

arts and leisure

Ask Yolonda

If It's Marked 'Personal,' Mother Should Honor Privacy

Dear Yolonda: A couple of weeks ago, I had planned to surprise my son and clean his room for him while he was away at school. But instead, I was the one who received the surprise.

In a stack of old newspapers, I found an unsealed envelope which was marked, "In case of my death, destroy." Well, naturally, I read several of the letters because I didn't know what else to do. My son had written several of the letters, and so had my nephew, so evidently they're in this together.

I had guessed my son had engaged in sex occasionally, but after reading these letters, I got the impression that all they had time for was sex. He had all the young ladies he had "scored" with listed. His cousin had a separate list. My nephew has even had an affair with one of his former high school teachers.

I folded the letters and put them back where I found them but, since then, I've been unable to sleep. To think, I'd been so trusting with my son, and all along, he's been a Casanova! No wonder his grades

date other people. But she knows that she's my main girlfriend. After all, I'm not taking other women on trips. Well, another woman I date had a slight genital disease, and I contracted it.

When I found out, I did the only proper thing to do. I immediately visited my doctor, and I called my girlfriend to explain the problem to her. I told her that on the trip she wouldn't have to worry about me infecting her; I would make the necessary provisions to protect her. But my girlfriend is angry and refuses to continue with our plans.

Do you think I'm being unreasonable to expect her to keep her promise and come to Hawaii with me? Before you answer, call the airlines and check the price of air transportation from here to Hawaii. If we don't take the trip, that money will be down the drain.

— E.S. in Evanston

Dear E.S.: I'm well aware of the cost of the flight from here to Hawaii. Still, you can't convince me that had the tables been turned, and your girlfriend brought a similar difficulty to you, you would have casually accepted things.

Some suggestions: Tell your girlfriend that if she'll accompany you, you're willing to travel platonically. If she still refuses, go, but take your mom. It sounds as though you could benefit from a rest in the love affair department.

P.S.: We're puzzled. What's a slight case of V.D.?

She's Conquered All Of Her Goals

Dear Yolonda: I got married at 16. I've since had three children and am presently divorced. Now, at age 29, I feel as though I've done the things that most women my age are aspiring to do. I've had all the kids I want, I already have a decent job, and I'm not too interested in getting married again.

I don't have too many friends because women my age haven't lived the life that I've lived. When I explain that I've set goals for myself, and have achieved most of them, they think I'm bragging.

But what is there to brag about? My husband and I bought a house when we were in our early 20s. A house is no big thing. Just save a down payment, and find a house.

Because I've been able to achieve everything I've ever tried to do, I'm wondering what is the best way to respond to people who have difficulties in this area.

Do you have any suggestions?

— Donna

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YOLONDA GAYLES



are so poor.

What do I do now? Do I find him a psychiatrist? Do I report him to his school counselor? Should I tell my sister that her son has had an affair with one of his former teachers? Both boys are 19.

— Molly

Dear Molly: Now you know why parents don't bother to clean their adult children's rooms. They might find some real dirt.

Before you commit your son and nephew to insane asylums, perhaps you'd better rethink this one. Possibly, they invented some of the stuff you read.

But even if some of what you read is factual, when something is marked "personal," you should honor it. In short, tell your sister nothing.

A "Slight" Case Of V.D.

Dear Yolonda: My girlfriend and I planned to vacation in Hawaii. I purchased tickets on a charter flight, and we both made plans to take vacation days from our jobs. Now she doesn't want to go, so I'm about to lose the money I paid for the tickets.

When we got together, we decided to continue to



Flattering Spring Shades

In the past, shades such as baby blue, pink and lilac didn't flatter black women because they were formulated to complement white skin tones. This spring, cosmetic companies that cater to black women have designed eye, cheek and lip colors in pastel shades that really light up fair, medium and dark complexions. Find out how to give yourself a lift with this season's new look in an array of luscious pastels by reading "Spring Radiance" in the April *Ebony*.



Thelma Houston

Spotlight

'I Just Go With The Sound And Let It Take Me Away'

"I feel that this album, 'Thelma Houston,' shows an ability to hang in there, to make changes when necessary and to be able to come back. I went straight for strong feelings on this record; I didn't play it safe as I have done in the past in terms of storylines and musical styles. You'll find a lot of innovation, a blend of new with what I've always been known for. On three tracks alone we used only synthesizers and drum machines. And, lyrically I've never done a song like 'Working Girl' before.

