

READING and WRITING in the

# DARK

A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

## NEWSLETTER

### THIS MONTH:

R.J. Blakman explores

### *The Problems of IMMORTALITY*

September's Reading and Writing in the DARK Newsletter subscriber exclusive, a full chapter of the upcoming novel!

Page 11

#### FEATURE:

### THE BATTLE of MONTGOMERY

It was only a few weeks back. Where'd all the energy it go?!

Page 3

#### Also:

From Iyapo's Blog  
A Dead and Dying  
Illusion.

Page 19

### FLASH!

### MELANIN: A NOVEL

Comes to

KINDLE UNLIMITED!

and Storytime:

My Journey to

MELANIN: A NOVEL

Page 6

### Book Review:

Balogun Ojetade's

Beneath the

Shining Jewel

Page 17

Ok. It's been out long enough!  
This month's crossword puzzle  
focuses on

**And What of the CARGO?**

Page 14

News and Information about Completed  
and Upcoming Projects and MORE!



# READING and WRITING in the DARK

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### CONTENTS

WELCOME BACK! & WHO IS R.J. BLAKMAN? ..... Page 2

The BATTLE of MONTGOMERY: Where'd all the energy go?! ..... Page 3

Storytime: My Journey to MELANIN: A Novel ..... Page 6

The Problems of Immortality (A Sneak Peek) ..... Page 11

September Crossword: And What of the CARGO? ..... Page 14

Book Review: Balogun Ojetade's Beneath the Shining Jewel ..... Page 17

From Iyapo's Blog: A Dead and Dying Illusion ..... Page 19

MELANIN: A Novel Now on KINDLE UNLIMITED! ..... Page 21

Alright, Enough about ME! Works by authors I know ..... Page 22

### WELCOME BACK!

Happy **SEPTEMBER!**

The year has passed the halfway point and great things are happening! I'm working on several projects at once (as I tend to do), and each project is more exciting than the next. I have short stories that are about to come out, not the least of which is the LONG AWAITED first installment of *Tales of the Monkey's Paw*! I'm also hard at work on the second Paradigm Void book, *Further Journeys into the Paradigm Void*. The first book is in the editorial process but will be available to the public very soon. I will be following that up with—on its first round of editing—*The Redemption of Maxine Allison: A Novella*. Also this month is a sneak peek at the prologue of *The Problems of Immortality*. (Yet another perk of being a subscriber to the newsletter). So, as I said at the beginning, there are big things coming up and I'm extremely excited to be bringing them to you and to get your feedback! [Feedback@iyapoyapa.com](mailto:Feedback@iyapoyapa.com) is ALWAYS open...

Iyapo Yapa



### WHO IS R.J. BLAKMAN?!

Alright! So the cover of this upcoming novel is plastered all over the Reading and Writing in the DARK newsletter, hailing the coming of R.J. Blakman!

Well... who IS R.J. Blakman?!

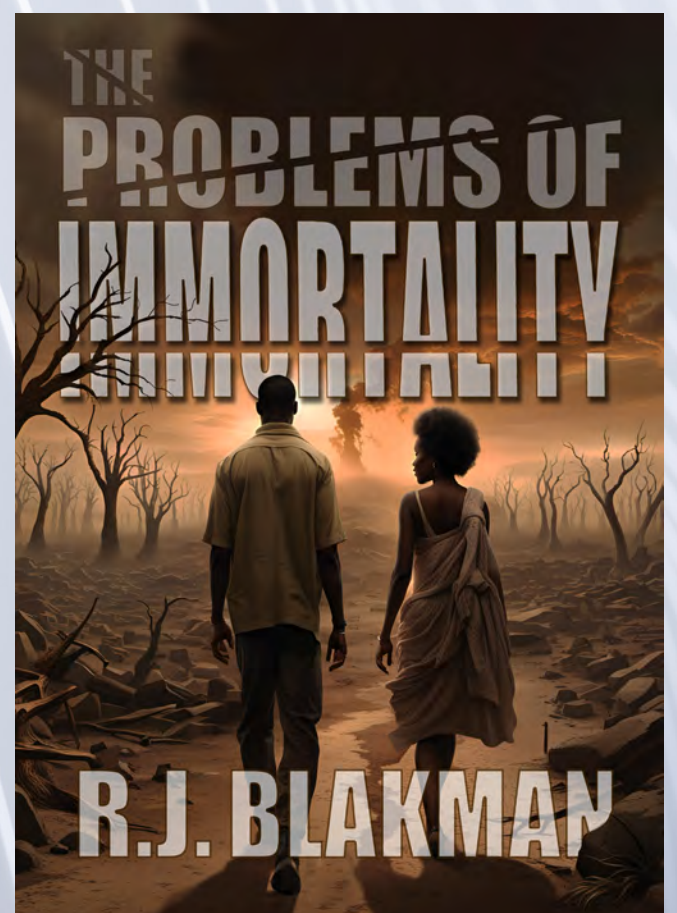
R.J. Blackman is a mystery writer, a writer of non-fiction and an all-around truth seeker. Blackman tries to look at things on a deeper level and whatever he finds, he tends to write about it with no sugar coating. Most of all, R.J. Blackman just happens to be... ME!

R.J. Blakman is one of the two pseudonyms I use when I want to write things that I think may not necessary line up with standard Iyapo Yapa fare. The views are pretty much the same, but R.J. may not be as heavy handed as I am. Then again, sometimes he might.

This issue gives you a glimpse into the world of R.J. Blakman and the way he writes and thinks. Sure, it will likely sound a lot like yours truly, but as you get into his work you are likely to start noticing some subtle differences in not only the writing style, but the world view - or more accurately, how Blakman approaches his world view.

Either way, I'm sure you will find his work entertaining and thought provoking and whenever you finish an R.J. Blakman work, I'm fairly sure you'll be glad you read it!

What's that? I said I wrote under TWO pen names? Yes. Well, if you want to know what the other one is, you'll just have to poke around on my website: <http://www.iyapoyapa.com>. It's tucked hidden away in there as an Easter egg, and you'll have to poke around to find it. There's a LOT going on on my website, so you will be thoroughly entertained while you're looking around!



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## The BATTLE of MONTGOMERY Where'd all that energy go?!

Some called it the “Montgomery Brawl,” to others it was the “Battle of Montgomery” (the name I personally like). But whatever it’s called, it seems to have served as a clarion call to Black people in the United States (and it could be argued around the world) to act swiftly and decisively when faced with the aggression of oppressors, no longer just passively “taking it” when they mess with us.

The internet and social media “broke” as people clamored to see videos of the event from every available angle. News stories were produced, commentaries were shared, songs were written, an anthem chosen, memes were made based upon it (I made several myself, one of which is featured in this article), and Black people throughout the diaspora were training to protect themselves using folding chairs, the de facto symbol representing the battle.

The pride and defiance of a people was kindled and then became a crescendo out of which came—

“Rich Men North of Richmond.”

The Montgomery Brawl happened on August 5, 2023, less than a month ago as of this writing, and for all the buzz and fervor that surrounded it, the event has become a footnote to all but those directly affected by it.

The new hot thing became the song “Rich Men North of Richmond,” by a country singer named Oliver Anthony. The song shot to the top, taking not only the number one spot on Apple music and iTunes for a time, but also charted at number 1 on Billboard.

My beloved sister Ajali Shabazz often says, and I agree, that NOTHING in this present system goes viral on accident. I guess, as with anything, there are exceptions to every rule, but in general, I believe that to be true, and the so-called Twitter files and Facebook files have born that out by admitting that they pick winners and losers. They elevate and suppress. I have zero doubt that every other social media platform is exactly the same to varying degrees.

So, what’s the deal with “Rich Men North of Richmond” and what is the connection to the Montgomery Brawl?

The Montgomery Brawl was August 5<sup>th</sup> of this year. “Rich

Men North of Richmond” was released three days later on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The brawl and subsequent commentaries about it were growing and looking like they were morphing into a discussion that went beyond the memes and obvious clowning. The problem was, for the ruling and political class, there was no way this could easily be spun and used to their advantage.

The other however, could be given exposure and tap into the angst the upper classes already know exist, but ignore and don’t give a damn about. The song was basically a “This’ll shut ‘em up.” Stop gap.

“The internet and social media broke as people clamored to see videos of the event from every available angle. News stories were produced, commentaries were made, songs were written, and an anthem chosen, about it, memes were made based upon it...”

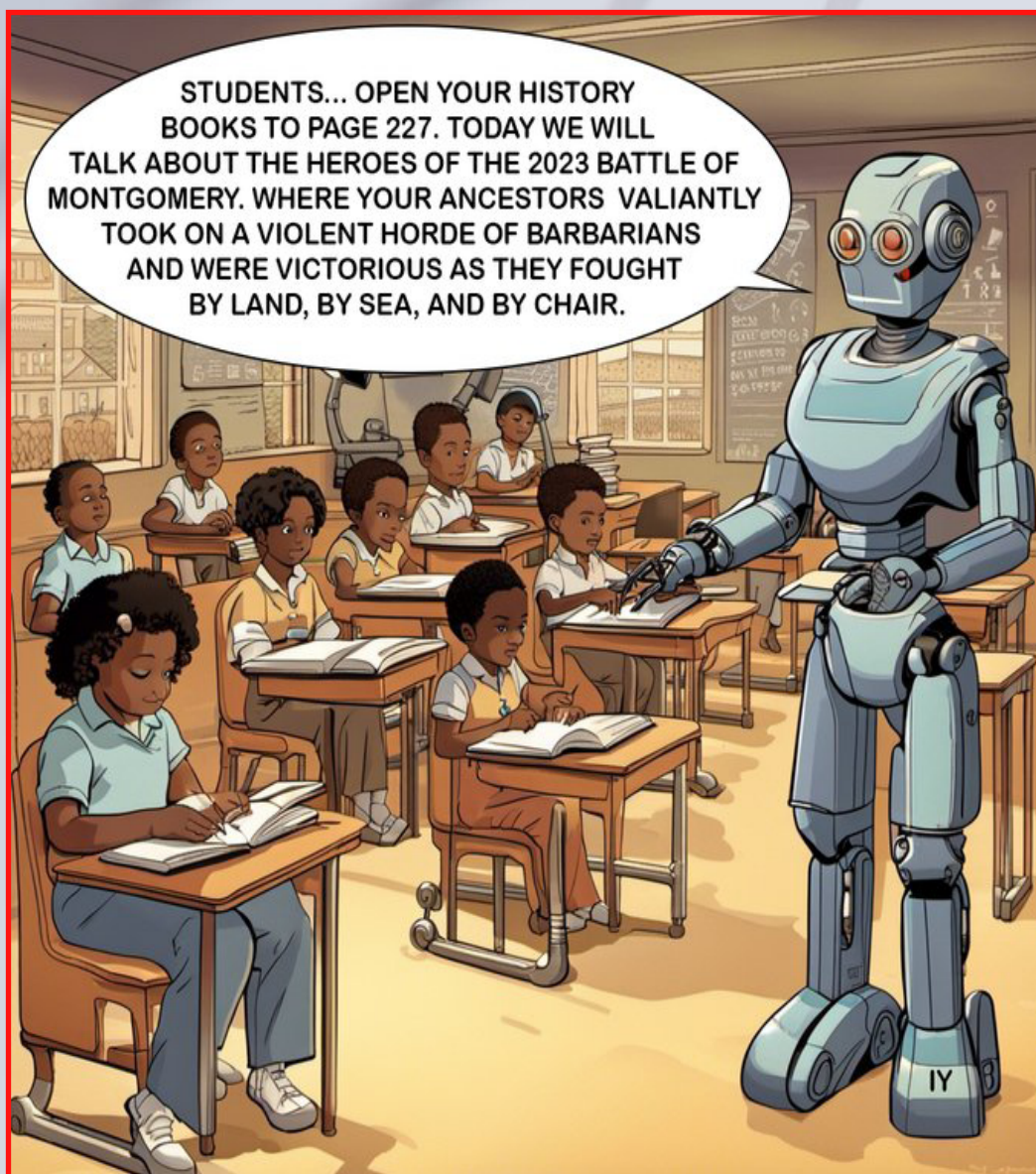
Now would be a perfect time to talk about “controlled opposition”.

One of my many mantras is that before our people can even begin to think about getting anything accomplished, we must learn about controlled opposition, what it is, what it’s for and how it works. I don’t know Mr. Anthony’s politics and don’t particularly care, but his song has definitely been weaponized for use by both parties in the United States to their own ends. How so? The song is about them, a harsh commentary on them as a matter of fact. So how are they able to use it?

We must look at the end goals.

At the end of the day, the goal of politicians and those who control the system is not to get anyone to like them, believe them or even trust them. The goal of politicians and the system, and particularly the system of white supremacy is to have you PARTICIPATE in it... to LEGITIMIZE it. If they can do that by getting people to have endless discussions about, the right, left and middle—that are serious discussions as if something real and sincere is being deliberated—and then get people to become politically active, to go vote, to march to protest and so on, then they have accomplished their goal.

Why do they want this participation?



