

Fires of the 60s vs. the deity of daddy

Written by Azaniah Little

Wednesday, 25 June 2014 14:50



PART 2 IN A SERIES

The advent of the 1960s paved the way for two distinct entities within the consciousness of the notion of "father" in my life, and in the lives of my community and the world.

The first was the culmination of Jim Crow along with locked mental images of "White Only" signs and the word nigger said way too many times. Daddy (as I called him until his death) had done all the right things. He stayed away from moonshine and loose ladies wearing cheap perfume. He had served in World War II, despite his best efforts; his *beloved* country still valued Nazi prisoners of war over him and other Black soldiers. In the eyes of America, my father and men of his generation were "boys" and white men were their fathers ... no matter how illiterate or backwards these so-called fathers were.



The other was the emergence of the revolutionary 1960s that challenged the very forces that dared call my father "boy" and denied access to employment at institutions like the Minneapolis Fire Department and branded and limited the destinies of his six children, even before they were born. Looming invisibly and specter like over Daddy was an unseen entity that he, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks or anyone else could have possibly predicted. When its winds of change began blowing, transformation leaped from its unseen belly, with many consequences he could never have imagined – not in 10 lifetimes.

The winds came from the north, east, west and south, toppling orders and institutions, Old

Fires of the 60s vs. the deity of daddy

Written by Azaniah Little

Wednesday, 25 June 2014 14:50

Money and familiar alliances. When the winds ceased after madly spiraling – *somebody* lit a match and shouted, "Burn baby burn" and uniform clusters of fierce raging fires were ignited everywhere. The fires lapped away at feelers of the monster of racism; however they also cleared the ground for a harvest that architects of the Civil Rights Movement had not included in their strategy meetings.

Soon an east wind began gently blowing the fires whose scorching tongues began violently and rhythmically lapping upon everything in its path and jumping course and began lapping things not in their path.

Soon everything was on fire.

In Minneapolis, Plymouth Avenue burned from one end to the other – 38th Street in south Minneapolis was ablaze, schools were torched, institutions fired up – even bras were set on fire. But it was the unseen fires that began to burn in my father's personal life that burned insidiously right along with the visible fires.

The unscrupulous fires began feasting upon the beautiful middle class home that he had so meticulously built. The unseen flames worked their way into our home from the outside, and worked their way in beginning with the recalibration of the English language as everything began being redefined.

Stokely Carmichael and others in unison chanted, "What do you want" with the group of students and Mississippi sharecroppers responding "Black power. Black power."

A different light was shed upon men like my father. No longer was the Black community interested in clasping arms and singing "We shall overcome."

Daddy had told me and my brother and sisters that we were Negro ... or colored. You could take your pick – they were used simultaneously. However, my most significant classification as a little girl was being Matt Little's daughter.

Until the fires of change began, I had never thought much about the Negro or colored part of my identity for they were insignificant in light of my being Matt Little's daughter.

*Azaniah Little lives in Seattle. She works as a freelance writer, minister and consultant, and is currently seeking publication for her first book, "Purpose for Your Pain..."
She is the proud mother of Namibia Little who lives in Minneapolis.*