

Coming of Age in BAM

by

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Last of the jim crow generation:
jim crow named for a minstrel show
White man in black face show called
Jumping Jim Crow into
Black Codes, laws after the Civil War
After Emancipation
How whites react to new-found Negro rights: legal separation of races
We planned attacks with Homer Plessy
NOLA Civil Rights vs Fergusson push to
Integrate public transportation
Some Blacks to Congress
Public Education for all a first!
Ku Klux Klan rose with 1st national blockbuster film, racist D. W. Griffith's
Birth of a Nation, then peoples' protests
NAACP & Urban League fight, later
Emmet Till & Scottsborough Boys fuel our rage
Brown vs Board of Education
Ignites hope

A child in the separate 1950s
Colored only restrooms, restaurants
Leftovers turned Soul Food Cuisine
Great Colored Cafés, Juke Joints
Back of town,
Jazz blossomed, bound by
Colored-only water fountains
Get groceries at the rear or side window
Couldn't sit at public counters
No Colored electricians, plumbers, truck drivers, all illegal
Some passed for white to survive,
Some to infiltrate enemy plans
Backyard parties, suppers, Second Lines,
We passed a good time together anyway,
Us, culturally covered, cozy, & Colored

Fueled by World Black Consciousness Movement,
David Walker, Marcus Garvey legacies, alongside
Rise of machines
Folks fed by Marx critiques of capitalism, abuses of labor
WWII-Blacks in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Forces saving peace
jim crow still ugly once home
1949 Chinese Revolution
1959 Cuban Revolution
International Black Intellectuals:
Aimé Césaire, Martinique
Nelson Mandela, South Africa
Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Kenya

A teen of the 1960s
Civil Rights Act passed in 1963
Not enforced until the 1970s
Larry Neal & Leroi Jones make
Black Fire
Our Christian names flew into African tongues
Abena, girl born on Tuesday
Kofi, boy born on Friday
1961, Amiri Baraka arrested at United Nations protesting murder of Patrice Lumumba, Congo

Independence movements in Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea
SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee)
Detroit Red blasted into Malcolm X
Taught resistance “by any means necessary,” then fire bombed
Touched by God into Minister El Hajj Malik el-Shabazz
Killed February 21st, 1965
Stokely Carmichael introduced Black Power slogan June 1966
Reviving Garvey

We divorced the Colored, Negro
Eyes-to-the-ground cower for
African Dashiki-wearing Gospel singing *Lifting Every Voice*
Black became beautifully bold
Kinks, Curls, Afro Puffs fanned like proud
Black flowers from red bean to black to brown to yellow, all Black

Our great past unveiled from Akan & Yoruba Kingdoms & proverbs to
Banneker designs of the U. S. capital city, WA, D.C.
Always blazing trails
Inventing, from the ironing board to traffic lights to the first working computer & blood plasma,
thank you Dr. Charles Drew
Jazz Bopped to a *Love Supreme*; *So What* Miles blew
R & B wailed
Ahhhhhh anh
Oohhhh ohhhhhh, Ray’s sunshine
Soul birthed Rock & Roll to Rock &
Whites would never be the same
Our poetic voices explode like fireworks: AI, Amiri Baraka, Brooks, Evans, Haki, Spellman,
Giovanni, Henderson, Kaufman, Walker, Young, Reed, Redmond, Carolyn M. Rodgers
Black journals pop up x 20
We keep our *Eyes on the Prize*
Oh Lord
We keep our *Eyes on the Prize*
Oh Lord

BAM & Mona Lisa Saloy

Like the Harlem Renaissance or the Beat Movement, the term Black Arts Movement is something we say in hindsight, a label to honor and dignify a legacy we recognize as significant in many lives and affecting generations. At the time, post Brown versus The Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas, the painful integration of public schools, and the aching protests and sit-ins of the heinous jim-crow era, we lost great heroes and heroines: Malcolm X, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy, and Fannie Lou Hamer said it best that she was “*sick and tired of being sick and tired.*” She articulated what we all felt, what our ancestors lived in the indigo and cotton fields of the south, in the subways and street corners of the cold north, locked out, looked down upon, often hated, misunderstood, and few outside of us really cared. Thank God, some did. Something else wonderful happened. The era of realizing the continuous forces for Civil Rights were raging; but most importantly, we, once Negroes, then Colored People, became Black and Beautiful.

