

ADOPTED WITH A CHILD'S LOVE



Mary F. Calvert/The Washington Times

Janice Powell, of the District, hugs her newly adopted daughter, Jara Akeelah Powell, 3, after judges approved 34 adoptions yesterday in a ceremony hosted by the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency. Story, A7.

DISTRICT

Officials praise adoption progress

Fenty aims to ease process

By Josiah Ryan
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A crowd of about 500 gathered at the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse yesterday in Northwest to witness the finalizing of 34 legal adoptions in celebration of annual Adoption Day.

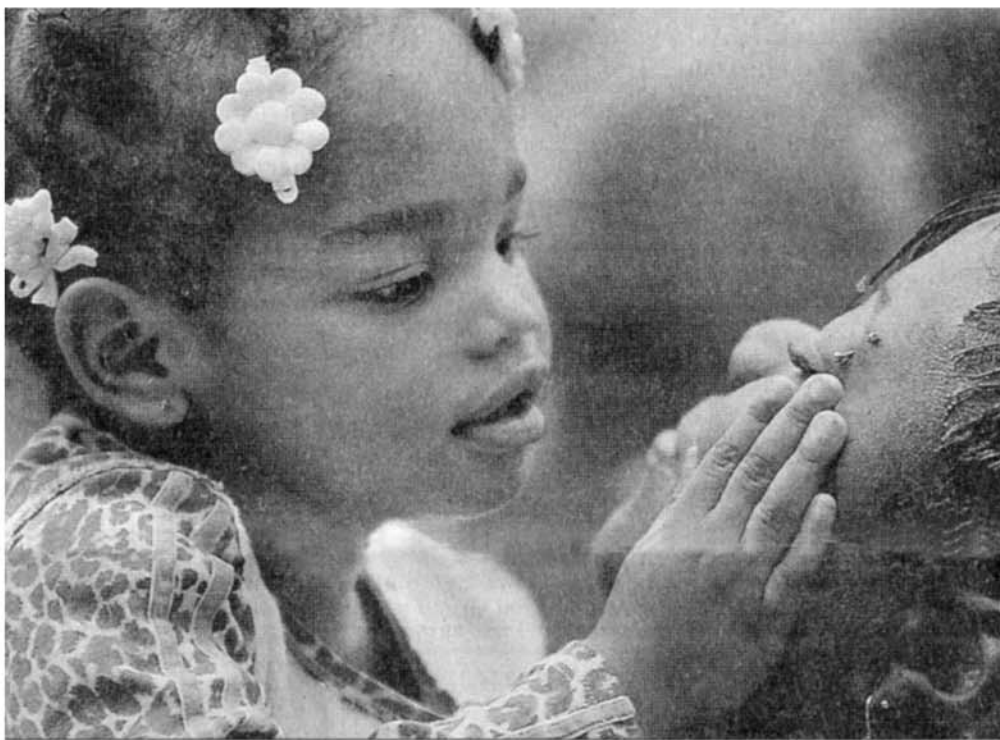
"This was certainly one of the more joyous occasions we have had in this courthouse," Superior Court Judge Anita M. Josey-Herring said. "This kind of event gives us the energy we need to serve here from day to day."

Judge Josey-Herring was among a group of dignitaries that included Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, poet Nikki Giovanni and inspirational speaker Les Brown. An emotional standing-room-only crowd filled the third-floor atrium of the courthouse to observe the ceremony.

Judge Josey-Herring said it was a day to celebrate the positive progress she has witnessed in local adoption since the first Adoption Day 21 years ago.

"Today, people are more focused on ensuring that kids don't grow up in foster homes," she said. "We are pushing every day to make sure we can get people to know about foster kids' needs. This celebration is for raising public awareness."

Each adoptee was recognized for special hobbies, strengths and aspirations, and interludes of inspirational

Photographs by Mary F. Calvert
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Malijah, 2, gazed into the eyes of her new mother, Tekeshia Moorer, and new son Tavon, 4, leaned on her for support yesterday at the 21st Annual Adoption Day celebration at the Moultrie Courthouse in Northwest, where 34 adoptions were finalized and celebrated, including Ms. Moorer's two.

music were performed throughout the ceremony.

Miss Giovanni, who read one of her poems, said she tried to pick a poem in the spirit of celebration.

"We celebrated today as a society of the coming together. We celebrated the coming together of parent and child," she said.

Mr. Fenty said he attends the event annually because he considers adoption to be an indicator of the city's progress.

"I can judge the city's success by the opportunities it provides to its young people

and families," he said during a brief appearance. Mr. Fenty also said he plans to increase subsidies as an incentive for D.C. residents to adopt and to eliminate much of the red tape involved in securing an adoption.

"We want to make it smooth and as easy as possible," he said.

Officials said 234 children were adopted during the past year, but hundreds more in the District were waiting to be adopted.

Each speaker asked the attendees to consider adoption

and shared the adoption hotline phone number. Miss Giovanni said that though adoption rates are down, people should take responsibility and fight through the existing difficulties.

Mr. Brown, a noted motivational speaker who was adopted, spoke of his upbringing. He held up his success — and the \$25,000-\$50,000 he earns on the lecture circuit — as a possibility for other adopted children.

"You just don't know who you have got up in your house," he said.