# Cover to Cover

# Adult 'pop-up' strikes chord

By Lyle V. Harris THE ATLANTA
JOURNAL CONSTITUTION

**ATLANTA** - Velma Maia Thomas didn't want people to read another book about the horrors of slavery. They had to feel it.

That's why she wrote "Lest We Forget," a slim, gift-size hardcover that gives newfound intimacy to the slave experience by using pop-up illustrations usually reserved for children's bedtime fairy tales.

The cover a sepia-toned daguerreotype of two weary-eyed figures reminiscent of "Gothic" hints at the three-dimensional story that follows. Unfold a picture of a slave ship on page 6, and see how 450 human beings were

stacked like cordwood for the torturous voyage to America. Turn to page 11 and open a copy of the receipt for Frances, "the Negro woman" sold for \$4,000. Flip the lid on a mock tobacco tin on page 20 and read the faded manumission papers Robert Green carried with him after being freed by his Missouri slave master. More than just a book, it's history you can

"I was nervous at first because I thought a book of just documents and pictures probably wouldn't do much," said the first-time author, leaning over a counter at the Shrine of the Black Madonna bookstore that she manages in southwest Atlanta. "We came up with the idea of having documents you can open up and pull

out. We went through it page by page, and when I saw the book, I was floored."

So were the 30,000 buyers who snapped up the first printing in a matter of weeks. The publisher has ordered another 15,000 copies, expected to be in bookstores in time for Kwanzaa and Christmas gift giving. The book was also chosen by the New York Public Library as the theme of next year's Black History Month essay contest.

"This book shows us how much we still don't know about slavery,' said Regan Ford, 28, after picking up an autographed copy at the store last week. "When you see and touch these documents, it drives home what happened. It's not abstract anymore.

"Lest We Forget" is based on the 1992 "Black Holocaust" exhibit, a traveling display of memorabilia from the slavery era that Thomas organized and curated.

The text of the book is just as animated as its pictures. The words and emotions of slaves spring from the pages in a way that speaks both to adults old

enough to have marched in the civil rights movement and to children for whom Martin Luther King Jr. is little more than a stat-

"I think people are embracing the book because it's so readable, Thomas says. "They don't think they have to have a Ph.D. to get through it. They can sit down and share it with a family member."

Thomas says her book is especially timely because of President Clinton's call for a national dialogue on race, recent attempts to dismantle affirmative action programs, and the imminent release of "Amistad," director Steven Spielberg's movie about a slave

uprising.
"We know this nation has never been on our side, so we should not be surprised if affirmative action is steamrolled," said Thomas, setting her large, almond-shaped eyes in a steady gaze. "All the we've fought for, we haven't been given; but we have to survive because our ancestors survived. There are tests for every generation, and this is ours."

Small and soft-spoken, with

neat cornrows tied in a bun, Thomas doesn't seem the type to wear her agendas on her conservatively dressed sleeves. A mother, minister and graduate of Howard and Emory universities, she carries herself with the scholarly passion of a historian devoted to her research.

"Writing a book like this was never my plan in life; it just sort of came when I was working on the Black Holocaust exhibit," she says. "I became so intrigued by the lives that were half-told. Because you really only see the story from the slaveholders' point of view. It was like (the slaves) were saying to me, 'I have a story.

Will somebody tell this for me?"

Those voices still call out to her, she says, including those of her own family who have been inspiring her to bring their untold stories to life. While tracing her genealogy, Thomas found out about her great-great-grandmother, a discovery that gave the bookadded meaning.

While researching, Thomas found that her grandmother had been 'appraised' at \$1,800.

"That stops you cold," she said. "Your life is never the same once you see a price tag on someone you know, or who your mother knew: You feel obligated to make a difference in the world."



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WASHINGTON - The new diabetes drug Rezulin is no longer for sale in the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned that patients using it should be monitored carefully for signs of liver

Both actions followed reports that three people died after being treated with the drug, known generically as troglitazone, and more than 100 other patients suffered liver failure.

Glaxo-Wellcome, which markets Rezulin in the United Kingdom, pulled the drug off the market there Monday because of its potential health risks.

Here, FDA officials said they plan to continue evaluating

reports of liver problems associated with Rezulin, but assured patients that the benefits of taking the drug outweigh the risks of using it to treat type-II, or adultonset, diabetes.

"FDA has concluded that liver enzyme levels should be measured in patients taking Rezulin at the start of therapy, every month for the first six months of treatment, every other month for the next six months and periodi-cally thereafter," the FDA said in a statement Monday.

The agency said about 600,000 patients in the United States and 200,000 in Japan take Rezulin, which is prescribed with insulin or another drug known as sulfonylurea in patients whose blood sugar levels are not controlled by

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Japan's Health and Welfare Ministry this week also has warned patients taking Rezulin to have their livers checked.

The FDA and Warner-Lambert, the drug's manufacturer, first announced the link between Rezulin and liver damage last month after getting 35 reports of liver damage, including liver failure that killed one person and led another to get a liver transplant.

The FDA then asked for additional reports on adverse reactions to the drug.

"The agency has now received a total of approximately 150 adverse event reports, including three deaths from liver failure linked to the use of Rezulin in Japan," it said in the statement.





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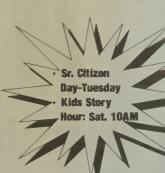
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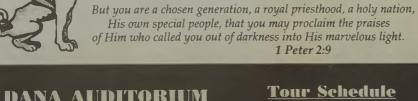
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