

In Nap's Words

*I am a way of life
An impression
Left by the breathtaking heat of Africa
Smells born on arms
Of jungles searching winds
The after affects
Of guns
Captivity
Religion
Rejection
Hope
And sin
I am a soulful scream
And a moan as one
I'm a personal expression
I am
The blues*

In 1980 I began hosting a show on WPFW-FM, a Pacifica Foundation Public Radio Station, in Washington, D.C. The show, which I called "Don't Forget the Blues," featured blues, news, jazz and information. Sometimes I would read poetry or short stories on the program.

I was aware of some of the work of Langston Hughes, but didn't really get introduced to his Simple Stories until a dear friend, Morissa Young, shared

with me her extensive love for and knowledge of black literature. One day while reading a book, she laughed out loud several times.

Intrigued, I asked her what was so funny and looked at the book. It was "The Best of Simple" and instantly I became a fan. We talked about the stories and she encouraged me to read them on my show. I did and needless to say, my audience and I fell in love with "Jess B. Simple."

"Jesse Simple" reminds me of myself and a whole lot of other people I know. The Stories have a universal appeal and folks from all walks of life enjoy and appreciate them. With great pride and enormous gratitude, I present this offering of the work of one of my favorite artists.

—Napoleon Turner, Jr.

This and other great Nap Turner CDs are available at www.rightonrhythm.com:

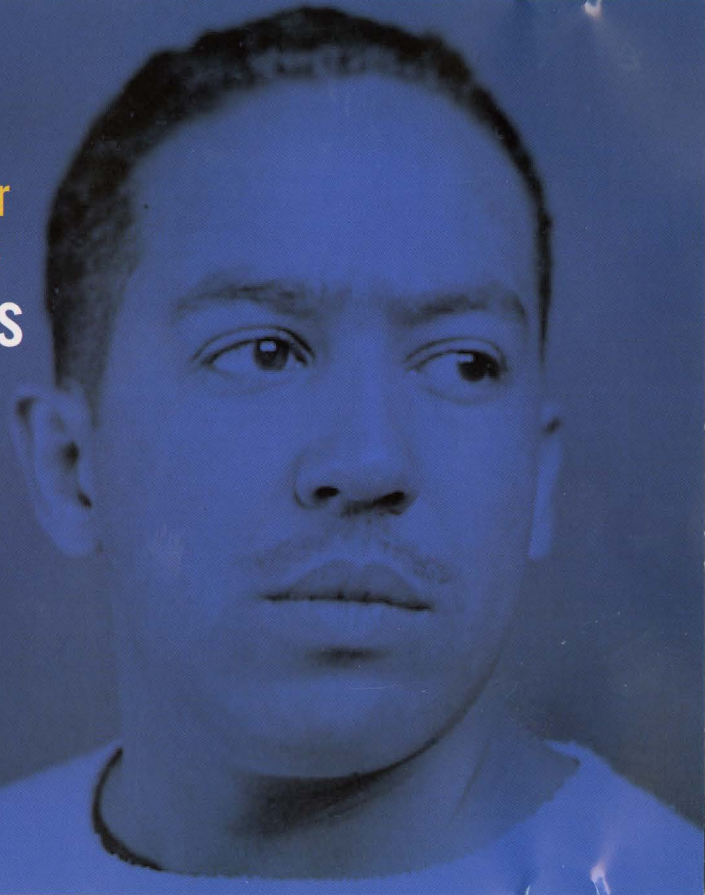


Live at City Blues
ROR005



Live at Cada Vez
ROR010

Nap Turner Presents Hughes Views of the Blues



Blues musician, jazz musician, bassist, vocalist, radio host, actor, mentor, teacher, social worker, loving husband, survivor. Nap "Don't Forget the Blues" Turner was the Godfather of the D.C. blues scene. His musical career began at age 14 and spanned nearly 60 years. Inspired by the likes of Slam Stewart and Oscar Pettiford, he built himself a home-made bass from a five gallon Pepsi syrup can, a five foot wood floorboard and a clothesline and started playing. As a young man in the 50's, working the strip around 7th and T, Nap jammed with the likes of Count Basie, Gene Ammons, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. But music quickly led Nap into the fast lane. Being hip, playing music, doing and dealing drugs, he was hooked on the hard stuff before he was out of his teens. No one, not even Charlie Parker, could convince Nap he was headed for trouble.

Through the late 50s into the 60s, Nap cycled in and out of jail and then St. Elizabeths mental hospital. While hospitalized he began formal music lessons.

