

BOOK REVIEW:

Young, female and black in America

By Avonie Brown
Carroll, Rebecca (1997).
Sugar in the Raw: Voices of Young Black Girls in America.
CrownTradePaperbacks. 144 pp., \$12

In her book "Sugar in the Raw" author Rebecca Carroll exposes the natural voices of young black women in America. The result is a poignant expose of how we see ourselves in our communities of blackness and in the relationships we have with whites and/or other minority communities. The young women also reconfirm that our blackness does not presume a monolith. We are diverse in our sexuality, socio-economic class and in an endless array of variables.

Carroll interviewed 50 young women ages 11 through 20 in 12 different cities across the country. She explains that she "made a sincere effort to include as wide a variety as possible in terms of class representation and regional location." In the end she chose to include only 15 of the young women she interviewed.

While the issues are complex and remain unsettled—a work in progress—each young woman shares her story with an openness and frankness as well as a clarity of analysis that truly belies age. In fact, the depth of their perspectives make it plain that "age ain't nothing but a number," to quote Aaliyah, another young Black woman musically asserting her voice.

Their narratives explore topics such as: The issues surrounding race in America and how it impacts on their lives; the color complex in the black community and how we continue to use it to fuel black-on-black conflict.

And the sisters said:

"I can't actually do or be anything other than what I do and be. Unless you want to get into a big activist battle, you accept stereotypes given to you and just try and reshape them along the way. So in a way, that gives me a lot of freedom. I can't be looked at as any worse in society than I already am—black and female is high on the list of things not to be.

The freedom of it is, I am black and female, yes, but I am also many other things and have to be even more."—Jaminica, 14-years-old, from San Francisco, CA.

"This girl I know at school who described me once in reference to herself: she said, 'Well, I'm light-skinned, but Jo-Laine is black.' What is that? Even though she's black, too, because my skin is darker I can't be described as anything but black, while she can try to be something else? I said to this girl, "Yes, your complexion is lighter, but we are all black," Being light-skinned or having real nice hair that doesn't kink up or whatever, is definitely something some girls like to boast about. I don't even think they know that it might hurt my feelings or even bother me at all. I don't think they think about anything but having the opportunity to be something other than what most people think being black is.

—Jo-Laine, 14-years-old from Brooklyn, NY.

And the book's focus also

turns to the issue of sexuality. The stories in "Sugar in the Raw," highlight the fact that homophobia within the black community has been used to layer the victimization of African-American homosexuals and lesbians. While some are ignored, or shunned in our political, social and religious organizations, the

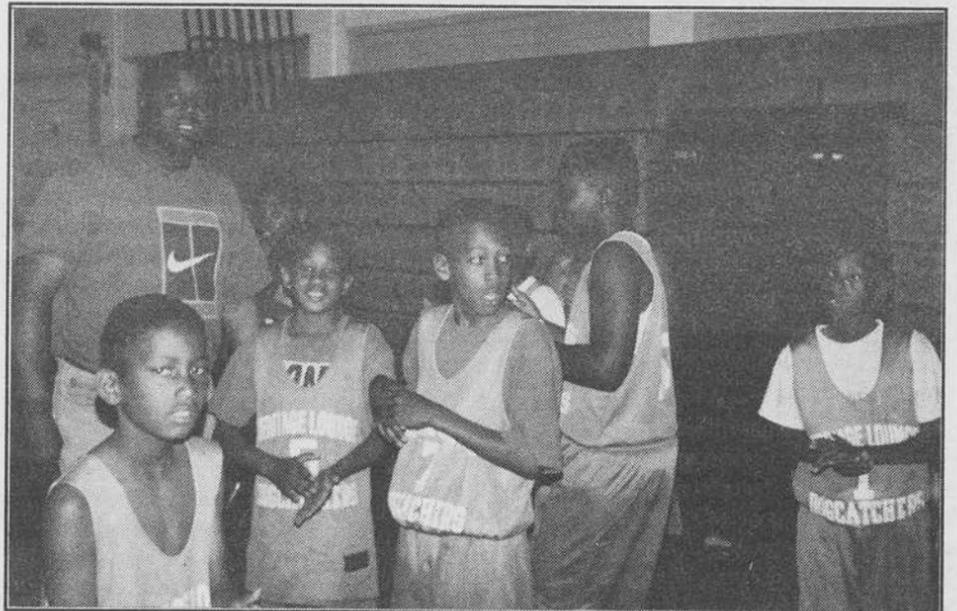
rejection has also been violent. While black gays would hope for unconditional acceptance, most simply ask that we practice tolerance of difference.

