Giving Back By Being Successful

Books & Bytes Interviews Dr. Ernest Hill

Kathryn Johnson
Co-Editor

Few famous people have their feet firmly planted on the ground. But, Ernest Hill is one of those people who does not have an exalted view of himself. Approachable, down-to-earth, Hill is the author of Satisfied With 'Nothin', a fictional account of "a young black man, Jamie Ray Griffin, struggling to create a decent life for himself in the harsh, often violent world of rural Louisiana during the 1970s." While here at Southern, Ernest Hill is housed in the John B. Cade Library on the second floor with the Honors College. He is a writer-in-residence for the Honors College. Recently, Books & Bytes interviewed Dr. Hill.

Books & Bytes: How did you get to come to Southern University as a writer-in-residence?

Ernest Hill: My first visit was at the request of Dr. Sandra Williams. She invited me to speak to one of her English classes. After hearing me speak, several of the professors, including a couple from the History Department, approached me about coming back to Southern to teach. I was definitely interested because one of my professional goals was to return to Louisiana to work. And one of my dreams was to work at my dad's alma mater, Southern University.

B&B: What were you doing before you came to Southern as a writer-in-residence?

Hill: I was finishing up my Ph. D. at UCLA, touring with my book, attending conferences and speaking to Black youth groups about drugs, violence, education, responsibility, and the importance of being good decision makers.

B&B: Why do you think the Black male is so violent?

Hill: It's not a matter of the Black male being violent, or having a violent nature. Most violence has an economic base and is usually localized in that sector of the population that possesses a dangerous combination of high expectations and limited options.

B&B: Why do you think the Black male is so violent?

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Footnotes From The Dean

During this yuletide season and the beginning of a new year, we ponder the past and plan for the future. A time for endings and beginnings! This is a time to set goals for the coming year, that with careful planning, can be accomplished, in part, if not completely. One important goal I would like to offer for consideration is to strive for excellence in every aspect of our jobs. I know we will continue to work as a team, share ideas, communicate with each other, exhibit a cooperative spirit and good will in the interest of the library and the university. The

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true worth of any organization, such as a library is the degree to which it successfully serves its main constituency. In view of this, we will provide outstanding service to all. Because of the high standards of excellence I set for myself and those around me, I have towering expectations of each of you which I feel confident you will meet. Just as I have expectations of you, I am certain you also have expectations of me. As always, I welcome your input, comments, suggestions, etc. Finally, I wish for each of you cherished memories of 1995. I challenge you to make every effort to share and serve purposely. If you do, you will receive a high return on your investment. Here is every good wish for much peace, love and happiness this holiday season and throughout the coming year.

Fall 1995 Student Workers

Archives
Andrea Dunbar*
Art & Architecture
Jeremy Brown
Camille Shade Collection
Etienne Muhammad
Regaynal Poplion
Zalphia Washington*
Circulation
Tana Boudreaux
Tamara Dillion
Joyce Hawkins
Juanita McKay*
Demond Maxwell*
Latonya Terry*
Chiquita Thomas
Dean’s Office
Andre Cody
Tina Donatto
Periodical/Government Docs
Oliver Allen, Jr.
Vincent Grier*
Ingrid Habert*
Nakia Mitchell*
Arlene Payne
Tujuana Payne
Ganesa Robertson*
Yolanda Smith
Catina Solomon*
Kathie Thomas
Steven Williams*
Interlibrary Loan
Willette Bulter*

Learning Resource Center
Chadwick Alexander*
Tyressa Bickham*
Kevin Daniels*
Katherine Davis
Bettie Gaines*
Kimberly Hendrix
Lisa Hogan*
Carolyn Jones
Sonnyboy Joseph
Leslie Minums*
Denise Meteva
Barret Ray*
Christopher Russell
Michael Thomas*

Music Listening
Charles Ferguson
Karen Fletcher*
Christopher Brown*

Reference
Angela Askins*
Frankie Cloman*
Lorenza Freeman
Diverous Johnson*
Tasha Walton

Stack Maintenance
Tracey Guy*
Ronald Holmes

Technical Services
Hortense Ambrose*
Dawn Bristro
Monica Lavalais*
Shawn Sumter
Kimberly Spraggins*

* Community Service Volunteer

Hats off to all the student-helping, information-finding, information-giving, book-checking out, mutilated page-ordering, book-binding, book-circulating, cataloging, mail-checking, mail-sorting, book-buying, computer-fixing, computer-programming, computing-analyzing, computing-using, internet-surfing, web-browsing, letter-typing, question-answering, direction-giving, meeting-calling, committee-chairing, meeting-going, idea-sharing, business-handling, encouraging word-offering, seminar-organizing, article-writing, always-trying, elevator-riding, book-shelving, microfilming, magazine-shelving, collating, report-writing, grant-writing, fun-loving, stair-climbing, picture-taking, email-reading, hard-working librarians at the John B. Cade Library. Here’s hoping you have a great holiday and come back safe for the beginning of the New Year and 1996 Spring semester!

