









Who Are We?

MotherWit Magazine, a family and parenting publication, shares the legacies, struggles, successes, and communities of all families. Our publication is dedicated to encouraging and enabling each reader to use the practical principles and wisdom passed down to us from past generations.

Our Purpose

MotherWit Magazine is designed to meet the needs of families by providing editorial that speaks directly to the events, legacies, memories, challenges, joys, rituals, contradictions, triumphs and tragedies that array our families. We will celebrate and chronicle the family traditions and lessons our mothers and fathers taught us. MotherWit is a community based publication engineered to support, encourage, and help families in their day-to-day living. MotherWit Magazine's down-to-earth appeal has drawn interest from families and individuals from all communities within and beyond the Greater Sacramento area. The majority of advertisements within our publication are sought out for their message and impact on our target audience. Our publication is dedicated to helping families regain and renew those core principals fundamental to every family.

"MotherWit" is simply a combination of "seasoned wisdom steeped in common sense intelligence. "" "MotherWit" is the one element that has remained unchanged with the passage of time, and is crucial to the foundation, well-being, and preservation of any family. *MotherWit* Magazine addresses all aspects of family life, including physical health, parenting skills, emotional health, spiritual health, financial planning, as well as exploring family traditions.

We are excited about the opportunity to provide you a publication that has you and your family's best interest in mind. I must say a special thank you to our advertisers, sponsors and our "seed subscribers." In our next issue we will have a "Thank You" page dedicated to all those individuals who believed in our publication at first glance! If you were one of our "Seed Subscribers" (those are people who purchased a paid subscription with our first issue) please contact us by phone or email so we don't miss printing your name in our next issue!!!

Thank you all so much for believing in *MotherWit* Magazine!

table of contents

FEATURE STORIES

- 13 The Caring Neighborhood
- 29 Picking Life-Friends By James A. Strickling, Jr

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- **10** Here's To Your Health By Jan Dixon, JD
- 11 The Tobacco Industry Wants You! By Kelley N. Walker
- 22 Mature Woman I Don't Want to be a Father Anymore By Djuan Perry

SAVORING OUR HERITAGE

15 How I Got Over . . . a life touched by Grace

– By Audrea Williams

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Seeds for the Sower Editorial
- 5 Inspiration From Our Readers
- **6 Toddler Mom** Interview with a Toddler By Valorie Taylor
- 7 My 2 Cents for your Good Sense
 Question and Answer column from our readers to you
- 20 That's My Baby!

An Inside Look at One of the Rising Stars of the Oakland Raiders

— By Danny & Audrea Williams

- 23 Every Penny Counts What's In A Name?
- **25 Our Village** Mocha Moms Highlighting community & neighborhoods groups
- 30 The Whole Child Mommy All I Need Is...
- 31 Good Home Training Tips
- 34 Family Portrait The Qualls Family
- **36 Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren**Second Parenthood By Antoinette M. Carter
- 38 Is There a Teacher in the House?
 The real cost of public education By Danny T. Williams

MotherWit

Pursuina Excellence in Family Livina

MotherWit is committed to serving the community through innovative leadership in an ethically and socially responsible manner.

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seeds for the sower

Q: Which came first, Mama Or the Tea Cake?

It woos the hearts of men, children stop in their tracks and abandon the liveliest of games to engulf themselves in its presence. Young women stare in awe and try to hide their excitement as their eyes try to analyze it for all its properties. And women (you know those women with their heads held high in confidence and total resolve that this has to be one of their best batches ever) make their grand entrance into a room full of guests to showcase its long-awaited arrival. What is the

"it" that commands so much respect to which I am referring? None other than the all natural, best made without measuring spoons and cups, homemade baked confectionary . . . The Tea Cake, of course. No store-bought or packaged imitation can rival a homemade baked

item, especially the Tea Cake! (Believe me.)

In my opinion, the world would be a better place if everyone had the attributes of a tea cake. If you have never seen a tea cake or have not had the delicious opportunity to eat one of my tea cakes, here's what it looks like. A good tea cake is firm, but not too hard or too

soft; it can be perfectly round, oval or misshappen altogether. Its flavor can be a nice hint of nutmeg or vanilla (which ever suits your fancy). Every batch will always come out a little different, but every batch must include the basic ingredients: eggs, flour, nutmeg, oil, sugar, and butter. People are just like that – or they should be. Each person should consist of basic elements in order to lead a productive and stable life: acknowledgement of and service to God, strong family values, good work ethic, an understanding of who you are and from where you come. Furthermore, one should possess the priority of listening to others, and adherence to the

golden rule ("do unto others as you would have them do unto you").

Continuing with this motif, *MotherWit* Magazine's essence consists of getting back to the basics of family living. Each generation is given the charge to grow bigger, do better, achieve more, whether it is educational attainment, land ownership, expanding a business, or intellectual enlightenment. Striving to do better and accomplishing success, whatever the arena, is always applauded by society, and most of the times, the pioneer or entrepreneur will testify of the suffering and sacrifices that were made to achieve the success. However, let us not forget that those successes are shared and enjoyed by the collective community. Hence, we should always remember where we came from, and keep not only those treasured homemade recipes, but keep, maintain, and duplicate the quality of character of our grandfathers and grandmothers.

When not familiar with the term, "motherwit", people will ask me what the term means and quickly assume that the magazine is only for women or mothers. Or, they will look at the cover of the magazine (and depending upon who's looking at it) with great joy, determine it is only for African Americans and take pride in its work, or with a disinterested attitude chuck it in the "not interested because it does not relate to me" pile. We define "motherwit" as "seasoned wisdom steeped in common sense intelligence. MotherWit is the kind of wisdom that can only come from sitting at the feet of our leaders and listening. Fortunately, wisdom is not black, it's not white, it doesn't come from being a celebrity and its purchase price doesn't amount to dollars and cents.

As I look over my life and even up to my present state, my strengths –the foundation of who I am and who I am becoming has been molded by the hands of women, men, Black, White, Hispanic and Asian people. Our publication provides simple, to the point, and truthful information that builds families and people from the inside out. So, where can you find *MotherWit* Magazine? You will find *MotherWit* Magazine in book stores, libraries, business offices, community centers, churches, or our website: motherwitmagazine.com. But you will find "motherwit" in the lives of people you most admire, in mom and dad's stories (my girls always beg me, "Mom, tell us about the old days please!," like I was born during the days of the outhouses); or you will find "motherwit" in the most comforting places filled with the aroma of generations past - a place simply called home.

Audrea L. Williams

Editor



Inspiration From Our Readers

MotherWit endeavors to publish a magazine that is both inspiring and informative. We strive to provide our readers with articles that will be interesting and motivating while also challenging your way of doing things.

We want our readers to become empowered to make the necessary life changes that will ultimately result in a better life. Because of this, we are very interested in what you think about MotherWit magazine and what topics you would like to see published.

In each issue, we will provide comments from our readers on various articles. Please e-mail us your comments and we will feature select responses in upcoming issues.

"I want to let you know how impressed I am with your magazine. I love the format, style and articles. The cover definitely caught my attention first."

— Kimberly Bailey, Sacramento, CA

"What a wonderful magazine! My boss recently handed me the premier issue of your magazine, *MotherWit* and what a pleasure it was to read the articles. I could not put the magazine down.

I especially enjoyed the articles in the columns: *Every Penny Counts, To Your Health, Is there a Teacher in the House* and *Growing Up.* I thought all the articles were well written and informative.

Also, I wanted to say that while I understand that MotherWit magazine's target audience is African-American readers, the content of this magazine is beneficial to people of all cultural backgrounds."

Pam Kalvin, Littlerock, CA (L.A.'s Antelope Valley)

"MotherWit is a great source of wisdom. Even for my age, it is also written with a professional, but down to earth feel to it."

(this reader is under the age of 18)

"I am a student and working mother of eleven old twins. Time is dear. I read two magazines each month; one of those is *MotherWit*. A friend introduced me to the magazine, and I have come to appreciate the timeless articles and information relevant to my community. I read *MotherWit* magazine cover to cover and it inspires me. Parenting, aging, family, recipes, sisterhood, experiences... and my grandmother's sayings. *MotherWit* has it all.

Dawn Elisa Peters, Sacramento, CA

Thank you for your comments and please continue sharing your responses with us.

— MW Editorial Staff



INTERVIEW with a Toddler

by Valorie Taylor



Valorie Taylor is a syndicated columnist/
Christian fiction author and author of "The Speak Letters."
Mrs. Taylor is the creator of a series of Articles titled "Toddler Mom." Valerie is also mother of Camden, Jordan and Kayla.



Never make your butter in the same place you make your bread.

— MotherWit

If this world were mine...

Your smile would be the first thing I see in the morning. And the last thing I see at night.

The world would grow with me and not against me.

A quiet house wouldn't be closed to me.

Your work schedule would always include me.

You would be my playmate when other kids aren't around and just my mom/dad when they are around.

I would never disappoint you or make you angry.

I'd put into words what my tears really mean.

I'd ask you to prepare colorful and fun looking food to eat.

I would remember to take myself to the potty and not wet my bed.

We would have the best non-sense conversations.

You would never cry.

You would never have to go to work or meetings.

50% of the time I'd try to be grown-up like you and 50% of the time you'd try to be a kid like me.

I'd explain all of what one hug, one smile and one kiss really means to me.

See how much I need you, Mom and Dad?

Won't you take time to show me the limits, the luxuries and the likeable things of this world? ▲

Seasoned wisdom and advice from your peers . . .

I am a single mother raising a son.
I know all the general to do's about raising a son, he's

been in the boys &
girls club, I try to
keep him involved
in church, but
I would like some
specifics on how to

train him to be

a man.

- F.B. Sacramento, CA

From the perspective of a young man reared by his grandmother.

Grandmother basically raised me by herself. My grandfather was present but not in a concrete way. The bible says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old, he will not depart." That is what my grandmother did; she trained me up. The choice to attend or not attend church was not mine to make. She required that I went to church, and she did not send me, she was right there with me. My grandmother gave me a foundation. I didn't have an example of a father and husband. She allowed me to interact and bond with other families that had a mom and a dad. From those examples, plus an uncle who left words in my heart and the men of God at church who talked with me, I began to desire to have a strong and stable family. That foundation was not built by church attendance alone. She also instilled in me a work ethic I live by today. My grandmother would wake me up early every Saturday morning to begin my chores. Everyone else in the house and all my neighborhood buddies were asleep. My chores taught me responsibility and to do a good job meant a lot to my grandmother, so I gave it my all.

It was important for my grandmother to acknowledge me, every so often I was rewarded when I did my chores well by simply listening to her praise me while conversing with a friend on the phone. She would say, "Yea, he's done a good job. I think he got a little common sense, I think he's gonna make it in the world." She was from Mississippi and chores were a molding tool for responsibility that I would carry with me throughout my life. I believe to raise a good man that you should suround him with men of God — men that will challenge him, but love him. He needs somebody else he can hang out with from time to time.

— Pastor Andre' Watts (age 35,) of the The Family Harvest Christian Church in Rome, Georgia and his wife Treceia Watts (age 36,) have been married for 12 years and have three children: Taylor11, Aaron 7, Cydnie 4.

From the perspective of a single mom who raised a son

Sometimes in a single parent home where there is a mother and son, the son • may think that he does not have to obey his mom; so, you must enforce whatever disciplinary measures you have chosen. As a single parent, you cannot allow your child to do what they want to do. They need rules and guidance and it's up to you (it is your say so, not theirs.) Also, keep them in the Lord's house; to sit in church so the word of God reaches them and is touches their heart and spirit. From elementary school to college, teachers and staff have complimented my son on his upbringing and the respect he has for his elders. College staff trusted my son so much that they had him "house sit" their homes while they vacationed. They wanted to applaud me, but I give all the credit to God and applaud him, because things could have been different. His employers over the years have also commended him on his rearing and mannerisms and appreciated the way he handled himself on the job. I was also very active in PTA in elementary and high school, so I would be aware of what was going on in school and to let him know that I cared about him and what he was doing. I supervised and reviewed things that he was being taught in school from elementary to high school. That was important to me.

I also allowed my Bishop to tutor and discipline my son because I could not be the "male" figure that my son needed in his life. There were times I thought the discipline was a little too hard but I never let my son see or know how I felt. I knew it was what he needed if I wanted him to be a strong and stable young man. I knew I had made the right choice by allowing a man of God, one who led a committed, godly and transparent life before everyone, to assist in the training and upbringing of my son. When he came home after graduating from Chico State College, Randy thanked Bishop for all the chastening he had given him and they hugged and cried in front of the congregation at church. You can't be their buddy; you have to be their parent. I went to a function at his school and sat there until it was over; it did-

"My 2 cents 4 your good sense" is a question-andresponse column designed to help you with your problems or concerns.

Two or three people will give their opinion on each question in order to provide our readers with wisdom and advice from a broad range of people who have lived through similar experiences.

Seasoned women and men with real life experiences who demonstrate lives of integrity will give advice. However, any advice given should never replace professional counsel from your local pastor or professional health counselor, nor should it replace God's word.

If you have a question you would like answered, send it to the attention of MotherWit, my 2 cents, and we will respond in the next publication or by letter.

n't matter to me that I was the only parent there who was not a chaperone. Your son has a long way to go, even though he may not like it now, he will thank you in the end. For my son's 21st birthday, he celebrated by sending me flowers, baby and grown-up pictures of himself and a letter thanking me for his upbringing. Praise God for His wonderful love and mercy! \blacktriangle

A letter MOMI real
from a son really app
GOD I a
raised by a birthday
Single Mom: planning
the lady:

March 11, 1996

I really don't know where to start, but I'll start with I really appreciate you! It is my 21st birthday, and I thank GOD I am saved. In past years a birthday was just another birthday but this one means a lot more to me.

You're probably wondering, why all of this? Well, I've been planning this since last year. I wanted to do something nice for the lady who has played a major part in me seeing my 21st

birthday. I didn't want to just get you perfume or something that would get out-dated so I put much thought into it and got the frame and pictures for you.

Mom, I could write a novel for all of the things you've done for me but I'll limit it to a few pages.

When I was just a young boy I remember not being able to stay out as long as some people, couldn't go some places, couldn't talk on the phone longer than ten minutes with young ladies, dances were out of the question, and girlfriends were a no-no. While in church, talking was a BIG no-no, but getting my lesson from school and Bible school was important, going to church and doing my chores there was never an option. Respect for elders, women, and everyone was a must. Telling the truth was important, and the list goes on and on.