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To have people (especially Black us), getting bogged down doing ‘busy work’, when they know that nothing we say or do matters in terms of what they are going to do or how they will govern. It is all distraction and a pull of energy and resources for their purposes, never culminating in anything that will propel us forward; causing us to put all our time, focus and energy into them and their system and build them up, as we remain stagnant at best and continue falling backward at worst.

(Listen to my podcast: “Government: The Movie” for a full breakdown <https://www.spreaker.com/user/hdic/drapetomaniac-podcast-2020-05-23-special>)

The subject of controlled opposition is a complete subject unto itself, so I won’t try to address it any further here and will probably unpack it in upcoming blog posts.

So, back to the Montgomery Brawl...

Some looked at the Montgomery Brawl as a reaction to country singer Jason Aldene’s song “Try That in a Small Town,” racist anthem of sorts. It appeared (at least to me), that as the unity and intensity surrounding the Montgomery Brawl started to pick up, it was growing legs and becoming unwieldy for those in control. Enter: “Rich Men North of Richmond.” The song got white and Black Americans as well as people in other countries talking,

and abruptly took the focus off of the Battle of Montgomery. Anthony’s song was the first topic of discussion at the first GOP debates, and unsurprisingly nothing all night was mentioned about what happened in Montgomery or what it means.

More than anything, the song served the purpose of changing the narrative back to that of everything being about CLASS warfare and not about RACE.

It is worth noting that the song “Rich Men North of Richmond” charted at number one on three major platforms and has been dubbed the “Everyman’s Anthem”. Whereas the Black Anthem “Montgomery Brawl” did chart on Apple and iTunes... in COMEDY releases.

Though it is true that there was a massive, almost unprecedented amount of clowning surrounding the Montgomery Brawl (some of which I participated in), much of it happened because of not only the limitless creativity of our people but also our ability to find the humor in even the direst situations while at the same time taking them very seriously. It is entirely possible that our people might not have taken the brawl seriously enough and possibly sought too many opportunities to make jokes, but in truth, we can never know because apparently the movement (if in fact some kind of movement was starting to grow out of it or be morphed from it), was stopped in its tracks.

## COMING SOON!

PRESENTLY IN THE EDITOR’S HANDS! (So don’t look a ME!)



If you’re needing to get your **THEORETICAL EBON FICTION (TEF)** fix, **THIS** is the place to go!

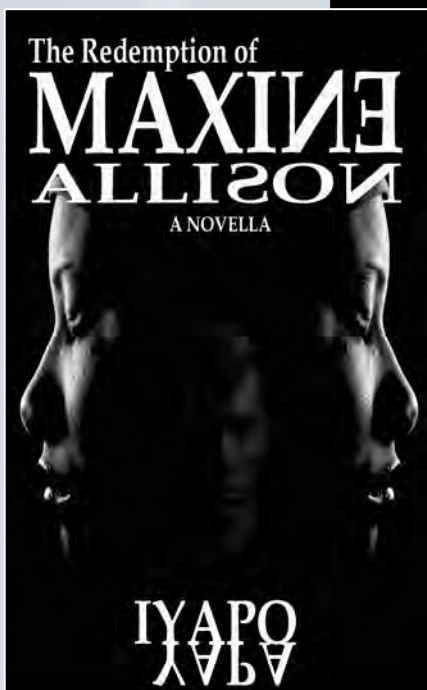
*PARADIGM VOID* is a collection of short stories written by Iyapo Yapa, one of the new leaders in the field of Black Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction. Each story explores possibilities and concepts that were not long ago only within the domain of the standard Sci-Fi reader.

Now, with the resurgence of Black writers of TEF, Iyapo is adding his powerful voice to the chorus, and moving at full speed to work in our people taking control of our narrative!

In *PARADIGM VOID*, Iyapo explores things like:

- What if somewhere in the universe numerous alien races observed earth and concluded that there is a faction on the planet that in no way should ever be allowed to reach out beyond the bounds of its own atmosphere?
- What if the universe itself started taking measures to correct and bring balance to itself in terms of justice?
- What if time slowed down nearly to a stop ... but only for YOU?

These possibilities and more are examined in “PARADIGM VOID” a collection of ten short stories in the genre of **THEORETICAL EBON FICTION**.



Is it **BEST** to **DIVEST**?

Maxine Allison thought so.

She’d had enough of dealing with Black men who were abusive, lackadaisical when it came to work, and just overall “losers” in her opinion. So she determined she would find herself a “white prince”.

Did she find her **PRINCE** and lose her mind? Is he **PRINCE CHARMING** or is he the **Prince of PERSIA**?!

Has she made a monumental mistake or is a trauma she sustained from a car wreck causing her mind to play tricks on her? If she has made a mistake can Maxine ever undo her disastrous decision ... right or wrong, it seems there is no way for her to find redemption...

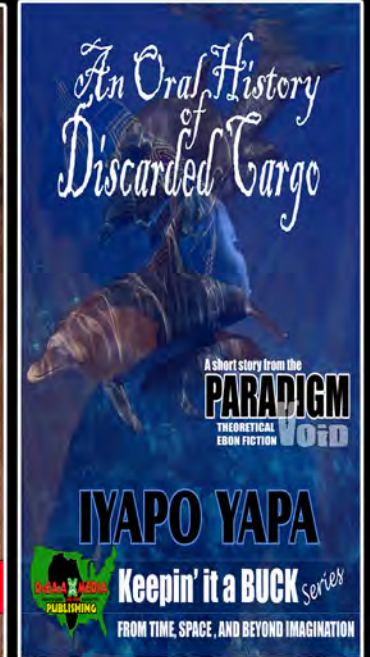
**or is there?**

Love, hate, secrets and deception abound in what is sure to be one of Iyapo Yapa’s most mind bending and controversial books to date. Read *The Redemption of Maxine Allison* and find out why!

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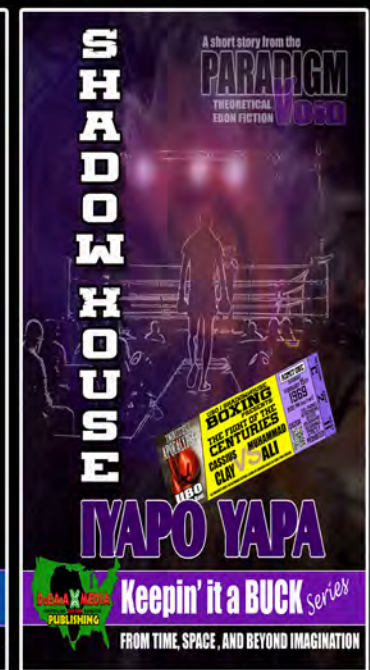
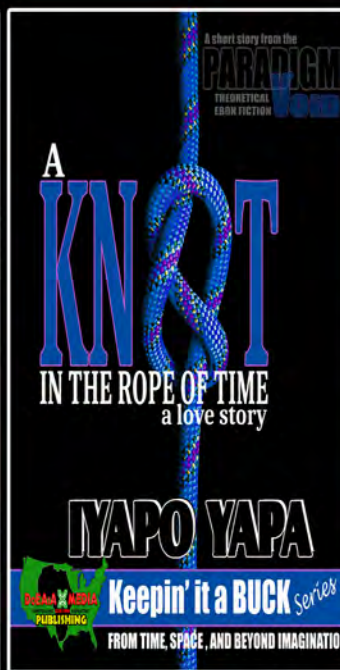


IT IS TIME TO JOURNEY INTO THE **PARADIGM VOID** ONE STEP AT A TIME.

EACH SHORT STORY IS DIFFERENT. EACH ONE THOUGHT PROVOKING & MIND BENDING.  
EACH ONE ONLY **A DOLLAR!** AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW ON: [amazon](https://www.amazon.com)



## Keepin' it a BUCK series



Also, Keepin' it a BUCK series TWO: Stories from Further Journeys into the Paradigm VOID is out NOW!



Also remember:

ORAL TRADITION talking books are also coming soon! Click the image to the right to hear a sample, of one of our talking books. Yes, it's still in its rough form, but the story is still fun as all get out! So give it a listen!

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## Storytime: My Journey to MELANIN: A Novel

When I was ten or eleven years old, we were given an assignment in class to write a short story. I was fairly excited about the prospect and took to it immediately! My teacher, Mrs. Richardson, said that the story had to be at least a page long and that we were going to read our stories in front of the class. The next day, everyone came in with their assignments as did I. They all had written their page.

I wrote ten.

With illustrations.

I got up in front of the class and read my tale of giant ants, born of radiation and the way the world fought back against them. In the end, a nuclear weapon was used to destroy them, which it did, but unfortunately the entire world was destroyed in the process. When I finished, the entire class stood up from their seats and applauded! Something I TRULY did not expect! (I wasn't an outcast back then, but I wasn't what anyone would have considered remotely popular.) From that very moment, I knew I wanted to be a writer.

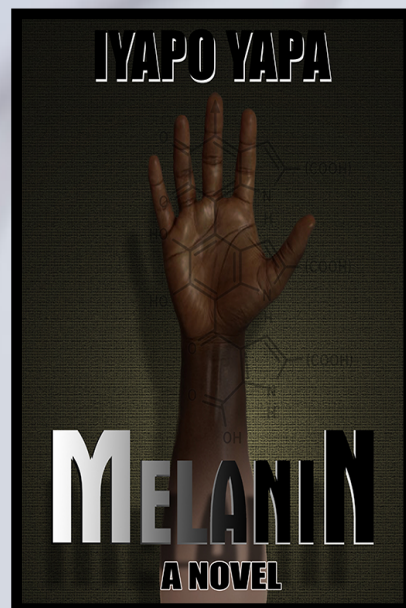
Before that I would spend all my time drawing—mostly cartoon characters. I was pretty good for my age, even if I do say so myself. For the longest time I thought everyone could draw because it came naturally to me; years later I learned that wasn't the case. Be that as it may, everyone thought I was going to ultimately become a professional cartoonist. Cartooning and design did end up being something I was able to make a living at off and on, but my true passion was always writing. By the time I was sixteen, I had written and drawn several children's books, started a couple novels—I remember one of them was called *Royal Blue*, about a blue stallion—and a stack of comic books. (The comic books were in various styles, everything from Hannah Barbara, Warner Brothers and Disney style to superhero comic books and a few drawn in Archie style. All completed.)

A few years later, when I was about twelve, I started attending a new elementary school, Milo Elementary. My family was poor by the standards of the United States. You know the deal: we were so poor that one night someone broke into our house to rob us and ended up leaving US five bucks! The neighborhood I came from was somewhat integrated though predominantly white; in all honesty, I got along just fine there and at school. Any racism I may have experienced didn't even show up as a blip on my radar, but I chalk that up to being a child and being oblivious. Years later my parents' stories would give me a different perspective.

We had to move because my father seemed more interested in running the streets, running with women and taking care of another family than he was in the wife and nine children he'd made with her. Our standard of living dropped, and my family ended up moving to the other side of the tracks... literally. We were now in a predominantly Black neighborhood, and I found myself going to a school that had more Black people in it than I'd ever seen in my life. My first day at Milo Elementary, I got swatted—that was back when teachers and principals were allowed to use corporal punishment—for telling someone "Thank you." for picking up a pencil I'd

dropped on the floor

**"I ran down the stairs and out the back door, imagining picking up dumped papers and chasing others that had been taken by the breeze, and more that were dirtied up and ripped. What met my eyes was something far worse."**



in the lunchroom. Yes. True story. For another day perhaps. Looking back, compared to the school I'd left, my new school seemed more like a penal colony than a school.

Hmmmm. I never gave it much thought; I'll have to tease that out. The students at the predominantly white school were treated with dignity and respect; in the Black school, students who were treated by the white principal and white vice principal as if we were always guilty of something and just hadn't been caught doing it yet. Seems to fit right in with the school to prison pipeline analysis. Back then, of course, I had no point of reference. I did know that I felt unfairly treated & deeply misunderstood.

Another story for another day.

I digress.

Without exaggeration leaving the U.S. and moving to Central America was much less culture shock than the degree of disorientation I experienced moving those 3-4 blocks as a child. The neighborhood where I started and the one we moved to weren't even comparable. That move was nothing short of devastating. At that time, my siblings and I all agreed it was worse than living in another country in that there was so much we didn't understand. I didn't understand the things they did. I did not understand the things they were into. I didn't understand the things they talked about. (When I could understand what they were saying. I'm not being condescending here, I had a VERY difficult time understanding them, and they had just as difficult a time understanding me. Something they attributed to me "talking white" and thinking I was better than them, not understanding of course, because we were children, that I spoke as I did because that was the only way I knew to speak.)

In class I seemed to have been a grade level to two grades ahead of my peers of the same age in the same classes. Something my teacher, a white woman named Mrs. Gabrielle never failed to point out to the rest of the class.

Oh why did she do that?!

Of course, it inevitably led to ostracization and bullying and being chased home from school on the daily. It was during that time that I got in to my first actual fight after school. I beat the kid (Duke), and after I beat him, I had him on the ground and was about to pop him again, when in true television fashion, I said, "There's been enough fighting." And got off him and started walking away.

Do you know that little shit jumped on my back from behind?!

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## My Journey to MELANIN: A Novel (Continued)

That's what comes from watching *The Brady Bunch* growing up and having no idea how the real world worked.

