

NAME - Helen Black

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OCCUPATION - Licensed Professional Nurse (11 years)

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES - Director and Minister of Music in the African Methodist Episcopal Church

MY STRUGGLE AS A BLACK WOMAN

Several years ago I was placed in the position of being sole support of my five children, and frequently six. My oldest daughter was in her last year of high school--working part time and preparing for Junior College; therefore, she too needed my financial and parental assistance.

I realized as a Black woman in struggle and a mother alone, I would have to face my responsibilities and duties with strength, faith and courage, so I decided as leader of my family I must be determined and always express love. I felt with these qualities I would at least be "ON MY WAY", realizing that the attitudes of parents mold and shape the attitudes and lives of their children. It was my desire to improve my conditions, and I began my search for a home. I was shown many. I wasn't looking for an all white area nor was I looking for an all black area. I was merely looking for a nice home in a nice area. I found that home in Fairlight Downs Subdivision, Olivette, Missouri. Procedures began and I was approved for said home. I was faced with some problems, certain requirements from the Olivette City Council. I then became aware that this home was in fact in an all white private subdivision. However, this was the house which I had been approved for, this was the home within my means and the home I desired. My struggle continued; I was determined. It wasn't long after moving into our home that the harassments began, to wit: complaints from Olivette City Hall; visits from the Building Inspector and City Manager, both of whom were driven to my home by police officers; letters from the Trustees of Fairlight Downs stating: "This is a private residential neighborhood and we intend to keep it this way", indicating copies sent to Police Chief Robert Cole. About the same time, harassments began to center around Gerald Garrett, my oldest son, then 15

years old. He was snatched off his bike by Sgt. Robert Terry and Major Harold Waggoner two weeks after we moved in, and accused of stealing checks out of mailboxes. He was taken for I.D. without my knowledge until sometime later. Afterwards, Gerald was constantly accused of snatching purses, robbery, burglary; he was frequently stopped, questioned and intimidated regarding any crime in Olivette. Sgt. Robert Terry finally promised, "We'll get you Gerald and it will take all those people out there to get you out". And he also stated to me, "Gerald will be past the juvenile age soon and there will be nothing you can do, Mrs. Black", a very threatening statement. The "We'll get you" campaign eventually led to the frameup charge, indictment and conviction of my oldest son Gerald Garrett, for the murder of an Olivette woman living in Indian Meadows Subdivision. Gerald and a friend Larry Hampton had cut grass for Mrs. Estelle Stern, a 68 year old widow, two days prior to her unfortunate death. Gerald Garrett (who has no previous record) was judged and convicted by an all white jury who knew nothing of the plot to get us out of Fairlight Downs.

Gerald was out on appeal bond, denied his right to finish his last year at Ladue High School. He enrolled at Bailey Technical High School and was approved and accepted as a student in Auto Technology. Gerald was also working part-time at John Cochran's Veterans Hospital.

On April 3, 1977, an Olivette widow was found dead in her home, three doors North of our home; Gerald once again was arrested and held four days without warrant or indictment. He was finally charged with another murder, burglary and arson. Once again for Gerald, a deliberate frame-up campaign against his innocence and his constitutional rights as a human being and a "Citizen of these United States". How long will people continue to hurt others, due to the color of one's skin?

GERALD GARRETT IS INNOCENT, NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT AWAY.

GERALD GARRETT WAS BORN BLACK, FOR THIS HE MUST PAY.

In Struggle,

Helen V. Black

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