But because I couldn't stay out as long as others and go the places they went . . . I've never been to jail, had a situation with the law, or been in the back of a police car . . . and I thank you! Because talking in church was a BIG no-no . . . I listen more attentively now to the word, and I respect God's house to the highest . . . and I thank-you! Because getting my lesson in school and Bible school was important . . . I have completed the whole Bible class, and I'm on my way to completing college . . . and I thank you!

Mom, I have so many others things that I could thank you for, but I think the most important one would have to be the life you lived at home and around me. I know for a fact, if you hadn't lived a saved life I wouldn't be where I am today. Whenever I was into things it was "what would GOD and my mom think?" People up here at school always tell me your mom is so lucky to have you as a son, but I believe that I am so blessed to have you as my mom! I can honestly say, when I have a youngster of my own I will most definitely raise them like I was raised. This is just a little token of my appreciation to say, "It's not only my 21st birthday, but it's our 21st anniversary! I love you, mom!!!!

— Love your son, Randy S. Love



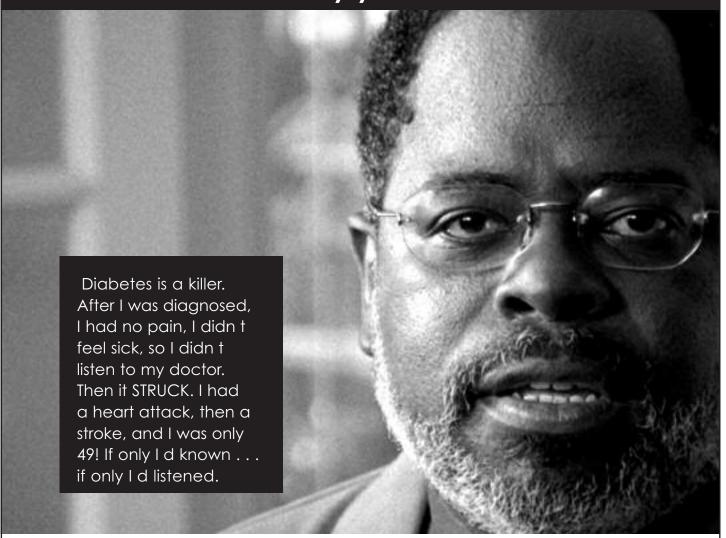
You have the power.

We'll help you find it.



Services for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Crisis Line: 916.920.2952 Business Line: 916.448.2321 www.weaveinc.org

Don t let diabetes destroy your life . . . choose to live.



The complications of diabetes often go undiagnosed, and are far more serious than you might think. Most people with diabetes also have high blood pressure and cholesterol, which can cause severe heart damage. In fact, 2 out of 3 people with diabetes die from heart disease or stroke.

Call 1-800-DIABETES for your free Diabetes Survival Guide.

But it s not too late. You can reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke by lowering your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol. Learn how.



www.diabetes.org

your health matters



's To Your Health

By Jan Dixon, JRD

First, let me start by saying that we are only a few months into 2006 and I hope that all of our readers have been enjoying a new and exciting year. I will not ask how many people have once again made a New Year's Resolution regarding losing weight, eating healthy, and exercising regularly. I will not even ask how many have actually followed through on their resolution, given up, or are stuck in the demoralizing cycle of stopping and starting over.

Let me suggest that you remove the "d" word, diet, from your vocabulary and that you totally forget about the resolution you made regarding your desire to lose weight. Instead, I want you to first look at the reasons why you have been overeating or why you have gained weight.

Losing weight begins with the "right" mental state. If you have not dealt with the problems causing you to overeat, then no matter how hard you try, you will be unsuccessful. Until you get at the "root" of the problem, whether it's low self-esteem, loneliness, hereditary, financial or marital problems, your efforts to lose weight will be sabotaged by you! Understanding the cause may require you to seek help from a professional; if this is required, please do so because we are talking about you becoming a healthier and happier person. It is about making life-altering changes in how you perceive and feel about yourself and your situations.

You must be willing to make an honest assessment of yourself and your situation. Then, be willing to no longer settle for what you see, but rather have the courage to make some changes for the benefit of yourself!

Once you have the "right" mental state, you can incorporate the California Black Health Network's program by following the 10 tips (shown at the righ) to help you reach your goal of keeping weight off. You might want to clip them out and put them on the refrigerator and even your bathroom mirror as a reminder.

So remember to start with the "right" mental state and I know you will be successful in whatever changes you desire to make in your life for a healthier and happier You!!

SOURCE OF REFERENCE: California Black Health Network (CBHN)

CBHN's Guide to Healthy Living

- **Ditch the Diet Mentality.** Instead, set up a food plan full of good-tasting nutritious foods like fresh fruits, leafy greens, low-fat dairy products and whole grains.
- Avoid the Treadmill Trap. Don't like treadmills? Find a form of exercise you can live with and stick to it. Many experts recommend exercising three to five times a week for 20 or 30 minutes. A brisk walk will suffice.
- Focus on Foods You Can Have. Take your pick of low-fat and nutrient-dense selections such as foods that offer healthy amounts of nutrients in exchange for the calories.
- **Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth.** Try no-regrets, low-fat indulgences such as strawberries, apples, and other sweet tasting fruits. Grab a candy bar with fewer calories than your usual one.
- Take Time to Adjust Your Taste Buds. Learn to enjoy new, low-fat tastes by gradually switching foods. Changing too much and too fast can get in the way of developing sound food habits.
- Beware of "Lite" and "Fat-Free" Products. Do not kid yourself into thinking "lite" means you can eat as much as you want. You must continue to watch portion sizes, because calories still count.
- **Tind Ways to Make Food Trade-Offs.** If you really want something, eat it; but cut fat and calories elsewhere. Cut down on "hidden fats" in your food, plan to transform milkshakes, custards and pudding into low-fat treats by using skim milk.
- Slim Down Recipes With Substitutions. Reduce the amount of oil use in cooking, and use skim milk or 1 percent instead of whole. Also use milk and half-half milk in soups, sauces and casseroles.
- Move Away From a "Good Food/Bad Food" Approach. All foods fit into your plan when you keep sight of your overall eating patterns. Occasional treats are not "bad". The key is how much and how often you eat them.
- Forgive Yourself When You "Slip." Everyone overeats from time to time, so there is no need to feel guilty for being human. One or two setbacks will not make you gain weight.



If you haven't heard it by now,

SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS

TO YOUR HEALTH. I know you are saying to yourself, "Of course it is, everyone knows that!" But are you sure you really know it? Let's consider this: between 1995-1999, 440,000 people were killed due to the ill effects of smoking. I'm sure you can quickly think of at least one friend, family member or acquaintance that has succumbed to lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, or some other smoking-related disease. This is an unfortunate and preventable fact, and it is one that disproportionately affects the black community; but

it doesn't have to.

Living a smoke-free life will decrease your chances of contracting devastating, often terminal illnesses like lung cancer, hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, stroke, and respiratory diseases like pneumonia, bronchitis/emphysema, and chronic airway obstruction. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) approximates that annual health-related economic losses in this country were over \$150 billion between 1995-99.

Studies also suggest that smoking takes years off your life, approximately 13.2 years

Each year, tobacco

companies spend

millions of dollars

millions and

developing ad

campaigns to

advertisements

in magazines, and

weekly and daily

place their

newspapers

for men and 14.5 years for women. And, if you are poor, older, or belong to an ethnic minority — the bad news you are less likely to receive advice to quit from medical professionals. So, let me be the first or the 50th person to tell you, quit smoking now! Quitting now, regardless of how long you've been smoking, will give your body an opportunity to begin to repair itself and it will give you back some of those years that smoking has stolen from you.

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance, and it is very difficult for many to quit, but

considering all you can lose by continuing to smoke, like spending precious time with a child, or grandchild or loved one, isn't it worth it to try?

If you are a non-smoker, but live with a smoker who smokes indoors, you are exposing yourself to the same carcinogens or cancer causing agents associated with smokers. Indoor smoke is called Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS). More and more people are contracting ETS-related diseases, without realizing they are jeopardizing their own health. Think of ETS as indoor air pol-

To protect people from being exposed to high levels of pollution and carcinogens, California and most other states monitor levels of emissions from vehicles and factories, and there are laws that prevent people from smoking in public places; but what about at home? Although we are protected to a certain extent from pollutants in our environment, it

is up to us as individuals to ensure that the air we breathe in our home is safe for us and especially our small children.

Make a change now. Make your home a nonsmoking home, and ask smokers who visit or live with

sure that SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR **HEALTH**, I want to point out some of the ways tobacco companies entice smokers to keep smoking and young people to begin smoking. If you consider all the deaths attributable to smoking, it is

in the tobacco industry's best financial interest to find smokers to replace those that have died. We know that the nicotine found in cigarettes is addictive, and that the younger you start smoking the more likely you are to become a regular smoker, and the harder it is to stop. This is why it is so blatantly irresponsible for the tobacco companies to market their products to the youth and ethnic groups in our communities. Did you know

you to smoke outside. Now that we know for

to your health

that cigarette ads appear in the magazines your kids are reading, like *Vibe* and *Rolling Stone*? Or have you ever wondered why you see so many Newport and Kool ads in *Essence*, *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines?

Each year, tobacco companies spend millions and millions of dollars developing ad campaigns to place their advertisements in magazines, and weekly and daily newspapers.

Like any industry, ad campaigns are designed to attract a certain market. We know instinctively that ads for action-packed video games are targeted at teen-aged males. This same tactic is employed by the tobacco industry to attract young smokers and specific ethnic groups. This is an excerpt from a 1989 RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company marketing presentation for the company's brands:

"We are continuing to target primarily youngeradult smokers and blacks. In fact, Salem will be our focused brand for the black market. This mar-

ket is critical for Salem, since 90 percent of black smokers prefer a menthol brand, and black smokers are the fastest-growing younger adult smoker segment."

The tobacco companies do not ignore any group; you'll see campaigns for young people, Hispanics, Asians and women. As a matter of fact, a recent Philip Morris ad series for the Virginia Slims brand incorporates images of strong women of African, Asian, and Latin descent to peddle its product. The underlying message - you can be a strong, confident woman if you smoke this cigarette. And, even though Joe Camel, a cartoon ad concept for Camel cigarettes, has been out of circulation for over 5 years, it is still one the most recognizable icons for young people. At one point, kids were able to identify the Joe Camel cartoon more frequently than Mickey Mouse. There are countless examples that continue to entice people to smoke, like people living carefree, and enjoying healthy lifestyles, or themes centered around hip-hop images such as diamonds and turntables that are attainable if you smoke a certain brand.

In 1998, the four major tobacco companies, Philip Morris (Marlboro, Virginia Slims, Benson & Hedges), RJ Reynolds (Salem,

Camel, Winston), Brown & Williamson (Kool, Pall Mall, Capri) and Lorillard (Newport) settled lawsuits brought by 46 states and 5 United States territories. The Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) was voluntarily signed by the companies to end lawsuits that sought to recover medical costs and other expenditures spent to care for sick smokers. Based on the acknowledgment from



some companies that smoking is dangerous, coupled with the ad campaigns they developed and marketed to the public, years of misinformation and countless misled consumers and potential smokers with the belief that smoking was not as harmful as public health experts claimed.

The MSA placed prohibitions on some of the tactics used by the tobacco industry to market to people, especially youths. Some of the things the tobacco companies agreed to stop doing included, ending all sponsorships of musical events and major league sports including baseball, football, basketball and soccer. Now, huge tobacco billboards once plastered throught inner-city communities are a thing of the past, as well as ads on and in buses and taxis.

One of the most important provisions in the MSA prohibits tobacco companies from targeting youths in its ad campaigns. In 2001, the California Office of the Attorney General brought a lawsuit against RJ Reynolds tobacco company, claiming the company violated the Master Settlement Agreement by targeting its advertising in magazines to our youth (teens). The attorney general claimed that a disproportionate amount of ads appeared in youth-oriented magazines - such as *Vibe*, *Rolling Stone* and *Sports Illustrated*. Evidence showed

that more advertisements appeared in these magazines and others like them than before the companies signed the 1998 agreement, which was supposed to limit this type of exposure to kids. In June 2002, after a trial in San Diego, CA, RJ Reynolds was fined \$20 million for violating terms of the MSA. The verdict is being appealed.

Knowledge is power. We know tobacco

companies want and need our business and are willing to do whatever it takes to continue to realize billions of dollars in profits. And we also know that quitting smoking is the easiest way to immediately improve your health. So we must take this knowledge and turn it into the power to quit (if we smoke), or educate others about never starting. There are many resources available for quitting, so contact your county's health department, the State of California's Department of Health Services - Tobacco Control Section, your doctor's office, or the American Lung or Heart Associations for information. There are also numerous web sites that offer cessation programs and quit smoking tips on

the Internet. Look for the many support groups that accommodate specific ethnic groups or people with similar interests. Good luck with quitting or convincing someone else it is time to quit! Now is as good a time as any.

Editor's Note: Kelley is an Analyst with the California Office of the Attorney General, Tobacco Litigation and Enforcement Section. She has worked in the Tobacco Education and Litigation field for 7 years. Kelley believes in educating the public on the devices that are used by the tobacco industry to keep people in the dark about the long-term damage that can result from tobacco use.

Break the chain LJust Say no!

our village . . . the caring neighborhood



Adopt-A-Senior

W.I.A. Youth Program volunteers showed their commitment to making a difference through another fantastic Adopt-A-Senior Project, a community service endeavor with the Caring Neighborhoods Program.

Youth volunteers worked together to make yard improvements for Mrs. H., a senior in the Freeport Manor neighborhood. Mrs. H. has a very difficult time walking, and suffers from a variety of medical conditions causing her to be hospitalized on several occasions in recent months. Mrs. H. was at risk of being cited for various code violations

on her property. Previous tenants left an abundance of junk scattered in the front and back yards, and when she needed to move back into her home, she was physically and financially unable to remove the items left behind. Disheartened at the condition of her yard and frustrated at her inability to clean it up, Freeport Manor On the Move President,

Helen Freeny, contacted us to see if we could help. Adopt-A-Senior volunteers arrived early on a Saturday morning to offer a helping hand. They began disposing of yard debris such as shower doors, cardboard boxes, and old yard equipment, accumulating it on the street to be collected on Neighborhood Clean Up Day. Volunteers also arranged potted plants and yard rocks, and then planted grass seed so that Mrs. H. could enjoy the view from her front porch.

Mrs. H. was incredibly grateful for the Adopt-A-Senior volunteers who reached out to help her live safely at home. THANK YOU W.I.A. Youth Program volunteers for your hard work and willingness to help this special senior!

