

the poverty program, you had to get recognized by some official agency, and to get recognized you had to do some mau-mauing in most cases. Once you got recognition, then you had the bureaucrats working full-time for you, drawing up the statistics and prospectuses, knocking on the right doors, and making the applications for the "funding," the money that was available from the government, the foundations, or the churches.

But it didn't end there. Just like you were trying to put the pressure on the bureaucrats, the brothers in your organization would be putting the pressure on you. They'd be waiting on your doorstep to see if you were getting anything for the brothers, to see if you really had any class. That was one reason why Summer Jobs was such a big deal. That was what the whole session between the Samoans and the Flak Catcher was over, summer jobs. The jobs themselves were nothing. They were supposed to be for teen-agers from poor families. It was an O.E.O. program, and you got \$1.35 an hour and ended up as a file clerk or stock-room boy in some federal office or some foundation—hell, they didn't even need one half the people they already had working for them, and so all you learned was how to make work, fake work, and malingering out by the Xerox machine. It is true that you learned those

skills from experts in the field, but it was a depressing field to be in.

Nevertheless, there was some fierce mau-mauing that went on over summer jobs, especially in 1969, when the O.E.O. started cutting back funds and the squeeze was on. Half of it was sheer status. There were supposed to be strict impartial guidelines determining who got the summer jobs—but the plain fact was that half the jobs were handed out organization by organization, according to how heavy your organization was. If you could get twenty summer jobs for your organization, when the next organization only got five, then you were four times the aces they were . . . no lie . . . But there were so many groups out mau-mauing, it was hard to make yourself heard over the uproar. You practically had to stand in line. It was a situation that called for a show of class. You had to show some style, some imagination, some ingenuity.

It brought out the genius in seemingly plain people. Like there was one man with a kind of common name like Bill Jackson. He and some of his buddies had created a poverty organization, the Youth of the Future, and had gotten recognition from one of the E.O.C. area boards. But when it came to summer jobs, the Youth of the Future was out of it, like a lot of organizations. Apparently

some people thought that was all the Youth of the Future was, just another organization on the poverty scene, just this Bill Jackson and his buddies from off the block.

So one morning about eleven o'clock a flamboyant black man in a dashiki turns up at City Hall. And this flamboyant black man, the Dashiki Chief, isn't running with any brothers from off the block. He is at the head of an army of about sixty young boys and girls from the ghetto. And even his dashiki—it's no ordinary dashiki. This number is *elegant*. It's made of the creamiest black and red wool with great leopard-fur cuffs on the sleeves and leopard-fur patch pockets on the front . . . and a belt. You don't see a dashiki with a belt every day. And he has one of those leopard-fur African fez numbers on his head, and around his neck he has a necklace with beads and tiger teeth leading down to a kind of African carved head pendant. He comes marching up the stairs of City Hall and through those golden doors in his Somaliland dashiki, leading the children's army. And these kids are not marching in any kind of formation, either. They are swinging very free, with high spirits and good voices. The Dashiki Chief has distributed among them all the greatest grandest sweetest creamiest runniest and most luscious mess of All-American pop drinks, sweets, and fried food ever

brought together in one place. Sixty strong, sixty loud, sixty wild, they come swinging into the great plush gold-and-marble lobby of the San Francisco City Hall with their hot dogs, tacos, Whammies, Frostees, Fudgsicles, french fries, Eskimo Pies, Awful-Awfuls, Sugar-Daddies, Sugar-Mommies, Sugar-Babies, chocolate-covered frozen bananas, malted milks, Yoo-Hoos, berry pies, bubble gums, cotton candy, Space Food sticks, Frescas, Baskin-Robbins boysenberry - cheesecake ice - cream cones, Milky Ways, M&Ms, Tootsie Pops, Slurpees, Drumsticks, jelly doughnuts, taffy apples, buttered Karamel Korn, root-beer floats, Hi-C punches, large Cokes, 7-Ups, Three Musketeer bars, frozen Kool-Aids—with the Dashiki Chief in the vanguard.

In no time at all the man's dashiki is practically flapping in the breeze from the hurricane of little bodies swirling around him, roaring about with their creamy wavy gravy food and drink held up in the air like the torches of freedom, pitching and rolling at the most perilous angles, a billow of root-beer float here . . . a Yoo-Hoo typhoon there . . . The kids have discovered the glories of the City Hall lobby. Such echoes! Their voices ricochet off the marble in the most groovy way. Screams work best, screams and great hollow shrieks . . . and the most high-toned clatter of sixty pairs of little feet

running at top speed . . . This place is Heaven off-the-rack!