Ultimately it was music that was Nap's salvation. In 1970, Nap entered himself into a methadone program. He overcame the odds and finally conquered his addictions. He then went to work as a counselor

and advisor in the DC Government's Narcotics Treatment Administration, helping others beat theirs.

In 1984 he received the Nap Turner Recognition resolution from the DC City Council and in 2002 he was given a Lifetime Achievement award by DC Mayor Anthony A. Williams. For Nap "Don't Forget the Blues" had a special meaning. It meant: "it was nobody's fault but my own that I've ended up in jail, don't forget the reasons you can get in trouble, don't forget where you come from, and don't forget how fortunate you are."

In 1980 he became a volunteer programmer at Pacifica Radio WPFW hosting a blues show and stayed on the air for more than 23 years. He was part of a triumvirate of radio hosts that won the station a Handy Award for broadcasting in 1984. Through a friend Nap discovered the writings of Langston Hughes and his stories of Jesse B. Simple and began reading them as a regular feature on his radio show.

When I first met Nap in 1994, he was already a major presence in the DC Jazz, Blues and radio scene. I had just begun taping and documenting the area performers through recordings in clubs around town and when the first Right on Rhythm CD, *The Blues You Would Just*

Hate To Lose Vol. I was released in 1996, it contained Nap's first released recording in his more than 50 years of performing in the DC area.

Around the same time, due to the great popularity of his readings of Langston Hughes' work on his radio show on WPFW, Nap assembled a collection of Simple stories with his good friend Ronnie Wells. He created a cassette with the title *Hughes' Views of the Blues*. A very short run of the tape was produced that he sold at gigs — then it disappeared.

We continued to work together and I produced his first full length music CD — *Nap "Don't Forget the Blues" Turner Live at City Blues*. In 2002 Nap and I released his *Live at Cada Vez* CD. We decided to include two more of the Hughes "Simple Stories." He did those readings in my living room. Over the last year of his life, he and I talked many times of trying to muster the resources to issue all of his Hughes material but sadly we ran out of time. Nap died on June 17, 2004. I continued to hold the dream of issuing the collection and worked with his beloved wife Gloria to create this special tribute to Nap Turner, a revered blues legend, and Langston Hughes, a revered literary giant.

—Wayne Kahn

In Memory of Nap:

*So sad the news
Don't Forget the Blues
God willin' & the creek don't rise
Oh man he just seemed so wise
A voice so warm and friendly
It resonated in your bones
Playing and talking
of the blues down home
Telling tales of Simple
Loving Percy & Johnny A
Educating his listeners
Bringing yesterday to today
As a younger man
With as many lives as a cat
Miss Mary said
"Come on up and sing one
and by the way keep the effin hat"
With survival came wisdom
Scraping bottom
and coming back up
The lesson learned
From paying those dues
Remember where you came from
Don't Forget the Blues*

—WK

Tracks 1, 2, 3 recorded live at Smokeless, June 2000
Rusty Bogart, Guitar; Charlie Hubel, Sax;
Arthur Gerstein, Piano; Eric Shramek, Bass; Jeff Lodsun, Drums

Tracks 4, 10 from "Live at Cada Vez," 2002
Gary Jenkins, Drums; Arnold Sterling, Sax; Rick Hanna, Guitar; Joe Kapp, Organ

Tracks 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 recorded at Foxhaven Associates, 1996
Charlie Hampton, Piano; Sonny Forrest, Guitar; Lenny Robinson, Drums;
Nap Turner, bass; Ronnie Wells, producer

Mastered by Bill Wolf / Wolf Productions
Produced by Wayne Kahn / Right on Rhythm

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In Memoriam
Langston Hughes 1902–1967
Nap Turner 1931–2004

- 1 Langston Hughes
Introduction to Simple (3:53)
- 2 Vacation (5:11)
- 3 Letting Off Steam (6:02)
- 4 Present for Joyce (8:33)
- 5 Self Protection (5:00)
- 6 For President (5:24)
- 7 High Bed (11:46)
- 8 The Moon (4:47)
- 9 Dog Days (7:25)
- 10 Again Cousin Minnie (6:42)
- 11 Lost Wife (4:48)
- 12 Coffee Break (5:59)

All stories © 1961 by Langston Hughes. All stories told by Nap Turner.

Front photo: Langston Hughes, 1934 / Harold Ober Associates

Back photo: Nap Turner, photo © 1996 Brendan Mattingly

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NapTurner
Presents

Hughes Views of the Blues

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