

Woman Shows Courage By Fighting Drugs In Community

By KAREN M. HANSON
Chronicle Staff Writer

For years, Mattie Young has put her life on the line to make life better for her community.

Even after death threats from drug dealers in the Cleveland Avenue Homes neighborhood, Young stands as valiant as an Indian brave defending his homeland.

But Young's weapon is not a tomahawk or bow and arrow. Her weapon is her mere presence.

"I said I wasn't afraid of them," Young said. "If I get killed, I just get killed. I've gotta die one day. I'd rather die doing right than die doing nothing."

Young has been on a crusade to do right in her community for years. Art Milligan, director of the city Housing Authority, said Young has been the leader of the pack in the Cleveland Avenue neighborhood.

"She was on the scene long before the housing authority was on the case," Milligan said. "Mattie led the charge in helping get drugs out of the community."

Young said the neighborhood has been plagued with drug runners. But four years ago, things began to get worse.

"People came from everywhere and were selling drugs, fighting and shooting," said Young, who has lived in the Cleveland Avenue neighborhood the past 15 years. "We just couldn't sleep at night."

With the support of Mayor

Martha S. Wood, residents, the Winston-Salem police department and several companies formulated in 1990 the Cleveland Avenue Task Force to address the community's drug problem.

Young, who is president of the neighborhood's resident council, said at first she stood alone in the fight. She took the initiative to clean up the neighborhood by picking up the telephone and calling for back-up.

"I started calling in help from the mayor and Chief (George) Sweat and the police department," she said. They came in because they said they couldn't do it by themselves. They had to have the residents to help. So after nobody else wouldn't say nothing or do nothing, I decided I was going to take it on myself.

After her voice was heard throughout the city, people in the community began to help.

"I said somebody's gotta stand up against the drug dealers and drug pushers and let them know that you're not afraid," Young said. "If they find out you're not afraid, they're not going to have any problems. They're going to go somewhere else where they can intimidate somebody else. So after the residents saw that I was going to take a stand, they decided to come in and help."

Young said she saw a lot of drug trade in the community because of her early hours on the

streets. Saying she's called "the Paper Lady" by the drug pushers, Young would hit the streets at 5:30 a.m. delivering newspapers to residents.

"When I'd go out delivering papers, I would see them selling drugs. They knew I wasn't afraid to go out. One time, one of the drug boys was getting ready to sell some drugs. He saw me coming and he told one of the guys, 'Wait a minute, man. I can't let you have nothing. Don't you see the Paper Lady coming?' So he said, 'Paper Lady, I'll help you carry your bag.' So he stopped selling drugs to help me carry my bag down the street."

"He got me far enough down the street so he could go back and sell his drugs. He wanted to get me out of the way, I guess. So he said, 'This is as far as I'm going, Paper Lady,' I said, 'O.K., thanks.' And he went on back up the street."

"I trust in the Lord and I know God can take care. I said, 'God will make the devil work for you. The drug boy stopped selling drugs to



Mattie Young began as a one-woman crusade in cleaning up Cleveland Avenue Homes.

Since then, Young has developed a one-on-one relationship with the police department. She said she was close to Officer Michael R. Jennings and Lt. A.G. Eise, both of whom were killed in the line of duty. Both men walked foot patrols in her neighborhood.

Today, the Cleveland Avenue area is safer because of Young's efforts.

It's just as much change as day and night," she said. "Now the sun shines in the daytime and the moon shines at night. We can go to bed at night and sleep at night and not be afraid that somebody's going to shoot in our house. We can go outside and come back in anytime at night and don't have to be afraid somebody's going to knock you out."

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Rappers

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black comedians routinely use "nigger" in their acts.

But older blacks, those of the era of sit-in demonstrations and marches and whose heroes were Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., say the historical dehumanization attached to the word should never be forgotten.

"I think the use of the word is degrading," says Emery L. Rann III, director of the Winston-Salem Department of Human Relations. "And I have a real problem with the commercialization of 'nigger' in day-to-day conversation."

Mark Raymond, program director of the city's black-owned radio station, WAAA, said although some blacks greet other blacks with the word, it should not be allowed into the mainstream.

"This radio station is not going to play any record that uses that word," he says. "The history of the word is too deep."

The reason Shocky Shay says she uses "nigger" in her lyrics is because the term can refer to anybody. She said that generations ago when whites used the term to refer to black people, they did it because blacks were ignorant since they were forbidden to learn to read or write. She believes that today the term describes anyone — white or black — who is ignorant.

"I got into an argument with a white producer recently," she says, "and I called him a nigger."

But for most blacks, several said, anger still persists when the

term is used by whites or when found scratched on bathroom walls. And the widespread usage by rappers, some blacks say, is not to demystify the word, but to boost record sales.

