



PROJECT MUSE®

Our Flesh of Flames

Imamu Amiri Baraka, Theodore A. Harris

Callaloo, Volume 26, Number 1, Winter 2003, pp. 129-145 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2003.0016>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/39836>

OUR FLESH OF FLAMES

by Amiri Baraka and Theodore A. Harris

Teddy Harris' work is the modernism of everyday perception and rationale. He makes works from vouchsafes and unrealized dreams, lies and advertisements for the nowheres. That is, he takes scraps of America North and threads them through his truthoscopic sensibility, for instance, pieces of newspapers, headlines, images from the diversity of our mostly grim experience, and he tells it to us again, and clearer.

Harris is a collagist, itself a modern form, and one that has been used to great advantage in pinning the political tail on the donkey, or elephant or corrupt tiger, as the case may be. One of the greatest practitioners of the collage art for popular advantage, that is, to tell the truth, was the German collagist Heartfield, who actually pulled Hitler's tail during the waning years of democracy in Germany. Right-wing politicians feared Heartfield (Herzfeld) because he used the collage to whack them sharply across the face, and lips, revealing their lies and evil to the people.

Harris, still a young man, has entered the collage with an astonishing clarity of form. The diverse pieces of reflected reality and unreality he thinks and pastes together create new images, replenishing our knowledge of the known, or making us aware of the unknown. There is a clarity and cleanness to his craftsmanship, which heightens the ideational projection the image sprays at us. At times, visual image actually seems to "say" out loud what maybe we know or need to know. Yet, he has put it together with an impressive display of knowledge about the medium he is using. There are no sloppy or half put together "slapdashes" which we must sympathetically take to the hoop with our political sympathies. Harris is a fine "auteur" (as the film magazines say, meaning, author, creator). And with this, the content, which, for me, is always principal, emerges bright and striking.

He tells about the peoples' struggles, world wide, against oppression and exploitation. Our lives under racism and the twisted rule of capital. At times, the images he thrusts at us are sharp enough to make us wince, with understanding and recognition. Harris' work is fundamentally about consciousness raising, and this is what art does. Mao says, "All art is propaganda, but not all propaganda is Art!" Harris' work speaks to us truthfully, forcefully, and with great skill. You need to check it out!

—Amiri Baraka

[Editor's note: The poems which follow act as captions for the collage with which each is paired.]

