

FOCUS

continued ▲ from Front

for her mother to find. "She never read them," Douglass-Andrews said. "She didn't want to violate my privacy."

When her attempts to discretely clue her family into her secret failed, Douglass-Andrews began writing more and more as a way to distance herself from reality. She said writing was therapeutic in that it gave her an arena where she could control the situations.

After she graduated from Mount Hood Community College with a degree in journalism, she wanted to write books. But people told her she would have to support her habit until it could support her. So she worked at a local newspaper in Washington before getting a job at the Seattle-Times.

"I never did make it into the editorial department there," Douglass-Andrews said. "But I was on my way to the top, starting at the very bottom."

She wanted to be a reporter, so she started by selling newspapers, working in the Seattle-Times customer service department and eventually in ad sales, but decided to write 'From Ghetto to Glory' instead.

"It's a good thing I quit the Times," she said. "Because writing this book has been the key to my sanity. Living with multiple personalities is a trip."

In the end, though, Douglass-Andrews has the strength to look her past, straight in the eye. She puts the seven other parts of her consciousness in their proper place, finds it in her heart to forgive her brother for the incest and learns to love, respect and trust herself.

That, said Douglass-Andrews, is what 'From Ghetto to Glory' is all about — the strength to go on and the ability to take something negative and turn it into a positive.

"People say I'm a survivor, but I don't like that word," she said. "The word survivor sounds pitiful, like people should feel sorry for me. I



Author Monique Douglass-Andrews is seen through a wooden fence that once held her neighbors barking dogs as she stares in discomfort at her childhood home and the place of her abuse. "Oh my god, its still the same — it never changes," she said. "My mama's curtains are still in the window and I bet there is still blood on the rug."

PHOTO BY WYNDE DYER/
THE PORTLAND
OBSERVER

A STORY TO TELL

wanted something stronger, so I chose to call myself an 'overcomer.' This book isn't about just surviving — it's about overcoming."

Douglass-Andrews said she didn't write a book to have it sit on a shelf and collect dust. She wants 'From Ghetto to Glory' to make a difference. She said she wanted people to read her experiences and to learn from them.

"I decided if I could help just one person — I know that may seem like a small number — by sharing my story," she said. "Then its almost like I didn't go through the abuse in vain."

So in between local and national book signing obligations, like a speaking engagement in the Bronx for as many as 50,000 in attendance at the National Council of Negro Women annual book conference, Douglass-Andrews makes it a point to go where she thinks people can most benefit from her story.

"People say I'm a survivor but I don't like that word. I wanted something stronger, so I chose to call myself an 'overcomer.'"

—Monique Douglass-Andrews, author of 'From Ghetto to Glory.'

One of those stops happened to be a meeting for Project Network, a non-profit group in Portland that helps women recover from domestic abuse and drug and alcohol addiction.

While in town visiting family for Thanksgiving, she made an appearance during a group therapy session and was overwhelmed by the

response to her story.

"One woman said, 'You're saving lives,' and I almost cried," Douglass-Andrews said. "That's pretty powerful. You never know how you are going to touch someone."

The major focus of her speaking engagements is to let people who have been abused know that they

are not alone. Douglass-Andrews said the self-hatred and feelings of worthlessness are common symptoms for all victims, not just victims of incest. She said many people don't have the courage to go on and she likes to motivate them to be brave by relating her experiences to theirs.

"I have a lot in common with these women," she said. "They may have turned to drug or alcohol abuse as a coping mechanism and I never did that, but I abused my body by sleeping with a lot of men."

Douglass-Andrews likes to encourage people to go on — no matter what — and to overcome the situations in life that would rather hold a person back.

In her case, writing has enabled her to move forward and out of the darkness of her past.

Douglass-Andrews, who now lives in Arlington, Wash., is also working on a new book. 'Cham-

bers' will continue where 'From Ghetto to Glory' left off with the second half of Sookie's life. The book will cross over from the autobiographical style into the fiction side of literature. Inside Sookie's head are millions of doors with what Douglass-Andrews calls big chains and locks holding them shut. In order to truly learn to love and trust herself, Sookie will have to open each door and explore the chamber inside.

"It will be very powerful," Douglass-Andrews said. "I'm very excited for the new things ahead of me."

'From Ghetto to Glory' is available at all large national chain bookstores and Reflections, on the corner of Killingsworth and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Douglass-Andrews will be signing books at the Lloyd Center Barnes and Nobles on Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. and at the Jantzen Beach Barnes and Nobles on March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

BOOK REVIEW From Ghetto to Glory

continued ▲ from Front

middle son, takes to a life of crime and the youngest, Daddy Bubba, tries his hardest to hold the family together with smiles and laughter.

