

# *Rendered Invisible*

By Frank E. Dobson, Jr.

Book Background

*Rendered Invisible* is a novella followed by five critically-acclaimed short stories. To follow are key facts that reinforce the impact each story will have with audiences:

*Rendered Invisible*: The historical fiction retelling of lives affected by Joseph Christopher, the .22 Caliber Killer, and how his reign of terror affected a generation of people from western New York state and New York City.

- Google "Joseph Christopher" and you see *might* see one reference to the serial killer who killed 13+ people in the early 1980's ...and that single mention is from a little known blog.
- Add "serial killer" to your search criteria and a more complete picture begins to emerge although the most recognized news source is Wikipedia.
- Fall, 2010 will mark the 30-year anniversary of the killings.
- All murder victims were black males with the exception of one, dark-skinned Hispanic man.
- Two of the victims had their hearts cut out.
- Three were stabbed but lived.
- One was nearly strangled in his hospital bed but lived.
- Even with the web, generations have never heard of him unlike David Berkowitz, the "Son of Sam" (6 murders) or Charles Manson (9 murders). Would that be different if the victims had been white?
- He was known by law enforcement as the ".22 Caliber Killer", although several others have shared that title:
  - Rob West, 1970: a white man who killed two white women in Ontario
  - Gary and Thaddeus Lewingdon, 1978: White brothers who killed 10 (both men and women) in and around Columbus, OH
  - Thomas Principe, 1970's: an Italian-American Gambino crime family member credited with at least 20 gangland executions (.22 Caliber Hitter)
  - Unknown, 1990: three white prostitutes killed by .22 caliber gun near Spokane, WA. Robert Lee Yates, JR confessed but was later proved to be in another city at the time.
- The Joseph Christopher story was covered by a 1998 show "The FBI Files (season 2, episode 18). Portions of this show are available on YouTube and video replays continue to generate emotional responses from viewers.
- Albert Menefee, Jr., the remaining survivor of the stabbings by Joseph Christopher died May 15, 2009 in Buffalo, NY. He was a Viet Nam combat soldier who Christopher stabbed December 31, 1980.
- Joseph Christopher was sentenced to 60 years in prison in 1982 for killing three black men in the Buffalo, NY area but it was overturned in 1985 by the New York court of appeals due to evidence of his insanity being withheld.
- He was convicted three months later in Manhattan for the death of Luis Rodriguez and the wounding of Ivan Frazier.
- He died in prison at 37 from a rare form of male breast cancer.

## Plus Five Bonus Stories:

### “Black Messiahs Die”

- A story on the topic of race, sport and violence, told through the eyes of a young white woman, a lawyer and a black basketball player, the next “great one.” Short story now being developed and presented as a play, “Young Messiahs Fly”.
  - *Young Messiahs Fly*, 2009
    - NY City: Frank Silvera Writer’ Workshop, Harlem School of the Arts
    - Nashville, TN: AAPEX presentation, Scarritt-Bennett Center, Vanderbilt University
    - Toledo, OH: New York Writers’ Series, Ground Level Coffee House
  - *Black Messiahs Fly* - National Black Theatre Festival, Reader’ Theatre, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 2007
- Mirrors racial profiling stories in the news headlines such as:
  - Robert Tolan, son of former baseball big leaguer Bobby Tolan shot by police getting out of SUV [<http://newsone.com/nation/news-one-staff/relatives-blame-houston-police-shooting-on-racial-profiling/>]
  - Fred Weary, offensive lineman for the Houston Texans pulled over after glancing at police car [<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=hill/090403&sportCat=nfl>]
  - Steve Foley, Chargers linebacker shot by off duty policeman [<http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/news/story?id=2575196>]

### “Homeless M.F”

- Originally published in Warpland: A Journal of Black Literature and Ideas, Vol. No. 1, 1995
- Shows violence is often random but its results are very specific.
- Demonstrates that the reaction to violence does not always lead to a violent future – life is about personal choices and change can happen.

### “Junior Aint”

- Originally published in Proverbs for the People: An Anthology of African American Fiction, (Kensington Press) 2003
- Story of search for self identity as young boy grapples with life without a father, without a “senior” to make him a real “junior”

### “Another Continent”

- Based on a true account, told by a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, the story weaves two stories of men seeking peace – one outside of genocide and another seeking peace in his relationship – each seeing something they want in the other’s journey
- Gives insight into the changing role of women as they shed former roles bound by tradition
- Is a story where main characters could be interchangeable with any race, as they seek to reach across boundaries and “continents,” toward wholeness and peace

### “It Falls Between”

- Shows how hard it is to let go of stereotypes from both sides of the racial coin.
- Encourages you to understand what motivates people and find grace for them rather than judgment
- Challenges you to reach across the aisle, past misunderstanding, to find what unites us all