"I hate to see where the word 'nigger' has to be used to sell records," says Darrelle G. Kennedy, a 26-year-old producer and songwriter from Winston-Salem. "But without it, these records won't sell." Kennedy says none of the artists — mostly jazz — that he produces uses "nigger" in their lyrics.

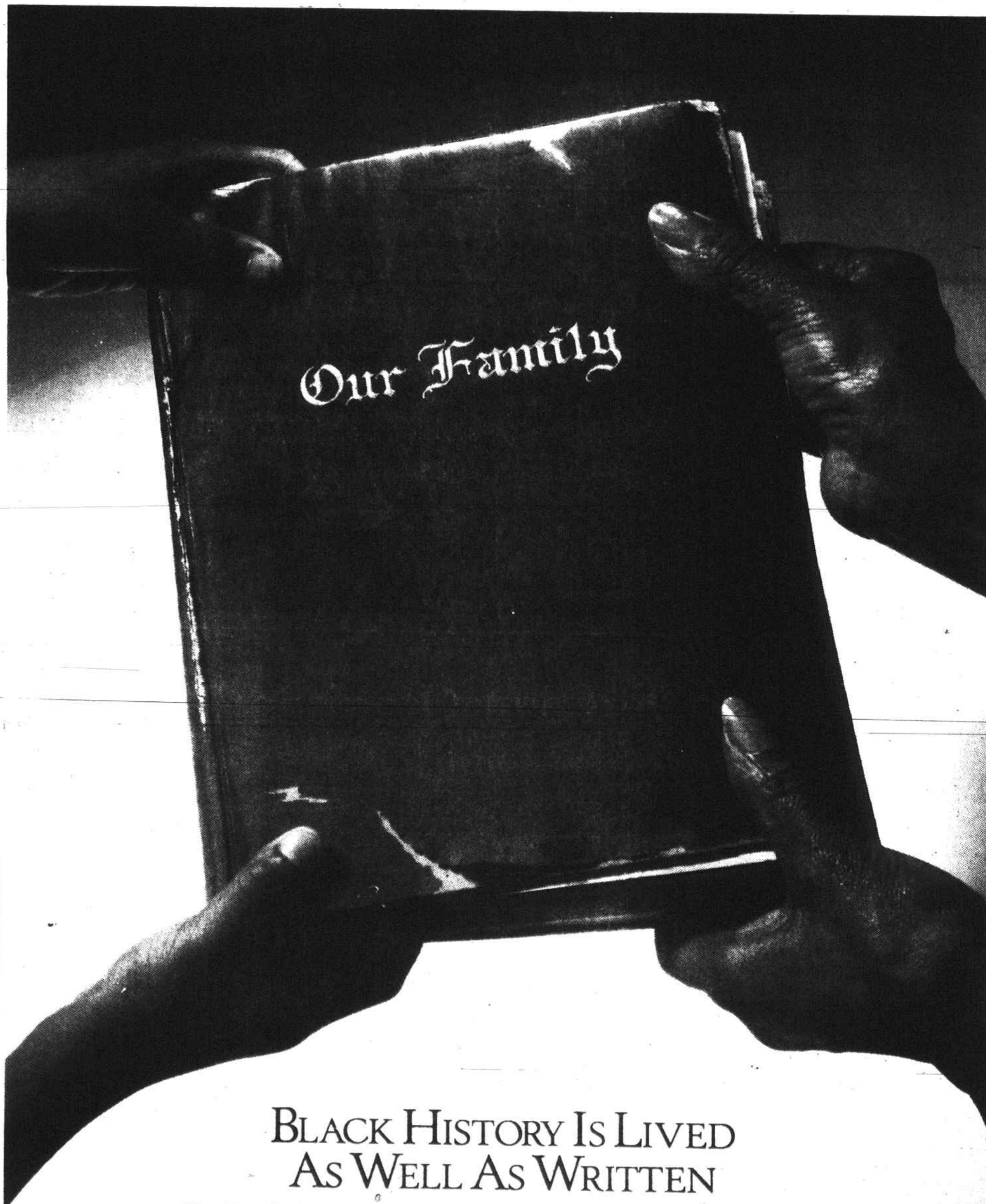
"I don't care if rappers embrace the term," says Nat Irvin, former chairman of the National Urban League and vice chancellor for development and university relations at Winston-Salem State University. "But that doesn't mean we have to embrace rappers. You don't remove the sting of the word by using it over and over again."

William Rice, founder of the local African-American Historical Society, agrees that the widespread usage of "nigger" is a way for young blacks to make money.

"Look at Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy," Rice says. "They were doing this and getting paid for it long before anybody. These rappers just took it to another level."

He suggested that blacks should concern themselves with more weighty issues.

"I think there are things that are much more important to deal with than trying to hang on to the usage of a word," he says.



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