But even Daddy Bubba couldn't save Sookie from Daddy Chaz's gravest crime — repeated rape, molestation and emotional abuse that sent her into a downward spiral and opened the doors for the spirits — or dissociative identities — to come in.

The home that was once filled with fond memories of Christmas time with pogo-sticks, drum sets, science kits and doll houses now fills up with darkness and what Sookie calls 'The Ugly.' The walls move like a pair of breathing lungs. When they stand still, Sookie says they sweat. No amount of scrubbing can erase the bloodstains left by a dead dog under Daddy Chaz's bed. Little black fingerprints leave scratch marks on the walls in the basement coal room. The house is alive.

What lived inside that house makes its home in Sookie's mind. The ghost of an old woman named Nellie tells her that children had been murdered and buried in the home. She tells Sookie that she can save the girls by sharing her body with them. So the floodgates open, and in come seven girls — Mona, The Twins, The Mommy Part, Blue and The Mean Part.

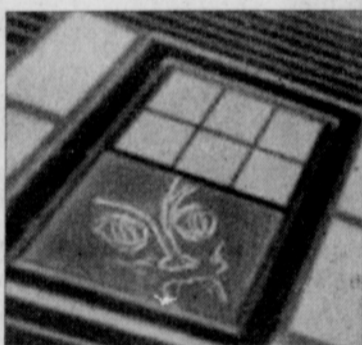
These seven girls stay with Sookie through her childhood, as she makes friends from other families broken by abuse, alcoholism and addiction. They form a tight clothes wearing all-girls' gang called The Tuff Cookies and Sookie explores juvenile lesbian tenancies.

After adolescence, she becomes promiscuous, graduates from high school and has a child.

Sookie gets a degree in journalism from Mount Hood Community College and moves away from Oregon, virtually cutting off all contact with her family.

But no matter how far she runs, Sookie cannot escape her past. In her daughter she sees all the imperfections in her self. The Mean Part of Sookie's mind tries to drown her daughter in the bathtub one night, other times she just locks herself in her room and cries.

In her quest to cleanse herself of the pain, Sookie unknowingly joins a cult and marries a member of the church. He makes her throw away all of her belongings because he said the devil was in all of them. The church commands them to quit their jobs, utilities get turned off and Sookie's husband tells the mortgage company he can't pay his home loan because he's waiting on a check from his father — meaning his Father, God in heaven.



"She returns to the house that haunted her childhood and confronts each room and the memories that fill them, symbolically putting each of the seven girls in her head back where they came from."

After she leaves her husband, Sookie gets hooked up with a small family-run newspaper. She's writing, doing what she loves and for several years it seems like a good job until her publisher seduces her.

Faced with setback after setback, Sookie decides to reconcile with her mother who she had pushed away for so long. With the help of her mom, many prayers, lots of

therapy and a man who loves and marries her, she is finally able to disclose the truth about Daddy Chaz to her shocked family.

Sookie then does what many abuse victims cannot do — she lets her brother back into her heart for the good she knows is in him and not 'The Ugly' that caused him to violate her.

She returns to the house that haunted her childhood and confronts each room and the memories that fill them, symbolically putting each of the seven girls in her head back where they came from.

Interestingly enough, Sookie and her daughter Shuga make a trip to the Multnomah County Library to research her home on Northeast 19th Avenue. She finds a 1947 copy of The Oregonian with an obituary and picture of Nellie, a woman born in 1859 who had lived in the house for 37 years. Nellie attended the Highland Baptist Church and members told Sookie the old woman had seven grandchildren — all girls.

Written with a fresh narrative and the help of a 'loving ghost' who coaxes Sookie to keep telling her story when she would rather close the book, what 'From Ghetto to Glory' does best is show readers no matter how bad life may seem, there is always a reason to go on.

Donations Save 'Harlem Song'

(AP)—More than \$300,000 from a variety of public and private sources has come through for the New York musical revue "Harlem Song," allowing the production to complete its engagement this year at the historic Apollo Theater and return next fall for a three-month season.

"Happily, now 'Harlem Song' is paying for itself, or close to paying for itself," producer John Schreiber said.

Last month, Schreiber announced the show, a history of Harlem told in song and dance, would have to close unless more money was forthcoming to keep it running. Even though "Harlem Song" has been seen by over 70,000 theatergoers, it suffered substantial financial losses since opening last August.

The producer said the new infusion of cash came primarily from two sources — the Upper Manhat-

tan Empowerment Zone and the New York City Investment Fund, a private fund.

The Empowerment Zone, a collaborative effort by city, state and the federal government to provide funding to business enterprises and cultural institutions, came aboard first, Schreiber said.

"We hope 'Harlem Song' will be the first resident company at the Apollo Theater for the Performing Arts," Schreiber said.

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