The lobby is officially known as the great central court, and it's like some Central American opera house, marble, arches, domes, acanthus leaves and Indian sandstone, quirks and galleries, and gilt filigrees, like Bourbon Louis curlicues of gold in every corner, along every molding, every flute, every cusp, every water-leaf and cartouche, a veritable angels' choir of gold, a veritable obsession of gold . . . and all kept polished as if for the commemoration of the Generalissimo's birthday . . . and busts of great and glorious mayors of San Francisco, perched on top of pedestals in their business suits with their bald marble skulls reflecting the lacy gold of the place . . . Angelo Rossi . . . James Rolph . . . cenotaphs, pediments, baroque balusters, and everywhere marble, marble, marble, gold, gold, gold . . . and through this Golden Whore's Dream of Paradise rush the children of the Youth of the Future.

By now the guards are asking the Dashiki Chief what he thinks he's doing. City Hall functionaries are asking him what he wants. The Dashiki Chief informs them that his name is Jomo Yarumba, and the Youth of the Future are now here, and he wants to see Mayor Joseph Alioto.

Meanwhile, the childstorm is intensifying. A little girl carrying a soft-top beer-style container of Fresca is about to collide with a little boy holding a double-dip Baskin-Robbins strawberry rhubarb sherbet cone, and the City Hall lifers can envision it already: a liver-red blob of sherbet sailing over the marble expanse of the City Hall lobby on a foaming bile-green sea of Fresca, and the kids who are trying to rip the damned paper off the ice cream in the Drumstick popsicles, which always end up inextricable messes of crabbed paper and molten milk fat, mixing it up with the kids whose frozen Kool-Aids are leaking horrible streaks of fuchsia and tubercular blue into the napkins they have wrapped around them in their palms and mashing it all onto the marble bean of Mayor Angelo Rossi . . . and now Jomo Yarumba and his childstorm are swooping up the great marble stairs of the great central court toward the first gallery and the outer office of the Mayor himself, and the City Hall functionaries are beginning to confer in alarm. By and by a young man from the Mayor's office comes out and explains to Jomo Yarumba that the Mayor regrets he has a very tight schedule today and can't possibly see him.

"We'll wait for the cat to get through," says the Dashiki Chief.

"But he's completely tied up, all day."

Tom Wolfe

"Hell, man, we'll stay here all night. We'll see the cat in the morning."

"All night?"

"That's right. We ain't budging, man. We're here to tend to business."

The young guy from the Mayor's office retreats . . . Much consternation and concern in the lobby of City Hall . . . the hurricane could get worse. The little devils could start screaming, wailing, ululating, belching, moaning, giggling, making spook-show sounds . . . filling the very air with a hurricane of malted milk, an orange blizzard of crushed ice from the Slurpees, with acid red horrors like the red from the taffy apples and the jelly from the jelly doughnuts, with globs of ice cream in purple sheets of root beer, with plastic straws and huge bilious waxed cups and punch cans and sprinkles of Winkles, with mustard from off the hot dogs and little lettuce shreds from off the tacos, with things that splash and things that plop and things that ooze and stick, that filthy sugar moss from off the cotton candy, and the Karamel Korn and the butterscotch daddy figures from off the Sugar-Daddies and the butterscotch babies from off the Sugar-Babies, sugar, water, goo, fried fat, drop-lets, driplets, shreds, bits, lumps, gums, gobs, smears, from the most itchy molecular Winkle to the most

Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers

warm moist emetic mass of Three Musketeer bar and every gradation of solubility and liquidity known to syrup—filling the air, choking it, getting trapped gurgling and spluttering in every glottis—

And it was here that Bill Jackson proved himself to be a brilliant man and a true artist, a rare artist, of the mau-mau. One of the few things that could stir every bureaucrat in City Hall, make every bureaucrat rev up his adrenaline and quicken his pulse and cut the red tape and bypass the normal channels and get it together by word of mouth, by jungle drum, by hoot and holler from floor to floor, was just what Bill Jackson was doing now. Even an armed attack wouldn't have done so much. There's already an 84-page contingency paper for armed attack, emergency guidelines, action memos, with all the channels laid down in black and white for bucking the news up the chain . . . But this! Sixty black hellions and some kind of crazy in a dashiki wrecking creamy wavy gravy through the grand central court of City Hall . . . This lacerated the soul of every lifer, every line bureaucrat, every flak catcher in the municipal government . . . There are those who may think that the bureaucrats and functionaries of City Hall are merely time servers, with no other lookout than filling out their forms, drawing their pay, keeping the boat from rocking

