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What Happened to Us



Arrested Development
by Gilda Rogers

Review by John Petrolino

Arrested Development by Gilda Rogers is a well researched, compelling, statistically driven work marking the history and merit level of Black culture in America up to the present, "The State of Black Achievement & Education In Hip-Hop America." Rogers outlines the benchmarks reached by her Black fore-fathers starting as far back in time to the pre civil war America. Her message can be best summed up from her closing argument, quoting an address given by President Barack Obama at the NAACP convention in 2005 "There is no reason why, with all we have today – all the books smarts, fancy degrees and access – that we still have people at the bottom of the well."

Rogers uses two "conflicting" ideologies throughout *Arrested Development* to highlight where Black culture was, how it advanced, where it rose to and, to her statistically supported opinion, of where Black culture is today. "The creation of the liberal arts college vs. common training or normal school created the controversial rift between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington..." Rogers states in the first chapter. Here she discusses the conflict between DuBois and Washington in the late 1800's; how Dubois was in favor of higher education to gain equality and Washington was in support of "...economic assimilation into the dominant White society, through Negro labor." It is important to note that both DuBois and Washington agreed "on the importance of Black character development."

Throughout *Arrested Development* Rogers chronicles the different levels of freedoms won by the American Black culture. She continues to cite the facts, in statistics, surrounding the progress of the Black Americans, highlighting the number of educated versus uneducated Blacks. Rogers cites that in the period of 1895-1930, the illiteracy rate of Blacks declined from 60 percent to 25 percent. Another impressive statistic, Rogers cites that "Between 1953-1961 White college enrollment increased by 55.5 percent, while 'non-white' increased 82 percent." These figures show a determined, motivated and enlightened culture of Black Americans whom wished to break from the bondage of segregation and inequality by exercising the rights they had to win.

Rogers works through the history of the Black American through the importance of The Harlem Renaissance, discussing prominent luminaries such as Langston Hughes, up and through the Black Power Movement, covering James Boggs importance as an activist. The central idea that Rogers continues to cite and instill throughout is that education was at the bottom of all the accolades, creating a sound foundation, and that any cultural advancement through a movement was from intellectual betterment and aspirations.

As for the subtitle of Roger's book, *The State of Black Achievement & Education in Hip-Hop America...*? Turning to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, we can understand that "hip-hop" is a term originating in 1983 meaning "a subculture especially of inner-city youths who are typically devotees of rap music." Rogers, especially when discussing the present day of a "hip-hop" America, quotes Boggs' theory of "capitalism supporting racism" and "racism supporting capitalism." She outlines how the current social zeitgeist in Black culture (and White) is one that it's

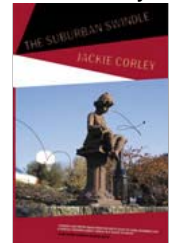
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These Last Couple Years?



cool to be "gangsta" and how the ghetto is "ghetto fabulous." The new paradigm of its cool to be ghetto, glorifying hardship, forging a new "ghetto fabulous" lexicon and also the self-demining use of the word nigga is a "manifestation of Immanuel Kant's philosophy of committing a 'crime against nature'." All of these new "norms" could be attributed by statements like Kanye West's declaration that "money is everything", continuing Boggs' capitalism/racism cycle. The statistics she brings to light are disheartening.

Arrested Development is an important book outlining what could possibly be foreshadowing a de-evolution of, not just Black culture but of, the whole human race. Roger's arguments, though her statistics are not, are color blind. The common thread between a lack of education is the lack of *quality* in education. Black, White, or otherwise, we are all in a state of *Arrested Development*, need to open our eyes, up lift each other and turn to one of Roger's closing arguments "To teach a young Black boy the importance of reading could very well be the next 'Great Awakening' and the writing of a new chapter in Black history." Amend her statement with "black" removed.

***Arrested Development* by Gilda Rogers is available at www.thebeyondgroupllc.com.**

About the author:

John Petrolino is the author of two collections of poetry; Galleria and Congo Lights. Petrolino's work has been featured in The Idiom Magazine, Eviscerator Heaven, The Bradstock Journal, Write On!! Magazette, The Working Tools Magazine, The Storm Generation Magazine, The New Jersey Freemason, WestWard Quarterly and on poetryvlog.com, identitytheory.com and wordriot.org with work forthcoming in Rock Candy, The Istanbul Literary Review, Exit 13, Hot Tea Cold Water, The Sandstorm Gallery and Lips. John was also featured on the newly released World Spirit film Greenwich Village. John continues to work on his poetry and other works while aboard ship, traveling or at home. Be sure to visit him on the web at www.johnpetrolino.com.

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