If only for that moment, the crowd who had gathered to watch the fight—you know how we used to do—turned on Duke, yelling that I beat him fair and that he was out of pocket. (That phrase didn't exist then, but that was basically what they were telling him.) They gave him a few choice punches as I walked away. I guess their code was stronger than their dislike of me. *Duke* never bothered me again, but surprisingly, contrary to what I'd been led to believe all my life, it didn't make the bullying stop.

I used to DREAD my mother asking me to go down the street to the store. It seemed like there was ALWAYS someone waiting to jump me, and I tried several routes. Didn't they have anything better to do? I guess not. One time in particular, two guys jumped me while I was going to the store. One held me, while the other sprayed pepper spray directly in my face. The one holding me let go and they left me there coughing, with snot running out of my nose as they walked away laughing.

Why?

Because they had a can of pepper spray.

They didn't take any money or anything. They just wanted to do it.

I used to fight back as best I could, but where I came from, I never had a need to fight. My brothers and sisters weren't prone to physically fighting each other, so I just never learned how or had a need for it.

In high school I SHORTLY joined a street gang calling ourselves "STREET", until I quickly saw the lunacy in it. Going around looking for fights because I was angry? And my big solution to my pain was to go out and become the people who had terrorized me?!

Good plan.

Teenagers don't know shit.

I digress. Again.

Such was my life. In all honesty, during that time, my older sister, my younger brother, & I developed a profound dislike for Black people. Just being honest. I've obviously grown out of it. My brother seems to have done the same, as well as my sister... though I don't think she ever **totally** grew out of it.

At any rate, during that time I didn't leave the house much (for obvious reasons), so I continued writing and drawing my books. One day a math teacher—Mr. Francis Campbell, a name I'll never forget—was introduced to my work through my teacher Mrs. Gabrielle. Mr. Campbell was a rotund white man whose strawberry blonde hair was thin to bald on the top. He wore a mustache and goatee and seemed to be very pink to my eye. The man immediately spotted me as a prodigy. He made it his crusade to get my work published, even at twelve. Those were some very exciting times for me. He spoke with

my mother, teachers and the principals to get me periodically excused from school on different days so that he could drive me in person to publishers. I was far enough ahead of my peers academically that no one saw a problem with me missing a day or two every few weeks.

Out of his own pocket he would get me art and writing supplies and paper. He'd get me anything I said I needed, or anything he thought I needed to complete my work and to take it to the next level. He didn't *buy* me a typewriter, but he did get me access to one.

**"In high school I SHORTLY joined a street gang calling ourselves "STREET", until I quickly saw the lunacy in it. Going around looking for fights because I was angry? And my big solution to my pain was to go out and become the people who had terrorized me?!"**

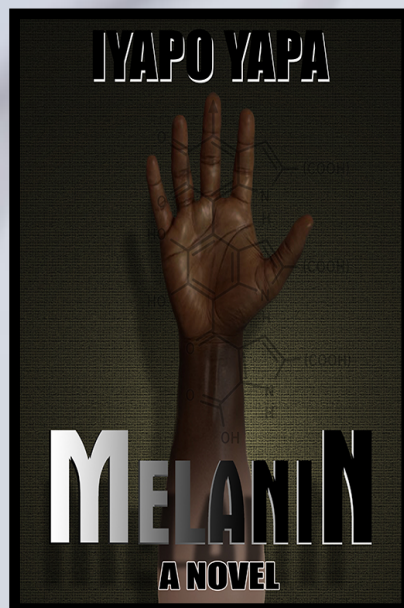
He also got me access to the school's mimeograph machine (look it up young folks). He drove me, sometimes for hours to different publishers with whom he'd set up meetings. As he would tell it to me, they were all extremely excited and interested in seeing my work and publishing me (He had mailed samples of my work in advance.) My family & I were excited; we all were thinking this might be a way for us to move up and out. I worked feverishly on my writings and illustrations, now armed with tools that made my work look that much more professional.

It never became a chore to me to work every day on these things because I loved doing it anyway.

I have to stop here and lament that I love and revere my mother, may she rest in power. She knew I was talented, but then so were all her other children... Exceptionally so... So, she didn't see anything extraordinarily special about what I did, and she saw my desire to be a professional writer/cartoonist as a pipe dream. She wanted me to have a "real profession", like a doctor, attorney, teacher, ... You know the drill.

My father on the other hand, with all his flaws, was one of my biggest cheerleaders and always seemed genuinely amazed at the things I could create. To this day, he has some of the only surviving work I did as a child. More about that later.

For a year, Mr. Campbell worked tirelessly to get my work published but without success. Even in the face of rejection after rejection we kept our spirits up and said there was more than one fish in the ocean. Finally, and, this one stands out in my mind, he had sent my work to a big publisher in Ohio with ties to Random House, explaining that I was only twelve (something he knew was a selling point). After seeing the work, they couldn't wait to meet me. They set up the meeting. I got excused from school. We left that afternoon and drove to Cincinnati. It was a nice day trip—we didn't get home until well after the school day was over. When we got there the excitement the publisher had before meeting me quickly



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## My Journey to MELANIN: A Novel (Continued)

waned when they saw me. It was not the first time that would happen to me and was definitely not the last in my life.

After a few forced pleasantries, a pat on the back, and a “Good luck,” we took the long quiet drive back home. When we got back to my house to drop me off, we both sat for a moment. That evidently was the last publishing house (at least in the state). I’ll never forget how Mr. Campbell sat for a moment, turning very red and shaking a little. He finally said for the first and only time, what he was thinking. “They’re always ready to publish you until they see your face! If it weren’t for the color of your skin, you’d have been published a long time ago!” He explained that he never told them ahead of time that I was Black because he knew that would make it so I couldn’t even be considered, but he always thought if they could just get the chance to meet me and I could get my foot in the door, it would overcome their prejudice.

Not so much.

To this day I don’t think Mr. Campbell had any other motive but to see my work published because, in his words, I was a genius. (Yeah, I think he was being generous, though I do think I was pretty good). For a little while, we tried sending the work off by mail outside Ohio, and got rejection slip after rejection slip. (One could argue that meant my work WASN’T all that, which would be fair. I think it was because we were working with a machine we didn’t quite understand. There is a difference between a piece of work that comes across one’s desk in a pile of 3000 others and dealing with people one-on-one.)

Eventually, he gave up, but never stopped encouraging me. (One day, I will dedicate one of my books to him, I don’t know which one yet, but I will do it. Period.) I didn’t give up. I was determined that I would reach my goal and people would see and read my work. One of the things that kept me working was the love of what I was doing. The other was that because of the endless bullying and threat of physical assault, I stayed in the house most of the time. While there, I honed my skills as a writer and cartoonist. I eventually picked up a guitar and taught myself that, most of all to compose music. I learned how to play piano later. When I wasn’t writing, I was drawing. When I wasn’t drawing or writing, I was playing or writing music. To that degree, I was pretty happy, and I was NEVER bored, something that I still experience to this day, more or less.

Fast forward three or four years to high school.

My works stood about four feet high from the floor and was all my pride and joy. Everything I had drawn and written from the time I was five up to sixteen, *eleven* years of writing and drawing, literally every single day after school and practically all day on weekends and school breaks. I didn’t have a lot of friends; the characters I created (Danny the Dinosaur in particular), had become alive to me and I found comfort in picking up one of their comics or books and reading them.

One day my sister got angry at me, and we got into a bit of a shouting match. She got out of school earlier than me, by one class. When I got home, I went to my room and prepared to do some drawing or writing and I looked for the cardboard

cabinet where I kept all my work.

It was nowhere to be found.

I went looking around and finally, my sister said it was all outside. I ran down the stairs and out the back door, imagining picking up dumped papers and chasing others that had been taken by the breeze, and more that were dirtied up and ripped. What met my eyes was something far worse, and horrific.

Flames danced in my eyes, flames dancing high out of a metal garbage can. All of my work was literally going up in smoke.

I looked inside to see if the fire had possibly spared any of my work and if I might be able to salvage some of it. Even if I had to douse it with water and be left with only wrinkled, faded and ink run remnants, I hoped to be able to recover some of it.

No.

My years of hard work and dedication to a craft, to a goal, pushing forward and driving, had become ash within the space of less than an hour.

**“They’re always ready to publish you until they see your face! If it weren’t for the color of your skin, you’d have been published a long time ago!”**

All that work for nothing.

Through the years, for better or worse, the metaphor of that event has never left me.

I took the loss of that work very hard, as did friends, teachers and classmates who were familiar with it, having watched me draw, or write during lunch, study halls and in some of my classes when I should have been paying attention to the subject. They all collectively could not fathom how anyone could do such a thing, no matter how angry they were.

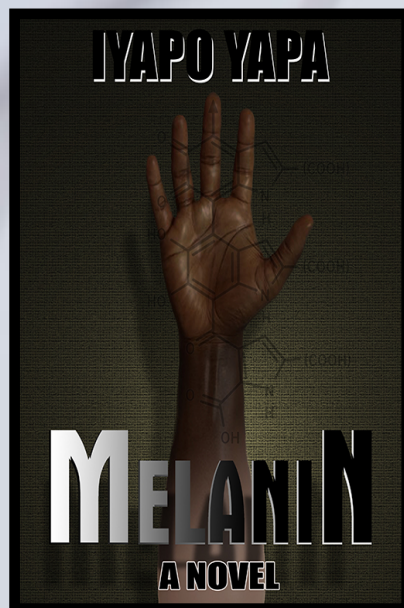
After that day, I went from drawing and writing every day to not writing a word for the sake of a story or putting pencil to paper for over a decade. That was one of the single most shattering events of my life and it took me years to get over it. To be honest, I don’t know if I ever totally got over it. Especially when I see creators show off work they did when they were children and show how far they’ve come. For me, one would think I never drew a line until I was in my late twenties or early thirties.

I have long since forgiven my sister for what she did, I genuinely believe in my deepest heart that had she TRULY known the depths to which she would traumatize me with that act, she wouldn’t have done it. But we were both teenagers,

And like I said, teenagers don’t know shit.

And yes. To this day, over four decades later, I PROFOUNDLY mourn the loss of that work.

Fast forward a few decades and I’m now a conservative Republican ala Tim Scott and Candice Owens, and I was no fan of Black people given what had happened to me growing



READING and WRITING in the

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A space for avid Black readers and Black authors

## My Journey to MELANIN: A Novel (Continued)

up. Without drawing it out, as I started coming around out of my madness ten or fifteen years ago. Now, as much as I hated my people, I now LOVE, HONOR and RESPECT my people. I no longer focus on the PEOPLE, but on the SYSTEM that CREATES them. Again, how that transformation came about is another story for another day, but guaranteed, people who knew me when, don't even recognize me anymore when it comes to my social and political views. They say it's like literally dealing with a completely different person. Even my children say that of me.

Another story.

Another day.

After some of the pain of having my work destroyed became somewhat bearable, I once again started to draw, and after that I started to write again. For a long while I became one of the most positive people you would ever meet. People used to say, "How do you do that?! NOTHING gets you down!" And it was TRUE, it wasn't an act. My attitude adjusted for some reason and for a LONG time I just saw the best in people and in situations.

But as the saying goes, "All good things must come to an end". Yeah, that's what people SAY, but I don't believe that's necessarily true. Anyway, on with the Storytime:

When I started writing again, I produced a lot of work. For all my work however, it seemed I just couldn't do what I did when I was younger and have **completed** projects stacked up yay high from the floor. I was no longer able to finish anything it seemed, though I would make GREAT starts! I was older, divorced, working a SUCK job that pulled all my energy and my soul, and when I did write, it seemed kind of pointless and I was tired and frustrated. Along with that, my mind was cluttered by living in the United States as a Black man.

Luckily, I met and married one of the, if not THE best people I know, and my BEST FRIEND, Angela. Together we up and moved to Central America. Once there, my mind became

clearer with each passing day and I started to write again.

One day I declared to my wife that I was going to write every day until I finished my first novel (One I had started four years prior and only had a couple chapters of).

Within less than two months of making that decision *MELANIN: A NOVEL* was completed! Then thanks to the editing talents or my mother-in-law Ivy and Angela herself, I had an actual FINISHED NOVEL! Within another four months, I had completed a second novel (*And What of the CARGO?*), a book of short stories (*Paradigm VOID*) and a novella (*The Redemption of Maxine Allison*)! And I haven't looked back (except for this article) LOL!

I published *MELANIN: A Novel* on Amazon and barnesandnoble.com on September 31, 2022!

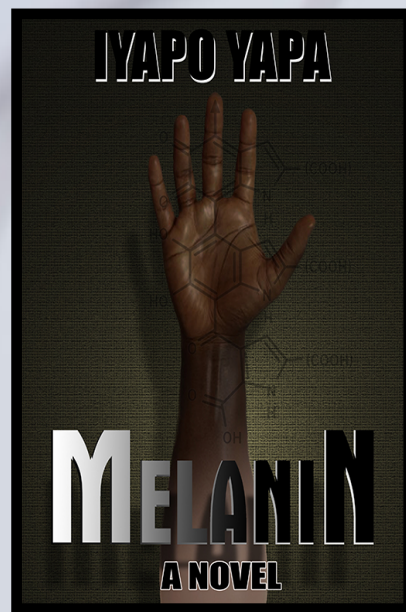
We have had a mix of highs and lows since the publication, including *MELANIN* often landing in the top 100 best sellers and sometimes even at number ONE!

