

Two of my brothers appear in this issue. Bennie Reed, Jr. And Dr. Michael LeNoir. Michael LeNoir is a distinguished physician who has acquired many honors and appointments. Although Bennie Reed Jr. has a college education, he followed his father, my stepfather, Bennie Reed, into the Chevrolet auto company. So did my younger brother Vincent. They both live in Nashville, Tennessee, where they lead prosperous lives. All of Cookie, his spouse, and Bennie's children and grandchildren are achievers inheriting a business sense from my mother, who knew how to negotiate the credit system. Her savvy brought the family into the middle class. My mother, Thelma, acquired her business sense from Mary Coleman. Her grandmother Lucy Hardiman was a slave who was born in North Carolina. After her husband left her, she supported her children by opening a food stand in her front yard. She catered to Black and white pipe workers and insisted they call her "Mrs. Coleman."

Even though Michael and Bennie have fared well in American society, they are not exempt from the slights and humiliations accorded Blacks who have been less successful than they. Of the five brothers, I'm the closest to Michael and Bennie, Jr. And when I heard of the Buffalo blizzard, I called to find out his situation. He said that he and his wife, Cookie, nearly lost their lives. A bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken got them through their most desperate hours.

Dr. Michael keeps us updated about the pandemic with a new entry in the series, "Virus Watch." Alison Newman talks about life since the publication of her memoir, *Francisco*. This memoir was the first publication of the late Joe Johnson, Steve Cannon, and me. Toni Morrison and William Demby endorsed it. New Directions will republish this classic this Spring.

William Demby, John O. Killens, and John A. Williams warned a younger generation not to be carried away with expectations of Black American and African solidarity. P. Lewis in his "Letter From Berlin," P. Lewis writes about the contempt with which Africans in that city treat Black Americans. One of those who express friendship with Black Americans is Barbara Masekela, a member of one of Africa's fabled families, The Masekelas. Nelson Mandela had such confidence in Barbara Masekela that he appointed her to two ambassadorships. We reprint an excerpt from her non-fiction work, *Poli Poli*. Dr. Melba Boyd connects Frederick Douglass to the works of Donald Glover and Gill Scott Heron. She writes: "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" presented to The Rochester Anti-Slavery Society at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852. Although this speech by the foremost African American political figure of his era prefigures Glover and Scott-Heron by almost two centuries, the thematic intersections are evident, and the three pieces interface and reiterate similar despair about American values and circumstances."

A strong poetry section includes A.B. Spellman and Gyasi Burks-Abbott. A.B. is the best poet to come from the downtown art scene of the 1950s and '60s. David Fishkind and Vitin A. Cruz provide us with fiction.

Our art critic, Molly Guillermo, covers Donovan Nelson's Portraits on display at the Kenkeleba Gallery.

The firing of Tiffany Cross at MSNBC is another example of the restrictions that multi-national corporations have on the few Black voices that they find acceptable: those who do not alienate

the audience that buys their advertisers' products. Did her colleagues at MSNBC support her?
No. They want to keep their jobs. My daughter and I produce Konch. Nobody owns us.

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