

The Greatest Story Never Told

Stories from the Black experience to help you live your best life.



Hello Beloved,

Every now and then, I hear someone complaining about the poor service they received in a restaurant.

I'm not saying they shouldn't...

But cold French Fries **pale in comparison** to what our ancestors faced.

If we keep that in mind, it might help our mental well-being.

In **Part 2, of The Poet, the Frog, and the People's Champ**, you'll see exactly what I'm talking about.

If you've not read **Part 1**... please do so before reading Part 2.

Otherwise, you'll be lost.

You can get to Part 1 by clicking on the link below.

[The Poet, the Frog and the People's Champ, Part 1](#)

If you have read Part 1, keep reading.

As you'll see, while we're not where **we ought to be**... we're not where **we used to be** either.



Into the Storm



It was getting cloudy as Ronny and I raced our motor bikes across the city.

There had been a forecast of high wind and heavy rain.

The first sprinkle came as we passed a newly remodeled restaurant.

I slowed down.

Not there, not there, Ronny warned... and kept his motor going.

But I stopped and parked near a line of big **Harley Davidson motorcycles**.



Frog

Their owners, a **leather jacketed gang**, were sitting at tables near the window with their girlfriends.

Nazi insignias were on their backs and Confederate flags were painted on the front.

It was a style that was popular with some whites in the east end.

One of them was called **Kentucky Slim**. I'd seen him at some of my fights.

Slim gave me a nod.

Their leader, a big redhead with chains hanging from his shoulder, sat with his arms around a heavy blond.

Frog, as we called him, never looked up.

But I knew he saw me.

Trouble

I found two empty seats at the counter.

As Ronny caught up, I sat down and picked up a menu.

A young waitress quickly came up and placed two napkins, silverware, and two glasses of water in front of us.

Two hamburgers, two milk shakes, both vanilla... Ronny said.

But as the waitress moved back to the kitchen, a **big beefy man** with a stomach hanging over his belt, motioned for her to come where he sat near the cash register.

Whatever his words were, they were brief.

The waitress disappeared inside the kitchen, and after a long time, appeared again.

She was talking to one of the kitchen help.

The help was an old, thin faced, **black woman** who stood at the door to the kitchen, looking down my way, and trying to say something.

We Can't Serve You

In those days, most of the restaurants, hotels and movie theaters were either closed to blacks, or had segregated sections.

The white girl finally came back and whispered as though she had something confidential to tell me.

We can't serve you here, she said.

Ronny muttered something under his breath, and I nudged him to be quiet.

The Solution

It felt good to be so calm and prepared for what I thought was coming.

My gold medal would be **the solution** to the whole thing.

Miss, I began politely, I'm the Olympic heavyweight boxing champion.

Ronny proudly pulled the medal from under my tee shirt and adjusted the red, white, and blue ribbon.

He flashed it to show the words, ***Pugilato***, the Italian word for boxing.

Oh, how he admired and loved that medal... maybe even more than I did.

The waitress was impressed.

Without hesitation, she dashed down the counter to the owner and spoke in urgent, hushed whispers.

He never turned around.

I don't give a god damn who he is!

The voice boomed across the restaurant with such force that everyone's heads jerked up from their plates.

I done told you... **we don't serve no niggers!**

Eye of the Storm

The waitress put her hand over her face as though she had been hit.

She backed up, hurried to me, and began repeating the message.

As if I hadn't heard it.

It got really quiet.

I remember looking directly into the eyes of a white, high school boy wearing a Manuel High sweatshirt.

He was no older than me... and he'd been admiring my medal just a minute before.

He looked down at the floor.

My heart was pounding.

A minute before, this had been a noisy, chatty place with 30 or more customers.

Fight... or Flee?

I pushed away from the counter.

Ronny went through every motion with me as if we'd rehearsed the act.

When I stood up... knives, forks, spoons and chit-chat stopped.

All eyes were on me.

My mouth felt hot and dry.

Never in a hundred fights did I feel blood rushing to my head as I did then.

I tried to meet the eyes of the whites along the counter, but the only eyes looking into mine were those of the old black woman from the kitchen.

She came through the door... **a large cross** hanging from her neck.

She was trying to get my attention by waving **a small book** that looked like a prayer book.

Then the owner, arms folded, huge stomach bulging over his apron, started around the counter as if to give me a personal message.

I backed off to the center.

For an instant, I had an urge to dig a right cross into the pit of his stomach, then a left hook to his mouth, and then an uppercut.

And to this day, I wonder if I shouldn't have obeyed that urge.

But my outlook on fighting had undergone a total change since the days when I scrapped in streets and schoolyards at the slightest excuse.

I'd already signed a contract for my first professional bout.

It's part of the pride of a professional fighter to not be caught, dead or alive, in a free for all.