The Adopt-A-Senior project is an ongoing endeavor between Caring Neighborhoods and the W.I.A. Youth Program – a job training and mentoring program, also sponsored by the City of Sacramento, - providing outdoor home repairs and/or yard work to frail or low income seniors. Through the Adopt-A-Senior Project, youth volunteers can develop a community service spirit and help elderly neighbors live safely and independently at home. **A**

If you would like to nominate a senior for upcoming Adopt-A-Senior projects, please contact 566-1594 or tgray@cityofsacramento.org.

Caring Neighborhood Corner

Mabel Elliot, Margo Williams, Mildred Whittiker, and Beatrice Heard are four amazing neighbors from the St. Andrew's A.M.E. Church Caring Neighborhood, in downtown Sacramento. Their kindness has continued to make a difference in the lives of many neighborhood seniors for more than seven years.

Mabel, Margo, Mildred, and Beatrice are very special nurses who provide free blood pressure checks and monitoring for approximately 60 to 80 senior neighbors within the Sacramento area. This volunteering service takes place four days of each month at the following locations: Women's Civic Improvement Club in Oak Park, Sam Pannell Community Center in Meadowview, and the St. Andrew's A.M.E. Church.

For some, this is their only regular interaction with a medical professional. For seniors who don't take their blood pressure medication properly, WATCH OUT! Regular monitoring reveals this behavior to the nurses, who in their special ways, encourage them to get on track. Occasionally, patterns of dangerously elevated blood pressure are detected, usually caused by an unsuspected illness. After referring the senior to a doctor, conditions from hypertension to heart failure have been diagnosed. Without their compassion, red flags, such as high blood pressure, may go unnoticed until an emergency occurs.

Most importantly, however, is the caring and concern shown by these wonderful nurses. Regular visitors look forward to a big hug and heartfelt visit. Oftentimes, the nurses comfort a family while an elderly loved one is receiving an operation, explaining the procedure in common language. This heartfelt, helping hand is a consolation to family members and a true example of these beneficent

women. Thank you, Mabel, Margo, Mildred, and Beatrice, for your dedication and outstanding service to neighborhood seniors! ▲

Do you know of a special caring neighbor who deserves to be recognized? We would love to hear about your efforts! Please contact Tracey Gray at 566-1594 or tgray@cityofsacramento.org and let us know how you are making a difference in your neighborhood!

Local College Students Reach Out



A group of extraordinary students from Sacramento City College received an award from the Avondale/ Glen Elder Weed and Seed Program for making a difference.

David Troth and classmates were required to complete a community service project, and wished to volunteer with seniors through the Caring Neighborhoods Program. They chose to help Mrs. R., an elderly neighbor who lost her husband to

Alzheimer's Disease last summer after providing his care for several years, and is the caregiver of her adult son who has a medical condition. Mrs. R. has had difficulty tending to her yard, and was at risk of being cited for code violations, so David's team decided to help out.

Volunteers contributed over 20 hours of service. Volunteers did everything from mowing front and side yards, pulling weeds, land-scaping planter boxes/areas, removing debris, sweeping driveway and sidewalks, raking leaves, transplanting potted plants, and taking time out for a short visit with Mrs. R. She was overwhelmed at their generosity and arduous efforts, and grateful for their kindness.

David's group and the Caring Neighborhoods Program were presented awards for outstanding service on behalf of senior neighbors in Avondale/Glen Elder neighborhood at a Weed and Seed Committee meeting with outgoing Councilmember Dave Jones.

GREAT WORK, David, Sterling, Rachelle, Alicia, and Naomi, and THANK YOU for making a difference! ▲

Seeking Nomination

Do you know of an elderly neighbor who could use a little help with a big project? The Caring Neighborhoods Program would like to help! We are currently seeking nominations of Sacramento County seniors who could use a helping hand with light maintenance or home repairs, to be completed by our communityservice and Adopt-A-Senior volunteers.

Possible assistance may include yard maintenance, pulling weeds, raking leaves, cleaning rain gutters, house painting, repairing a fence, etc. Ideal candidates may be living alone, on a fixed income, frail or suffering from a major medical condition, and/or do not have able family members living with or nearby them. Our volunteers are eager to help!

For more information or to nominate an elderly neighbor for this heartwarming project, please contact Tracey Gray, at 566-1594 or tgray@city-ofsacramento.org.

Community Paint Project

Caring Neighborhoods Program volunteers made a difference this past holiday season, for an elderly neighbor in the Colonial Village neighborhood.



Donating over 218 hours of community service, over ten days, volunteers from Sacramento City College Society of Hispanic Engineering Professionals and Americorps Corporation for National and Community Service - Red Team 1, teamed up to paint the house and improve the backyard for Mrs. F., a 96-year-old elderly neighbor.

For several years, the aging house was in dire need of new paint, as deteriorating areas left the wooden house bare to weathering elements. Volunteers worked together to prepare the yellow and green house for a fresh coat of white and blue paint. They scraped flaking paint, sanded uneven edges, power washed the structure, applied two coats of primer/sealer and paint to the house and trim, and removed old paint from windows, masonry, and sidewalks. Volunteers also removed debris from the back yard, raked leaves, landscaped planter areas, clipped overgrown shrubbery, pulled weeds, arranged yard furniture, and swept walkways.

Mrs. F. was astonished at how beautiful her house looked, and for the diligent efforts of these dedicated volunteers to help her live safely and independently at home. What a nice surprise!

Thank you, Sacramento City College Society of Hispanic Engineering Professionals and Americorps Red Team 1 for your great work, and Rebuilding Together for the donation of paint and supplies. A special thanks to Art Hernandez, Aaron and Kimberley Gray, and John Parino for making this project a success!

a life touched

This new column was inspired by Mama Brooks and is now one of my favorite sections. I was introduced to Inez Rebecca Brooks (Mama Brooks) and the Floyd family while in high school. She made such an impression on me that while I was in college at UC Davis she became the subject of an assignment for my Women's Studies course. The assignment was to interview a woman who you admired and her life experiences during a time when race and gender were definite handicaps. Mama Brooks had planted seeds of wisdom in my life. What a unique opportunity I had to look through the

This article is just an excerpt of the full interview I had with Mama Brooks. I received an "A" on the paper and I said within myself, "I going to hold on to this piece of writing because one day I am going to use it for something." Little did I know that this term paper about Mama Brooks would become the first article written for MotherWit Magazine.

windows of Mama Brooks life.

Mama Brooks (Inez Rebecca Brooks) passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 30, 2005 at the age of 92. She left behind a legacy in those of us who love her dearly - warm memories, funny stories and a example of what a full life is truly about. I was blessed to have known such a strong woman and honored to have shared in her going home celebration. Unbeknownst to me the Floyd family, Mama Brooks and her stories, which she told in a whisper like she was telling you a secret, have etched their way into the history of my life.

Mama Brooks was blessed with a long life but more importantly she was blessed with the love, devotion, loyalty and commitment of her eldest daughter Audrey and John Floyd, her son-in-law (who was more like an actual son). These two wonderful people shared their lives and home with Mama Brooks who came to live with them in 1984 and lived with them for the remainder of her life. Their caring for Mama Brooks was an enduring example of how we should honor our elders.

To the entire Brooks, Chillis and Floyd families my sincerest and deepest prayers and loving respect be towards you all. Love Audrea Williams On a hot and cloudy day on a plantation in Glencoe, Louisiana, three women field workers are at the aid of a Midwife about to deliver a baby to Mrs. Chillis. With one final push on December 27, 1912, Inez Rebecca Chillis was born. Inez, now known as

Mama Brooks, weathered many storms in her life. As a young Black girl she grew up in Houston, Texas and Glencoe, Louisiana. During the early-to mid-nineteen hundreds one would imagine that life for a Black woman would be filled with despair and gloom. For Mama Brooks there was always hope.

To Mama Brooks, "life could be lived good, that is if one lived a good life." She believed that if you were a good person, which includes "working hard, doing good to others and never lending ones self to vice" - you would have a good life. Not only did she believe in honest and good living, but her deep love for God and her mother helped her to maintain such a life style. God, her love for her mother and other women characters, her love for people and hard work kept Mama Brooks from the many tragedies that befell thousands of African-American women of the era. Due to the ethics that formed the basis of her character, men never played a significant part in her life.

Small Town Life

Glencoe, Louisiana, was a small town. Without pictures or descriptive words, I can see Glencoe in my mind. Dusty roads, older women hanging out the wash, children making up their own games while big sister washin' dishes with hands slowing down as a daydream enters her mind about bad clothes, fancy cars and nice men. Or is it fancy clothes, nice cars and bad men. Inez was the only child conceived between Mr. and Mrs. Chillis. Despite being an only child, "my mom and dad used to fight all of the time" said Mama Brooks shaking her head. She explained that her mother and father were too different types of people.

Inez remembers her mother as a hard worker who made sure her child had food to eat and clothes to keep warm. On the other hand, her father didn't like to work. Mama Brooks said, "I watched as other women took care of my father by buying him things and giving him money. Five years after her mother and father went their separate ways her mother married again. Mama Brooks' second father was a blacksmith. A blacksmith was perceived by society as a good job. Not only was the position of blacksmith afforded respect, but it also paid more money than the Blacks who worked in the fields. Inez's stepfa-

ther was a hard worker.

Her mother bore eleven children, seven boys and four girls. Inez's stepfather made a decent wage, and her mother only worked in the cotton or sugar cane fields during the winter months.

Midwives and folklore . . . **Foundations of A Blessed Life**

As a young girl, Inez was loved by her teachers and other elderly people. Teachers always invited Inez to live with them because she was special and thought to be a "blessed child." Looking very proud she said, "That's what the Midwife told my mother." At birth Inez was born with a "veil" (thin layer of skin) over her eye which was interpreted as a

how I got over

blessing. A child born with a veil was considered blessed because the veil was believed to be a special gift from God. Mama Brooks added that if a mother kept the veil on her child, she could tell whether or not her child was sick or in danger just by examining the physical state of the veil. If the veil was smooth and healthy looking, then the child was in good spirits. If the veil was shriveled up, then something wrong was going on with the child. Inez said she can attest to this fact because ever since she was a child, she experienced on many occasions the ability to foresee events before they occurred. Now, explained Mama Brooks:

Doctors have taken all of the sacredness out of child birthing. No longer are mothers told if their children were born with a veil. At birth, doctors simply clean the baby of everything.

Mama Brooks talked about the modern environment the women now have their babies in. "My mother had five of her children at home," said Mama Brooks. Women (Midwives) were the ones who were in charge of delivering babies. Now men are the ones delivering our babies.

Inez would walk to her Grand-mother's who lived just a few miles away, to pick fruit and vegetables from the orchards for her family. Inez did whatever she could to ease the load her mother had to carry. Her mother experienced obstacles and setbacks, but she never took out any of her frustrations on Inez.

Although her second husband and new children increased the family's size, her mother made no distinction and showed no partial inclinations with any of the children. Nevertheless, Inez and her mother were extremely close. Due to their close bond, Inez's stepfather became jealous. Nodding her head up and down she said, "Yup, he was jealous of the love between me and my mother." Every time she mentioned her mother a warmth swept across her face and she put a hand over her heart. "Oh yes I loved my mother. I put my mother in my bosom. I carried her everywhere I went", exclaimed Mama Brooks.

Burden or Blessing...

She appeared to be angry at her stepfather, but she never told her mother. When asked why, Mama Brooks retorted, "I didn't want to bother her with that kind of stuff." Even if Inez didn't have the proper clothing or whatever she may have needed during a specific time, she never let her mother know. Again, Inez didn't want to trouble her.

Mama Brooks' reluctance to complain to her mother was due to a great respect and love that she had for her mother. As a "blessed child" and believer in Jesus Christ, Mama Brooks was lead by the "Holy Spirit" all throughout her life. And it was the Holy Spirit that told her to leave her mother so she could be happy with her husband. Inez realized by leaving home, there would be one

less mouth to feed. Furthermore, her grandparents, on her mother's side, happened to be financially stable. She knew by living with her grandparents, "I could get more." Now she could get more food and clothes, without worry of burdening her mother; an example of how much she loved her mother. She said she could love like this because she had the Jesus love and nobody could take that away."

Family Secrets

Inez's grandmother, Rosa Harrison, was an American Indian, and her grandfather, Alfonz Harrison, was mixed with black and white. The description of her grandfather was "light-skinned [with] good or straight hair," said Mama Brooks. She told me that Mr. Harrison's father (her great grandfather) was a white man who "owned" or hired Black men and women. One of those Black women field workers was Alfonz mother. The union between the white plantation owner and his black woman worker conceived Inez's grandfather, Mr. Harrison, but was kept a secret for years. Even as Mama Brooks recounted the incident, she talked in a whisper, imitating the way the story was told to her. Everyone in Glencoe knew the identity of her grandfather's father, but no one ever said anything.

Living with fear

Though she didn't live with her mother, Inez would frequently cut through the sugar cane or corn fields, taking her mother goodies for her brothers and sisters. Surprised that a young black girl would dare walk so freely amongst the tall weeds alone, I asked Mama Brooks if she ever experienced any racial or sexual harassment which was characteristic of the times due to the lack of laws against such heinous crimes. Though assured that such things did take place, the threat of racial or sexual harassment ever entered Inez's mind nor crossed her path. Inez was never surprised by a stranger lurking in the bushes during the cool of the day. With a giggle that rocked her back and forth, Mama Brooks said, "I was like Little Red Riding Hood!" With a smile of



Inez Rebecca Chillis, at 1 year, with her mother Elnore Chillis, age 20. This photo was taken in 1913.

confidence, "But I never met a wolf."

"The people of Glencoe kept to themselves", said Inez. Blacks and whites didn't socially interact. During that time, blacks were just happy to be alive. Although black and white children went to the same elementary Catholic School, there was an invisi-

ble line that neither side crossed. The Catholic School wasn't free, therefore Inez's mother worked to pay for the tuition fees. Mama Brooks recalled no major trouble between Blacks and Whites in her hometown because she revealed that, "Blacks were afraid to do anything wrong or out of line for fear of being hung."

Bound to the Plantation

Blacks lived in houses on plantations owned by white men. The owners of the plantation hired "Overseers" to keep watch over the field workers. Reflecting on the Blacks who worked in the fields, Mama Brooks stated, "Yes, the Overseer never had any problems from the workers, he was mostly there to make sure things ran smoothly."