In honor of the publication of *MELANIN: A Novel* and its one-year anniversary, the novel is going to now be available on KINDLE UNLIMITED on the Amazon platform! That means that anyone with a Kindle Unlimited account can read *MELANIN* at no additional cost right from their Kindle or tablet or mobile device that has the free Kindle App on it!

I'm extremely proud of my novel, and sometimes take it off the bookshelf just to hold it in my hand, look at it and wonder at the fact that I actually—after decades—completed a novel, and then other works, and that people are reading and enjoying them. To a degree it still feels a little surreal when I think about it. I can say, anyone who has a dream and/or goal, don't let anyone or anything stop you from achieving it! It CAN be done! I'm living proof of it!

***How do you get to Mount Kilimanjaro?***

***Make sure every step you take is toward Mount Kilimanjaro!***



Iyapo and Angela at a party celebrating the completion of *MELANIN: A NOVEL*

7 December 2021

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## **THE PROBLEMS of IMMORTALITY: R.J. BLAKMAN**

**~a sneak peek~**

Bell-Isle stumbled around the landscape, quietly swearing at himself each time he bumped into something. After all this time one would think he'd know every rock, every crack, every dip and uneven place on the ground. But even now he still somehow managed to kick what should have been familiar rocks, or trip over his own feet. Bell-Isle "Detroit" Sanford was a tall, lanky man. Distant years ago, before everything went to hell, everyone had him pegged for someone who could play basketball, and he often let others live with that illusion of him by never setting foot onto a court and having them find out the truth. He knew everyone just thinking he could play was not only because of his height, but because he also was born in the inner city and was very dark skinned, even among his own Black peers. For as gangly as he was, he wasn't necessarily clumsy, but he was a bit awkward. Evidently, that awkwardness was something that even a number of centuries couldn't wipe away. He had walked from Canada to Mexico several times—same with his trips from the East Coast to the West Coast. In the beginning he would drive it, but then as the scenery and cities passed by him in a blur he started wondering if he might be missing something.

Or someone.

So, he started walking, and had been walking ever since.

In the early days after the war that ultimately did end all wars (but not in the way the leadership of the various countries thought it would), He ran across a few survivors, some of whom joined him on his trek to find even more people and perhaps start society over again with the remnant. Much to Bell-Isle's dismay, eventually, the men, women, boys and girls journeying with him who didn't grow old, sick and die before ever being able to reproduce, were overcome by the toxic environment itself and succumbed to it.

He found companionship with a few animals, one in particular he remembered. A mountain lion cub he came across while walking through Montana. He named the critter 'Tony'. By that time food had gotten scarce, but there was food to be had, so he made sure his new pet—or new friend had food and water as fresh as he could give it. Tony ended up being a companion for years and amazingly managed to live to a ripe old age, but as with all living creatures, Tony eventually died. That was the natural order of things.

For most.

Not for Bell-Isle Sanford.

He often wondered about his sanity and if it were still intact. Given that he'd not seen another human being in nearly two hundred years he didn't know whether he had an actual point of reference anymore. Perhaps the fact he questioned his sanity meant that he was still sane.

Maybe.

Maybe not.

It was at least something to consider.

He scoped around at the desolation that had replaced the once familiar and plentiful sights he was used to oh so long ago that had once filled his eyes. One would think that after so long he would be used to walking these paths that were once forests, parks, cities, and streets. Sometimes he could almost still hear the traffic as it zoomed down the thoroughfare.

He looked around and allowed his mind to conjure the images of cars of all makes and models. Small ones, midsized and gas guzzling' huge. Brand new—old—so many. Sometimes it seemed, the city was like the Thomas Dolby song, where he sang, "... I noticed something pretty bizarre. There's not a lot of people there, just an awful lot of cars."

Things didn't tend to change very much. Not anymore. Taking in the ubiquitous destruction and carnage that spread out before him, Bell-Isle shook his head and thought about the way things used to be, the way they are now and how the situation came to be what it is.

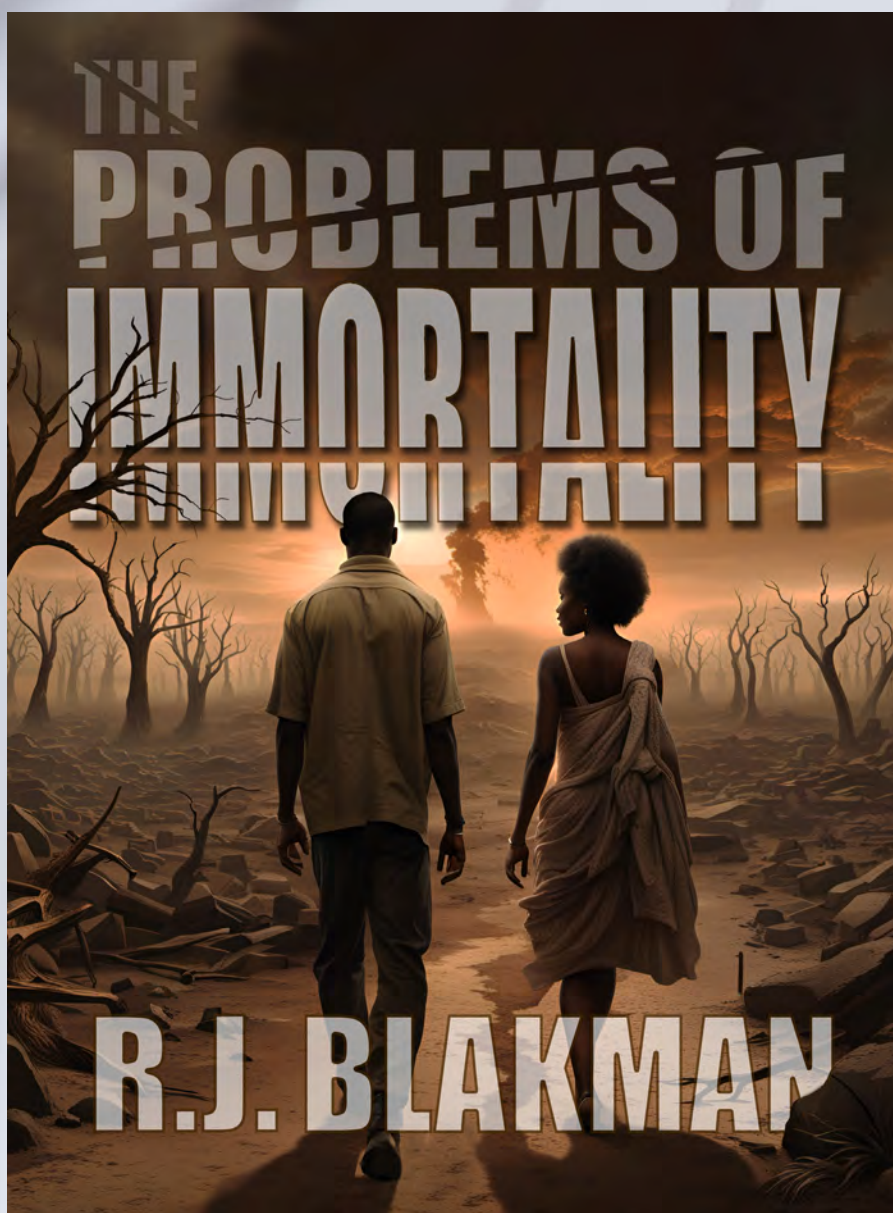
They had done it.

They had finally done it.

Everyone Bell-Isle knew and loved was gone, at least for the most part to his knowledge.

The homes and businesses he once frequented had been reduced to rubble and ash. There was not a living thing in sight, no dogs or cats, birds, bees, no trees or flowers. Even the skeletons of long dead animals and people had gone to dust or had nearly completed the process of getting that way.

Bell-Isle was the only living thing in the now burned out and barren landscape—a landscape so devoid of life that it couldn't even be called a graveyard, for a graveyard had at least the echo of life.



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He had had a long time to ponder how this once country, and the rest of the world had come to such a pass.

The United States was founded on violence and bloodshed, first of its own countrymen, then of the people it enslaved, exploited, and terrorized. It got its way by becoming the biggest kid on the block, and then using that position to become the quintessential bully. The U.S. thought nothing of inserting itself into the affairs of other nations and telling them how they should run their countries. The prevailing belief for far too long, perhaps even to its inception, was that it was the God given right of the United States to be the ‘nanny’ and authority for and over the rest of the world, and to tout itself as the standard by which all other countries should be measured. Its blatant hypocrisy, cognitive dissonance, and schizophrenia notwithstanding. Simultaneously, the United States as a country operated at a level of lack of self-awareness that was almost comical. The country easily saw the deficiencies (or what it characterized as deficiencies) of other nations—whether those shortcomings were actual or not—while completely ignoring its own failings that in many cases far exceeded the evils and atrocities committed by those it castigated.

At one time the United States was a world leader—but it was a cruel, heartless, merciless leader and as a whole knew nothing but force, violence and war as a way of dealing with other world powers who did not want to submit to it. For a time, all the nations of the earth behaved like the cowering victims the United States wanted to make them. But as happens with many who are bullied, eventually they straighten their back, unflinchingly look the bully in the eye, and with clenched fists say, “No more.”

That is what it came to in the days of BRICS and the collapse of the U.S. dollar when the BRICS nations collectively gave the United States the middle finger as they moved away from the Petro-dollar.

Like any abuser and bully, when the object of their abuse and bullying are attempting to separate, they result to the only thing they know. The only thing they have ever known.

Violence.

The American century was drawing to a close, but the empire was in the position for the first time since its inception of becoming a minor player on the world stage. Something that didn’t sit well at all with the powerbrokers at the top of the chain. So, the United States had no intention of going “gently into that good night...” as Dylan Thomas put it.

No.

If the U.S. had to go, it was going to go kicking and screaming and taking others down with it, even the whole world, if need be. And for the decision makers at the top, no price was too high. No life was above the cause, (as long as it wasn’t one of *their* lives of course). There was no sacrifice of sons and daughters, husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, that was too much to be asked of those at or near the bottom.

The irony was that after the revolution, for a great many people they didn’t notice much of a change in their standard of living. As the old saying goes, when you’re already close to the bottom you don’t have far to fall.

Ground troops and drones notwithstanding, the United States, though arguably dominant when it came to other countries in terms of its military machine and nuclear arsenal, could be active in one or two... maybe even three wars at once. However, with new alliances being made and the monetary system of the country having been severely weakened, along with a population that had lost all faith in its government and finally a government that was so inept and bought and paid for that it couldn’t make a move to do the right thing if it genuinely wanted to, the handwriting was on the wall.

The U.S. and its allies launched nukes.

China, Russia, and BRICS nations that had advanced weaponry responded in kind, and the rest is history.

Now, ancient history.

\* \* \*

*“I love you forever.”*

The words still echoed in his mind as clear and as distinct as if they’d been spoken yesterday, and not centuries ago. Bell-Isle looked at the sky, the dingy, dirty brown of it and realized that



Part of the Keepin’ it a BUCK HORROR/SUSPENCE Series!

The book cover features the title "Tales of the MONKEY'S" in a stylized, white, hand-drawn font. Below the title is a black silhouette of a monkey in a crouching position, with a white handprint to its right. The background is black with the word "WAPPA" repeated in large, semi-transparent, grey letters. At the bottom, the tagline "NOT EVERY WISH GRANTED MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE" is written in red, all-caps, sans-serif font.

And don’t forget to check out the original Keepin’ It a BUCK Series featuring tales of Theoretical Ebon Fiction!

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couldn't for the life of him remember what a blue sky looked like.

For the life of him.

Perhaps it was because his consciousness was too crowded with thoughts of her. Thoughts of Tamarra. Yes, the sound of her voice echoed in his mind—but not just her voice. He remembered vividly the depth of her clear brown eyes, the kind of eyes that made her always look as if she were seeing everything in the world with wonder, and for the first time. Eyes that made her look as if she were always on the verge of asking a question. He could see her lips, full and soft. At times Bell-Isle would close his eyes and put two fingers to his lips and imagine feeling the touch of hers pressed against his, if only one more time. Her ebony skin was smooth and dark, kissed by the sun that loved it.

He thought about making love to her. He missed her. The way she moved, the way she moaned, the way she'd first whisper, then cry out his name. He could feel her body, he could smell her fragrance, he could taste her.

And now—he was alone.

*"I'll love you forever."*

They'd both said it with such conviction. Yes, they married young at 18 and 19 years old, but were they that mature? Were they mature enough to decide to get married? Beyond that, were they mature enough to make the decision that would now guide their eternal destinies? This man's present predicament perhaps served as the best answer to that question. He thought he would live forever with the woman he loved and adored, but instead was now fated to be without her.

Forever.

