

Missing Daughters of Chicagoua
By Mary Ann Crowe

for Brit B., Kent G., Chaka K. & Hyde Park classmates

She said we could be twins

if sisters came in Black and redhaired light

we were the same height

and had two brothers

Despite different skin in our identical plaid

Catholic schoolgirl uniforms

both of us too slow for playground Double Dutch

South Side Chicago

Living across from an apocryphal Narragansett tower

amid pseudo-Indian Village apartments

our families took pride in sharing mythical Cherokee ancestry

mine from the Blue Ridge of Georgia

hers, from Tennessee

Seatmates on the school bus together

when four Black girls our age were killed—
President Kennedy shot soon after—we passed posters
outside the Nation of Islam Mosque
for Little Stevie Wonder on tour downtown
the first year my father was away preparing for Vietnam
Dad returned after the following year, enduring '64
and his village's bombing, but his favorite
Sam Cooke could not survive
another killing season in America

We corresponded through some mean years
when Blacks and whites weren't making friends
too many assassinations from Malcolm X to Fred Hampton
sealed her change from our shared religion
and *we grew up together* became an excuse
she'd add after college Black table introductions then
We didn't even seem like friends last time—
she changed her slave era name

I kept mine—and though I've moved beyond
the Mason-Dixon Line and sometimes feel like

I'm not-quite-white passing

I mourn her heart's deeper pain with each new horrific headline

from Charleston to Charlottesville,

Minneapolis to Buffalo

Notes for “Missing Daughters of Chicagoua” By Mary Ann Crowe

Notes:

- Chicagoua is the indigenous source for the name Chicago.
- The Narragansett is an historic 1928 Art Deco Chicago apartment building.
- On “Chicagoua”: Swenson, John F. “Chicagoua/Chicago: The Origin, Meaning, and Etymology of a Place Name.” *Illinois Historical Journal* 84, no. 4 (1991): 235-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40192527>
- Brit Bennett is the author of *The Vanishing Half*, and Kent Garrett, of *The Last Negroes at Harvard*.
- Chaka Khan was 2 years behind my grade school class.