Like a patient in a hypnotic state, I was mesmerized by the history she recounted for me. Blacks working and living on plantations, the Overseer and the big white house that was on the plantation, though far removed from the slave quarters. All those things were a reality for Inez. A history that was once a second-hand story for me was a lived experienced for Inez. With a lingering gaze at Mama Brooks, I let out a slow but soft "Wow" as she said: I was named after the plantation my family and I lived on, except the plantation's "I" in Inez is pronounced with a long "e" sound,



Slaves and hired field workers in front of workers quarters on a supercain plantation

Elnore (Harrison) Chillis, Grandma Brook's mother, born in 1893. At about age 40.

Inez – whereas my name is pronounced Inez with a long "I" sound.

Growing-up Fast

After living with her grandparents for a while, her grandpa, Mr. Harrison fell sick. With a look of remembered sorrow, and monotone voice, Mama Brooks told me that her Grandfather died when she was

either nine or ten. "We all cried", said Mama Brooks. She explained that when all of her grandparents began to grow older and sick she felt she had to grow up. When Inez's grandmother fell sick, she made a request to be taken home, to die at her birth place with her own mother by her side. On the train, traveling back to Glencoe, Louisiana with her sick grandmother, Inez began to silently mourn the absence of her precious grandmother. Even as the last breath of life left her grandmother's body, Inez eased into the bed where her sick grandmother laid and curled up next to her. With her lip protruded out and an exaggerated shake of her head, Mama Brooks said, "I wasn't afraid to sleep in the bed with my grandmother."

Every since she was old enough Mama Brooks worked. If it was nothing more than taking care of 'white people's children', which it was most of the time; Mama Brooks always had a job. While working in the day and going to school at night, Mama Brooks completed a ninth grade education. Discouraged to continue school by the death of her grandmother and the reality that, "it was better to send mama a dollar to buy five loaves of bread for my brothers and sisters than [a report card]." Mama Brooks quit school and worked. Mama Brooks never regretted this decision, but she remarked, "Had I went to college, I would have been a wizard!" Ironically enough, little did she know that she was something more than a wizard.



1935 - Plantation field workers & house staff waiting for transportation to work site.

Leading such a serious or what she called "old fashioned life", she never had time for other children. Whether living in Houston or Glencoe, the neighborhoods in which she lived never had a lot of children. Even if there were children in the neighborhood, Inez wasn't allowed to play with them. Mama Brooks said

you couldn't just play, "you had to be careful with boys!" Because she stated, "they were trouble." Tolling, in my mind, with the many interpretations one could make in response to her statement, I thought to deal with the issues of boys later.

Simple Luxuries

Mama Brooks also lived with her greatgrandparents on her father's side. Mustering up a proud look she said, "My great-grandfather was a Baptist Preacher!" Looking back, she shared with me an incident that would frequently happen while living with her great grandparents. Her great grandfather was a Preacher and he traveled to many states. He rode the bus, which was often filled with many people traveling to different destinations.

Upon visiting different places, he would buy shoes and clothing for Inez. She said, "They would measure my feet with a piece of string and great grandma would tell great granddad my sizes so he could shop for me while he was traveling." The bus line resembled Greyhound bus line, but made fewer stops. Since the bus didn't stop in Glencoe, Inez's great granddad would have to put all of the gifts for Inez in a bag so that when the bus would pass a designated spot he would throw it out of the bus for Inez and her great grandma to pick up. She laughed, "Sometimes we spent hours out in the bush-

es looking for the bag great granddad threw out of the bus." She also talked about the convenience of owning a pair of shoes. Simple things like not going barefoot was considered a luxury, especially when you had to spend long hours on your feet either walking or working.

Babies Raising Babies

Due to her age, Inez would dress like an old woman so that the white women would trust her to help raise their children. Chuckling at an old memory, Mama Brooks told me



about being interviewed by 'a white lady' to help with the children and housework. The woman inspected Inez from head to toe with suspicious eyes and came to the realization that, "You're not an old woman, you're a young girl!" But no matter what her age, white families always trusted Inez and took her in as their own. The families she worked for would buy her things all the time. She went on to say, "it was like nothing [bad] could touch me." Inez's ability to maintain goodness when badness was all around and the blessings that were showered upon her life were all accredited to keeping God and her mother at the center of her heart. She called herself "good" because if she was bad according to her view on life, she said, "I wouldn't have made it."

Working for white families Mama Brooks earned \$2.50 a week. She was very good about saving money and using it economically. She saved up money to buy herself some clothes. "Slips! Oh yes! I used to always have at least two!", exclaimed Mama Brooks. She would also send home money and clothes to help out with the children. "I was a hard worker!" exhorts Mama Brooks. With hard work, but most importantly continued prayer and faith in God kept her from harms way.

Like many other Black women, Inez was more than just a hired hand or maid. The comfort level she established and maintained with the white family was always high. To illustrate the impact of Inez's presence on white families, she told me this story: At the breakfast table one morning, a family she worked for was enjoying their morning meal their baby blurted out its first word, "Inez, Inez!" Joining in a whirlwind of giggles, I laughed as hands of time began to move on to another memory in Mama Brooks' life. With one 'tick' we were at a different time and place.

When Aunt Centi, the Midwife who delivered Inez, died, broken hearted Inez returned to Glencoe to attend her funeral. She remembered, "all the children were dressed in white. It was a very sad time for the Blacks in the community," said Mama Brooks. Nevertheless, being back home was always a joyous time, recalled Inez, because it meant she got to spend time with her mother and the rest of the family. However, while visiting her family, Inez always kept a job. Working in Franklin, Louisiana, a little ways from Glencoe, Mama Brooks ironed dresses at .50¢ a dress for elderly people. Mama Brooks remarked on how "long" the dresses were because the women who wore them were exceptionally tall.

17

Relationships With the Opposite Sex . . .

On the subject of boys, men, and sex, Mama Brooks sat, unmoved by these words that fell upon her ears. "I was 'very' slow about boys," stressed Mama Brooks. Her mother nor any of her grandmothers gave her much information about boys, sex, or relationships with the opposite sex. The only thing that was ever said about the issue of sex was "leave boys alone!" In addition, Inez's five brothers would inform her about the corrupt intentions of young men. Even more interesting was the fact that Mama Brooks didn't trust Black men. With a look of deep concern and confusion I asked, "Why?" And she simply retorted, "They gave you a baby." Although this view of Black men was in her mind, Mama Brooks did have relationships. There was a young man named Ben Robinson who loved Inez dearly and she was also fond of him. However, she said, "I promised God I'd never marry a drunk." Flattered by Ben's affectionate gestures, Inez never gave in to her true, hidden feelings.

Mama Brooks revealed that it was hard for a young Black woman to survive. She maintained that if you weren't courting or married, but just happy to be single and free, you were considered sneaky or deceptive. If you dated more than one guy, but weren't sexually active, you were still labeled flip, fast, or a slut. On top of all that, if you had a nice beau or was liked by someone, women would 'curse you to your grave' because they were jealous. One such event took place in Mama Brooks' life in which a young woman tried to poison her. A young woman who liked Ben Robinson told her best friend, who practiced a type of witchcraft, to get rid of Inez. At the time, Inez was living with a female cousin. The woman who practiced witchcraft tried to befriend Mama Brooks and invited her to dinner.

"I knew what she was up to the first time she said, 'Hi Inez. How are you doing?' My cousin told me she had been asking about me on occasions."

Inez played along with the woman and accepted the dinner invitation extended to her. "The Holy Spirit had already shown me what the woman was planning to do to me," whispered Mama Brooks. Inez had eaten before she went to the woman's house. The woman presented Inez with a generous amount of food and bid her enjoyment. Inez told the woman she had already eaten. Eager for Inez to eat the food the woman suggested she take it with her. "She even walked me all

the way to my cousin's house to make sure I kept the food," chuckled Mama Brooks. After chatting with Inez and her cousin, the woman left. Retrieving the plate from the icebox, where Inez had asked her cousin to put it, Inez showed her cousin the traces of lve that saturated the food.

It Wasn't Love at first sight

After surviving the poisoned food adventure, Inez's next job led her to a man. Working in Houston at age sixteen Inez worked in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dudley. Sometimes the Dudley's would take trips to Rockport, Texas. One such occasion they invited Inez to come along. She met David Cox and after three months married him. I was surprised at what she told me because I knew that she led a stringent and committed life. It wasn't love at first sight, or even love period, because "I just want-

ed a change," said Mama Brooks. Expounding on her earlier point about single women, Inez knew that it was better to be married than unmarried for women. The need to show how mature or "grown" she became was another motivating factor. She stayed with Cox for three years and then up and left him. She said she really didn't love him and their relationship served no purpose to her. However, she didn't divorce him because she didn't believe in marital separation. A little while after she left him, Cox's family notified her that Cox had died.



L to R - Inez (Mama Brooks) 29 years old, and her husband Stewart Brooks, His sister Frannie (sweet) Warre, her husband Elmore Warren and India Palmer (Stewart's Aunt).

Until Death Do-Us-Part

After her first marriage Inez didn't have the desire to see men until the age of 29 when she met Stewart Brooks. "Girl! He just wouldn't go away! Everywhere I went he was there," laughed Mama Brooks. Stewart was a military man who had what it took to capture the heart of Inez Chillis. He was a good husband and a good father to their daughters, Fay and Willi Ann. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Stockton, California. They both worked and raised their two daughters. After their children had left and married, Stewart Brooks health declined, he was a diabetic. Mr. Brooks died in August of 1978 "It was till death do us part," said Mama Brooks. They were married for 38 years and during his sickness Mama Brooks took care of him. In fact Mama Brooks never knew her age until her husband died. She said she was so busy working all those years she didn't have time to celebrate her birthday.

Though I cannot walk in Mama Brooks' shoes, as an African-American woman, I have also followed some of the same paths. At first I was shocked at what I thought to be a lack of racial prejudice experienced by Mama Brooks, which was in fact a different level of racial prejudice. To Mama Brooks, she was blessed to have worked in such 'white wealthy homes'. To me, the fact that jobs such as maids, clothes pressers and working in the fields were the only jobs open to African-Americans was an extreme prejudice or infringement on our rights as working citi-

> zens. To Mama Brooks perhaps other women and men of her time, they saw jobs such as taking care of other people's children, especially when the other people were your oppressors, as good jobs. I would conclude that any job that kept one from working in the fields was a good job.

> Mama Brooks attitude towards White people wasn't negative. To her Whites were just prejudice against Black people and that's just the way it was. I expected her story to make white people out to be the villains, but I was wrong. Like men, White people

were just individuals you had to deal withthey served a purpose. After I left Mama Brooks' house I was amazed at how she maintained such a tender heart towards people.

Strained Relations

Thinking about Mama Brooks' relationship with her father brought back memories of my relationship with my own stepfather. I didn't handle my stepfather as graciously as Mama Brooks. If ever my step dad and I had a disagreement, my mother knew it and so did the neighbors. Though I love my mother dearly, I never thought that the disruptive relationship with my step dad would have bothered her. But to my dismay, I was wrong.



One evening, my step dad and I had an argument after dinner. My mother broke down in tears. To my recollection, that was the last fight I had with my stepfather. Now at a later age, I am much more tolerant of my stepfather. Unlike Mama Brooks, I would react every time I had a difference of opinion with my step dad. It took me a while to accept my stepfather for who he was. I was only able to release the tension between me and my stepfather by obtaining what Mama Brooks called "the Jesus love" in my heart.

Four Generations Give Way to New Freedoms

My reality and relationship with white people was built from a different premise compared to that of Mama Brooks'. The distinction was due to contextual differences. For Mama Brooks, her interaction with White

people was shaped from a unique time and place. In the early nineteen hundreds African-Americans were not only banned from basic human rights, but the owners of labor, production and politics were still debating whether or not we (African-Americans) were human! In light of this, African-Americans main thrust wasn't higher education or feminist issues, but the need to survive, the need to stay alive. What does education mean to a woman whose children cry from hunger pains? Nothing.

on the work and progress

of such leaders as Martin L. King, Rosa Parks, and the like. Yes, racism and oppression still exist, but African-Americans are now able to use channels and tools to tear down the dams of racism. Therefore, my reality is constructed with the knowledge of the enslavement of my people, the thought-provoking literature of Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou, the Civil Rights Movement, and the freedom to receive a higher education. These factors give me the ability to not only see White people as my equal but to be able to practice it in the workplace and in the classroom. Something Mama Brooks couldn't do. The Bill of Rights, Constitution, but most importantly the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders built the bridges that my generation needed to cross the

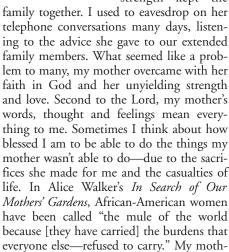
rivers of race and gender oppression. Mama Brooks and the millions of deceased slaves didn't have those bridges to cross. So, the African-Americans whose backs this country was built on either drowned in the rivers of oppression or became brain dead or passive to the struggle.

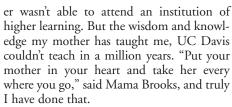
Kindred Spirits

Analyzing the "commonalities and differences" between me and Mama Brooks, I also noticed that we both shared an extremely close relationship with our mothers. Like Mama Brooks' mother, my mother's relationship with my biological father didn't last. My mother married a man who was a hard worker and good provider. She bore two more children, a girl and a boy. With our increased family size, my mother never treated me any different from my younger sister or brother.

In fact, even though I am the eldest, I am sometimes considered to be the baby of the family.

When Mama Brooks talked of her mother with great passion, I could relate to her feelings about her mother. Like Mama Brooks' mother, my mother was a hard worker — in the home and out of the home. My mother did whatever it took to keep our family's head above water. A housewife the majority of her life, my mother's strength kept the





A pervading point throughout Mama Brooks' life and my experience has been the empowerment of women. Like Mama Brooks, women have been my heroes. Not only did my mother play a paramount roles in my life, but other women such as my mentors, Cleo Spears and Dr. Anne Jackson, a dozen women teachers, famous women writers and poets, and my two closest friends, Sophia and Yasmin. I have shared a bonding experience with these women that would characterize the relationships between women in the nineteenth century, accord-ing to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's article, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relationships Between Women in Nine-teenth Century America." In Rosenberg's article she discussed the support mechanisms women served toward one another: "The female friendships must not be seen in isolation; it must be analyzed as one aspect of women's overall relations with one another," states Rosenberg.

Commiserating with Mama Brooks helped me to understand my role in society not only as a woman, but an African-American woman. The words from her conversation still echo in my mind. With a smile on my face, I remembered her last few words of our interview, (she smiled with a small chuckle as she ended): A

All of God's children have to go through trials and tribulation.

But I just looked to the hills.

People used to look at me and wonder how I got over.