Kathryn Johnson
Co-Editor
Christopher J. Rogers
Co-Editor

Happy Holidays . . .
They are usually dropouts, with limited education and violence, stealing and killing become a way to make a living. While I was in Los Angeles, I had the opportunity to work with a set of Bloods and Crips. That experience taught me a great deal about the mentality and outlook of gangbangers.

B&B: What motivated you to write Satisfied With Nothin’?

Hill: I went to California and began reflecting on my life in Louisiana. I realized that I had a story to tell. I wrote my master’s thesis on Louisiana. So, I started writing the book. My parents raised ten successful kids, all of whom are doctors, pharmacists, professional athletes, etc. (The most famous of my siblings is Kenny Hill, who played for the Raiders and the New York Giants, has three Super Bowl rings, and graduated from Harvard with a 3.9 GPA in molecular biophysics. He is now the general manager of a Canadian football team.) This fact made me wonder why some kids succeed and others fail. I always think about the greatest lesson that my Dad taught me: “Make good decisions.” I think that this is the key to success. The book came as a result of these reflections and my desire to speak on problems plaguing the Black community.

B&B: What do you have planned for the future?

Hill: I’m writing another novel. It will be entitled A Life For A Life. I’ve signed a six-figure contract with Simon & Schuster for a book deal. I’m close to getting movie rights for my current book, Satisfied With Nothin.’ The first release was published by Pickanninny Productions in 1992. Simon & Schuster has bought the rights and will re-release the hard-back edition this August with a huge media blitz. My agent feels that we should wait for the new release and media blitz before closing the movie deal.

B&B: What do you think about Terry McMillan’s huge success as a writer and now the movie “Waiting To Exhale” coming out?

Hill: When you say Terry McMillan, controversy comes to mind. I think she did a tremendous service to the Black writer. She tapped into a market of people who had never read a book before. It’s been said that she is the first Black “dime novel” writer. She is certainly in a different category from Maya Angelou or Tony Morrison. However, any time a writer is successful, everyone benefits.

B&B: Why do you think her book was so successful?

Hill: The subject matter and good marketing. Hers is one of the first books that deals with the Black male/female relationship in such detail. In many ways it is similar to Alice Walker’s Color Purple. It also had great crossover appeal for whites because of the volatile male/female issue.

On that same line, sales for Shahrazad Ali’s book, Black Woman’s Guide to Understanding the Black Man, went through the roof. It made her very rich. Obviously, much of the appeal there was due to controversy and curiosity. Many people bought the book just to see what all the fuss was about. She did an excellent job of marketing herself.

B&B: How long do you plan to stay at Southern?

Hill: I will be at Southern one year as a writer-in-residence. My tenure here will culminate with the teaching of a creative writing course in the Spring semester, 1996. I know there is a lot of talent here at Southern. Hopefully, I will be able to teach a little technique and maybe help some of these talented Southern students to get their works published. I had the good fortune to meet scholars who helped me and I want to do the same for Louisiana. My success will be Louisiana’s success.

B&B: Do you write in any other genre, essays, factual accounts, etc?

Hill: I haven’t published anything other than fiction. I am an historian and I have written historical papers, articles, etc. The dissertation I did on the Colfax (Louisiana) Riots in 1873 is the type of historical writings I do in the future. One historian said that my research on this event will change the way southern history is viewed. However, I want to write two or three novels before embarking upon the scholarly arena.

B&B: How did you come up with the title, Satisfied With Nothin’?

Hill: I had thought of calling it “Nigguh, Please”, but as I was contemplating a title for the book, I remembered my Dad riding me around Oak Grove when I was about 10 or 11. He drove past the old juke joint and the rows of dilapidated houses where people were sitting outside drinking and playing dominoes; people who were poor, out of work. They all looked so happy to me. After about an hour, my dad turned to me and said, “Son, don’t ever be satisfied with nothin’.” When I realized that my novel was saying the same thing to the Black community, I had my title. Hopefully, my novel will rekindle the desire within all of us to achieve, and that desire will serve as a catalyst to help us eradicate forever the apathy and complacency currently plaguing the Black community.