Ultimately, the suffering was endless it seemed. Those were the lowest times and the ones that made life nearly unbearable for Bell-Isle. He had been wandering around the planet alone for hundreds of years without seeing another soul—not even animal, insect, or plant. Though that wasn't completely true, he did manage to come across a roach about seventy-five or so years ago; something that gave him hope. He had taken the insect as a pet and it lived for nearly four months (a long life for a roach even in the best of times), before either the lack of food or the poisonous water became too much for it, or perhaps just succumbing to its natural life cycle, leaving Bell-Isle alone again.

Even for the loneliness and the abject hopelessness that would sometimes cloud his mind, Bell-Isle continued to live. What helped him were two overpowering thoughts. The first, something his mother told him several centuries ago.

*"Where there is LIFE, there is HOPE."*

Even in the midst of this desolation.

The second, the thought that out there—somewhere—was his beloved Tamarra. The odds of them crossing paths might have been astronomical, in his calculations, but he would never give up searching. After all, he had all the time in the world.

He moved forward, walking unsteadily at times from a kind of exhaustion he couldn't really attach a name or feeling to. It wasn't a tiredness—not in the way he once experienced it. Bell-Isle didn't

know if he could even get truly tired anymore. Not in body anyway. The weariness he experienced was a weariness of mind, a weariness of heart that no amount of physical rest could remedy.

He moved forward, knowing the only thing driving him was the thought of Tamarra, and the possibility that he might one day see her again. As he took in the landscape that had now become oh so familiar to him, having walked the route several hundred times, he now knew most of the landmarks.

Very few things changed now. The weather had become a kind of constant—at least in the area in which he now walked. No huge swings in temperatures, no more seasons, little if any rain and almost no more breezes to speak of. This barren world now looked as alien as the surface of Mars Bell-Isle guessed, at least in the parts in which he roamed.

He discovered fairly early that he didn't need to sleep, though he could if he wanted to and it did have a rejuvenating effect, such as it was. It wasn't until much, much later that he found, after there was no longer any food nor drinkable water that he didn't need to eat or drink either—again—unless he wanted to.

Eventually he sat down at what looked like the remains of some old building or other. He rested his back against it and closed his eyes, not so much to rest his body but to clear his mind to whatever degree he could. Suddenly he became aware of a strange odor in the air. He didn't open his eyes, but he raised his head, so his nose was higher in the air and took several sniffs. He no longer needed to eat or drink, or to even breathe—not in the same way he once did—but he could still smell things. What he was smelling wasn't something he normally encountered on his travels, but at the same time it was not unfamiliar. Bell-Isle, after recognizing the scent, opened his eyes and quickly surveyed the surroundings. He had only smelled the odor once in several hundred years, but he would never forget it, or of what it was the harbinger.

For the first time in centuries, Bell-Isle's sorrow, boredom and longing gave way to fear.

## AND SO IT BEGINS!

*Mr. Blakman is hard at work on the novel (already several chapters in), and if the prologue is any indication, the reading audience is in for a roller coaster ride of emotion, action, adventure and probably some reflection.:*

*The Problems of Immortality coming soon!*



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## September Crossword: And What of the CARGO?

Ok! You've all had plenty of time to read it, and if you haven't read it yet... WHY HAVEN'T YOU?! Well, there's always time. Now that the puzzle is here, it isn't going anywhere, you can take a stab at it any time you want. The only thing is that you will have to read the novel first! After that you will be an authority on all things *And What of the CARGO?* and should be able to breeze right through this puzzle. Kinda. Some of the questions are tricky and ask about things in the novel that most people will read by and not give a second thought... So, have your copy ready in case you need to refresh your memory, and most of all... HAVE FUN!

[CLICK ON THE IMAGE BELOW TO DOWNLOAD A PRINTABLE COPY OF THE PUZZLE!](#)



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## SEPTEMBER CROSSWORD PUZZLE AND WHAT OF THE CARGO?

### ACROSS

- 5) "... ci \_\_\_\_\_ ci sunju gaa.
- 6) Name of the African tribe that was the main focus of the story.
- 7) The name of Malcolm and Miya's pet Jack Dempsey.
- 12) The name of Kylah's mother.
- 13) The cruise that the Strodehammers took, the "Lights and \_\_\_\_\_."
- 14) First revolutionary to show up at the Rasulallah African Arts Center. \_\_\_\_\_ X.
- 16) Found the first ship adrift in open seas. The Cuban \_\_\_\_\_ Navy.
- 17) Original release date \_\_\_\_\_ 17, 2023.
- 19) The countries on the African continent became the United Republic of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 21) The name the Protestant clergy bestowed upon themselves. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Power.
- 22) The only English word Kylah would ever allow herself to learn or speak.
- 26) In what African country did Tiffy get the Zahnokan book?
- 27) Kylah's last name.
- 30) Last name of the President of the United States in the novel.
- 31) Name of the company owned by the vice president's husband. \_\_\_\_\_ Accents Ltd.
- 33) Name of the short prison story that takes place in the same universe as And What of the CARGO?
- 34) Led the revolt on the slave ship. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 37) The name of Tiffy's husband.
- 38) Name of the captain of the slave ship \_\_\_\_\_ Hollern.
- 39) Freedom fighters formed by Benjamin Stallwell. The \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

- 1) Author of And What of the CARGO?
- 2) Name of the group that drafted the speech and guidelines presented to the world leaders. The \_\_\_\_\_ Council.
- 3) "Voyage of the \_\_\_\_\_."
- 4) What organization did the UDAIC take the place of? [UNIA]
- 8) FBI agent who bore a striking resemblance to actor Josh Brodin. Agent \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9) Name of the missing ship found off the coast of Greenland. \_\_\_\_\_ Courage.
- 10) Tiffany "Tiffy" \_\_\_\_\_ Jefferson.
- 11) Name of the warrior who was chained beside Kylah on the ship and aided in the revolt.
- 15) The UDAIC is the United Diasporic African \_\_\_\_\_.
- 18) Name of the first cruise ship massacre. \_\_\_\_\_ of the Ocean.
- 20) Name of the FBI agent who was assigned to work with Tiffy.
- 23) Name of the ship's mate who was in charge of Kylah's comings and goings. Connor \_\_\_\_\_.
- 24) Type of work Malcolm Jones did for a living.
- 25) The name of Kylah's father.
- 28) The person who recruited Miya to reason with his fellow industrialists. Leo \_\_\_\_\_.
- 29) Where Mannford was for most of Miya's childhood.
- 32) Short story that inspired And What of the CARGO? "An Oral History of \_\_\_\_\_ Cargo.
- 34) Name of the young warrior who brought Kylah a bucket of water.
- 35) "High \_\_\_\_\_ on the High Seas."
- 36) Amanda Something with an "R"'s last name \_\_\_\_\_.



Flash fiction is a genre of fiction, defined as a very short story. While there is no set word count that separates flash fiction from more traditional short stories, flash fiction stories can be as short as a few words (while short stories typically run for several pages). Flash fiction is also known as sudden fiction, short-short stories, micro-fiction, or micro-stories.

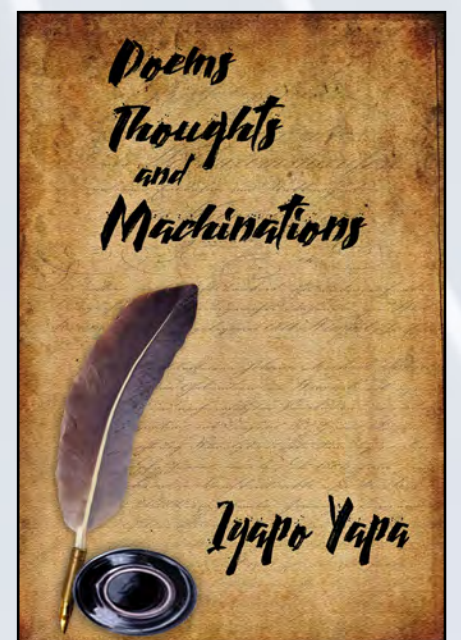
Got a few minutes or a good story? That's all you'll need.

The title says it all.

Sometimes I think all people wax poetic whether they write it down or not. For the most part I think everyone has times of reflection and seeking deeper meaning in things.

Here is where I write it down in verse and many times without traditional structure.

Always seeking.



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Click Below For:

And What of the CARGO?



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## And What of the CARGO?

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“Kylah Mbaye of the Zahnoka people, lay as silently and still as she could, halfheartedly petitioning the ancestors that at least for one night she would not be spirited away and taken above deck to endure yet another in a procession of endless rapes. Another woman would have long ago given in to despair--but Kylah--in the face of such crushing odds against her and her people within the bowels of this floating nightmare, knew that eventually, this voyage would not end well... for her captors.” And so it began. AND WHAT OF THE CARGO? is a tale of love and hate, tears and triumph, suspense and horror that leads to an unimaginable conclusion.

“The Atlantic crossing, or “Middle Passage,” as it was called by European slavers, was notorious for the number of deaths incurred, averaging in the vicinity of 15-20%”

— Walter Rodney. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa

Much is rightly said and written about the enslavement and fates of Afrikans who were kidnapped from their homeland and transported to the Americas and other lands along the Middle Passage. Absent however is an expanded examination of the fate of those who did not make it through the journey. Whether victims of an inability to survive the unimaginable environment in which they were forced to occupy, or due to murders while attempting to revolt, or by simply jumping overboard, choosing death as a better alternative to chattel enslavement.

What of those ancestors in the depths of the oceans, and what of their souls and spirits. Or to put it bluntly—what of the CARGO?

## What are readers saying about And What of the CARGO?

“This story is an exceptional horror tale of what happens when displaced restless souls whose spirits sought to exact restitution from those who prospered from their demise are ignored. The reunion and collaboration between the historical and modern families to bring about justice for their stolen legacy was gripping.”

- Amazon Review

“Mr. Yapa is one of the most imaginative writers out there. He handles controversial subject matter with grace and maturity. He offers powerful insight on one of the most important topics of our era: the Atlantic slave trade and modern-day racism. In this story there is retribution for evils - past and present. There is blood, dismemberment, horror, anger, rage, justice, hate, love, passion, politics, wealth, and finally reconciliation and peace. What a journey. I Loved it. And yes, it did scare me - It scared me a lot!”

- Gwen

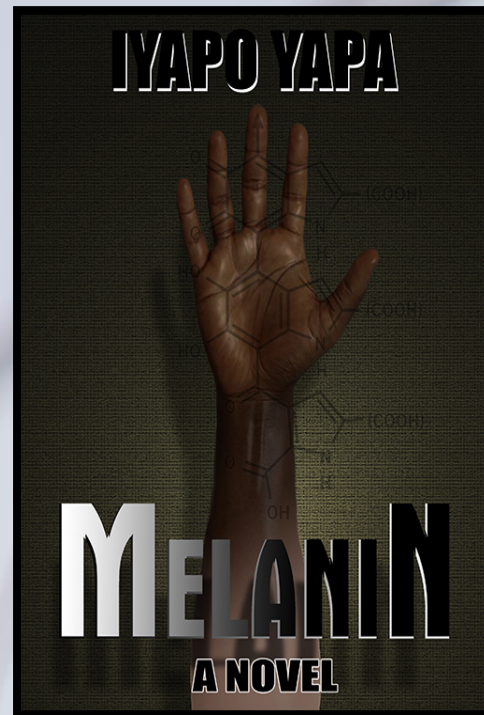
“Yapa weaves another story this time interwoven with historical references. I was on my seat with every chapter. I don't want to give it away but....revenge is sweet when served dead. And I can't get over how different each of his offerings are. Read his Vella's and you'll see what I mean. Another great book by Iyapo Yapa. A must read!”

- Amazon review

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MELANIN: A Novel



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## MELANIN: A NOVEL

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Due to a series of man-made radiological catastrophes, the non-Black population of the planet becomes susceptible to a highly virulent form of melanoma and has to choose between becoming Black (phenotypically and genetically), or almost certain death.

MELANIN: A NOVEL examines a world where Black people are realizing they are once again truly free. What does it mean for Black people to be back in their rightful place, after centuries of subjugation, marginalization and terror? What does it mean for Black people to no longer be under the boot of a system put (and kept) in place to use and keep using them?

Conversely, what happens to those who have only known control and dominance for centuries as the tide is turning? How do they react to the knowledge that they are powerless to stop the turning tide as the field becomes genuinely level, and the system of white supremacy utterly collapses around them?

On top of that, is a threat to the world at large that is so horrifying no one could have imagined it!

goodreads

## What are readers saying about MELANIN: A NOVEL?

“Melanin is an uncompromising and timely tale of speculative fiction, brimming with thought-provoking ideas and imaginative twists.”

- Brandon Massey, award-winning author of *The Quiet Ones* and *Dark Corner*

“Iyapo Yapa has earned a place among the great science fiction writers with Melanin. The plot twists will keep you reading long after midnight. As well the imagery is captivating. Replicating the Black experience, you are drawn into the story as if you are there.”

- T.J. Riley, author of *The Path to Brightness*

“The whole world needs to read this book!”

- M.A.D.M. Precious, author of *Michelle's Story* and *Loving Betrayal*

“Every Black person needs to read this book!”

- Gwen B

“It was exciting! I stayed up a few nights wanting to see what was coming!”

