

John Howard Griffin

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Dearest Nell,

Again, late, late night: again a day of horror with the bombing of Rabbi Nussbaum's home by the Klan and now at night, the marvelous serenity of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto slow movement that pours in my ears while a superlative pastoral scene that Father George just gave me (beautifully mounted - one of his marvelous photographs) does the same thing to vision as it sits here above my desk.

A letter from Bear Jacques Maritain today - tired, in great pain, wondering why God does not take him - living his hermit existence in Toulouse. That enters it too, with the purest kind of love.

And a letter, too, from the endlessly cruel "Southern" Griffins informing my dad that his sister died and was buried this week - not even letting him know until after the funeral; still punishing him for what I did in my work. How contemptible, how damaged these racists are, how cunning in their cruelty. My dad took it very well, but God ~~knows~~ how deeply he was hurt. Before I wrote Black Like Me, they were a close family, now they leave him out of everything; shun him I suppose for having hatched a son like me.

It is in these moments late at night, when the fevers and activities of the day are finally past that I think most of you because this is the time, the mood that seems to fit you - none of these others do and do not even deserve mention in letters to you though they must occupy most of my waking hours during these times of great crisis. I sit here surrounded by my sleeping family, all of them safe, all of them secure in this great love that flows without impediment between us; and it is at these times that it seems to me I want to write you, to send you a little note, because you fit into this, harmonize so intrinsically into it that you are part of it, not only you as person, but you as part of the beauty of our walls and desks - your marvelous photos, your books that are never out of our sight or hands. Sometimes when you say to me how little you do, or can do, I feel like smiling: how much more could anyone WANT to do - you have helped us by nourishing not only us, but by forming our children (particularly Gregory, though Johnny and Susan are deeply and passionately responsive to your work also) in these examples of a great and beautiful soul that can express itself not only in acts but in visual beauty that communicate profound things to them and us.

All for now. Great love to you from all of us,

John

Mandy, through much loving, kissing and
hugging finally this evening finished off the red
ball music box you sent her last Christmas!

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