"My attitude, with the release of this album, is that when you haven't had any product in two years, then you just want to come out *smoking*."

So says Thelma Houston about "Thelma Houston," the album and the woman. Not since the gold-certified single and album, "Don't Leave Me This Way," has Houston turned up the heat so much.

Thanks to the help of producers John Arrias and Jai Winding as well as executive producer Charles Koppelman, the talented Los Angeles singer feels she has created one of her finest albums ever, going back to 1967 when she began with The Art Reynolds Singers.

Debuting on MCA Records, Houston has recorded

10 previous albums, including "Don't Leave Me This Way," which was number one virtually around the world.

Not only did the single and album go gold here, but also in Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina, among other countries.

For Thelma Houston, her career actually started when, as a young girl in Mississippi, she constantly sang while listening to the radio. Eventually, she left with her family for Long Beach, Calif., where she met another young singer in high school — Art Reynolds.

Houston's first album, with the gospel Reynolds Singers, was called "Tellin' It Like It Is," and was released at just about the same time as her first single as a solo artist, "Baby Mine," produced by Gary Paxton for Capitol Records.

Jimmy Webb produced her first solo album, "Sunshower," on ABC Dunhill in 1970.

After that came six albums for Motown, including "Don't Leave Me This Way," for which she won a Grammy Award in 1977 as Best R&B Female Vocalist (three years prior, she was nominated for the song "You've Been Doing Wrong For So Long"),

and then two for RCA before moving to MCA.

"Also, in the mid-70s, I did one of the first direct-to-disc albums," Houston says. "Basically, Motown loaned me out to a specialized label (Sheffield Lab) and I recorded the album, 'I've Got the Music in Me,' which was direct-to-disc, where the lacquer was being cut at the same time that the album was recorded. Then it retailed for \$15 to \$20; now, when you can find it, it goes for \$100."

The '70s was a watershed period for Houston, as it brought her her greatest successes, but also signaled change, culminating in the MCA release "Thelma Houston."

She not only expanded her talents as a singer, but also as an actress, an entertainer. She took acting lessons, and starred in such films as "Bingo Long's Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings," "Norman, Is That You?" "Death Screams" and "The Seventh Dwarf," as well as the Dory Previn musical, "The Amazing Flight of the Gooney Bird."

"With 'Thelma Houston,' I'm finally at a more comfortable place in my life, not only in terms of where I've been," she explains, "but also where I can go. I'm still developing a style, still learning, chang-

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From my personal files here is...

Blackness, What Is It?

By Azzie Wagner c. 1975

Blackness is not just the idea
Of a big wide fluffy 'fro—
Nor is it the soul handshake
To that "right-on" brother as you go.
Blackness is the essence of beauty,
That's not just skin deep,
It's the beauty and warmth of a soul
That a nation wants to keep!
Memories written on the pages of history,
Long years now since ignored...
By the white man who structured society
And himself epitomized and adored!

Blackness is the memory of toil
From slavery to modern day...

Of the amendment put into law
That looked at the black man to say —
"You have a place in history,
Of which you're an integral part...
Of the very backbone of a nation,
The pulsation, the bloodstream, the heart!"
Saying, "You're a human being,
To be recognized as such —"

Poetic Dimensions

By Azzie Wagner

Your life is to no longer be jeopardized,
Or hassled, or put in dutch!
You can sit abreast with all mankind
To enjoy the comforts of life...
You can eat and drink at certain places,
Abolishing greed and strife!"

Blackness is having the National Guardsmen
See you through a day —
When you attempt to walk the paths
Of history's toilsome way!
It's having a special "escort"
To enjoy what's rightfully yours —
It's finally looking upward —
To a world of open doors!
Blackness is a freedom
Unique and all its own —
A strength to conquer the perils,
The hassles as hard as stone!

It's an inward beauty experienced
Not by the color of my skin —
But a deep down heartfelt contentment,
That's genuine from the heart within.
Of a soul and body that looks forward
To many years ahead —
As we pave the way for our children
Throughout a world of dread!
Blackness is saying, "I'm proud of this heritage

That is my very own."
Of saying that determination is mine,
Though sometimes I walk alone.

Brief and informative, a New Yorker talks about...

Black Woman

By Toye Pemberton c. 1981

I am a Black woman —
No queen, celebrity, or priestess
Just a Black woman who needs
To be loved, protected and cherished!

If I am asking for too much
When I tell you that
I don't like to be cursed and beaten
Then please leave me alone

And I'll take my Blackness elsewhere!