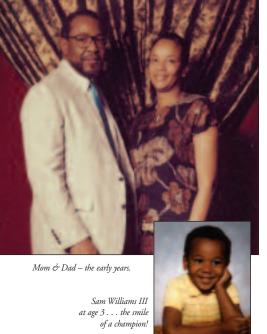


My context is built L to R - Mama Brooks (78 years old) Mama Brooks daughter Audrey Floyd her daughter Donyelle with her son Nimoy Isaiah.

that's my baby!

MOTHERWIT EXCLUSIVE:

An inside look at one of the rising stars of The Oakland Raiders



Looking at the mammoth physique and stature of this Oakland Raider may cause one to approach this giant among men cautiously. Then, you meet Sam Williams Sr., proud father of Oakland Raider Defensive End/Linebacker, Sam Williams III, who was Oakland's third round draft choice three years ago, and there will be no doubt in your mind 'what tree this apple fell from'. But, as destiny would have it, Sam Williams III is no stranger to The Bay Area sports world, and this father and son duo is truly inspiring.

ho loves to watch a spunky toddler set his mind to accomplish something that seems to difficult for him? But in the spirit of surmounting uncompromising obstacles, the toddler keeps trying anyway until he accomplishes it! Dad recounts this story... "As a little boy, when Sam put his mind to do something he did it. I was in my garage one morning putting up sheet rock and little Sam, who was about 4, came out to keep me company in the garage. The garage door was up and little Sam stood watching in amazement as the big kids in the neighborhood were riding their bikes. There was a bike in the garage for Sam, but I hadn't put the training wheels on yet. He took the bike and tried to ride it. 'Look dad', Sam would say as he peddle and would eventually fall. "Eight hours later, (I remember because I started working on the garage at 8:30 a.m. and I had finished at 6:00 p.m.) Sam said, 'Look Dad, I can ride a bike. "And sure enough, he had taught himself to ride a bike without falling.

Looking at the mammoth physique and stature of this Oakland Raider may cause one to approach this giant among men cautiously. Then, you meet Sam Williams Sr., proud father of Oakland Raider Defensive End/Linebacker, Sam Williams III, who was Oakland's third round draft choice in 2003, and there will be no doubt in your mind 'what tree this apple fell from'. But, as destiny would have it, Sam Williams III is no stranger to the Bay Area sports world, and this father and son duo is truly inspiring.

When you walk into Sam Williams' Sr. office at Folsom Prison Transitional Treatment Facility, there can be no doubt about his favorite NFL team. The office door window is blanketed by a picture of a Raider football helmet under his name. After being seated, one can't ignore the player profile of Oakland Raider Sam Williams III that is larger than life. Then, the team photo is inspiring and gives way to no doubt about this proud father and Bay Area native in terms of where his affections lay. If his motto is 'I left my heart in Oakland', he's not referring to Rice-A-Roni, because he has a real-life Oakland 'treat'-his

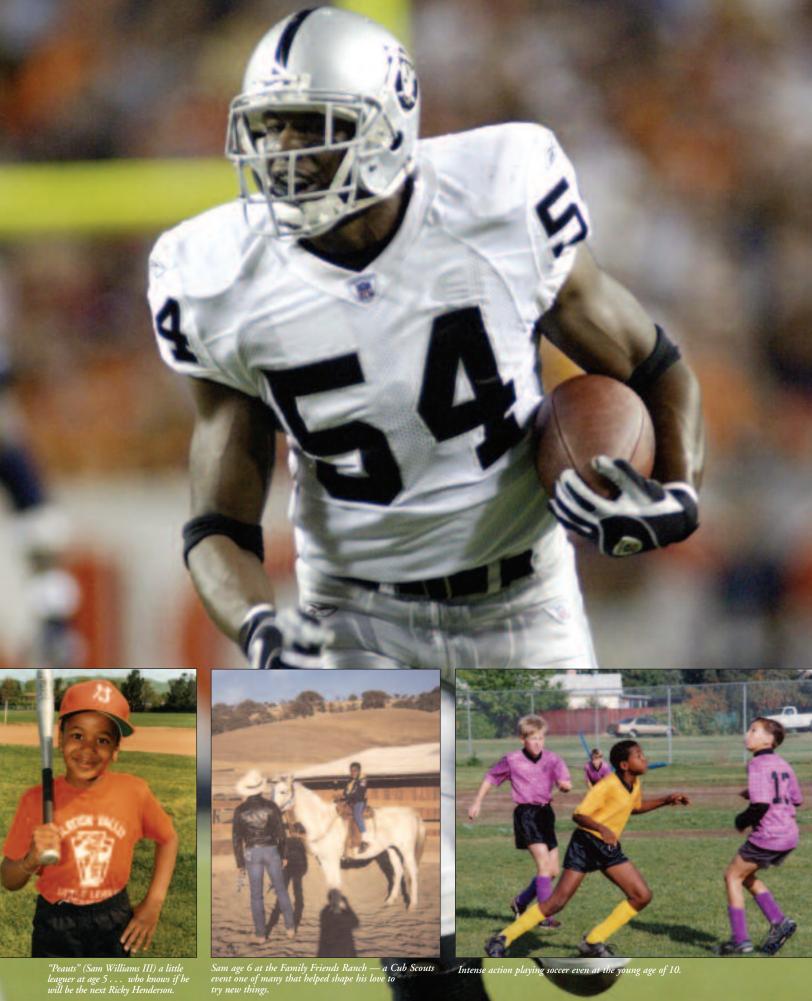
By Audrea and Danny Williams

son. "I used to be a 49er fan until my son was drafted by The Raiders", said the proud father. You don't want to ask about his son's welfare during mini-camps or preseason, because Williams will have the Oakland Raider website up faster than his son can runn the 40-yard dash. Sam Williams III (who is 6'5' and weighs 265 lb.) has clocked a 40-yard dash in 4.5 seconds — that's fast! Yet, he walks softly, and doesn't carry a big stick, because according to this young Raider, he carries the awesome responsibility of filling his father's shoes.

Sam Williams III is grateful for his father's stringent and militaristic coaching style. After all, Williams was coached by his father until his sophomore football season at Clayton Valley High School, but he was not allowed to play pee-wee or pop warner football. Bluntly put, "I wasn't worried about him getting hurt. I was concerned about other coaches lack of experience", said Mr. Williams. Now, Sam's late start in football was due to his father's diagnosis and assessment of his son's physical toughness. Indeed, Sam Williams was outstanding in soccer and volleyball; he even qualified for the junior Olympics. The University of Miami attempted to recruit him for his base-



4 year old Sam and mom Jo Ann . . . perhaps an olympic speed skater?



"Peauts" (Sam Williams III) a little leaguer at age 5 . . . who knows if he will be the next Ricky Henderson.

that's my baby!

ball prowess. But according to Williams, baseball was not his passion and he didn't even like the rules in Tee-ball.

Jo Ann Williams, Sam Williams III Mother, stated "Compared to the families that lived around us, we were strict. Our kids knew that there were consequences for their behavior. During Sam's high school years, he wasn't allowed to do a lot of the things the other kids were doing. However, Sam is one of a few young people in his class who grew up to be successful. Now there were affluent, young people who were successful due to their birth right, because their parents were already wealthy and they just passed it on to their children. But our children had to work hard to achieve their success and they are better for it", stated Sam's mom, Jo Ann. "Tyler, our daughter, is an Elementary school teacher. Our daughter had it hard because she talked proper, and as a girl, her pressures were different from Sam's. Tyler was the only black girl in our neighborhood and one of a few blacks within her school. We had different rules in our house. She couldn't wear make-up at 12 and 13 and she was not allowed to date until she was 16. And although everyone else was doing it, our motto was unwavering-but not in our house. She rebelled a little and she didn't like the rules all the time, but compared to some of her friends who dropped out of school or got pregnant, we are grateful for her success."

In terms of sportsmanship, Williams demonstrated an innate aversion to diplomacy and the fine art of a true gentleman's etiquette. As we all know, football has often been compared to war-like conditions, and to the chagrin of his father, Williams was uncommonly nice and gentle after he would knock players down. Yes, albeit soccer, Williams' tenacity often resulted in the soccer field riddled with fallen players. And Sam Williams made it his business to extend his arm to the player he just destroyed, DURING the play, as only a true gentleman would.

Sam was not 6'3" like his father. Sam was only 5'8" and had a lot to prove. Not exactly the resume of a high school blue chip player, let alone an NFL prospect. Well, by his junior year, the sleeping giant awakened. He must've eaten a whole lot of Campbell's chunky soup because he grew from a scrawny, average frame into a 6'5" force to be reckoned with. And just like that, in his first game as a junior, Sam was returning an interception for a game-winning touchdown against Los Lomas High School. One could only wonder what Sam would do for an encore in his second game. Well, he broke his arm while blocking a running back in a game against Pittsburgh High School, but it was Sam's heart that suffered the real injury.

Sam Williams III returned to Clayton Valley High School's football team with vengeance and determination. Sam was all over the field, tallying 13-15 tackles a game, and was dominating with such ferocity, the eyes of the college football world were fixated on him. Dubbed Clayton Valley's Mr. Defense and all-league awards from the San Francisco Chronicle, Cal-Hi Sports, and other local newspapers, Sam's future couldn't have looked brighter. From the PAC-10 to the WAC, Sam Williams had burst on the Division I scene with the respect of college football recruiters everywhere. After careful consideration, Sam chose Fresno State University, a young and rising Division I program that had already beaten long-time PAC-10 schools. In fact, Fresno State was registering impressive wins and Williams couldn't have picked a better time to dominate. Coach Pat Hill personally recruited Sam, but the young collegian didn't realize his diplomacy experience would be his most utilized technique the first two years at FSU. In a language all football players can understand, upperclassman politics was the name of the game. Well versed in this arena, Sam quietly awaited, like the gentleman he has proven to be, his turn to unleash the fury Northern California has become accustomed to.

The first six games of his junior year at FSU were as frustrating as his junior year at Clayton Valley. Often times in war, a soldier's true merit can only be exhibited in actual combat, not drills. As a FSU coach was frantically aligning his defensive personnel, Sam was summoned accidentally to the front lines during a game against Colorado State. The game was a nail-biter and at some point, by the time a coach realized Sam was in the game, one mistake could've cost him future playing time. Sam and his fellow bulldogs battled Colorado SU to a tie and over time was next. Sam ensured the Bulldog's sudden death opportunity by making two spectacular TD-saving tackles. The next six games were academic. Sam earned consecutive black shirt honors as a defensive stalwart, and Head Coach Pat Hill's recruit had finally arrived to assume his place among the elite Bulldogs.

Mom: As a parent, you can see what effect your training has had on your children when your kids are out on their own. That is when you find out either they have what you gave them or they don't. And it's up to you make sure they have it because later on in life their going to need it to fall back on. You have to have it in order to pass it down. It has to be handed down to your children and a lot of parents aren't doing that because many are missing "it" themselves.

Fittingly enough, Sam will don a similar



At 14 and a freshman in Highschool Sam played running/corner back.

black symbol of pride, respect, and excellence before and after battle. As an Oakland Raider, Sam Williams III is not just committed to his professional football career on the field, but his willingness to reach out and touch the community is commendable. So, to actually observe the seemingly never-ending line of Raider and football fans alike at the graduation ceremony for the Folsom Transitional Treatment Facility inmates, who were enthusiastic, but patient, was a symbol of Sam's larger than life presence and his personal commitment to help others feel appreciated and empowered, despite their societal or economic standing. Every autograph was accompanied with a 'real smile' and every fan, inmate and correctional officer alike, were equal and left Sam's presence validated and acknowledged by a player who belonged to one of the NFL's most respected, beloved, storied, and successful franchises. That same week, Sam was back in Sacramento at Arden Faire Mall where fans flocked to meet him and a fellow teammate at the Raiders Image sports store.

In the Oakland area, Sam enjoys reaching out to elementary school children. He visits, mentors, and inspires young people to read.

Sam's injury last year limited his action to one game, and he credits his mother for keeping him encouraged and upbeat. Sam Williams derived his strength and character from his mother's many lessons of perseverance and confidence. "My mother taught me not to let anyone tell me what I could or could not achieve," recounts Sam fondly. One can only appreciate the confidence of Raider owner, Mr. Al Davis, and coaching staff, in Sam's ability to contribute in the nickel defense and beyond. The Raider Nation can be thankful for Sam Williams, one of the many gifted, talented, and proven Raiders because this obvious 'Commitment to Excellence' has the Raiders poised again to regain their AFC West dominance. Albeit preseason, the men in Silver & Black are already showing why they have always been the class of the AFC West. **A**

every penny count

What's In A NAME?

By Jan Dixon



One of my favorite things to do is shop. Sometimes, instead of going to the mall to actually buy merchandise, I spend my time observing others at the mall. As of late, I have noticed that our youth are really into "name brand" purchase.

Now, do not get me wrong, I have my favorite designers too, but having matured somewhat, I don't shop strictly based on the name on the label or by brand!

By the way, one of my favorite suits to wear is a St John knit: but trust me, I will shop at Wal Mart, Target, or any other discount store because I have learned how to put my look together, whether my budget is slim or abundant.



Don't let your mouth write a check your behind can't cover.

- MotherWit

Designer Tags Status Symbols or Budget Breakers?

It's puzzling to me, when children as young as eight refuse to wear anything that is not "brand name" and parents go along with it. For the most part, the majority of young people (ages 8 to 16) do not have jobs in order to afford brand name clothes. So, parents are willingly spending their hard earned money to buy brand name clothing as opposed to less expensive, but equal in quality "no" brand name clothes.

I recently read an article in which a mother was stressed out because her 10-year-old would wear only brand name clothing. According to my research, it appears many parents found themselves in the same situations. In the article, the mother told how her daughter wanted a LL Bean backpack that was \$55.00, instead of one from a no brand store for \$20.00. I pose two questions to parents who face the same predicament: Will a \$55.00 backpack help your child study better? Or, will they get better grades because they have a \$55.00 backpack?

I conducted a mini price comparison, and discovered that a Speedo swimsuit costs about \$30.00 compared to a similar swimsuit from K-Mart for \$15.00. Brand name tennis shoes starting at \$150.00 and can go up to over \$200.00; but Payless or discount stores carry tennis shoes for around \$15.00. Keep in mind, the expensive tennis shoes that kids are wearing are for fashion, not to actually play in! Urban clothing by Phat Farm, Roca Wear or Jean Paul can easily cost over \$100.00 for the head to toe outfit.