It was somewhere between the Black Panther Movement calling us to arms, to defend ourselves, as Malcolm X said, “*by any means necessary,*” and the Black Muslims practicing cooperative economics, amid our new-found consciousness that traditional “church” was historically hypocritical, later the birth of Kwanzaa to offset our newly-found ability to promote buying Black. Then, Don L. Lee became Haki Madhubuti and told “*Niggas that to be Black is to be very hot.*” LeRoi Jones called out an “*SOS, calling all Black People/ Calling all Black People,*” and he became Imamu Amiri Baraka. Nikki Giovanni reminded us that even though most of us grew up poor (a sociological term) that “*All the while we were quite happy*” -- especially since we had no idea just what we were missing since there was so much we were not allowed to do, say, experience; what we did do, say, and experience was great cooking made from whatever white folks didn’t want, later called Soul Food, and now the stuff of massive cookbooks, cooking shows, and chefs, the hottest cuisine in the world. We sang our hearts out in church, praising the Lord in Gospel riffs born in the Sorrow Songs and Middle Passage woes added to the blues of work songs and chain gangs. These gems became Gospel music that toured the world raising money for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. We cooked up something new between The Blues-baring, soulful stirrings of Black angst married to European notation into Jazz, America’s original classical music. Then, Soul music broke loose into Funk, then into Rock & Roll, later Rock, later Disco, until those street-corner heroic narratives of *Shine & The Signifying Monkey* left the sidewalk from Toasting into another musical phenomenon and blossomed into Rap, full scale. Yeah, we made more than lemonade. Through it all, our poets and lyricists, from Langston Hughes to Curtis Mayfield, gave us hope to move on up.

As a *bonafide* Baby Boomer, the last of the jim-crow generation born and raised in the south, BAM gave me my voice, my drive to self-determine, to articulate my southern roots, my legacy earned from ancestors holding court on the front porch.

Thanks to BAM efforts and trail-blazing cultural work, Black literature continues to break new ground. We, Black authors, write our past and tomorrows.

Mona Lisa Saloy, Ph.D., author & folklorist, educator, and scholar, is an award-winning author of contemporary Creole culture in articles, documentaries, and poems about Black New Orleans before and after Katrina. Currently, Conrad N. Hilton Endowed Professor and Coordinator of English at Dillard University; there, Dr. Saloy received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to document contemporary Black Creole Culture. As a Folklorist, for decades, Dr. Saloy has documented Creole culture and sidewalk songs, jump-rope rhymes, and clap-hand games to discuss the importance of play. As a poet, her first book, *Red Beans & Ricely Yours*, won the T.S. Eliot Prize and the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Award. She has written on the significance of the Black Beat poets, on the African American Toasting Tradition, on Black & Creole talk, on life and keeping Creole after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Her book, *Second Line Home* is a collection of poems that captures day-to-day New Orleans speech, family dynamics, celebrates New Orleans, and gives insight into the unique culture the world loves. In 2014, Dr. Mona Lisa Saloy was nominated as Best Female Faculty by *HBCU Digest*, out of 101 Historically Black Colleges & Universities. Since 2010, Dr. Saloy is listed in Marquis Who's Who.

Also, she was honored as best female artist by the Margaret Burroughs/New Orleans Chapter of the National Council of Black Artists; and honored as exemplary faculty in scholarship and creativity on campus. In 2014, she was guest speaker at the Smithsonian on Black Creole Culture in New Orleans. Saloy's screenplay for the documentary *Easter Rock* premiered in Paris, the Ethnograph Film Festival 2015 and in November 2017 with Folklorists in Washington, D.C. at the National African American Museum; documentary "Bleu Orleans: Black Creole Culture at Dillard University" premiered October 2017. Last fall, Dr. Saloy was appointed by the Louisiana Division of Folklife as a Folklore Ambassador. Currently, Dr. Saloy is competing a biography on Black Beat Poet Bob Kaufman and two collections of essays on Black Folklore. She writes for those who don't or can't tell Black Creole cultural stories.