

Where I'm Coming From

The funnies find a different point of view.

BY BARBARA BRANDON

The integration of the comic pages was long in coming. Perhaps the belief was that there was nothing to be gained from the black experience. That kind of limited thinking is often characterized by an inability to see "black themes" as universal.

A black voice wasn't heard through black mouths, created by black hands, until the sixties, when pioneer black cartoonists entered national syndication. Even then their views were expressed through casts of children. I refer to strips such as Morrie Turner's *Wee Pals*, Ted Shearer's *Quincy*, and *Luther*; the feature created by my father, Brumscic Brandon Jr. Out of the mouths of babes seemed the most palatable way to introduce blacks to the funny pages.

Few black cartoonists have entered national syndication since the seventies—none of them women. I'm pleased the *Detroit Free Press* has given me the opportunity to not only showcase adult black characters, but adult black women, who, like myself, speak their minds freely and candidly.

Where I'm Coming From is a weekly strip that explores life and relationships—universal themes—some of which come from a black sensibility.

It's the nineties and I'm optimistic. I only hope racial and sexual attitudes have matured to a point where those in the media recognize the need for social commentary from a variety of perspectives.

BARBARA BRANDON is the only black female cartoonist currently published in a major U.S. newspaper. Her *Where I'm Coming From* has appeared in the lifestyle pages of the *Detroit Free Press* since June 1989. She recently signed a development contract with

Universal Press Syndicate and hopes to take the strip national within a year.

A 1980 graduate of SU's College of Visual and Performing Arts, Brandon has previously worked as a fashion and beauty writer for *Essence* magazine, and as an illustrator for *Essence*, the *Crisis*, the *Village Voice*, and MCA Records. She resides in New York.

DAVID ANN SAUNDERS