Sadly enough, parents will sacrifice life and limb to keep their child in the latest brand name fashions and continue to purchase clothing based upon how their children will be accepted by friends. Kids constantly ask one another where the clothing or shoes came from and how much it cost. If a child does not buy or wear from the "A-List", they are considered a misfit or not "with it" at school and in the community.

I know it is important for our young people to feel they fit in and to be accepted by their peers. But, as parents, you must teach them that their self-esteem is not on the inside of a label. Our youth need to understand that brand name clothing does not make you somebody!

Don't Fall As Prey . . .

On the other end of the spectrum, questions and legitimate concerns are being raised to parents about the lack of investment in our children in areas like purchasing additional learning tools for your children, obtaining tutoring, and actively preparing for your child's future (college, internships, etc.). If they need help, how much TIME or MONEY will you spend to send your child to an educational summer camp or after school program (M.E.S.A. or Educational Talent Search, both at CSUS) or summer school program? Yet, you already spend an exuberant amount of money to ensure your child is dressed in the right brand name!

Parents, before you buy that next brand name outfit, take the time to ask yourself a few questions: 1. Does the child need it? 2. Can I or can we afford it? 3. Is the item worth the price tag? 4. Have I taken care of my child's learning, physical, spiritual, social, and emotional needs?

Yes, it is important for our children to feel they fit in and it is important that our children dress respectable when they attend school. It is also important for our children to have friends, but none of the aforementioned priorities should be based on brand name selection. Spending money on brand name apparel just to make your child fit in when you cannot afford it and so many other REAL needs go lacking is just morally and socially irresponsible. What's in a name? Nothing, unless it's your family name! ▲



Mocha our village

Just as she did every day, a pregnant La Verne Braziel took her infant son to daycare and went to her job in El Dorado Hills. Mary J. Blige's song, "No More Drama", came on the radio and something came over Braziel. Upon arriving at work, she walked into her boss' office and resigned. Leaving was something her husband Kenyatta had encouraged her to do earlier, but she resisted. Could they pull it off and still have enough money to pay the bills?

What Mrs. Braziel wanted more than anything was to spend more quality time at home. After taking stock of their personal finances, her husband, a computer technician with Earthlink, took temporary jobs with Labor Ready on his days off to compensate for the loss of the second income. "He worked hard to make sure I made it worth the while," she said.

Historically, African-American women have had to work, whether to single-handedly support their families or assist their spouses in making ends meet. On the contrary, many women of all races are choosing to do the opposite. The US Census Bureau reported that in 2002, 11 million children had mothers who stayed at home.

"It was a sacrifice, but we made the decision that was right for us," Mrs. Braziel said.

She's found solace and support in a local group of other stay-at-home mothers, otherwise known as Mocha Moms. The Sacramento Chapter, founded in 2002, is part of a national organization for mothers of color who have chosen not to work fulltime outside of the home in order to devote more time to their families.

Mocha Moms, established in 1997, has chapters across the country, including Alabama, New Mexico and New York. In California, there are chapters throughout the state including: Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, Fairfield and Los Angeles.

In Sacramento, the moms get together for playgroups and Moms Only meetings. There are also trips to the movies and a book club. Mrs. Braziel says she feels comfortable talking about parenting choices among women who are just like her.

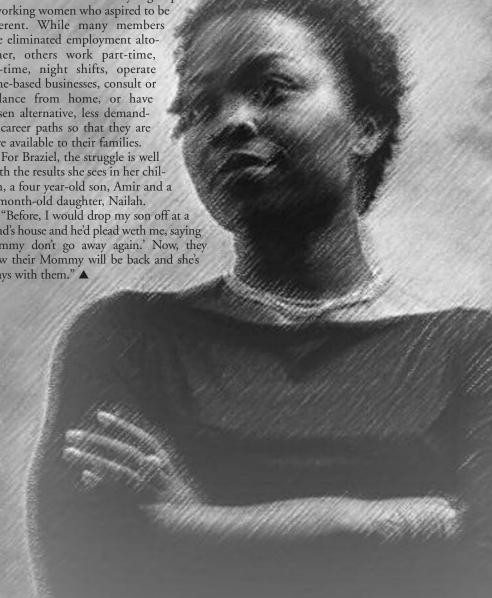
"I can say anything or ask anything without the fear of them judging me or frowning at me," Braziel said, referring to issues like potty training and discipline.

Mocha Moms say they don't discriminate against working moms. In fact, Mocha Moms was started by a group of working women who aspired to be different. While many members have eliminated employment altogether, others work part-time, flex-time, night shifts, operate home-based businesses, consult or freelance from home, or have chosen alternative, less demanding career paths so that they are more available to their families.

worth the results she sees in her children, a four year-old son, Amir and a 14-month-old daughter, Nailah.

"Before, I would drop my son off at a friend's house and he'd plead weth me, saying 'mommy don't go away again.' Now, they know their Mommy will be back and she's always with them." A

Editor's Note: In Sacramento, the Mocha Moms meet at Antioch Progressive Baptist Church and the Sunrise Mall. President, Azizi Penn, leads the chapter. To learn more visit their web site www.geocities.com/sactomochamoms or email sactomochamoms@yahoo. com.











{ Pineapple }

{ Pomegranate }

{ Jackfruit }

{ Ginger ,



{ Mangosteen }



{ Pepper }



{ Rambutan }



{ Bitter Melon }



{ Garlic Sprouts }



{ Starfruit }



{ Durian }



{ Plantain }

Healthy treats come in many shapes, sizes, and origins.

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I Don't Want To Be A Father Anymore"

By Djuan Perry



Don't ever do anything you wouldn't want to have published on the front page of the New York Times.

- MotherWit



Ava was

on the brink

of becoming

overwhelmed

until she

decided to

quit her job as

"Father."

Anyone who has children understands the responsibility involved in raising them. Over the course of time, the responsibilities increase as children mature and grow up. Well, Ava and Ishmal were the proud parents of two very handsome boys. The cou-

ple married at a young age and soon after, Ava bore a son, Ishmal Jr. Of course, Ishmal Sr., like most fathers, was ecstatic and joyful about the occasion. His dream was to have healthy sons who would finish high school, go on to college and advance to the National Football League. Ishmal Sr. played college football, but had to give up the sport because of a bad knee injury.

Ishmal's dream was unfortunately, interrupted. Complications arose in his marriage, largely because the couple married young and were not prepared for the responsibility involved in sus-

taining a marriage. Ishmal and Ava divorced after six years of marriage, which resulted in Ava raising two small boys by herself. Ishmal Jr. and Jonathan, who were six and four years old, were at the ages when they needed their father and had just begun to enjoy their relationship with him. They wrestled and played football in the house together, and when household items were broken, the 'boys' instinctively hid the items so Ava wouldn't find them. They

> tried to do push ups and crunches like their daddy and they even had eating contests. Now, their beloved past were memories clouded in devastation and heartbreak.

The youngest son, Jonathan, had severe separation anxiety and acted out in school. The oldest, Ishmal Jr., internalized his emotions and became very sensitive. The mother, Ava, suddenly was thrust in the role of "Head of Household." Now, Ava was the "father figure" as well as the mother; Ishmal Sr. ignored the situation just so he could cope.

Well, time had passed and Jonathan and Ishmal turned 11 and 13 years old, when Ava decided she did not want to be the "Father" anymore.

Ava's goal was to keep her home healthy,



A Doctor's Word

When Spring Cleaning, Don't Forget the Medicine Cabinet



By Dr. Deborah Gould

Just as people go through their houses to clean out the vestiges of winter in the springtime, everyone should consider what's in their medicine cabinet. I suggest to the families I see at my clinic that they make a once-a-year effort to go through the household items that are important to their family's health:

- Fire Extinguisher. If you have a fire extinguisher, check to make sure it's still
 properly filled. Often fire extinguishers sit unnoticed for years, but it's essential to
 make sure it will work when you need it.
- Smoke Alarm. Change the batteries in the smoke alarm once a year. Test it to make sure it works.
- 3. Medications. Clean out your medicine cabinet.

Medications have a shelf life just like foods do. When they reach the date of expiration, you need to throw them out. The reason is that as the product degrades, your liver and kidneys may not be able to metabolize it properly. A drug that was once helpful could now be ineffective or even harmful. This rule applies not only to prescription drugs, but also drugs you buy over the counter, such as acetaminophen and other pain relievers. You can find expiration dates in places like the label, the bottom of the bottle or at the base of the tube.

For women, you need to go through your makeup. Women tend to keep their makeup for a long time, even years. Just like medicine, makeup doesn't last forever.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is the U.S. government agency that requires food and drug manufacturers to put expiration dates on their labels. The FDA doesn't require cosmetics companies to print expiration dates on their products, so consumers need to be sure to monitor the age of the products they use. Bacteria builds up in your makeup because it is repeatedly exposed to the bacteria on your skin.

Makeup that you use around your eyes should be replaced often. Replace mascara three months after you buy it. If it becomes dry, throw it away. All-natural products, those that have plant substances, may have shorter shelf life. Toss unopened packages after about 18-24 months. Don't keep opened packages for more than three months. Powders, foundations and other topical ointments can be kept a little longer after they are opened. I recommend throwing those away after six months. Though it is not required, often manufactures print the expiration date on the box.

I encourage you to check Kaiser Permanente's web site for more information at www. kaiserpermanente.org. But to take the first step toward making sure the medicines you and your family use are safe, talk to your doctor.

Email Dr. Gould at: doctors-word@kp.org

Dr. Deborah Gould is chief of pediatrics at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Oakland California.





This advertarial is part of a monthly series for NCM's ethnic media partners unities by Kaiser Permanente physicians based on their experiences. Sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and produced by the NCM infollier.

mature woman

The state of the s

happy and peaceful, but she felt the dual role of parenting was too much. The situation began to wither her demeanor, naturally and mentally. At times, she felt like a group home leader, who constantly had to be strict and a hard disciplinarian. The majority of the times, she had to deny her inner feminine intuition of calm arbitration and nurturing reconciliation in order to make way for referee when Ishmal and Jonathan were fighting and not getting along.

So, instead of 'June Cleaver', she had to become a drill sergeant and treat her boys with a boot camp mentality in order to incorporate a rigid form of justice, discipline and

On Opology and O Promise

An APOLOGY for the times

When you were misunderstood.

An APOLOGY for the times when you were judged and treated too harshly.

An APOLOGY for the times when you were not given a fair chance.

A fair chance to be LEADERS, a fair chance to be FREE because the expectations of others became the dominant CREED.

An APOLOGY for your Brillance and Creativity being mistaken as Rebellion.

An APOLOGY for those who have tarnished your HEART and SOUL and caused you to doubt your PURPOSE and the existence of your very being. You are the FUTURE and because of your VISIONS. WE shall live and YOUR DREAMS shall become our DESTINY.

An APOLOGY for the ignorance of man who CANNOT ACCEPT YOU in your ERA of CHANGE, DIFFERENCE and INDIVIDUALITY.

An Apology and A Promise

A Promise to be OPENED MINDED and OPEN HEARTED.

A Promise to be Fair and Impartial

A PROMISE to SET BOUNDARIES and CHALLENGE YOU to become the MEN and WOMAN GOD desires YOU to be.

A PROMISE to help you become SUCCESSFUL.

A PROMISE to HELP you GROW and MATURE into your POTENTIAL.

A PROMISE to give you DIRECTION and ENCOURAGEMENT.

A PROMISE to be HONEST and UNDERSTANDING.

This is dedicated to you, Mothers, Fathers and especially The Youth, Our Future

- Djuan Perry.



control. Even though she was aware that if she spared the rod she was subject to spoiling the child, Ava did not enjoy those moments, and at times it made her feel masculine and unattractive. And enforcing 'martial law' definitely required a lot of energy. Ava soon embodied the ego of a man, deputized, all-knowing, and never wavering, and realized the vast difference in persona between a man, who seemingly looks forward to conquering conflicts and quelling power struggles versus a woman, who looks to resolve issues with gentle impartiality and tender reconciliation.

Ava concluded, "Boys just naturally respect their father or the presence of a man. Ava knew it was time for a change, especially since Jonathan was still having problems in school and remaining bitter about his father's absence. It appeared the older Jonathan was getting, the greater he began to act out. Ava was on the brink of becoming overwhelmed until she decided to quit her job as "Father." She stopped trying to compensate for the absence of Ishmal Sr. and for the demise of their marriage. Instead, she began to educate her sons on the pitfalls divorce has had on the children instead of enabling them.

She explained to them that she could not do everything. She expressed to her sons (as their mother) her desires to love, caress, nurture, feed, clothe, support and encourage them. She told them that bitterness, depression, anger, rebellion, and even disobedience would not bring their father back. Nor would it aid them in becoming happy, healthy or productive young men. She taught them about taking responsibility for themselves and their actions. Further, she explained to them how God requires and demands that all children obey their parent, which began with a reverence for the Lord.

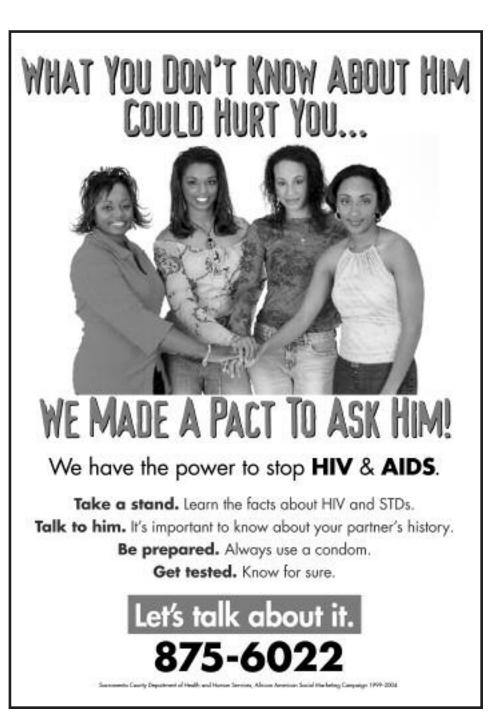
She went on to explain that life might seem unfair at times, but things happen and you have to keep going. She added, "You can't give up nor can you give in". She taught them how to pray, have faith, and that it was okay to cry. "Just make sure you take care of your business when you're done," she said. Moreover, Ava encouraged her sons and reassured them that they were the most important entity in her life, next to God, and that they were her priority.

However, Ava knew her sons desired and needed male companionship. So, she encouraged her sons to get involved in sports at school and allowed male teachers and coaches to spend quality time with them. She allowed men at her church who were fathers to mentor them. This proved to help considerably because Jonathan and Ishmal graduated from high school with scholastic and athletic recognition. Currently, the brothers attend college and play football. They still adhere to their mother's words of wisdom and love, and respect her for the "WOMAN" and mother she is. Because Ava did not give up, she helped a father's dream become a reality.