=====**CALLALOO**=====



1995 Seize the Time

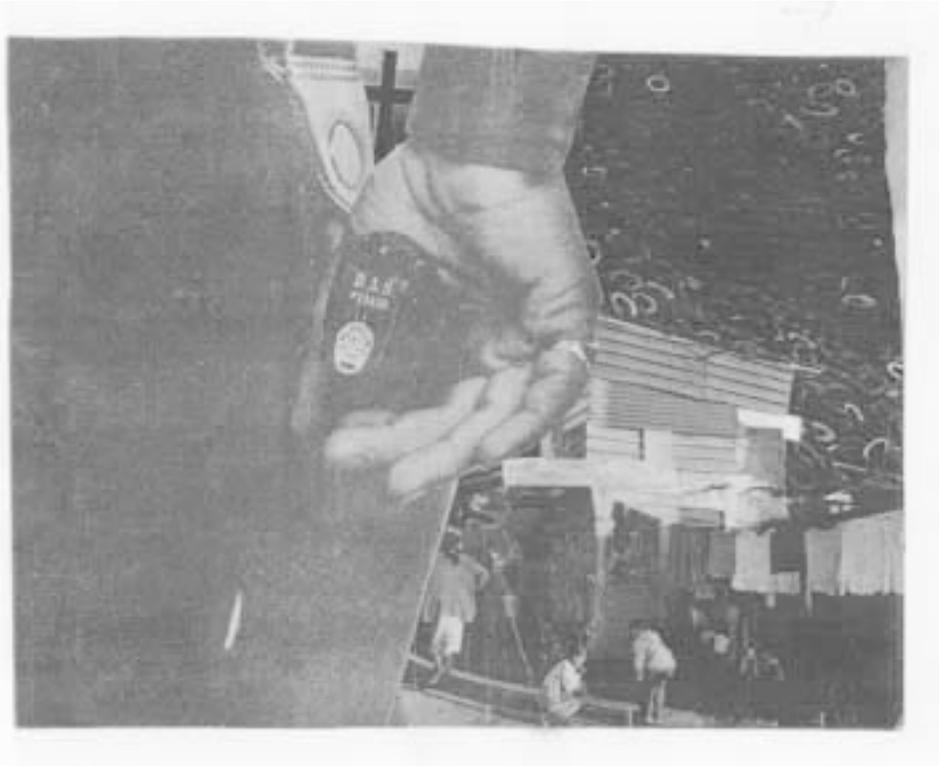
Theodore A. Harris

SEIZE THE TIME

by Amiri Baraka

If you come out
 The tree
& get caught
 by the beast
w/ his 666
 shooter
 up against
 yr knot
say to yrself
Oh, Beast you is
 Not a human
 & never will be
Alas
 Yr most progressive
 Odor is name Giuliani
& we trying to get
 an antidote for that

==== CALLALOO ====



**1994 The Cross, The Gun, Tires, Necklacing and Black People
Theodore A. Harris**

DIS FIRMATIVE NEGROSSITY

by Amiri Baraka

Dead Ass Spooks' Spook Spooking

It's some spooky shit
The ghost resembled
A coon
Or

The Nigger that
Work for
The Beast

Might even can
Carry
A tune



1999 Resistance to Repression

Theodore A. Harris

UNWE

by Amiri Baraka

Boy & Tarzan
Equal
TWO

Subtract
The woman
2 equal
Nun

baby bybyed
out
they butt
we Jesus
Jesus Christ
It Black
as
Sut



1998 Collage Eulogy for James Byrd, Jr.

Theodore A. Harris

1998 COLLAGE EULOGY FOR JAMES BYRD, JR.

by Amiri Baraka

Inside out
Flag is they north
Death is it's sport
You where, ain't you?

**He don't
inhale
He don't
come**

If you should own
Blood, if you are
God or are one
Of his
Children
& you can ask
him, inside
the Crack House
of the church
Proud of your murders
By the dungeon of devils
Hid behind the flag
Can you hear the Slurping
Like birds chirping, after the
Harmonica blows, & bombs are
Dropped on foreign niggers. Dark
Er niggers. Death mailing hate
666



Diallo's Blues Are Our Blues

Theodore A. Harris

DIALOGUE W/ NOISE

by Amiri Baraka

Can the Devil,
Explain Evil?

Why?

You think
 It's
 Interesting?



1999 Betrayal

Theodore A. Harris

UNTITLED

by Amiri Baraka

"CHRIST was never in
Europe!"
(sd Carmichael)

(Neither was
Krishna
Muhammad
Nor
Buddha!)

=====**CALLALOO**=====



1999 We Wear Our Flesh Like Flames

Theodore A. Harris

**BRITANNICIA SAYS THERE IS NO EXPLANATION
OR USE FOR LAUGHTER**

by Amiri Baraka

Burn Baby
 Father
 Mama
 God

Upside down
 In Dis

The Tarzan
 Doo Doo
 House
 The Capital
 You
 Dig?)

The Spanish word
 For Sad
 Is Dolor
The Christian word
 For
 Dolor
 Is
 Buck
The Anglo- Saxon
 Word
 For Love
 Is
 Fuck



1999 Collage Eulogy for Amadou Diallo

Theodore A. Harris

1999 COLLAGE EULOGY FOR AMADOU DIALLO

by Amiri Baraka

My memory
Is you memory
"endless flag
pretty blue
done split
done gone
away

from underwater
rose we
in it
self

had be'd
a flag
of death

2
Everything
Sick poison
Gas is dawn
Got a click teeth
Our space Death you cover
Candy time. Holiday
Cupid coffin Puck you
No longer let it kill I
Back. Them. Fire.
Shoot. Stab them with
They filth can't swing
Don't sway that's why
They try to kill us
This way