Dr. Hill is a native of Oak Grove, Louisiana. Beginning his college education at Northeast Louisiana University on a football scholarship, he later received his bachelor’s degree in Social Science with an emphasis on history from the University of California, Berkeley, his master’s degree in Africana Studies from Cornell University, and his Ph. D. in history from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Management ...

The following article was taken from The Executive Speechwriter Newsletter. Theodore Levitt of the Harvard Business School offers this observation on how to be an effective manager.

Most managers manage for yesterday’s conditions, because yesterday is where they got their experiences and had their successes. But management is about tomorrow, not yesterday. Tomorrow concerns what should be done, not what has been done. “Should” is determined by the external environment—what competitors (old, new, and potential) can and might do, the choices this will give customers, the rules constantly being made by governments and other players, demographic changes, advances in generalized knowledge and technology, changing ecology and public sentiments, and the like.
Congratulations, A Job Well Done

Kathryn Moland, Documents/Serials Librarian, will be retiring January 10, 1996. She has worked for the Southern University library for 26 years. She has 28 years of total work experience. Her years of service are appreciated and she will be greatly missed.

Keith Osburn (S. U.) and Edwia Richardson (LSU) Recent Graduates

Students take time to discuss and go over notes in the library before taking their finals

Photos by Christopher J. Rogers
"Running the P.C."  
Classes Were Offered  
At The Library  

Dawn Kight  
Systems Librarian  

"Running the P.C." was a series of five basic computer classes conducted on Sundays during the fall semester. Ms. Denise Metevia, student worker in the Library Learning Resource Center (LLRC), saw a great need for these classes after realizing that users of the LLRC had very little or no basic computer skills. The employees found themselves answering the same basic questions over and over again. She felt that if these classes were held, not only would it help students become computer literate, it would also reduce the workload of workers in the LLRC.

The five basic computer classes taught by Metevia were: MAC BASICS, IBM BASICS, WORDPERFECT FOR BEGINNERS, MAC WRITE PRO and PRINT SHOP DELUXE. The classes were offered to faculty, staff and students of the University free of charge. Members of the community could attend after paying a registration fee of ten dollars.

The series proved extremely successful and was surprisingly attended by mostly staff of the University. Each person who successfully completed the series will receive a certificate and a LLRC discount card which gives them laser printouts at a reduced cost. Attendees of the series were:

Jaymes Baker  
Jeanette Bergeron  
John Bibbins  
Matthew Cannon  
Shajanda Foster  
Lashawn Goodwin  
Katina Hall  
Johnie Hughes  
Murphy A.A. Johnson  
Lazarro Nettles  
Charles Rawls  
Lucian Stamps  
Centel Tate

Book Review  
Satisfied With Nothin’

Kathryn Johnson  
Co-Editor

Just when you thought that Black writers had stopped worrying that bone of contention, had buried that ugly skeleton, racial discrimination, a la Richard Wright, here comes Ernest Hill and Satisfied With Nothin’. Hill vividly dredges up those old wounds that you thought had healed over, the pain that you, perhaps, lived through, if you were a Black child in the 1960’s when the civil rights battle was at a crescendo. Hill skillfully chisels a clone of Bigger Thomas in his character, Jamie Ray Griffin. Jamie Ray is depicted as the Black youth who has the weight of the Black community’s hopes and aspirations on his shoulders. When the all-white school was integrated and the bus arrived to take Jamie Ray and his school mates to school, Mrs. Betty, picturing the composite Black community, yells out “This is us day chillun. Show ‘em we’s jus’ as good as they is. Make us all proud.” As he fearfully ventures into the white man’s world, there is danger at every turn, real and imagined. He is filled with fear of the white man and rightly so, as it turns out in the book, because the white man is shown to be callous, conniving, insensitive, and cruel. Like Bigger Thomas in Wright’s Native Son, Jamie Ray lives in fear. He has been raised in an atmosphere where racial discrimination is as thick as corn pone and as pervasive as smog. His mother has warned him about how to act around white folk: “Best way to git ‘long with white folks is to never look ‘em straight in the eye.” However, Jamie’s friends thought that the end of segregation meant the end of racial discrimination. But, it didn’t quite work out that way. Try as he might, trouble always had a way of finding Jamie Ray. It was the system. He was boxed in, caged by sociopolitical constraints that would not let him just be a man without racial tags.