- Ayoka B.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Beneath the Shining Jewel By Balogun Ojetade

One of the things I enjoyed most about *Beneath the Shining Jewel* was how unapologetic it was, and second, the fact that it in no way talked down to me as a reader! At first, I really had to work my way into the story because, it took me into unfamiliar territory. As a Black man, and a ProBlack Black man at that, I'm most certainly PanAfrikan. That said, having been born and raised in the United States, I am, like most Black Americans far more indoctrinated into, acclimated with and entrenched in American (and by extension European) culture. Some of the locations, references, customs, rituals, and symbolism took some getting used to. In a GOOD way, because it also made the novel a learning experience.

Truth to tell, I fully intend to read it a second time so that I will have a deeper understanding of all that is going on and am able to glide through and relate to it even more. (That said, don't let that in any way stop YOU from reading it, my experience may be completely different than yours depending on how Afrikan-centered you are).

Balogun Ojetade's story telling style is straight forward with just enough nuance to be a perfect fit for the story he constructed. It's funny the lines that just stick with you. I remember this one (I had to go back to the book to get the quote exactly right):

*"So much skin on the fat one... so much smelly, bristly, crunchy, fatty, drippy skin. And he looked familiar too. But the skin... so much; so smooth on the tongue... eat it and then the terror passes, doesn't it, for a time?"*

AWESOME. I could not only feel the motivation of the character, but it enhanced the scene surrounding it!

I also appreciate fight scenes and actions scenes as told by someone who is not giving their idea or *interpretation* of what a fight or action scene looks like, but by someone who has real world knowledge of the actual physics and physicality of how things work in such situations and how things would REALLY go down. (None of this Hollywood I did a double summersault and landed on the edge of your sword, stuff.)

The main character, Mba Bongo is a flawed man but at the end of the day, he is still a hero. I still am deciding whether I would have him as a friend if I knew him in real life. (That isn't a bad thing, I LIKE when that happens with a character; for me, it means the character is multi-faceted and more like people are in real life. That's a well written character.)

When it comes to Mba's colleague Jima, 1. He's pissed off (with good reason), and 2. Don't let the wheelchair fool you. That's all I'll say about him.

Anything can be run into the ground. Overdone. Zombie stories are no exception, especially with things like the comic series turned television series with umpteen spinoffs. *The Walking Dead*. (Fun fact: *The Walking Dead* and *Breaking Bad* take place in the same universe.) i-Zombi, World War Z, and pretty much ANYTHING by George A. Romero. I can quickly burn out on the whole zombie thing.

UNLESS...

Someone finds a way to put a truly different spin on it like Black Horror/Thriller writer Brandon Massey did with his novel *Frenzied*. Alongside that, *The Shining Jewel's* Gnaw Maws are way different! Coming from an Afrikan perspective, Ojetade has accomplished, with flying colors, a truly unique spin on not only the zombie genre, but horror in general!

If you are a person who likes and reads horror and zombies, read this. This will fit the bill and not disappoint! This is for the zombie fan looking for a great take on the genre. And for those who are not necessarily into the whole zombie thing, but do like a good dose of action, adventure, mystery and horror that is well written and engaging.

I would also recommend this book to anyone who wants to take a break from the urban romance, or "thug life" stories that are so ubiquitously marketed to Black people.

By all means, give *Beneath the Shining Jewel* a read! For anyone who wants a great story that will keep you engaged—the push in the beginning to get acclimated to the environment of the novel was worth it—READ THIS BOOK! I read it and was glad I did! I'm looking forward to diving into more of Balogun Ojetade's work. (I presently have his action book, *MALIK: Confessions of a Black Identity Extremist* on my TBR -To Be Read- list. There are just a couple ahead of it.)

When it comes to action, adventure, sword and soul, horror, non-fiction, self-defense, you name it, and Balogun Ojetade has likely written it. He is a prolific writer with a knack for storytelling and a seasoned self-defense instructor with a deep desire to teach people the TRUTH about self-defense through real world knowledge, practice and example!

Click the book cover image to find *Beneath the Shining Jewel* on Amazon.



## About the AUTHOR



Balogun Ojetade

As Technical Director of the Afrikan Martial Arts Institute and Co-Chair of the Urban Survival and Preparedness Institute, Balogun Ojetade is the author of the bestselling non-fiction books *Afrikan Martial Arts: Discovering the Warrior Within*, *The Afrikan Warriors Bible*, *Surviving the Urban Apocalypse*, *The Urban Self Defense Manual*, *The Young Afrikan Warriors' Guide to Defeating Bullies & Trolls*, *Never Unarmed: The Afrikan Warriors' Guide to Improvised Weapons*, *Ofo Ase: 365 Daily Affirmations to Awaken the Afrikan Warrior Within*, *Ori: The Afrikan Warriors' Mindset and Ogun Ye! Protecting the Afrikan Family and Community*.

He is one of the leading authorities on Afroretroism – film, fashion or fiction that combines African and / or African American culture with a blend of "retro" styles and futuristic technology, in order to explore the themes of tension between past and future and between the alienating and empowering effects of technology and on Creative Resistance. He writes about Afroretroism – Sword & Soul, Rococoa, Steamfunk and Dieselfunk at <http://chroniclesofharriet.com/>.

He is author of eighteen novels and gamebooks – *MOSES: The Chronicles of Harriet Tubman* (Books 1 & 2); *The Chronicles of Harriet Tubman: Freedonia; Redeemer; Once Upon A Time In Afrika; Fist of Afrika; A Single Link; Wrath of the Siafu; The Scythe; The Keys; Redeemer: The Cross Chronicles; Beneath the Shining Jewel; Q-T-Pies: The Savannah Swan Files* (Book 0) and *A Haunting in the SWATS: The Savannah Swan Files* (Book 1); *Siafu Saves the World; Siafu vs. The Horde; Dembo's Ditty; and The Beatdown* – contributing co-editor of three anthologies: *Ki: Khanga: The Anthology*, *Steamfunk and Dieselfunk* and contributing editor of the *Rococoa* anthology and *Black Power: The Superhero Anthology*.

He is also the creator and author of the Afrofuturistic manga series, *Jagun Jagun Lewa* (Pretty Warrior) and co-author of the Ngolo graphic novel.

inally, he is co-author of the award winning screenplay, *Ngolo* and co-creator of *Ki Khanga: The Sword and Soul Role-Playing Game*, both with author Milton Davis.

Reach him on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Afrikan.Martial.Arts> and on Twitter at [https://twitter.com/Baba\\_Balogun](https://twitter.com/Baba_Balogun). Find his books on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Balogun-Ojetade/e/B00AVEA7SU>.

Balogun works and lives in Atlanta with his wife, seven daughters, son, son-in-law, 2 granddaughter and grandson.

You can also see Baba Ojetade at the WARRIOR CLASS (Where they kick ass, and you will too, if you pass), on YouTube via Black Power Media at the link below. Baba Ojetade also has a YouTube show titled: **African Spiritual Resistance**, also through Black Power Media.

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[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Black+Power+Media+Warrior+Class](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Black+Power+Media+Warrior+Class)

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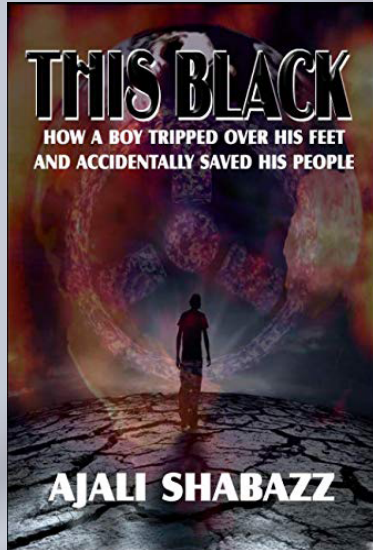
READING and WRITING in the

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Books by:

## AJALI SHABAZZ



Author of: *This Black - This Black NATION* and *Furnace of Affliction!*  
**The Reading and Writing in the DARK Podcast Interview!**

You don't want to miss this discussion with this new POWERFUL voice in  
PRO BLACK FICTION in the genre of Theoretical Ebon Fiction, and Non Fiction!

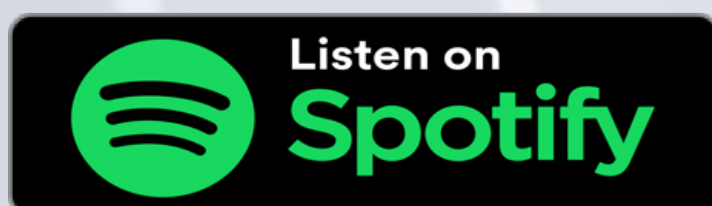
Listen to the interview on  by clicking the link below:

<https://www.spreaker.com/show/a-conversation-with-author-ajali-shabazz>



Did you know there is also a READING and WRITING in the DARK PODCAST?! Well there IS and you can tune in to it and listen just by clicking the block to the right.

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READING and WRITING in the

# DARIK

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## Dead and Dying Illusions

From IYAPO'S BLOG Sunday, 27 August 2023

I'm presently working on a secret project. (At any given time I'm always working on a few.) I have to admit the one I'm referring to has slowed down because it requires far more research than I believed it would need at the outset. The more I'm finding out, the more I'm finding out—and ain't NONE OF IT GOOD! I will say that the project pertains to the Fukushima nuclear disaster and the subsequent irradiation of the planet, as the facility has been, and continues, spewing radiation for over a decade. It is affecting everything on the planet from the bottom of the sea to weather patterns beyond the sky.

There is no judgment to be made on these findings. One can only judge the UNKNOWN... when a thing is KNOWN it is a truth of fact and requires no judgment.

The horrifying facts about manmade radiation and its effects are largely hidden and even suppressed by those in control. Why is this monumentally earthshaking event and the aftermath of it hidden from the public?

Those in charge of the planet MUST keep this colossal blunder hidden because it would threaten their already tenuous position in the world and the dubious narrative they have crafted for and about themselves over countless centuries. Western medicine is a PERFECT correlation to their overall view of life.

Just as with their high-tech gadgets, they can diagnose the CRAP out of what is ailing a person. Same with psychological evaluations, same with just about everything.

But their abject unwillingness to admit who and what they are forever puts ANY solution beyond their reach! I think of the song "Rich Men North of Richmond", which is a fair assessment of the politics, ineptness, and outright corruption of the country's political "leaders".

However, as close to the bullseye as those lyrics are, the problem is twofold:

One: This situation is what it is because white people were unwilling to fight the system that was granting them privilege as long as it was pressing down on the necks of Black people, and it seemed it would always ONLY push Black folks down. Not only did they not seek to change it, they elected and put in place individuals and helped pass legislation that ASSISTED it in destroying us. Now that the trap is sprung and they see it was designed to screw EVERYONE but the select few, they're angry and saying we all need to join hands to fight because it isn't about race, it's about class.

Yeah... naw... I'll just sit this one out.

Two: One of the most fundamental rules about change is that before a problem can be solved one must ADMIT there is a problem. The problem in this case is that due to insecurity,

conditioning, nature... whatever it is... EVERYTHING THEY TOUCH eventually turns to SHIT. But they want to be perceived globally as the greatest, the most civilized, the most beautiful, the smartest in the room and the standard by which all others should be judged. They want to either BE or be RECOGNIZED as GOD. (This is not hyperbole; they have for CENTURIES proven this to be their goal with their every action.)

And so, we get down to Fukushima and the destruction of the ecosystem, irradiation of the planet and pending system collapses of every kind.

It's tough to be recognized as perfect and as a god when you have for centuries been arguably the ones who have been in CHARGE and EVERYTHING you have had a hand in is a gargantuan MESS!

THAT'S why even as they recognize it, they won't admit it and cover it up.

(And the fact they want to wipe out those of us who do not worship them or are of no use to them).

Are WE a people who are deranged?

*"I think we should not attempt a plan unless we can poison food sufficient to kill a half a million men, since there is no doubt that the*

*actual number affected will, because of non-uniform distribution, be much smaller than this."* - J. Robert Oppenheimer, from his letter to a fellow physicist dated: May 25, 1943.

I could never in my wildest nightmares imagine a Black person even conceiving such a thing. Let alone casually saying it as a matter of course. But for Europeans and colonizers those sentiments come out of them so easily it is disconcerting. You cannot pull out of a person what is not IN them. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)

Our people MUST understand that not ONLY are we dealing with a people who mean us no good, but that they have as one of their objectives, maintaining an idealized image of themselves that only exists in their mind and black and white television shows of the 50's and early 60's. That image has absolutely NO foundation in reality. They are grasping tooth and nail onto that image because they HAVE to, otherwise they lose the facade of being the standard and would eventually find themselves having to navigate on a playing field that is genuinely level. One upon which, without assistance and privilege (given to themselves), they would be unable to compete. Moreover, they would no longer be able to receive the worship they so deeply need and desire.

But they WILL be stopped and when the mask is finally removed and their plan for us falls apart, they'll collectively say, "And we would have gotten away with it too if it hadn't been for The Most High and these meddling ProBlacks!"



