



Uncle Tom's Children (P.S.)

By Richard Wright

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Set in the American Deep South, each of the powerful novellas collected here concerns an aspect of the lives of black people in the post-slavery era, exploring their resistance to white racism and oppression. Originally published in 1938, *Uncle Tom's Children* was the first book from Richard Wright, who would continue on to worldwide fame as the author of numerous works, most notably the acclaimed novel *Native Son* and his autobiography, *Black Boy*.

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Uncle Tom's Children (P.S.) By Richard Wright Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Library of America has insured that most of Wright's major texts are now available as he wanted them to be read." -- *Alfred Kazin, New York Times Book Review*

Collection of four novellas by Richard Wright, published in 1938. The collection, Wright's first published book, was awarded the 1938 Story magazine prize for the best book written by anyone involved in the WPA Federal Writers' Project. Set in the American Deep South, each novella concerns an aspect of the lives of black people and explores their resistance to white racism and oppression. The stories are "Big Boy Leaves Home," "Down by the Riverside," "Long Black Song," and "Fire and Cloud." Thematically and stylistically they form a consistent whole. In 1940 an enlarged edition of Uncle Tom's Children was published. Subtitled "Five Long Stories," it also contained a nonfiction essay, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," and a polemical short story, "Bright and Morning Star"; both additions were thought by critics to have damaged the literary integrity of the book. -- *The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*

About the Author

Richard Wright won international renown for his powerful and visceral depiction of the black experience. He stands today alongside such African-American luminaries as Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison, and two of his novels, *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, are required reading in high schools and colleges across the nation. He died in 1960.

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The Ethics of Living Jim Crow

An Autobiographical Sketch

My first lesson in how to live as a Negro came when I was quite small. We were living in Arkansas. Our house stood behind the railroad tracks. Its skimpy yard was paved with black cinders. Nothing green ever grew in that yard. The only touch of green we could see was far away, beyond the tracks, over where the white folks lived. But cinders were good enough for me and I never missed the green growing things. And, anyhow, cinders were fine weapons. You could always have a nice hot war with huge black cinders. All you had to do was crouch behind the brick pillars of a house with your hands full of gritty ammunition. And the first woolly black head you saw pop out from behind another row of pillars was your target. You tried your very best to knock it off. It was great fun.

I never fully realized the appalling disadvantages of a cinder environment till one day the gang to which I belonged found itself engaged in a war with the white boys who lived beyond the tracks. As usual we laid down our cinder barrage, thinking that this would wipe the white boys out. But they replied with a steady bombardment of broken bottles. We doubled our cinder barrage, but they hid behind trees, hedges, and the sloping embankments of their lawns. Having no such fortifications, we retreated to the brick pillars of our homes. During the retreat a broken milk bottle caught me behind the ear, opening a deep gash which bled profusely. The sight of blood pouring over my face completely demoralized our ranks. My fellow-combatants left me standing paralyzed in the center of the yard, and scurried for their homes. A kind neighbor saw me and rushed me to a doctor, who took three stitches in my neck.

I sat brooding on my front steps, nursing my wound and waiting for my mother to come from work. I felt

that a grave injustice had been done me. It was all right to throw cinders. The greatest harm a cinder could do was leave a bruise. But broken bottles were dangerous; they left you cut, bleeding, and helpless.

When night fell, my mother came from the white folks' kitchen. I raced down the street to meet her. I could just feel in my bones that she would understand. I knew she would tell me exactly what to do next time. I grabbed her hand and babbled out the whole story. She examined my wound, then slapped me.

"How come yuh didn't hide?" she asked me. "How come yuh awways fightin?"

I was outraged, and bawled. Between sobs I told her that I didn't, have any trees or hedges to hide behind. There wasn't a thing I could have used as a trench. And you couldn't throw very far when you were hiding behind the brick pillars of a house. She grabbed a barrel stave, dragged me home, stripped me naked, and beat me till I had a fever of one hundred and two. She would smack my rump with the stave, and, while the skin was still smarting, impart to me gems of Jim Crow wisdom. I was never to throw cinders any more. I was never to fight any more wars. I was -never, never, under any conditions, to fight white folks again. And they were absolutely right in clouting me with the broken milk bottle. Didn't I know she was working hard every day in the hot kitchens of the *white* folks to make money to take care of me? When was I ever going to learn to be a good boy? She couldn't be bothered with my fights. She finished by telling me that I ought to be thankful to God as long as I lived that they didn't kill me.

All that night I was delirious and could not sleep. Each time I dosed my eyes I saw monstrous white faces suspended from the ceiling, leering at me.

From that time on, the charm of my cinder yard was gone. The green trees, the trimmed hedges, the cropped lawns grew very meaningful became a symbol. Even today when I think of white folks, the hard, sharp outlines of white houses surrounded by trees, lawns, and hedges are present somewhere in the background of my mind. Through the years they grew into an overreaching symbol of fear.

It was a long time before I came in close contact with white folks again. We moved from Arkansas to Mississippi. Here we had the good fortune not to live behind the railroad tracks, or close to white neighborhoods. We lived in the very heart of the local Black Belt. There were black churches and, black preachers; there were black schools and black teachers; black groceries and black clerks. In fact, everything was so solidly black that for a long time I did not even think of white folks, save in remote and vague terms. But this could not last forever. As one grows older one eats more. One's clothing costs more. When I finished grammar school I had to go to work. My mother could no longer feed and clothe me on her cooking job.

There is but one place where a black boy who knows no trade can get a job, and that's where the houses and faces are white, where the trees, lawns, and hedges are green. My first job was with an optical company in Jackson, Mississippi. The morning I applied I stood straight and neat before the boss, answering all his questions with sharp yessirs and nosirs. I was very careful to pronounce my *sirs* distinctly, in order that he might know that I was polite, that I knew where I was, and that I knew he was a *white* nun. I wanted that job badly.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Deloris Wagner:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with close friends is thing that

usually you could have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Uncle Tom's Children (P.S.), you are able to enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

April Young:

You may spend your free time to learn this book this e-book. This Uncle Tom's Children (P.S.) is simple to create you can read it in the park your car, in the beach, train as well as soon. If you did not possess much space to bring the particular printed book, you can buy the actual e-book. It is make you simpler to read it. You can save the actual book in your smart phone. So there are a lot of benefits that you will get when one buys this book.

Diane Sanchez:

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