Unlike Bigger Thomas, Jamie Ray does cultivate some coping skills and is not filled with hatred of whites. In spite of the fact that he witnesses some of the cruelest deeds perpetrated against Blacks by the white man, he remains open-minded about whites. Hill, like Wright, exposes the dichotomy of the white man who plays the role of benefactor, judge and executioner of the Black male. These grotesque deeds that Jamie witnesses still does not make him rebel against the white structure. In fact, he tries to assimilate himself into white society. He has a white friend, goes to his house for dinner; has a white girl friend. But, the fear is always there as Jamie treads cautiously into white society. He has a white friend, goes to his house for dinner; has a white girl friend. But, the fear is always there as Jamie treads cautiously through his high school years.

The book covers Jamie’s life from his high school years through a stint in college where he played on the football team, and into his peak years where he meets an untimely death. Unable to cope with the system, unable to break the cycle of poverty, he succumbs to the very life he tried so hard to escape. In the end it cost him his life.

This work of fiction is a valuable addition to the literature of the Black experience and Louisiana history. I’m looking forward to Dr. Hill’s next fictional venture.

Quote of the Month ---  

Weiler’s Law: Nothing is impossible for the person who doesn’t have to do it himself.

BOOKS AND BYTES • 5
Kwanzaa Celebration Continues To Grow, Enhance Life

by Dorothy E. Davis
Art & Architecture Librarian

The Kwanzaa holiday season, developed in 1966 by Dr. Ron Karenga, professor of Pan-African Studies and Black cultural leader in California, continues to grow in the United States and abroad as people of African descent feel the need for a season of cultural affirmation. Based on seven principles and continuing over a seven day period (December 26 - January 1), it is observed in home as well as corporate settings.

The season is centered around the Nguzo saba, the seven principles of Black culture. Each day is dedicated to one of the principles. Usually, a candle is lit from the candle holder (the Kinara), which is specially designed, and a principle is discussed, dramatized, or expressed in some symbolic way. More often than not, gifts are given to children which are usually handmade. In 1992, when Southern University hosted a city-wide celebration on campus, the children were given fruit, a Kwanzaa card and handmade bracelets.

A traditional observance includes African foods, a ceremony honoring ancestors, discussions about the achievements of the past year, music, poetry, drama, singing and dancing. The word Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase "Matunda Ya Kwanza", which means, first fruits. Swahili terms are used in all of the celebrations. The seven principles are: (1) Umoja - Unity, (2) Kugichajulia - Determination, (3) Ujima - Collective Works and Responsibility, (4) Ujamaa - Cooperative Economics, (5) Nia - Purpose, (6) Kuumba - Creativity and (7) Imani - Faith.

This year, on December 4 and 5, the Honors College at Southern University, sponsored a two-day Kwanzaa program and workshop, which informed and inspired students to observe the holiday, peculiar to people of African descent. Kwanza Yenu Iwe Na Heri! (May your Kwanzaa be Happy!)

Want to Buy a Gift that Does Not Cause You to Gain Weight?
Here’s “Food for Thought”

Edwia Richardson, Assistant to the Dean

Ten Suggested Book Stores for You:
1. Books-A-Million • 9526 Cortana Place • 3525 Perkins Road • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 923-0058 or (504) 343-9584
2. Book Warehouse • 9596 Florida Blvd. • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 925-9505
3. Fountain of Light Bookstore • 7877 Jefferson Highway • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 927-2385
4. Little Professor Book Center • 7562 Bluebonnet Boulevard • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 769-6189
5. Lamb of God • 344 E Main Street • Brusly, LA • (504) 749-2338
6. Our Story Bookstore • 2153 N. Foster Drive • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 357-7881
7. Paige’s Masonic Regalia • 4317 Airline Hwy. • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 355-0601
8. Reflections Books & Gifts • 3929 Florida Boulevard • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 343-7323
9. St. Francis Book Center • 427 S. Foster Drive • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 926-1216
10. Waldenbooks • 3404 S. Morgan St. • Baton Rouge, LA • (504) 271-7666
Books & Bytes Expressions

What does this time of year mean to you?

