

Fires of the 60's vs. the deity of daddy part VI: Black Panther worldview

Written by

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The "fires" had lapped away at the core of my innocence, and it was beginning to show in my expression, sudden isolation and anger, and the militant clothing I wore. Yet, he still called me "angel" or "sweetie pie."

Daddy would look at me and ask a few questions like, "What did you learn in school today?" "Have you been thinking about what college you will go to? You know its never too early to begin planning for it." After hearing my empty and rhetorical responses, he would say, "I don't know who's filling your head up with all of that junk." Or, "those guys are not going to do anything but get themselves killed." Or, "you cannot do anything in life without an education." Then he would look at me with the saddest eyes, and make a slow descent down the wooden stairs leading to his basement office.

Vapors from the 1960s' fires encompassed me, transforming me into something even I did not recognize. I had inherited my father's love for change, however I now believed wholeheartedly in the teachings of "my new fathers" and the need for armed struggle. Secretly, at 16 years old, I was taught how to fire a .357 magnum "because that's what the police carry," they said. I was taught how to construct Molotov cocktails and how to blitz a city with propaganda. Like many in my generation, I romanticized my death and being martyred for the people ... the revolution.

Daddy's refusal to cease calling me his angel or sweetie pie baffled many because I was far from it. Yet in doing so, the hearing of it still had a way of instantly softening what had now become a hardened glare in my eyes.

As my young body began to blossom, my revolutionary stance took on an entirely new dimension characterized by a quotation by one of the "fathers" of the day in saying, "The role of the woman in the revolution is on her back" ... and I believed him ... as did scores of other young impressionable girls who embraced their every word. The barometer set for this "burn baby burn" generation – especially being a young Black female was set firmly at rebellion at any costs, at any price and on every level.

I no longer listened to my father and would sneak to Black Panther headquarters explicitly against my father's orders ... sneak to Plymouth Avenue –even when the National Guard was

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called there at the height of the riots. But, despite the wedge that now existed between my father and me, I was allowed the privilege to witness in our home, the real source of my father's strength as his own Robins Island experience arrived and nearly swallowed him and everyone in our house completely whole as the fires lapped away at the edges of America. His entire family began to disappear, just as he was slowly disappearing.

One of my younger sisters was hit by a police car with the vehicle dragging her hundreds of feet down the street. My father was at a meeting when a neighbor banged at our door telling me that she was laying in a pool of blood on 4th Avenue. When I arrived at the old General Hospital I was handed a bag and told casually, "Here, we had to cut her clothes off her." When they took me to my sister, her head was the size of a watermelon, and she was screaming from the pain from the injuries over her entire body. My sister nearly died, and her recovery entailed more than a year of surgeries and hospitalization, including being placed in a full body cast.

Another sister was shot at on Nicollet Avenue and escaped the bullet by hiding under a nearby parked car. Shortly afterwards she was beaten so badly both of her eyes were purple and swollen shut.

Amidst the pressure of the 1960s and the effects we experienced as a family, my parents began a series of physical separations and shortly after, their marriage ended in divorce constituting the second and last time I saw my father cry.

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She is the proud mother of Namibia Little who lives in Minneapolis.*