And the sister said:

"It doesn't occur to me so much that being black in America, is this huge struggle, but I'll tell you, being gay in

the Black community is a trip. There are not a lot of black girls in my community who are gay or willing to admit they are gay. I came out when I was 15 and it was a totally instinctive thing; it just felt comfortable to me. All the relationships I had been in with boys lacked something and I

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Coach Mike Gammage led his team, the Dog Catchers, during the 4th-5th Grade Division playoff Wednesday night, at Doolittle Gymnasium.
Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

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Presents

March Madness hits Doolittle

By Carl Chamberlain
Sentinel-Voice

It's late March and as all true basketball fans know "March Madness" means the best teams in college basketball clash to decide who's really number one. On the local scene there's "March Madness" of a different sort as the best young basketball players in the area compete in the Doolittle Community Center Youth Basketball Tournament.

The teams are divided into four divisions which include the 2nd and 3rd grade division, the 4th and 5th grade division, the 6th and 7th grade division and the 8th grade division. The competitors are coached by volunteers and sponsored by local businesses like Larry's Sight and Sound, Smooth Air Conditioning, The Heritage Lounge, J.C.H. Cable, Burnley Dental and R and R Advertising.

Even though it would be unfair to compare the college teams to the young men at Doolittle Gym it is fair to say the level of enthusiasm of the local players, coaches, and fans is just as high. A visit to a semi-final game last Tuesday between the Lil' Sixers and the Rebels of the 2nd and 3rd grade division serves as an illustration of how intense the games get. In a game complete with strategy sessions, screaming coaches, arguments with officials, chanting fans

and intense and energetic play there was both comedy and drama. And even though there was not a single dunk, no-look-pass or finger-roll it was obvious that this was a serious basketball game.

After the Lil' Sixers' semi-final 19 to 12 victory, Coach Lonnie Cambell seemed confident of a victory in the upcoming Championship Game. "We will win," he said. Cambell, who has coached youth basketball for three years, said he enjoys coaching younger players because in his words "they are eager and willing to learn" and don't have the "attitude" problems some older boys do.

According to Cambell, many of his young players have been playing basketball since the first grade. Some of his players compete against older players, he said.

All participants in the Doolittle League must maintain a C average in school and must get a positive progress report in order to compete. "The main thing that we stress is education," Cambell said. Other coaches echo that sentiment.

Coach Macheo Willis, who works with the 76ers 6th and 7th grade team, believes the players learn valuable life lessons from their experiences. "I believe that outside of this they get some positive motivation," he said.

Willis feels that "personal guidance" from the coaches and hard work on the part of the players equals a positive experience for both. "Life in general is a competition," he said.

Willis, who was a high school standout while playing basketball for Bishop Gorman High School, saw his dreams of playing college ball evaporate when he seriously injured his back in an automobile accident. Despite his disappointment he has moved ahead toward a career in Physical Therapy and is pursuing a college education while working. His intent in coaching is to pass on his enthusiasm for basketball, instill a sense of hard work and pass on valuable lessons about life the game has taught him.

"Some coaches coach strictly off talent," Willis said. He believes emphasis on fundamentals and good sportsmanship should be important priorities because without them talent is meaningless.

In the upcoming finals in the 2nd and 3rd grade division, the Lil' Sixers will play the Hen Hen Dog Catchers. In the 4th and 5th grade division, the Bad Boyz will face off against the Dog Catchers. In the 6th and 7th grade finals, the Rebels will play the 76ers and the 8th grade final will feature the Rebels versus the 76ers.

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