David Candler
Music Librarian

Jesus is the reason for the season which means we should be celebrating his birth and the significance thereof. As the holiday vacation approaches, I always assume that I will get a lot of work done around the house and get plenty of rest. However, in addition to celebrating the birth of Christ, I look at this time of year as being a time when you can expect to see many friends and relatives whom you might not have seen in a long time. There are many musical programs to attend and view on television. For the last 3 or 4 years, some friends and I have been celebrating the Christmas season through what we call “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. The success has been so great that we had to change the name to “Christmas in Baton Rouge”, which begins around December 15th and ends around January 5th. I also look forward to viewing a lot of football games. It truly is the season to be jolly because most people are at this time of the year.

Murphy A. A. Johnson, Jr.
Stack Maintenance

Christmas means God sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into this world so that he would become the human sacrifice on Calvary. (Jesus was born to die for the sins of mankind.)

It was only because of Christ’s death that we now have the blessing of eternal salvation.

Joy to the world, peace on earth, goodwill to men is only true for believers that are looking forward to eternal salvation.

Angela Proctor
Circulation Team Leader

This is the time of the year that everyone should thank the Lord for all of their blessings. It’s also a time of celebration for the coming of Jesus Christ. I think the celebration of Christmas has become too commercialized. The children in today’s society really don’t understand the meaning of this important holiday. Children only understand that they are supposed to give a gift and receive one in return.

Angela Proctor

The holiday season is a time to celebrate the true meaning of the birth of Jesus. Jesus is the reason for the season. When we think of gifts, always remember that Jesus is the most precious gift given to mankind. It is a time that we share with others that are less fortunate. It is a time for festive events, gift-giving, family dinners and reunions.

Kathryn Johnson
Books & Bytes, Co-editor

This time of the year is a very beautiful season. However, the true meaning of Jesus’ birth can be celebrated everyday. No greater gift has God given to the world than the perfect human sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The peaceful conditions that should exist this time of the year will be perfectly realized in the future when Jesus Christ exercises his rulership over the earth.

Interviews and Photos by: Christopher J. Rogers
Faculty and Staff Updates

Edwia Richardson, Assistant-to-the-Dean received her library degree from LSU, December 22, 1995. She has been on the Library staff for two years.

Sana Alawady, Janice Bell, Mildred Brown, Charlotte Henderson, Dawn Kight and Edwia Richardson, attended the SOLINET Board of Directors reception which was held in New Orleans on December 7, 1995. Library Dean Emma B. Perry is chair of the SOLINET Board of Directors.

Kathy Knighten, Edwia Richardson, and Cathy Royal attended a telephone workshop conducted by the Morning Advocate.

Dawn Kight, Systems Librarian, has been appointed to the Southern University System-Wide Telecommunication Committee and the University World Wide Web Committee.

Sana Alawady, Public Service Chair, was appointed to serve on the University Curriculum Committee and she also chairs the Social Science sub-committee.

Emma Bradford Perry, Dean of Libraries, is chair of the Southern University Search Committee for the newly created position, Dean for Lifelong Learning. In addition to being a 1995 graduate of Leadership Louisiana, she served on a panel, “Libraries New Realities, New Opportunities”, at the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) annual meeting, held in Atlanta, Georgia. She has also served on SACS’s Accreditation Teams.

Kathryn Moland, Documents/Serials Librarian, will retire January 10, 1996. Mrs. Moland has worked at the library for 26 years. She will retire with 28 years of experience.

Janice Bell, Denise Metevia, Emma Morrison, and Roslyn Tolson attended the afternoon session of the one-day Windows ’95 Seminar held on October 5, 1995.

Kathryn Johnson, attended a workshop at UNO on Compex, DIALOG’s online database for engineering held on November 26. She also attended the December 5, LOUIS database planning meeting held at LSU.

Rodney Johnson, Library Learning Resource Center lab assistant and professional comedian, hosted the Homecoming Concert on October 26, 1995. Concert performers were Brian McKnight and Kut Klose.

Emma Morrison, Library Learning Resource Center Director, has compiled a Multimedia Center Videocassette List. The list includes over 1700 titles.

Keith Osburn, Computer Lab Assistant, received his B. A. in Elementary Education at the Southern University December 1995 graduation.

Jayne Massenberg, Bindery & Gifts, announced the graduation of her son, Edward Jason Massenberg, III, who received his undergraduate degree from S. U. at the December 15, 1995 commencement.

Dawn Kight, Mildred Brown, Charlotte Henderson, and Angela Proctor attended the Louisiana Notis Users Group Meeting (LaNUGM), held in Alexandria, Louisiana, on November 10th.

Happy Holidays

John B. Cade Library
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Baton Rouge, LA 70813

Address Correction Requested