

COMMENTARY / CULTURE

Granddaughter Naomi, Now You Can Be What You See!

Like millions, I was glued to the TV screen as the “yeses” and “noes” were read aloud in the U.S. Senate chambers, the votes on the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Ketanji

Brown Jackson.

Now although her nomination was a foregone conclusion, for me each “yes” felt like a shot in the arm, a spike in adrenalin. I refused to allow the “no” daggers steal the magnificence of the day.

Suddenly during a commercial, I got a call from Mrs. Faith Edwards, executive editor of the Chattanooga News Chronicle. It was clear that she couldn’t contain her elation. And neither could I.

“Hey brother Terry, I had a hunch that you’d be watching this historic moment. Praise God, yes, yes, yes, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, I’m beside myself.” But of course, our call was short because we both had to get back to the resumption of the vote counting.

Moments later an epiphany as I watched the proceedings. My two-year-old granddaughter Naomi, pigtails and all, came in the room, climbed onto my lap and asked, “what are you watching grandpa?”

Before I could figure out how to explain the significance of the moment to a two-year-old, a quote flashed through my mind as I looked her in those innocent eyes:

“You can’t be what you can’t see,” wrote education pioneer Marian Wright Edelman. Worth repeating, “You can’t be what you can’t see.”

With my eyes on my Naomi, I thought about her four-year-old sister Noelle playing with toys in the kitchen, and her 11-year-old sister Nadia upstairs absorbed in her tablet.

And for reasons I could not fathom, I thought about Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Addie Mae Collins, four beautiful Black girls killed when a bomb went off while they were in Sunday school in 1963 at a Birmingham, Alabama church. For these girls, in this historic moment, I thought about what could have been.

So, thanks to you Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, my beautiful granddaughters and millions of other young Black girls can now be what they now see.

Still I Rise, By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I’ll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
’Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I’ll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don’t you take it awful hard
’Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines
Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hateful-
ness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I’ve got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.



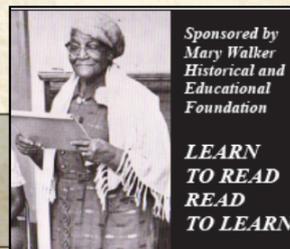
Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson



Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Addie Mae Collins, four beautiful Black girls killed when a bomb went off while they were in Sunday school in 1963 at a Birmingham, Alabama church.

© Terry Howard is an award-winning writer and storyteller. He is also a contributing writer with the Chattanooga News Chronicle, The American Diversity Report, The Douglas County Sentinel, Blackmarket.com,

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This Week in African American History**Dan Bullock, Youngest Soldier Killed in Vietnam
December 21, 1953 – June 7, 1969**

Dan Bullock (December 21, 1953 – June 7, 1969) was a United States Marine and the youngest U.S. serviceman killed in action during the Vietnam War, dying at the age of 15.

Bullock was born in Goldsboro, North Carolina. He lived in North Carolina until he was about 12, when his mother died and he and his younger sister, Gloria, moved to Brooklyn to live with their father and his wife. He said he wanted to become a pilot, a police officer, or a U.S. Marine.

When he was 14 years old, he altered the date on his birth certificate to show that he was born December 21, 1949. He processed through the recruiting station and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on September 18, 1968. He was a member of Platoon 3039 at Paris Island. At first he struggled to make it through, but was able to do so with the help of one of his fellow recruits. Bullock graduated from boot camp on December 10, 1968.

Private First Class Bullock arrived in South Vietnam on May 18, 1969, and was assigned as a rifleman in 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company F, 2nd Battalion

5th Marines, 1st Marine Division. He was stationed at An Hoa Combat Base, west of Hội An in Quảng Nam Province. Less than a month later on June 7, 1969, Bullock and 3 other Marines were occupying a bunker near the base airstrip when a People’s Army of Vietnam sapper unit attacked the base at night, throwing a satchel charge into the bunker killing all 3 Marines; Bullock was just 15 years old. He had been assigned to cleaning duty that night but was transferred to the night watch after one Marine was wounded on night duty.

After he was interred, his grave site did not have a marker. A veteran’s marker was finally provided in 2000.

On June 7, 2003, a section of Lee Avenue in Brooklyn, where Bullock had lived since age 11, was renamed in his honor. In 2019, a North Carolina state historical marker honoring his life was erected near his childhood home in Goldsboro NC. Marine Corps League, Brooklyn #1, Detachment 217 usually holds a color guard memorial ceremony each June on Lee Avenue honoring PFC Bullock.