The worst a person treats someone is the worst they will treat anyone. (in other words, if he's lying and cheating on his wife now, then someday he'll lie and cheat on you)

- MotherWit





"Mommy, All I Need is..."

Building our children from the inside out! Inspirational ways to show our children we love them.

Act like a kid . . . sometimes.

I can remember like it was yesterday. I was about 10 years old and my sister was 3 years old. In her baby talk, she tried to tell my mom that I was picking on her, but I hadn't. With a mad, but goofy look on her face, my mom began to run toward me. I had never seen my mom act like that, so I decided to run, not sure of what she was intending to do. I ran to my room and jumped on the bed with mom hot on my heals and my baby sister giggling right behind her. She started making more goofy faces and my sister and I screamed and laughed as she scooped us up into her arms. Kids love memories like this, I know I did. I'm big on manners and proper conduct, but when it's time to play I love to play with

my kids. My heart goes out to children who think it's silly to act silly. Life can be so serious at times. I'm teaching my children the strength one can find in laughing at yourself. Putting on an impromptu skit in our family room, my kids laugh at me and say, "Mommy, you're funny." I think to myself, "That's right baby, I'm your first teacher, nurse, coach, spiritual leader, provider, and play partner." Sure, I will be all these things to my children if it will allow them to be grounded and honest people. I remember my mom would show us the dances that they used to do in her day: the pigeon, the bump, and the hustle. The names alone would

make me laugh so hard, but when she tried to show us how to do them, oh how I wish I had had a video recorder. The saying goes, "Laughter does the heart good," and I would like to add, "Laugher with mom or dad makes the ties of love stronger."

Respect Them.

"Mommy, may I speak freely." I giggle inside and brace myself when my six year old makes that statement (who out of all of our children, uses this statement quiet often — she's what I call our passionate child). I chose to lend the phrase, "may I speak freely," to my children when I have "laid down the law" and they want to question, why? This approach to mommy does a couple of things for our relationship. One, it allows my children to question my decision (in a respectful way) without questioning my authority to make the decision. Two, it gives me a chance to assess whether or not I'm being too hard on my child. Three, it empowers them to demand a certain level of respect from mom and dad, simply by the way they approached the situation. So, instead of kicking tamtrums and door slamming, there is discussion. The definition of respect I most like is, "to consider worthy of high regard." The word "worthy connotes that you are able to hold yourself in a way that deserves respect." Our communities are full of young people that deserve respect. It is hard to deny a young person respect when they demonstrate maturity in conduct or conversation. The saying, "you have to give respect to get it," is useful — and true. \blacktriangle

... USE YOUR
Brilliant Mind
AND YOUR
CREATIVITY
to be all you
WERE MEANT TO BE



If God had meant for
you to speak more than you
listen, he would have given you
two mouths and one ear.

— MotherWit



GoodHome Training tips help build strong families from women and men who have raised children and grandchildren.

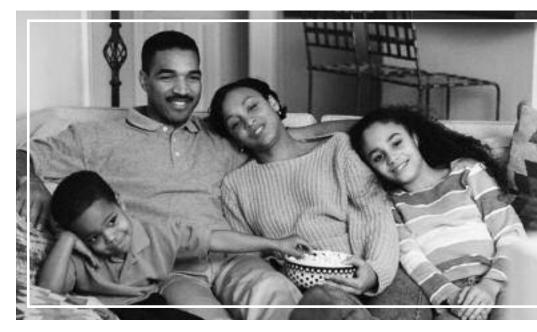
My teenage daughter – not in my house!

Please, parents don't compromise your spiritual, moral, and family standards in your home! Dropping your guard, lowering your expectations, or just plain tiredness or weariness can happen to any of us. Circumstances such as the lack of finances, absence of a father figure, or the "they've been a good kid syndrome thus far" excuse often results in marginal expectations and results from our children. If you have a good kid at home, don't YOU want them to stay that way? I have heard people say, "I don't want to raise my kids like my parents reared me" or "My parents were too strict." Well, it kept many of us from shotgun weddings, visits to the bargain wedding chapel in Reno, jail, and the welfare line.

"I let my daughter have guy friends over the house to visit her while I was home and my rule was simply, "you don't have to go home, but you're going to leave my house at a decent time." When a parent allows a boy, (even a nice boy) too much latitude when it comes to your house and your daughter, he will most likely take it a step further. Can you stop your teenager from doing things they shouldn't? No. But, you definitely don't have to make it easier for them under your roof. Help the teens to keep their relationships respectful. Hey, at least they'll say, "My mom does not allow people in the house while she's gone" or "My dad will kill me." What matters is the message you are sending. Think about when you were young and all the situations you were unprepared for, yet had to experience. Unfortunately, today's teens are going 'all the way' and pregnancy is usually the outcome. Picture seven out of ten pregnant teen girls and ask yourself if you want your daughter to be a candidate or the next one. Whatever they do they're going to do anyway but not in my house.

> T.B., Sacramento, CA Mother of adult children

(MotherWit would like to remind the African-American population about our teenage daughters claim to fame — 70 % of all pregnant teenagers in the U.S. are African-American).



Building Blocks of a Strong Family

First, pray before you act. Second, be consistent in every area of your life. This should extend from preparing your children's meals to discipline. Parents must be in agreement about how family life is handled and be on the same 'page', or the children will be confused.

V.H., Sacramento, CA Wife of Sylvester Hullum for 25 years Mother of 4, grandmother of 5 children and one more on the way

"Wake Up!!!"

Dear teenagers: Don't tease yourself or try to find out how strong you are. Let's not kid ourselves, as a teenager, your body is already on fire and that rascal (not an officer or a gentleman) is ready to add fuel to your fire; but, rest assure, he won't be around to help in your time of crisis. Hence, the epidemic of teen mothers killing their babies. It is a normal feeling for any young person. Now, for the silly girl who sneaks out her house without permission — you might as well throw your whole life away because you're telling your boo that you don't care what your parents say. Amazing! She will obey a 'broke-down, kicked to the curb, 0point something GPA drug dealer rather than her biological parents. (I'm still trying to figure out why our community is upset at Mr. Bill Cosby!) As adults, we have problems maintaining the dos and don'ts of relationships. So why encourage our teens to involve themselves in and maintain relationships that take a lifetime to cultivate. But I guess from the teen's perspective, sometimes what's being taught and what's being modeled are two different things. No matter, mom, dad, you still rule the house or at least you should. If there is ever any doubt, just look at your mortgage statement or rent receipt. Whose name appears on it?

MotherWit Staff

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Rediscovering the Power of – When women were women . . . a strong family foundation and men were men;

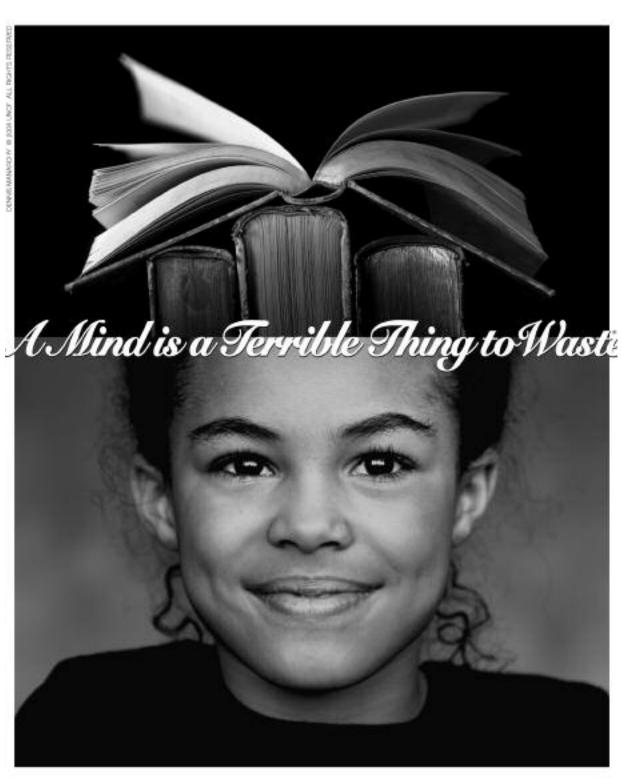
Reuniting the past with the present;

Celebrating your family's history;

Old fashioned courting;

The mood and the smell of grandma's kitchen,

Restoring Family Heritage – one story at a time!





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Picking Life-Friends

By: James A. Strickling, Jr.

son as they are. You can create atmosphere, but no one can create a friend in the image of their own choosing. Being down-to-earth, complimentary and a pleasant person are necessary qualifications. A trusted and tried plus is to learn how to affirm another person.

Remember-friends are few. Most of us have one true friend. Some of us have two or three true friends, but most of us have a number of acquaintances. That's okay. You can survive in life with one true friend.

The amazing fact of how we touch another person's life in our youth, and we remember them the rest of our life is nothing short than miraculous. For example, I recall three memorable characters in my first grade class and the teacher, Ms. Dorothy Thomas. Lorenzo was asked to recite the

Christmas Story, "The Night Before Christmas." Ruby was there being cute. Benny was there and he liked Ruby. However, Ms. Thomas became a lifelong friend. She was also my teacher in high school and we renewed the friendship that was established in the first grade. We reconnected again at my 25th class reunion. She was not only a teacher, but an icon and mentor. She demonstrated how people can connect with respect. We have kept in touch since that time. When I go back to my hometown, I make a special effort to visit this person I have chosen to be my friend. She is a life-long friend.

In our adult life, we employ the same techniques of interacting as we did as a young person. We feel that magical pull toward certain individuals and a magnetic push away from others. When that pull exists as an adult, we erect correct social barriers that are acceptable for the time and place. We determine if the interaction needs to go

place. We determine if the interaction needs to go to another level. Friendship establishes the guidelines and parameters for conversation. These conversations could lead to true platonic friendships, marriage, and lifelong interactions.

These relationships help to create a social fabric that can withstand the cyclones and tornadoes in life. Crises, disappointments, pain, and sufferings will come. When you know that your friend is standing by you, it makes the situation easier to bear. Take a risk and be a friend.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In spiritual terms, one can weigh a friend by this measure. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity (Proverbs 17:17). A true friend's love will not waver in adverse times and circumstances. On the contrary, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go" because an angry person usually stays angry and they are not even sure of the cause (Proverbs 22:24). In fact, disregarding the fiery warning sign can lead one to a destructive destination and a sad ending. Rather than complimenting each other, you "will learn his ways, and get a snare unto thy soul" (Proverbs 22:25).



I have friends in overalls whose friendship I would not swap for the favor of the kings of the world.

— Thomas A. Edison

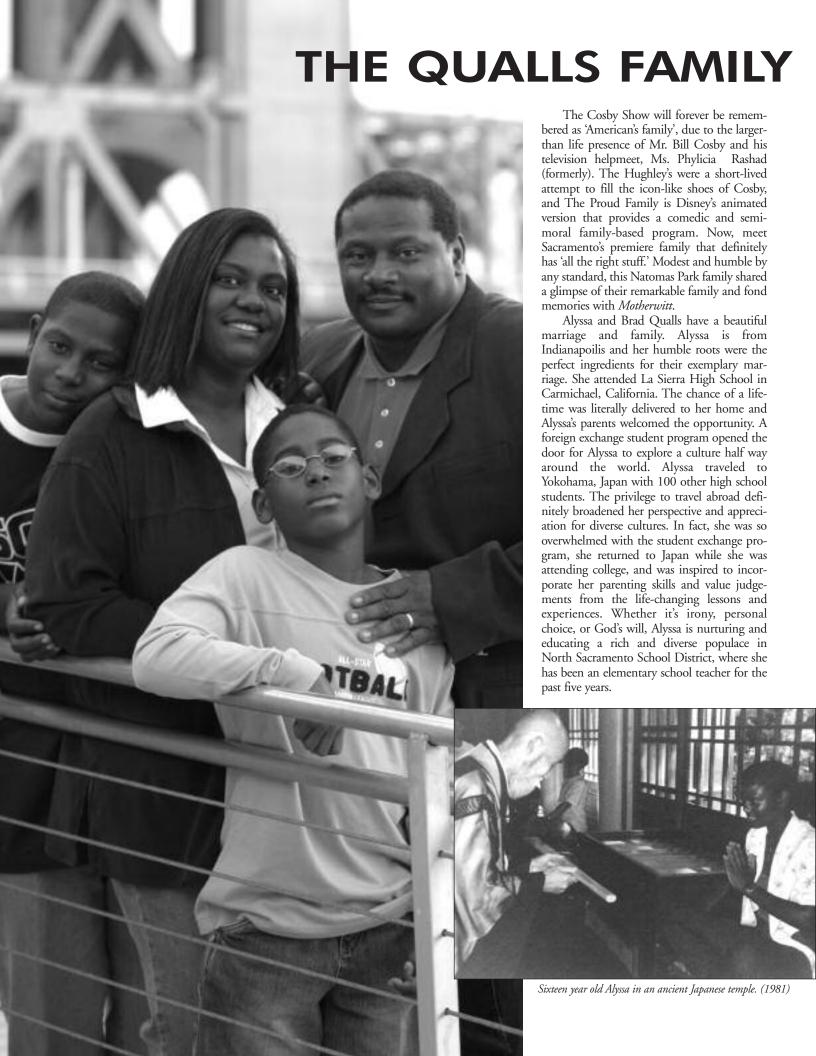
A friend is a special person you know, like, and trust. You are the only one equipped to choose "your" friends. One may ask, who will be my friend and how do I pick a friend? Well, what things do I want to know about a friend? What is important about their values, philosophy, and interests? Does my *prospective* friend respect the way I am? What do you bring to the table to offer a potential friend? Is your reply, "all of the ME that I am"?

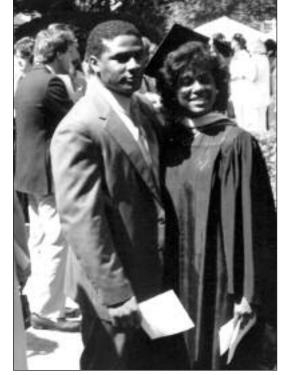
Friends are few. Most of us have one true friend. Some of us have two or three true friends, but most of us have a number of acquaintances. That's okay. You can survive in life with only one true friend.

Just for fun, let's take a look at a friend. This is an individual that walks into your life and you just connect. For some strange reason, you get locked in a friendship because of chemistry, association in a group, similar goals and aspirations, or interests. Oftentimes, the catalysts defy logic. You accept this other person with all of their faults and warts, and they accept you, warts and faults as well. Sometimes, you are thrown into life-situations and discover that both of you have a number of things in common. Are these points-of-intersection in life accidental or coincidental? Contrary to popular assumption, they are ordained.