Most important, I had **another approach** in mind.

One I was sure would work.

I would **make them feel ashamed** of what they were doing.

And, if necessary, I would stay until they took me to jail.

I got myself together to tell them everything I'd been thinking.

Impassioned Speech

This is supposed to be the **land of the free** and the home of the brave!

You're **disgracing it** with your actions.

You all know me.

I was born in General Hospital only a block away.

I was raised here.

I went to Central High.

And now, I've brought back an Olympic Gold medal for all the people of our city.

I fought for the glory of my country, and **you should be ashamed** of what you're doing!

You serve foreigners here, but not an American citizen who's a Negro?

You'll have to **take me to jail** because I'll stay until I get my rights!

You should be ashamed!

Shamed

But I never said a word of all that.

The words just wouldn't come out.

Something inside me **wouldn't let them** come out.

So instead of making them feel ashamed...

I felt ashamed.

Shamed... and shocked... and lonesome.

The Cross and the Switchblade

The black kitchen woman was wiping her face with her apron as though she was about to cry.

The motorcycle gang had taken **a sudden interest** in the action.

Some walked down to where the owner was and leaned against the counter.

I saw Ronnie move his hand to his right-side pocket where he kept his pearl-handled switchblade.

It was a **long, wicked weapon** that he'd taken off a **dying pimp** named Jailhouse Sydney Green.

Jailhouse Sydney Green... the meanest pimp I've ever seen.

For as many hours as I'd put in punching bags, sparring with partners and learning the art of boxing, Ronnie had spent training himself to **handle his blade** with frightening skill.

You take the owner he whispered. I'll take Frog.

A Painful Punch

I shook him off.

In a one-on-one, two-on-one, maybe three-on-one, I could whip most of them.

But the insult was **so deep, so painful**, that no simple fight with fists or knives would be enough.

I needed more. Much more.

I'd been standing there for less than a minute, but it seemed like a year.

Ronny was saying in almost disbelief, they don't know who you are. They don't know you're the champ.

Well... I ain't scared to tell em'.

Then, almost like an **announcer in the ring**, Ronnie shouted,

Folks, this is the champion! Our very own Olympic champion... just back from Italy.

Shut up Ronnie, I said. **Don't beg!**

I moved closer to the door keeping my eyes on the owner.

I felt a peculiar, **miserable pain** in my head and stomach.

The pain that comes from punches you take **without hitting back**.

Shattered Illusions

Whatever **illusions** I'd built up in Rome as the **All-American boy** were gone.

My Olympic honeymoon **was over**.

I was back in my old Kentucky home.

I saw the owner relax, move behind the counter and offer Frog a cigarette.

They lit up and laughed... everyone enjoying some great joke.

More Shame

Before I got to the door, someone was **holding my arm**.

It was the **black woman** from the kitchen.

Close up, her face looked even thinner.

She had large eyes... larger than any I'd ever seen.

They were soft and wet with tears... and looking directly into mine.

Son... **keep the faith**, she said prayerfully.

That was such a nice poem you wrote for our paper.

She put the thin, little prayer book in my hand.

Between its pages was **a poem I'd written** on the airplane flight back to America.

It had appeared in black newspapers across the country.

I glanced at it.

***To make America the greatest is my goal.
So, I beat the Russian and I beat the Pole.
And for the USA, won the medal of gold.
Italians said we like your name.
We like your game.
So make Rome your home.
I said I appreciate your kind hospitality,
But the USA is my country still.
And they are waiting to welcome me
In Louisville.***

It only **deepened** my shame.

Her little book was not a prayer book, but a volume of **Langston Hughes** poems.

I put it in my pocket.

Get Back In the Kitchen

Mary!

The owner's voice boomed as though he **caught her in treason.**

Mary!

Get back in the kitchen!

She meekly followed orders and someone began laughing.

The noise and chatter returned to the restaurant.

And Ronnie kept up a steady stream of cursing...

As I pulled him outside and into the night.



Let's put a bookmark here dear reader... so you can get on with your day,

To find out what happened on the way home, join us next week for **Part 2** of **The Poet, the Frog and the People's Champ**.

Are You a Sharer?

*It ain't no fun if the homies can't have none.
~ Snoop Dog*

If you are and **would like to share** "The Poet, the Frog, and the People's Champ" **with a friend**, you can by clicking on the link below and copying and pasting the URL.

[The Poet, the Frog, and the People's Champ](#)

Once again, thank you for taking this journey with your fellow readers.

It's just one lesson from the greatest story never told.

If you have a story of your own that you'd like to share, send it to me at the email address below. I'd love to hear it.

Or, if you have comments, expressions, or feedback... feel free to hit me up at b.johnson@ethnicexpressions.com

Until next time,

Brian