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## Dead and Dying Illusions (continued)

From IYAPO'S BLOG Sunday, 27 August 2023

As Marimba Ani said, "Anything you can think of (and even things you can't – as my wife Angela and I add), they will DO and already HAVE done. I think one of the problems our people have is the inability (not through any fault of our own, but because by nature we are not cut that way), to understand or relate to the absolute BOTTOMLESSNESS of their capacity for evil. In fairness, many of them, speaking of wyte people, (in my opinion) don't reach, or even approach those unimaginable depths... but the CAPACITY for it is there in a way that does not exist for OUR people.

It is like discussions of various dimensions where it is hypothesized that beings on various dimensional planes can only be aware of others relative to their plane and lower. I.e., a 1-dimensional being cannot perceive a 2 dimensional being who cannot perceive a 3 dimensional being and so on. But a 4 dimensional being CAN perceive beings on 4,3,2 and 1. A 3 dimensional can perceive 3, 2, & 1, etc.

What I'm saying (in my typical long winded, roundabout way), is that our oppressor operates at a level of evil that we cannot even PERCEIVE, while they can from their level perceive US and our limitations when it comes to depravity and wickedness. That's one of the reasons, I believe, they are able to outmaneuver us when it comes to evil. That is also, in my opinion, the reason our people never cease to be surprised at the depths to which they sink. Every time we think they have done the most evil, evil that evil can produce, they go a step lower. Because we are unable to see the cache from which they are able to draw, the majority of us have no idea it exists. Even if we did, we would not know how to even access it, just like if we (being 3 dimensional beings) were trying to access the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension.

That is why those of us who seek to understand what exactly is going on with those entities grapple with the things they do and are capable of. We unfortunately—or FORTUNATELY as it were—have no point of reference and no understanding of the vastness and limitlessness that are out there, when it comes to those levels of evil.

But before I seem like I'm giving them TOO much credit or

power... it also works in the REVERSE. In terms of love, honor, brilliance, creativity, a connectedness with nature, the universe, and the Creator it is the same. For THEM, it is a mystery they can't unlock because just as with a 3 dimensional being seeking to speculate about a 4<sup>th</sup> dimension... they can speculate, they can hypothesize, they can imagine... but they cannot KNOW the way WE know. Just as their savagery and barbarism is a MYSTERY that far too many of us are even unaware of, OUR capacity for love, forgiveness, kindness, brilliance, and connectedness is a mystery to THEM. Something they covet and hate us for, by the way.

Again... our people not being able to engage on their level is NOT our fault. How can a 3 dimensional being be blamed for never perceiving a 4<sup>th</sup> dimension... especially when that is something that has never been a question to be readily pondered?

By the way... the cache of evil, wickedness and depravity from which THEY draw... we have the counterpoint to that which is a cache of love, spirituality, and brilliance.

Alright Iyapo... you're s' damn smart! How is it that there ARE Black people who commit unspeakable atrocities on the same level as any wyte person?! And wyte people who are capable of artistic brilliance and brilliances in the sciences, and powerful "shows" of compassion?!

Simple:

They draw from their cache and bring it into this reality... based upon our proximity to them our people access it (the evil) THROUGH THEM.

And VICE VERSA – they access the positive aspects from US based upon their proximity to us.

But in BOTH cases, it is against the natures of the given people... and very difficult to sustain (though some on both sides manage to do so). (Though it would seem – on THIS side anyway – that it is far easier to corrupt a good person than it is to turn to good, a wicked one).



# READING and WRITING in the DARIK

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## MELANIN: A Novel NOW ON KINDLE UNLIMITED!

I know that my first novel has brought joy to those who have read it and been kind enough to take time to rate it and write reviews. *AND MELANIN* has been a ceaseless source of pride and joy for me. From the time I released *MELANIN: A Novel* it has only been available as soft cover, hard back and Kindle edition. It is my only work published through Amazon, that is not available on Kindle Unlimited.

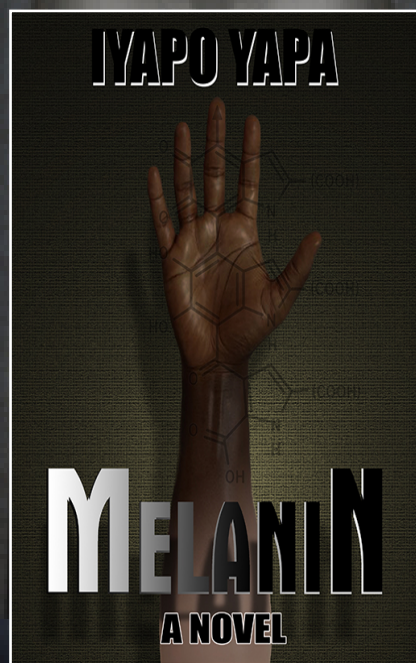
### UNTIL NOW!

To celebrate the One Year Anniversary of the publication of my debut novel, *MELANIN: A Novel* is now available on Kindle Unlimited! This means that if you have a Kindle (or any tablet or mobile device) you can (download and) open the free Kindle App and read about what hap-

pens in a world were becoming genetically and phenotypically Black is the difference between life and death.

### BUT IT GETS BETTER!

As a huge THANK YOU to all of my supporters and want-to-be supporters, you can add *MELANIN: A Novel* to your digital library for FREE starting today (Friday, September 1, 2023) through Labor Day (Monday, September 4, 2023)!

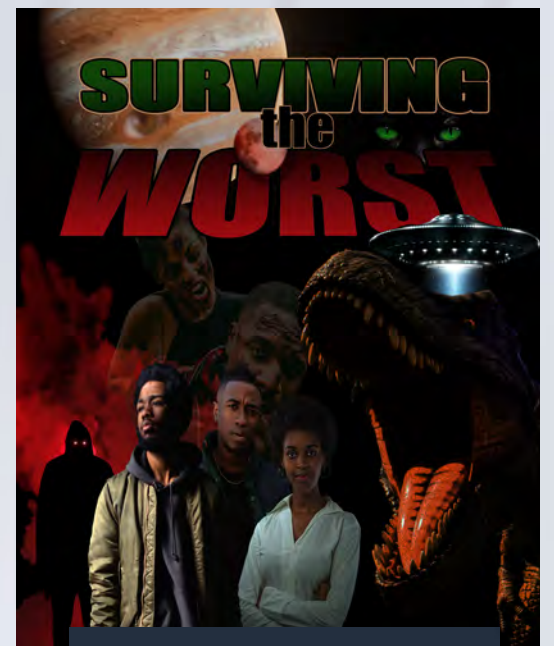


So, tell your family and tell your friends! Tell your neighbors and your colleagues! Tell your book clubs and your reading groups! And remember to grab a digital copy for YOURSELF while you're at it!

## Could YOU survive?!

Five years ago, a cataclysm now known as THE COLLAPSE occurred. Dimensions merged with horrific results. It is now common to see creatures of myth, legend, and nightmare along with once long extinct animals populating the landscape. Carl, LaTanya and Lester, embark on a quest to find a lost book that can't change the madness of the new normal but may assist them and others in the now nearly impossible task of: SURVIVING the WORST! Enter a world of action, adventure, science and horror on Kindle vella!

Click on the Kindle vella link below!



kindle vella



Be sure to take some time to visit my website at:

<https://www.iyapoyapa.com> - or just click the image to the right!

There are a LOT of things to see and interact with! There are also a couple special surprises hidden in the site. They aren't marked, but if you take a little time to search for them, you'll defiantly be pleasantly surprised!





## Alright, enough about ME!

Below are AWESOME stories on the KINDLE VELLA platform by some authors I know!

Just click the cover art to be transported to their stories!

And remember, the first THREE episodes are FREE to read!



### I DeClaire Love

Angela Riley

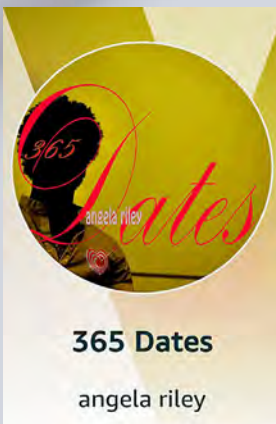
DeClaire and Tyrone meet and sparks fly. They fall in love with each other quick, fast, and in a hurry. It seems too good to be true. But is it? Is it safe to love? Are there any “good” rules when it comes to love? Do we have to fight for love? Are there always games being played when it comes to love? Is simple, sane, “old-fashioned” love out of style? CAN LOVE SET US FREE? \*\*\* New Episodes Weekly!



### The Love X TamuTamu Agency

Angela Riley

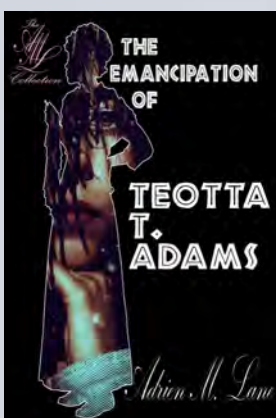
Love is natural but it ain't always easy. And Mama Tamu should know! She is a 91 year old match maker who has run “The Love X TamuTamu Agency” for FIFTY years. She has personally experienced and been a witness to all kinds of love. And, as she says, “Love is more than a notion!” Follow along as she stands up for and works to support and encourage the natural flow of Black Love.



### 365 Dates

Angela Riley

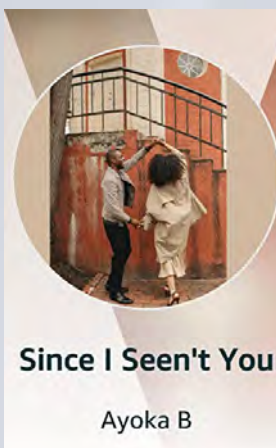
Single again, after my first divorce, one day I had a new thought: I WANT TO DATE. And... NOTHING. No one came knocking on my door to woo me. No one approached me when I was out wanting to court me. Nobody asked friends/family to be set up with me. Just crickets! So, thinking that maybe my goal was to vague--I want to date.--to make anything happen, I decided to pursue a HUGE goal of going on 365 dates. Not 3, 5, or 6 dates but three HUNDRED and SIXTY-FIVE dates. So...LET'S GO!



### The Emancipation of Teotta T. Adams

Adrien M. Lane

Teotta T. Adams has it all, big house, nice car, fine clothes, and a private chef, one of the best in the world, and a successful husband. Yes, Teotta has everything. Everything except her FREEDOM! She spends her days in the lap of luxury, but inside she knows something's wrong. Her ‘husband’ is just this side of a stranger, and worse, Teotta knows even less about herself. When she finally discovers why, and the incredible truth behind it, she will long for the bliss of her lost ignorance.



### Since I Seen't You

Ayoka B.

She and David met when they were 18. After a rough start, they build a friendship that would span decades: marriages, children, love and heartache. When they lose touch, she thought that she would never see him again, but she was wrong. Can men and women truly be just friends? Can their friendship withstand what life has in store?



### The Match

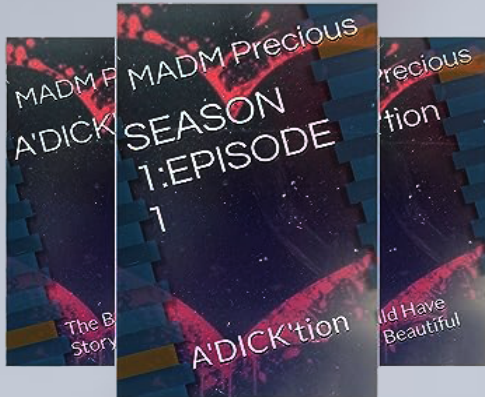
Ayoka B.

Have you ever changed someone's life? I mean in a life and death sort of way. I opened a letter that I almost threw out, thinking it was junk mail; it said that I was a possible bone marrow match for someone! I couldn't even remember being tested. The letter asked me to contact them if I was still a willing donor... what would you do?

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## A'DICK'tion The Back Story

MADM Precious

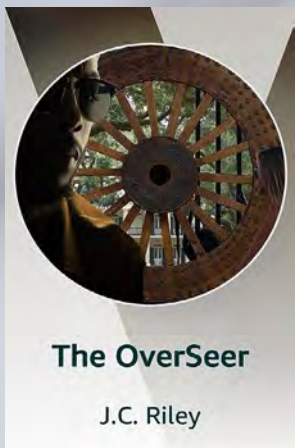
From Book 1: Sex addiction is a real thing; When Quincey finds out his wife is caught up in some things, can they save their marriage.



## The Godchild Chronicles

J.C. Riley

War rocks the Planet Raosis! Pthahlon Anuku is drafted onto the Anti-Terror Detail & is under constant attack. With ties to both sides of the conflict, Pthahlon must choose a side in order to get him & his wife (fellow CDO Officer Raseem) safely off of Raosis. What will it take for Pthahlon & Raseem to escape in one piece? Who will they rely on to help bring their ambitions to a reality? And more importantly, what kind of sacrifice are they willing to make to achieve their ultimate goal?



## The OverSeer

J.C. Riley

It's nice to be up high and seeing over things, right? Welcome to the world of THE OVERSEER. Strap yourself in because it's one heck of a ride!

ALSO AVAILABLE on AMAZON and OTHER PLATFORMS!

Below are stories and books by some authors I know! Just click the cover art to purchase their book.