Some friends are made due to relationships with family, other friends of the same sex, interests, organizations, religious assembly, neighborhoods, schools, shopping mall, and same grocery store, etc. On the other hand, some friends are discovered in remote places, recreation areas (golf, fishing, boating, camping, PK meetings, etc) and you strike up a conversation that continues for years. Some friends are yet to be discovered, and are impatiently waiting. Be on the lookout for that new friend.

You don't have to be a proverbial extrovert to make friends or become a friend. The big challenge is to be just risking enough to accept another per-





(Left) Brad & Alyssa in 1986 at her graduation from UOP. (below) Twenty year old Alyssa injoying a meal in a remote Japanese village. (1984)

fellow officers. Unable to sever his football ties, Sgt. Qualls, who has two sons, Erik and Ryan, is the offensive coordinator for Erik's team (The Natomas Jr. Nighthawks football team).

family portrait

Alyssa Qualls credit the longevity of their marriage to a few principles. By using the tools of hard work, respect for each other, trust, and the ability to remain on the same communication level, the Qualls have enjoyed a blessed and rewarding relationship and family. In terms of child rearing, the Qualls instilled qualities in their children that would ensure a good heart, mind, and soul. A concerted effort to expose them to things, vacations to see the world, and constant discussions with Ryan, the teenager, has given the thoughtful parents a sense of pride concerning their two sons. The long talks and guid-

ance has helped Ryan to make good choices. "I tell him he's a role model," and he has accepted the challenge. Ryan is an honor student at Natomas High School, and he hopes to attend the University of Southern California. Bravo to the Qualls family and God's speed!

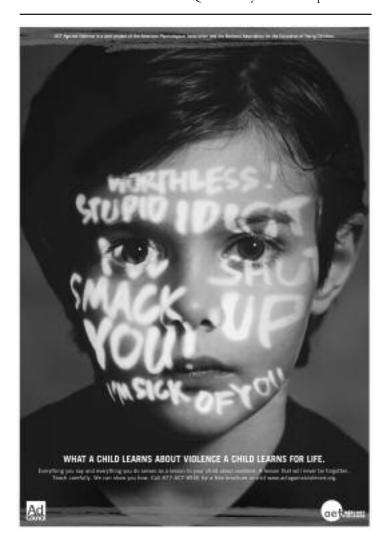


The first trip to Japan "as an exchange student was a wonderful experience" and it "opens your world and expands your horizon," said Alyssa. For Alyssa, the life lesson

world and expands your horizon," said Alyssa. For Alyssa, the life lesson and opportunity not only "to go to another person's country, but to also understand their customs and see that they live everyday just like us" was refreshing and instilled the perspective of respect for all humanity; it has actually transcended her American 'ideals'. "I lived with a different family on both of my trips and we stay in touch today," Alyssa proudly shared. "One of my sisters from Kobe, Japan has moved to L.A. and she just emailed me the other day." Alyssa actually has two Japanese families, one in Sacramento, CA, and the other in Yokohama, Japan. Now, their love story began in 1982, and its course ran undoubtedly through Japan.

Alyssa and Brad met at University of Pacific in Stockton, California. While attending UOP, she was compelled to visit Japan again. If she had not fallen in love with Brad, she probably would have stayed in Japan. While in Japan, she lived with a family and the mother and sister surprisingly spoke English. "I was very independent while living there and I learned enough to function and get around." Brad, also a UOP student, visited for two weeks at spring break. During his visit with his sweetheart, they traveled all over Japan to relish the experience. Alyssa and Brad derived an insight they would cherish for a lifetime. "It was very important for both of us that our children live in a culturally diverse community and we wanted our children to grow up with progressively thinking people." The Qualls love affair has endured for 18 years. Alyssa loves the fact they share the same friends and describes Sgt. Qualls as a 'big teddy bear'.

Brad grew up in the Oakland/Berkeley area. As a student-athlete at Berkeley High School, he was a versatile athlete, but football was his ticket to stardom. As a star quarterback in high school, Brad recruited to Arizona State University. However, Brad did not enjoy the PAC-10 experience and decided to return to his bay area roots at Contra Costa Junior College. True to form, Brad's athletic and intelligent play and leadership on the field landed him another athletic scholarship. Although the University of Pacific was not a PAC-10 powerhouse or NFL scout hangout, it was a true testament to his commitment to academic excellence that transcended and set him apart from being considered just a gifted athlete. As the good Lord would have it, Brad was injured and forced to red shirt (he remained on the team and went to school, but did not play in games). Not to be denied, Brad earned his degree and joined the California Highway Patrol. Currently, Brad holds the rank of Sergeant; without doubt, the 22 year veteran is respected by



grandparents parenting grandchildren



ccording to the old adage, life begins at forty. I often heard this motto repeatedly as I was growing up; I can recall thinking it very odd, to say the least. The best years of anyone's life always seemed to me to be the ones between 18 and 21. You were old enough to do all of those wild and wonderful things, but still young enough to fully recover by the next morning and start the cycle all over again.

I was too inexperienced to realize that the reference being made was, for the early baby boomers, who typically had their 2.9 children in their early 20s and those children were leaving home by the time their parents reached 40. Therefore, the parents were then free to move on with the rest of their lives. They could enter their second childhood and focus on themselves and the dreams that they had deferred in order to raise their families. Regrettably, however, such is not the case for an increasing number of forty, fifty, and sixty-year-olds — and even some of us poor unfortunate souls who are still in our thirties. Parenthood may very well come for us a second time around and, unlike love, it isn't always better.

The United States is experiencing a boom in what social scientists and social workers refer to as "kinship care." According the U.S. Census Bureau, there are more than 4.5 million children under the age of 18 who are living in grandparent-headed (GPH) households as of 2000. This number represents a 6.3% increase since 1990. In certain regions, such as the District of Columbia, 14.5% of all children are living with their grandparents. Hawaii and Mississippi are both close behind, with 12.9 and 10.8 percent respectively. Overall, the parents are absent in more than a third of these households and nearly one-fifth of these households live at or below the poverty line.

Second Parenthood

Antoinette M. Carter

When it comes to raw numbers, the state of California leads the pack nationally. The state's population includes over 9 million children, 625,934 of whom live in a grandparent-

headed (GPH) household. This represents a whopping 49.8% increase for the state since the 1990 census. In one-quarter of these homes, the parents are not present, leaving the brunt of childrearing on the shoulders of our elders. The states of Nevada and Utah have each experienced an overall 108% increase in grandparent-headed (GPH) households.

The demographics of these homes are also telling. According to the AARP website's *California State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children*, "12% of [GPH homes in California] are African-American; 42% are Latino; 9% are Asian; 1% are Native American; and 33% are white." Whereas for the United States as a whole, "29% of grandparents [who are responsible for their grandchildren] are African American, 17% are Latino, 2% are Native American, 3% are Asian and 27% are white."

So, those are the facts, but what's the deal? As you have probably already surmised, it's all about drugs, violence, teen pregnancy, broken homes, incarceration, and AIDS — although not necessarily in that order. But whatever the reasons, the glaring truth is that the golden years for seniors are not what they used to be. Our elders are struggling and, instead of being their support as they prepare to leave this world for the next, their children and their children's children oftentimes become their burden.

That's the cloud. The silver lining is that the U.S. government and private entities such as AARP have all elicited considerable resources and aid in order to minimize some of the more mammoth stumbling blocks for grandparents and other relatives who find themselves caring these children. Grand-parents and other relatives who have taken over the parenting responsibility for their kin should take the time to review the resources recommended in the AARP's monthly publication.





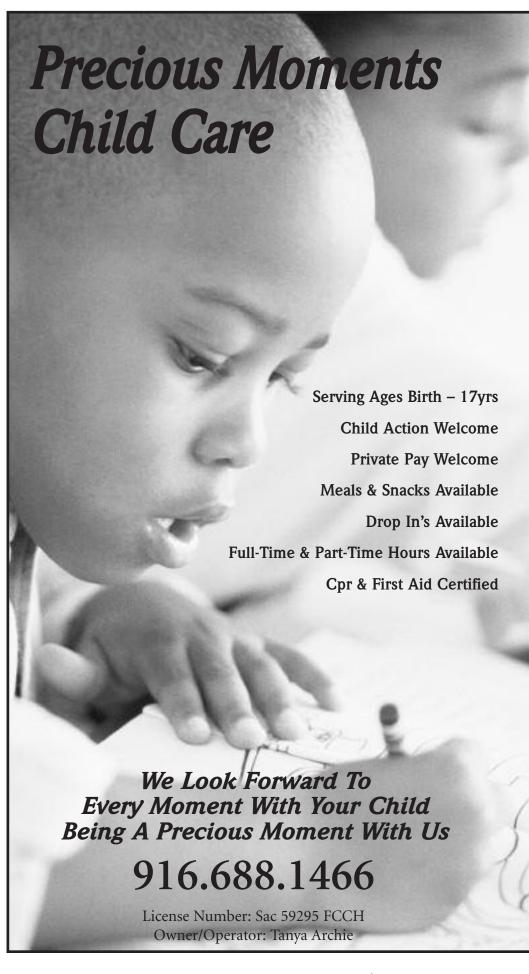
Instead of complaining to God that you're not getting what you want, you should be thanking Him that you're not getting what you deserve.

— MotherWit

California State Fact Sheet for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children:

- The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP): The 'granddaddy of all resources'. The AARP website provides information on finances, legal options and support groups for grandparents who are primary caregivers.
- The National Council on Aging: BenefitsCheckup.org, is a confidential database of federal, state and local programs you may be qualified for and how to apply
- The Brookdale Foundation: funds state and local agencies through its Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP). Also conducts a national conference for networking and information exchange.
- GrandsPlace.com: a national website & chat room for grandparents and other relatives who are raising children. Chats are free and are held each day at 11 am EST.
- California Community Colleges: providers of educational programs and workshops for caregivers.
 Contact Lucy Berger, coordinator of foster and kinship care education, at (916) 323-5276 or Lberger@cccco.edu.
- West Coast Children's Center: conducts support groups, tutorials and educational meetings. Contact Dr. Lenora Poe at (510) 845-7189 or lenorapoe@aol.com.
- The Institute for Black Parenting (IBP): provides support groups, assistance with legal guardianship, adoption planning, workshops, respite activities, childcare assistance, transportation, first time homebuyer's training, and much more. Contact Alondra James at (800) 367-8858, ext. 257, or ajames@blackparenting.org.

This is but a small portion of the wealth of information contained in the fact sheet. Please log on to the AARP website for more details.



Truth or Dare?

The real cost of public education



by Danny T. Williams



Our Head Teacher: Mr. Danny Williams has taught English on the high school and college level for nine years. Today Mr. Williams teaches at a local high school and is a formore Assistant Professor of English, Los Rios Community College District



What Jack says about Jill usually says more about Jack than it does about Jill.

— MotherWit

Trick or Treat?

Without conducting a gallop poll or telemarketing survey, it is safe to conclude most American youth are able to recite the battle cry on October 31 every year. Remember? 'Trick or treat? Smell my feet! Give me something good to eat!' This inherent recitation is a result of decades of a mass adoption and conformity for celebrating a pastime more endearing to children than baseball. For, on Halloween night, hundreds of thousands of youth invade neighborhoods on their epic quest to sequester a bag full of CANDY! The Halloween hunt continues well into the high school years and the parties have captivated the adults who insist on honoring the age-old tradition of celebrating on October 31.

Yet, it was the shot heard around the world which enabled us to partake in such kinds of civil liberties. Most adults probably know it was Paul Reveere that embarked on one of history's most dramatic jaunts. For indeed, the British were coming! Now as for our children, they are the successors of the Civil Rights Movement, but how much history are they really exposed to? After all, our nation is only 50 years removed from segregation, and bussing seems to be an issue of continual debate. Our schools are equal and free for all to attend, but the quality of education through information appears to be compromised. And when it comes to African-American History (Black History) in the public education system, the portals of history are dark and void.

Well, we are happy to report that the void of non-recognition does not constitute dearth, futility, and hopelessness. There is life in (albeit untold in its entirety) in the heritage of African-American ancestry. However, as a product of the public school system, I must ponder the question many students exclaim: Why is Black History only studied during the month of February?

Let us be brief on this sub-topic. The meticulous indoctrination of eastern pagan rituals like Halloween, Easter, and Christmas have been offered to our children

in lieu of accurate and holistic history education. African-Americans have been forced to rely on 'Roots', 'Glory', and 'The Color Purple' (and Spike Lee) to represent our struggles, accomplishments, and contributions to humanity. Most parents do not offer their children soda or candy, but rather fruits and vegetables until they reach a healthy stage beyond the toddler years. Likewise, our children are force-fed or spoon-fed tricks (because Santa and the Easter bunny are not real) instead of treats (the truth that build the foundation of one's character and community). In fact, the ungodly proliferation of Westernized commercialism has kept our families in a state of comatose. Is the quality of a family measured by the amount of gifts received or holiday rituals practiced? I think not; rather the integrity of one's upbringing through family and cultural values and the knowledge of the presence of God and the love of His son, Jesus Christ. With a focus on the former treatise, how can a child be reared properly and his neighbor respect him as well when neither party is aware of a complete American history? Jesus told us to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

However, it is unlikely to fully respect each other when history presents one people as superior over another. It is not to far-fetched to perceive children asking God why He made the European a conqueror and explorer and the African the conquered and exploited (FYI: One black man founded the town that evolved into modern day Detroit.)

I would dare not assign the ills of a people to an infrastructure of institutionalized racism, but one must question the unexplained phenomena of the education of African-Americans. And if I was not clear, I must repeat the obvious. Children from other cultures who are taught black people were only slaves and successful athletes can not respectfully embrace and interact with their counterparts, especially when history represents and condones this perspective.

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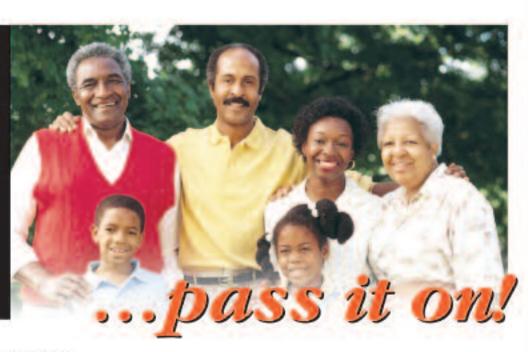
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