutalization of sick slave masters.

Every American citizen when would like to believe that the slave system has long been abolished by those who actually believed in the democratic ideals that this country was founded on, and that the African woman's body was no longer at the mercy of white men.

"The poor are the guinea pigs of these kinds of things because they are not literate enough to organize protests, and they are discriminated against."

However, in 1991, a 27-year-old African-American woman named Darlene Johnson came before a Visalia, Calif. judge named Howard R. Broadman. Johnson had already been through the court system on child abuse charges. She had four children, all of whom had been removed from her custody and put in foster care, and she was pregnant with the fifth. Darlene Johnson was a single mother on welfare with a drug problem and was, most likely, uneducated.

Judge Broadman told Johnson that, as a condition of her probation, she must get new birth control device called Norplant, a device that is surgically inserted in a woman's arm and last up to five years. Judge Broadman told Johnson that if she accepted this new miracle of modern technology, she could avoid three more years of incarceration.

At first Johnson agreed, but after her public defender explained what she actually agreed to, she went back before Judge Broadman and refused. The judge insisted, however, convinced that Johnson's inability to take proper care of her children deemed her unworthy of having anymore. So, once again, a white male exercise his control over African woman's body and determines from a bench, instead of a Big House, what will happen to her children and the use of her womb. Perhaps slavery wasn't abolished after all.

In the Feb. 4 issue of the Akron Beacon Journal, Health and Fitness special staff writer Cheryl Curry reported on the intention of many states to mandate use of Norplant for welfare and drug-addicted mothers.

Curry writes: "Some states, including Ohio, are moving toward using Norplant as a method of coercion. A bill being drafted by a state representative would require women on welfare who have two or more children to get the implant.

Another bill pending in the Senate would mandate use of Norplant for women who would pass on drug addictions to their babies."

The fact that drug-addicted women and women on welfare are the ones targeted for this bill is no coincidence. These women are usually victims of the circumstances of poverty and are perceived by the masses of Americans as an insignificant
Darlene Johnson is a clear example of this theory. After suffering under the oppressive fist of Uncle Sam’s once-a-month “check” and under the prejudices of a nation of people who believe that wealth is achieved through hard work,” she lashed out violently at the closest and weakest things to her: her children. Johnson was then forced to answer to the Judge/Slave master who decided that the condition of her freedom is a forced five-year sterilization.

As an African-American woman, these governmental actions disturb me. It seems that after 400-plus years of white-male manipulation, it is still a fact that in the 20th Century white men still determine the fate of the African woman’s body and that of her children. I fail to understand how mandating use of Norplant can help Darlene Johnson, or any other woman, to come to an understanding of what motherhood is supposed to be. What Darlene Johnson could really use is someone to explain to her that her reactions to her children are results of the “monkey see, monkey do” phenomenon. After years of abuse, how can Johnson be anything more than an abuser?

If the government can take these actions against welfare recipient and so-called drug abusers, then they may eventually be able to take these same actions against any woman, regardless of class, educational background or economic standing. I question the motives of the government in a country notorious for African subjugation and immolation. When white men can determine the destiny of African-American women from behind judicial benches and legislation and through the manipulation of a miseducated and easily influenced American population, then there is much cause for concern.

African-American women nationwide need to be wary of these new bills and laws, which bring race and class warfare to whole new levels, and we should be less quick to judge women like Darlene Johnson. Stringent laws that seek to regulate the reproduction of certain “types” of people sounds slightly like fascist thought and is very unbecoming of a country known worldwide for its shining democracy. The answers for America are not in birth control devices but in abolishing systems of subjugation. For women of African, Asian or European descent, to allow this to go on is to forfeit your personal reproductive rights and makes everyone fair game in the struggle for a New World Order.
THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION COMMUNITY SCHOOL...

A CONTINUING TRADITION IN EXCELLENCE...
PREPARING YOUTH TODAY TO BE LEADERS TOMORROW


A BLACK UNITED STUDENTS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
Those that don't
Know their history are
Doomed to repeat it