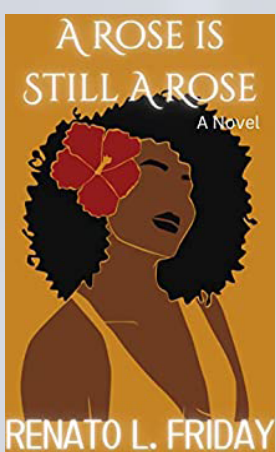


## Affirming Self Love (Graphic Non-Fiction SERIES)

angela riley

### SelfLOVE Meditation, Reflections, & AFFIRMATIONS Series...

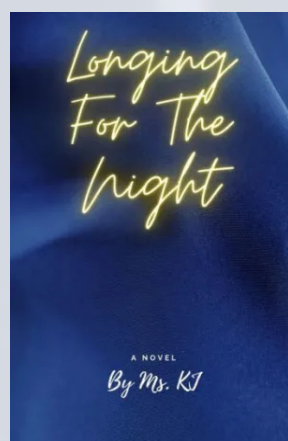
With a new book released each month, this "Graphic Nonfiction" series is filled with love for BlackUs. Each episode opens with a short essay exploring a theme such as "Following the Happy" or "Plan & Reflect" and culminates with a dynamic collection of affirmation. You'll have a beautiful time meditating and reflecting on the monthly theme as you AFFIRM Self Love.



## A Rose is Still a Rose

Renato L. Friday

Rose thought life was going great: she was engaged, had a beautiful set of twin girls, a recent trade school graduate, and a new job right around the corner. Unfortunately, her fiancé, David, turned out to not be what she needed, and she chose to break things off. In the midst of her failing relationship, she met a man named Falcon, who ironically turns out to be her new boss. They quickly go from acquaintances to lovers, which opens up a fire pit of drama. Then comes Landon, a self-made millionaire, who is very humble about his accomplishments. He shows her all the things she was lacking while with David, and ultimately proposes. Naturally, Rose is scared to fall for Landon and accept his proposal due to David's lies and Falcon's toxic choices, but she takes a chance and allows Landon to love her the way she needs. Will her love for him forsake the feelings she's still harboring for Falcon, or will she give into temptation?



## Longing for the Night

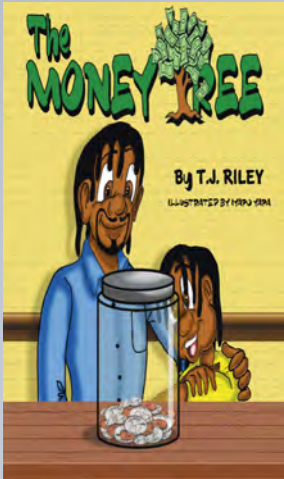
Ms. KJ

Inspired by the poem Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti, two young sisters face the trials and tribulations of the hood in this coming-of-age story about the harshness of living in South Central Los Angeles.

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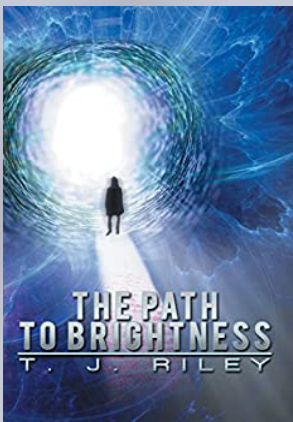
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## The Money Tree

T.J. Riley / Illustrated by Iyapo Yapa

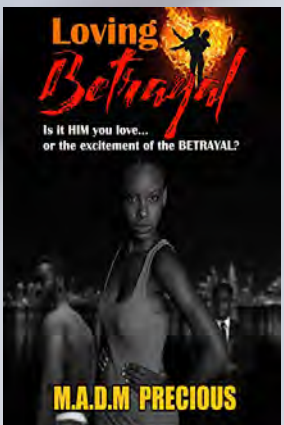
Every child wants money to buy something, right? Our hero does too. But, his father has a surprise, a Money Tree. Join the fun journey to find out how to grow your own money tree.



## THE PATH to BRIGHTNESS

T.J. Riley

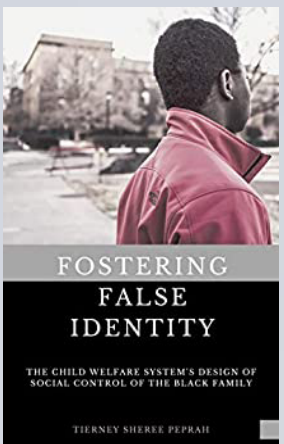
Fatima, a young woman, has a near-death experience. When she awakes from a coma and recovers, she has mystical powers. She begins to see auras and experiences life with her new abilities. For the clever character, Fatima, life is about to dramatically change. Follow Fatima's journey as she tries to convince others of the astounding esoteric knowledge she has brought back from beyond the veil. However, there are some that wish to stop her from sharing an ancient secret. A secret that will change life on earth, forever.



## LOVING BETRAYAL

MADM Precious

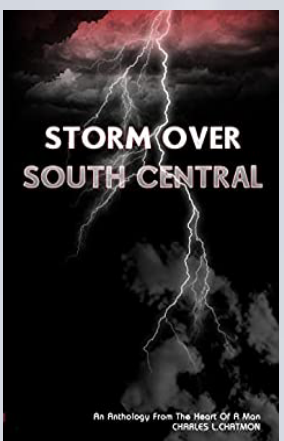
When Michelle met Michael, she thought that she found the love of her life. She was young and coming out of a bad marriage. A single parent of two children, she was scared, broke and had no self esteem. Michael seemed perfect, except for one little problem...



## Fostering False Identity: The Child Welfare System's Design of Social Control of the Black Family

Tierney Peprah

THE ORGANISM OF RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES CRAFTS VARIOUS SYSTEMS MEANT TO ACHIEVE ONE OVERARCHING PURPOSE, that is to ensure that peoples and groups designated for an inferior existence pose little to no threat to the social structure of wealth and privilege that is propped up on their backs. These systems are allowed to exist, oftentimes unchallenged, by propagating dishonest descriptions of why these systems exist. Many people are without the proper means to challenge these systems, camouflaged as being charitable or in the public interest, for their unjust outcomes. In *Fostering False Identity*, the American child welfare system is explored as such a system. While the child welfare system is portrayed as a moral arbitrator in the abuse and neglect of children, in actuality this system was formulated for the specific purpose of regulating disenfranchised populations by removing children from those communities to assimilate them into White society. Thus assimilated, they are believed to pose minimal threat to the social order. *Fostering False Identity* will explore this phenomenon through a lens of Black liberation and self-determination of African families who are consistently victimized by this system.



## Storm Over South Central

Charles L. Chatmon

The Storm has been unleashed, which means it's time to share what's inside the much anticipated anthology by author Charles L. Chatmon.

Chatmon, a refreshing voice in the world of modern poetry and author of *The Depths of My Soul & The Voices of South Central* returns with engaging short stories and thought provoking poems.

Read *Storm over South Central* and discover the thoughts he writes about in this volume filled with verses and tales of despair, stories of hope. It will also reveal a lot about American society – its strengths, its flaws and its people. This is a literary journey you will enjoy taking.

**And there will be more authors to come, who are working to**

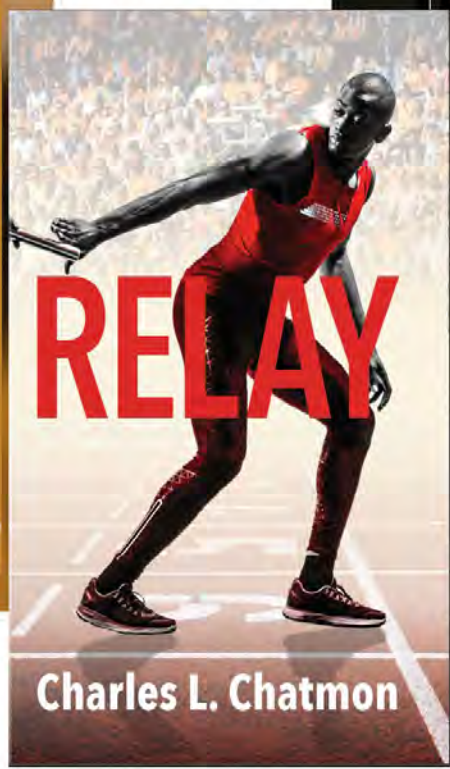
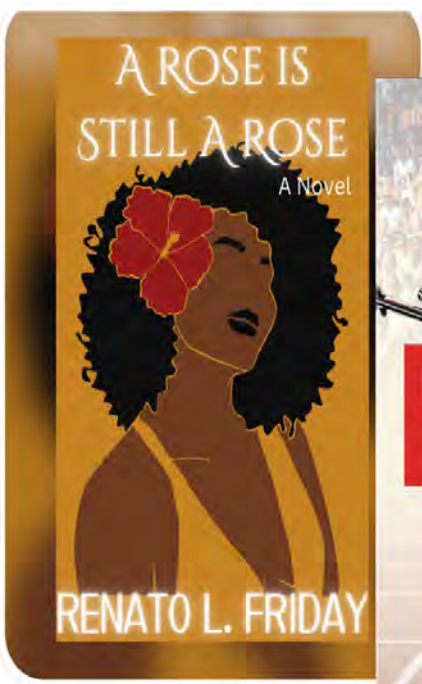
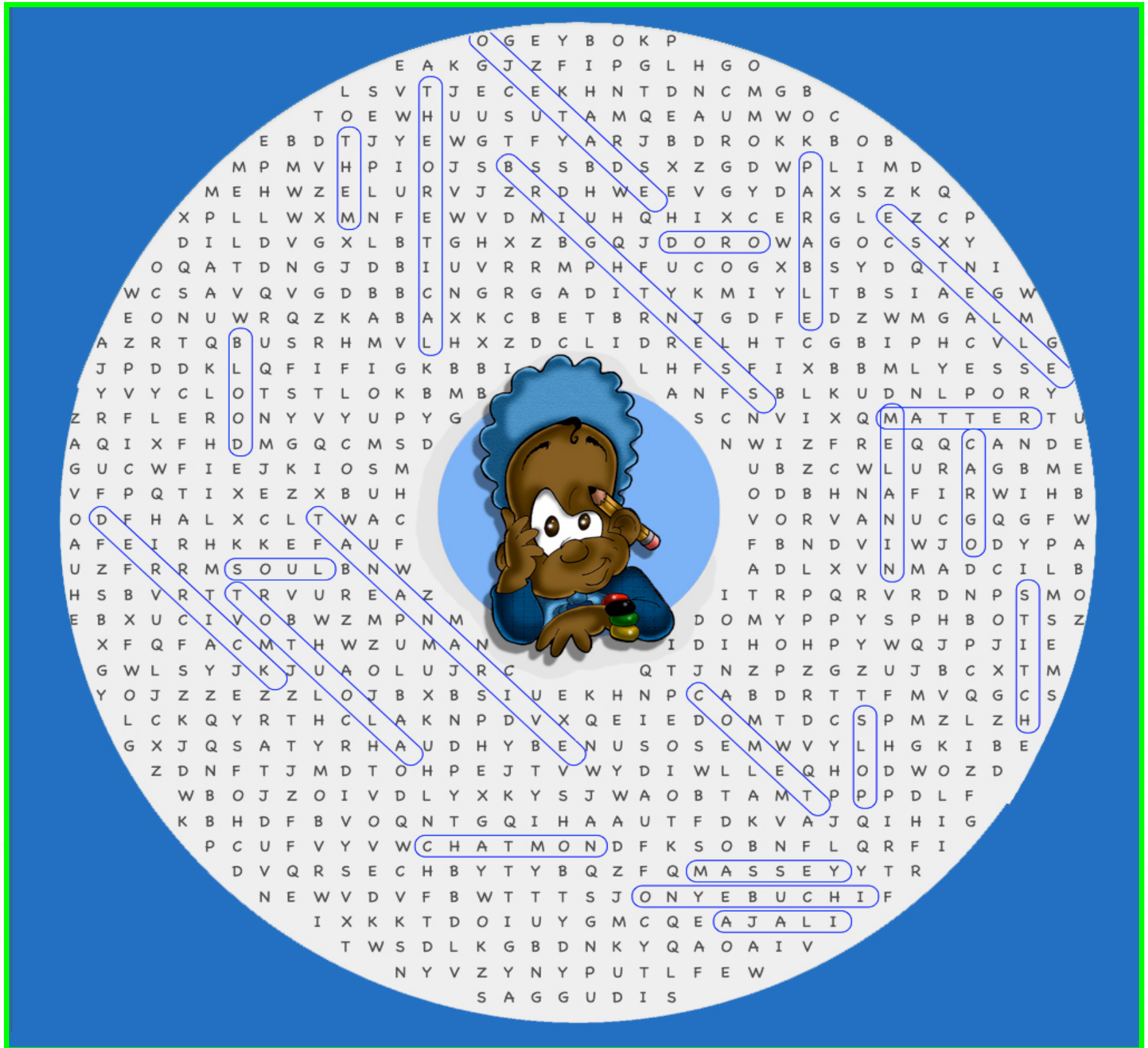
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