

BOOK REVIEW

Belton book explores psyche of black men

Speak My Name
Don Belton
Beacon Press, 1995
271 pages

by Jean Samuel

Speak My Name is a collection of various black writers speaking out on issues faced by African-American men.

Many authors contributed to this excellent work, including Amiri Baraka, Jerrold Ladd, and William Henry.

They focus on such issues as the declining black family, relationships between men and women, and media images of the black male.

Speak My Name provides clear, honest views of the psyche of black men from young to old. With its many variations on a theme, readers are given a full spectrum of ideas, dreams, and a sense of the anger that black men feel.

In the chapter "How Does It Feel to Be a Problem," Robin Kelly attacks examines the way the media treats black men.

He is highly critical of the strong media portrayal of the "hardened, hostile" black man, so popular in films and the evening news.

In Kelly's view, young black men "feel the need to adopt hardened, threatening postures merely to survive in a Doggy-Dogg world. Not that black men ought to become colored equivalents of Alan Alda. Rather, black men out to be whomever or whatever they want to be, without unwarranted criticism or societal pressures to conform to a particular definition of manhood. They could dress down without suspicion, talk loudly without surveillance, and love each other without sanction. Fortunately, such a transformation would also mean the long-awaited death of the 'nice Negro.'"

In chapters with titles like: "How

Does It Feel To Be A Problem?," "Shades," and "Confession of a Nice Negro, why I shaved my head," each author deals with a personal issue and explores not just the how but the why.

This collection also has something for women as well. In the chapter "The Sexual Diversion: The Black Man/Black Woman Debate in Context" Derrick Bell explores the relationship between black men and women. Bell seeks to understand the anger that black women have toward black men.

"For a generation now, a host of writers—many of them black women—have been telling the world about the inadequacies of black men...And while there are many, many black males who do not fit the woeful patterns, we know from statistics and personal experience that these criticisms are based in reality as well as myth. Rather than condone or condemn, I want to examine this phenomenon in the context of a society where the deflection of oppression is the norm."

In his forward, Belton provides a timely political and sociological context to the insights provided in the book:

"At the 1992 Republican National Convention, presidential candidate Pat Buchanan announced there is a cultural war going on in America. Buchanan's dispatch had all the sweep and dimension of news that remains news. Indeed, America has been the site of cultural warfare for a very long time."

Speak My Name is diverse in its writing and subject matter making it easy to relate to and understand. Belton hopes that America will read and understand, but most of all put a stop to the violence that is destroying black men.

POETRY

I Love You More. . .

I love you more than the sun that rises,

For you are my warmth and my sensation

You are my happiness, my heart realizes.

I love you more than the water I swallow,

For you quench my every thirst and curiosity.

You are the soul light I follow.

I love you more than the air I breathe,

For you are the source of my life,

You are the one thing against all others I need.

I love you more than the words I use

For you are the A in my alphabet, my first.

You are the love I can't refuse.

I love you more. . .

I love you more than you will ever know.

James Perry



Photo by Jamie Jordan

Nikki Fayton, Miss ECSU for 1995-96, gives it all she's got during the Miss ECSU Showcase.

New Spike Lee film probes underground world of phone sex

FILM REVIEW

by James L. Perry

Girl 6, Spike Lee's latest and long awaited film explores the underground world of phone sex, raising eyebrows among many Spike Lee film buffs.

This controversial drama/comedy is a dramatic departure from Lee's usual issue-pounding flicks, like *Do the Right Thing*, which focused on the racial tension in a New York City neighborhood. Unlike his other works *Girl 6*, doesn't give the viewer any social issue to wrestle with. Instead Lee takes a light-hearted look at phone sex solicitation.

The film stars Theresa Randle, who has appeared in such films as *Malcolm X*, *Sugar Hill*, and *CB4*. Randle does a great job as in her role. Her cool-calm attitude and her sensual voice add to the movie.

Randle plays a struggling actress who stumbles upon the job of a phone sex operator, when her other three jobs don't pay the bills. In one scene, Randle is put to through a sample phone call test which called for a quick-minded sensual response. Her response: "I have blonde hair, big blue eyes, and clear white skin, and my name is 'Lovely.'" It is clear that Randle didn't possess any of these physical attributes, having large mocha brown eyes and cappuccino colored skin.

Randle's character also fantasizes about playing lead actress in popular African-American films, such as Dorothy

Dandridge in *Carmen Jones* and Pam Grier in *Foxy Brown*. In this scene Randle goes to battle with three strong men who approach her.

Throughout the film Randle struggles with her concern of being true to the art of acting, while settling for a non-traditional acting job. Randle also to struggles to keep her feelings at bay about getting attached to some of her phone customers. In one instance Randle gets emotionally involved with a caller who calls to discuss his mother who is dying of cancer. Randle gets attached and arranges to meet the guy only to get her feelings hurt when he doesn't show.

Also appearing in the film is Isaiah Washington who starred in another Spike Lee film, *Clockers*. Washington plays the dead-beat ex-boyfriend/suitor, who seems to have a problem with Randle's job as a "call girl." In a humorous scene, Washington is surprised when Randle displays her sexual conversation qualities as the two talk over coffee.

Lee plays Randle's unemployed neighbor who makes a living collecting baseball cards and occasionally selling the cards to pay his rent. Lee also acts as the confidant to Randle in her times of trouble.

Many other well-known actors make cameo appearances in *Girl 6*, including Halle Berry, Rolanda Watts, Naomi Campbell and Madonna, who plays the owner of a phone sex operation.