

HARLEM



Princess

The Story of Harry Delaney's Daughter

Ruth Bates Harris

Excerpted from "Harlem Princess"

Pages 187-188

"Is this Mrs. Harris, the civil rights lady," the caller asked.

Being roused out of a heavy sleep, I wearily responded in the affirmative.

"Mrs. Harris, my friend was shot by the police."

"I'm very sorry," I said. "Where is he?"

"He was rushed to the hospital. . . ."

I was used to many late night calls but people didn't realize I could carry on what I thought was an intelligent conversation while still asleep. I don't know what happened that night but early the next morning, there was the voice again. "Mrs. Harris, remember I told you last night that the police had shot my friend?"

I was stumbling through the proper answers when the caller said, "He died. The police killed him. I need help, Mrs. Harris."

Then I was fully awake. "Meet me at the District Building at Thirteenth and E Streets, N.W. off Pennsylvania Avenue," I said. "I'll be there."

The caller gave his name as Rufus Mayfield and said that he had no money, "If you get a taxi now and meet me, I'll pay the fare," I said.

We synchronized our watches and agreed to meet at the Thirteenth Street entrance in twenty-five minutes. Thus began an association with an intriguing person, a natural leader . . . If we could just channel his leadership in the right direction. It wasn't easy but a meeting was arranged between him and Commissioner Tobriner who was convinced it would be a waste of time. Through his contact with Nonviolent Coordinating Committee officer Marion S. Barry, Tobriner and the Department of Labor, \$2 million was provided by the Labor Department for a bold new venture, PRIDE, Inc.

After the success of a labor-financed program focusing on rat control, a new program would undertake landscaping, gardening and beautification services, electrical appliance repairs and other programs. "Catfish" Mayfield, as he was called, was no doubt the youngest such board chairman in America, declared Marion Barry, PRIDE's new deputy director. PRIDE would employ over fourteen hundred youth.

"Congratulations, Catfish and PRIDE, may your decision be wise ones. The whole world is watching."