and dreaming of their pension like the lid on an orderly life. But bureaucrats, especially in City Halls, have a hidden heart, a hidden well of joy, a low-dosage euphoria that courses through their bodies like thyroxin . . . Because they have a secret: each, in his own way, is hooked into The Power. The Government is the Power, and they are the Government, and the symbol of the Government is the golden dome of City Hall, and the greatest glory of City Hall is the gold-and-marble lobby, gleaming and serene, cool and massive, studded with the glistening busts of bald-headed men now as anonymous as themselves but touched and blessed forever by The Power. . . And in an age of torrid sensations, of lust, gluttony, stroke-house movies, fellatio-lipped young buds jiggling down the street with their hard little nipples doing the new boogaloo through their translucent nylon jerseys, and age of marijuana, LSD, TCH, MDA, cocaine, methedrine, and motels where the acrid electric ozone of the central air conditioning mixes with the sickly sweet secretions oozing from every aperture—in the midst of such cheap thrills and vibrating nerve ends, who is left to record the secret, tender, subtle, and ineffable joys of the line bureaucrat savoring the satin cushion of City Hall? Who else is left to understand the secret bliss of the cof-

fee break at 10:30 a.m., the walk with one's fellows through the majesty of the gold-and-marble lobby and out across the grass and the great white walkways of City Hall Plaza, past the Ionic columns and Italian Renaissance façade of the Public Library on the opposite side and down McAllister Street a few steps to the cafeteria, where you say hello to Jerry as he flips the white enamel handle on the urn and pours you a smoking china mug of coffee and you sit down at a Formica table and let coffee and cigarette smoke seep through you amid the Spanish burble of the bus boys, knowing that it is all set and cushioned, solid and yet lined with velvet, all waiting for you, as long as you want it, somewhere below your consciousness, the Bourbon Louis baroque hulk and the golden dome of City Hall, waiting for you on the walk back, through the Plaza and up the steps and into the great central court, and you stop and talk with your good buddy by the door to the Registrar's or by the bust of Mayor Angelo Rossi, both of you in your shirtsleeves but with your ties held down smoothly by a small-bar tie clip, rocking back on the heels of your Hush Puppies, talking with an insider's chuckles of how that crazy messenger, the one with the glass eye, got caught trying to run football-pool cards off on the Xerox machine because he couldn't see the Viper standing

there on his blind side for five minutes with his arms folded, just watching him . . . [w]hile your eyes play over the lobby and all the hopeless wondering mendicants who wander in off the street, looking this way and that for some sign of where the Assessor's office is, or the Board of Supervisors', or the Tax Collector's, probably taking their first plunge into the endless intricate mysteries of The Power, which they no more understand than they could understand the comradely majesty of this place, this temple, this nave and crossing of the euphoria of The Power—and suddenly here are these black ragamuffins! neither timorous nor bewildered! On the contrary—sportive, scornful, berserk, filling the air, the very sanctum, with far-flung creamy wavy gravy, with their noise, their insolence, their pagan vulgarity and other shitfire and abuse! And no one can lay a hand on them! No one can call in the Tac Squad to disperse sixty black children having a cotton-candy and M&M riot for themselves . . . The infidels are immune . . .

The incredible news was now sweeping through City Hall. The Mayor's number-three man came out and took a look and disappeared. The Mayor's number-two man came out and took a look and disappeared. The Mayor's press secretary came out and took a look . . . it was rumored that The Media

were heading over . . . and the press secretary disappeared, and the kids dervished through it all, spinning their inspired typhoon up to the very architraves, and Bill Jackson orchestrated the madness in his whirling dashiki . . .

And in no time at all here was the Man himself, Mayor Joseph Alioto, advancing into their midst, attended by the number-four man, the number-three man, the number-two man, and the press secretary, and with his bald head gleaming as gloriously as Angelo Rossi's or James Rolph's, heading toward Jomo Yarumba with his broad smile beaming as if he had known the famous youth leader all his life, as if nothing in the world had been weighing more on his mind this morning than getting downstairs promptly to meet the inspiring Youth of the Future . . . And as the Mayor shook hands with Jomo Yarumba—there! it was done in a flash!—the Youth of the Future were now home safe . . .

Thereafter Bill Jackson could get down to the serious business, which was to use his official recognition to raise money for the sewing machines for his organization's dashiki factory . . . black-designed, black-made, black-worn dashikis to be manufactured by the youth themselves . . . There were no two ways about it. Bill Jackson and his group were looking good. That particular scene gave a lot of

Tom Wolfe

people heart. It wasn't long before an enterprising brother named Ronnie started his own group, The New Thang.

"The New Thang?" said Mayor Alioto, after they had put in their own unique and confounding appearance at City Hall.

"That's right, The New Thang."

The Mayor looked wiggled out, as if the lights had gone out in his skull.

"Thang," said Ronnie. "That's Thing in African."

"Oh," said the Mayor. There wasn't even the faintest shade of meaning in his voice.

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