

Half the World

By **CLAUDIA JONES**

The Case of the Missing Baby

WHEN THE CAPITALIST PRESS tips its hat to real human drama as regards the home and family, it's really news. I don't of course refer to the daily diet of "sex" crimes and murders which are a regular fare of explosive home life and family relations which the capitalist system itself creates.

An example of such rarity in news coverage, especially as regards the Negro family, was the news headlines of April 25, in every metropolitan newspaper to the effect that the nine-day-old Negro infant was found alive due to "unusual care" given it by an 18-year-old Negro chambermaid who abducted and cared for the baby in an improvised incubator.

For once, millions of readers saw that such tragedies born of our capitalist society take place among the Negro people. For once, millions of readers of the capitalist press shared the suffering imposed on the parents of the child and viewed sympathetically the entire tragedy. That family life is a close bond among all people, no less the Negro people, who live in the overcrowded ghettos, hemmed in by prejudice and jimcrow oppression was news in a capitalist democracy. News photographers showed Negro parents, the parents of tiny Chaneta Holden, expressing conjugal happiness as they viewed a Negro nurse holding their child. There was even an effort to treat with sympathy the unfortunate Negro young woman who abducted the child because of her own frustrated motherhood, having lost her own twins in miscarriage.

BUT, EVEN WITH ALL THIS, the Jimcrow poison of the capitalist ideologists seeped through their press copy. Scientifically trained doctors claimed that the care of the child of this "unschooled Negro chambermaid" was a "miracle." One story read: . . . "despite her youth and limited education . . . (she) had shown such an instinct and aptitude for taking care of the premature child that doctors were amazed. She had purchased books on child care, heaters and sterilizers and other equipment to give the Holden baby the delicate attention it needed."

I could not help but think, as I am sure many mothers did, of the "unschooled" Negro mothers in the South who have no hospitals and who give birth to children under the most primitive conditions, who are forced to rear their children in conditions that rival chattel slavery in modern America whose atomic bombs threaten to wipe out civilization.

At Neponsit, L. I., the chief surgeon at the U. S. Marine Hospital commented: "The native intelligence of the person who fed and cared for this baby must be unusual." In the above context, the "native intelligence" of Negro mothers and Negro women is indeed unusual, especially when one notes that jimcrow environment, and unsanitary housing conditions which is the lot for millions of Negro citizens in our capitalist society.

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TINY CHANETA HOLDEN'S own adaptability to her environment, her fighting desire to live, was also granted by the eminent doctors. She is back in her expensive \$10 a day hospital incubator. But what of her future—and millions of tiny Negro infants who die at birth because of these primitive conditions in the richest society in the world? Even the "miracle" of care, to use her mother's happy words, resound in our ears when she described her six-room apartment shared by two other persons—a dingy, drafty, cold flat: "It's criminal to bring a baby here." And Mrs. Holden's husband, Clifford Holden, 26-year-old unemployed GI, echoed his wife's sentiments: "What can we do? . . . Even if I had a job and money, it's next to impossible to get out of this rat-hole."

And what of the fate of Mrs. Evelyn Jane Jordan? Will the capitalist press and courts deal with her as mercifully as, for example, the sympathy shown for "mercy killers," or take into account her upset state, her frustrations of lost motherhood, even as did the child's mother, who holds no malice but expressed grataefulness for keeping her baby alive?

The rarity of capitalist news coverage as concerns the Negro family stops at the water's edge as to the solution of real problems, the problems of life and death for Chaneta Holden, victim of jimcrow housing conditions and national oppression. Only struggle and unity of Negro and white to change the society can guarantee her a life of peace and a happy childhood.