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JOHN SHEARER



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# I wish I had an Afro

by John Shearer

COWLES BOOK COMPANY, INC., NEW YORK



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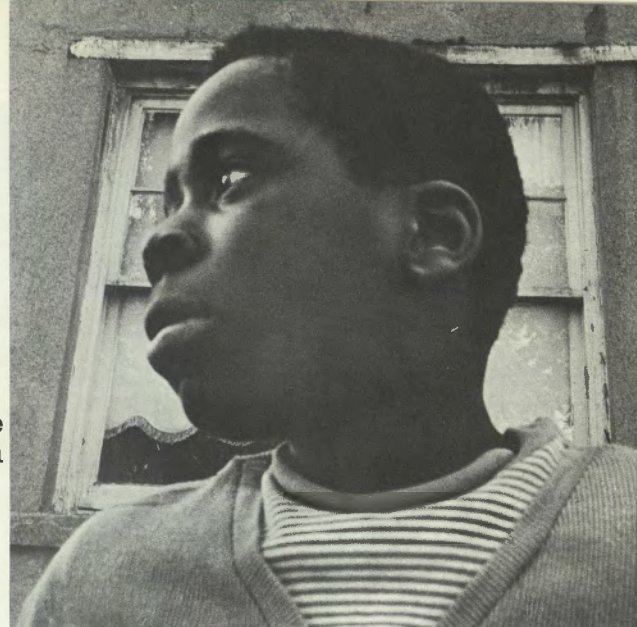
This honest, unsparring look at the inner life of a poor black woman, is a child and strong, but been far from too protected. John, is a worker who ing for his gues with militant you achieve a bit mit that pass the black m

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## Little John



My name is John McDaniels. Right now I be eleven years old, but my birthday is in October, so soon I'll be twelve.

Me an' my family an' my dog, Duke, live in Greenburgh — in Westchester. My teacher last year told me Westchester has lotsa money. Well, I live here an' I don't have any money. The part of Greenburgh where I live is called Fairview. It's sort of a little place maybe about six blocks long. I've lived here all my life in the same old house. All my life — right on the top floor. My ma always be sayin' we live worse than all those people you read about in the South 'cause it gets so cold in our house an' the roof leaks. I don't like those cold breezes whooshin' through the cracks, but I like this old house. I don't think we live so bad. Ma worries too much!



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My dog, Duke, been in our family almost as long as me. That's what my ma says, anyway. He lives in his own little raggedy house in back of ours. My dad says one day he's goin' to get him a real boss house. Duke is my real good friend. When I was little, this big guy was messin' with me. Well, Duke came up behind him an' bit him on the leg. That guy ran home, an' so did Duke an' me. That was a long time ago an' he's gettin' older now.

My mother's name is Rena. She's always sayin' I'm just like her. We talk all the time. I even get up late at night an' talk to her. It be real dark an' I be scared. She tells me not to be afraid of anything. She even makes me go out an' fight those big guys who take my lunch money. They make me pretty scared, though.

My ma works every day but Saturday an' Sunday at the home for old people. She leaves before I go to school an' got lots to do when she gets home. She be real tired. Sometimes when she sets down she even goes to sleep. Then she don't have to think about all the work she got to do.





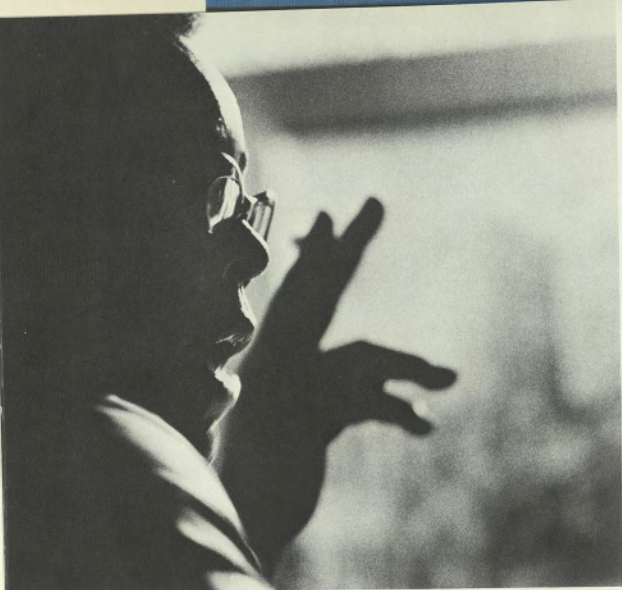
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## Rena

Yeah, I live in Westchester, but I'm not one of those Westchester housewives you hear so much about. My husband, Big John, an' I have two kids. Ronda, the oldest, is fifteen. Then there's Little John, who's eleven. That boy means the world to me. I like to have him around. People tell me it's not the best thing to keep the boy so close, but he's such a good boy, an' the youngest. An' you know a mother can't be too careful. He's the baby, after all.

There are times, though, when I have to make the boy go out an' fight, like when some boys took his lunch money. Once you let that kind of thing start, well, there's just no stoppin' it! So I had to make the boy go out an' fight. He didn't do too bad, either.

