

STYLE & SOUL



Khalid Muhammad, 74, and his wife, Nandi, 63, (left) talk about their life in the North Philadelphia home and neighborhood where they run a small penny candy store for local children. Videoing them for a project are Mike Kuetemeyer (left, background with camera) and Anula Shetty (right). CLEM MURRAY / Staff Photographer

Worth more than a penny

A North Phila. couple whose candy store has been a haven and school for neighborhood kids are getting recognition.

By Samantha Melamed
STAFF WRITER

There's a house on Cumberland Street in North Philadelphia with a white flag fluttering outside. The flag is not — despite a decadelong siege by weeds and blight, and daily bombardments of refuse — a symbol of surrender. It bears the words *will power*. It means the Penny Candy Store is open.

The store in question is technically the home of Nandi and Khalid Muhammad. Their living room's been overtaken by a large table heavy with bins of candy and a commercial freezer full of ice cream.

But it's more than a candy store: For many kids in the Hartranft area, it's been a clubhouse, after-school program, summer camp, and school for the last 17 years. Nandi, 63, and Khalid, 72 — who've adorned their cobalt-blue walls with their own pantheon of greats, like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Cecil B. Moore, and Black Panthers

leader Reggie Schell — aim to teach the kids about black history and math, about managing finances, and about respect.

"We see our role as their friends," Nandi said. "But also, if we saw they needed to learn how to count, we'd teach them. Kids will pay attention to candy."

Those lessons, and their lasting resonance, are documented in a new work-in-progress by Anula Shetty, 47, and Mike Kuetemeyer, 48, artists-in-residence at the Village of Arts and Humanities, in the same neighborhood, in collaboration with lifelong residents Fred Harris, 24, and Franklin "Q" Tate, 23.

The work, *Places of Power*, is what Shetty and Kuetemeyer call an immersive documentary. It will be an app with images of the neighborhood embedded with video and text.

"The idea was to document people creating change in the neighborhood and places of power that might not be visible," See **PENNY CANDY** on C2

Below left, some of the candy that "Miss Nandi" and Khalid Muhammad sell. Below center, Nandi Muhammad with photos of the many children who have frequented their store/classroom on Cumberland Street, right.



CLEM MURRAY / Staff Photographer



Courtesy of Anula Shetty and Fred Harris



CLEM MURRAY / Staff Photographer



Mother and daughters: The writer (second from left) with her now-married girls, (from left) Jill, Amy, and Nancy. RUTH ROVNER

One of life's most complex of relationships

By Sally Friedman
FOR THE INQUIRER

The eruption seems to come out of nowhere. A daughter and I are on the phone — not even face-to-face — when a nerve is hit. We've tread on treacherous mother-daughter ground, and we're at it. Again.

Of the women in my life's history, my three daughters have primacy, reserved front-row seats.

famously say, "Daughters test you!" I always cringed at that comment, often accompanied by Mom's slight sigh about her best friend, Yetta.

Yetta, of course, had sons. Sainted sons who respected their mother. My sister and I were guilty of sins like disrespect, insolence, and, on a particularly bad day, selfishness.

See **DAUGHTERS** on C2

Move over, mamas.

'Dadchelor' parties for fathers-to-be

By Terri Akman
FOR THE INQUIRER

During the planning of his sister-in-law's baby shower, Micah Snead's thoughts went to the woman's husband. Was there a way to celebrate his impending parenthood, too?

"The whole process of having a baby is kind of like a loss of self," said Snead, 34. "You're not that important anymore, you've gotten her pregnant, and now nobody's

all that interested in you."

Looking to "recapture a bit of the old glory days," Snead, of Bryn Mawr, planned a "bro-fest" for brother-in-law Drew Dinger. A day of disc golf with the guys at Fairmount Park was topped off with adult beverages and cheesesteaks.

"It was a ton of fun and a nice way to blow off a little steam ahead of time," said Dinger, 36, of Havertown. His daughter Hannah was born

See **MAN SHOWER** on C3



Robin Giunta of Berks County designed new "man-shower" lines to add to her business, Paper Clever Party. ROBIN GIUNTA

PARENT TRIP | C3

Four EMTs burst in, birthing kit in hand. Game on.

FASHION | C8

Talking dickeys and styling with the Veronicas.



Treats as well as images of significant figures in black history await children at the Muhammad home. CLEM MURRAY / Staff

Couple lauded for community legacy

PENNY CANDY from C1

Shetty said, “and make them visible both to the community and to people outside.”

So, she and Kuetemeyer mentored Harris and Tate in videography and editing; in return, the young men provided the filmmakers with insight into the community. They introduced them to subjects who became part of the documentary: a woman who goes by O, who runs a community center, Serenity House, and is pursuing a sustainable “soular” power initiative; and Darlene Pope, a block captain who’s obtained money to fix up houses on her block to prevent gentrification.

While filming nearby, Tate and Harris remembered the candy store. “I was like, ‘Whoa! When’s the last time you been to the Penny Candy Store?’” Tate said. “Eight or nine years, right? When they open?”

They went back, and the Muhammads were still there.

Nandi, who’d worked in food service at the Naval Hospital, and Khalid, a former investigator for lawyers including Cecil B. Moore, took over the store from an older woman, known in the neighborhood as Miss Billie. She could no longer manage it herself, and they saw it as too important to let disappear.

“The children here, there was really very little structure for them. So we said, ‘We’ll do that,’” Nandi said.

They hung up the flag, and word spread.

But — except for an initial visit from a parent — it’s kids only.

“Adults have a tendency to have guns, knives, and drugs in their pocket,” Nandi said. “We wanted them to be able to come here and be safe.”

Kids could open savings accounts instead of spending a dollar all at once.

But to buy candy, they had to learn a little math.

“If I put five pieces of candy in front of you,” she’d ask, “how much change do I give you? Think on it.”

Harris said he still values those lessons.

“It was a real big influence on us. They taught us how to count, life lessons, how to tie our shoes. Everything we needed to get ready for the adult world, they taught us,” he said.

The couple kept the block clean for years, holding Saturday-morning cleanups to combat the perpetual short-dumping of trash, tires, and even washing machines, and paying kids who helped a \$5.50 stipend.

And they began taking photos of each kid who came through. At first, the pictures were tacked up



Franklin Tate helps Fred Harris adjust video equipment as they prepare to assist in a documentary project on community leaders.

on the walls. When the walls filled up, they made albums. Now, those albums are visual histories of the neighborhood.

Tate and Harris found their own photos in there, and those of cousins and childhood friends.

But, Tate said, “Some people in this book got killed. A lot of them are locked up.”

Those who remain don’t always remember to come by the Penny Candy Store.

So the artists decided to organize a Penny Candy reunion last Saturday, screening video of the store, and showcasing the photos of the kids who have come through the store over the last two decades.

It was part celebration, part call to action: Two years ago, the Muhammads got so tired and overwhelmed by cleaning the block, they stopped. Now, sometimes the sidewalks are impassable.

With an assist from the artists, they’re planning a cleanup in April. About 30 alumni came to the reunion, and about 10 pledged to come and help pick up.

Virnas Hendricks, 25, was at the reunion, examining the photos from a decade ago and wondering whether he had really ever looked that young. He said he would be at the cleanup.

“They came into the neighborhood and made positive things for our community. Without the Penny Candy Store, I don’t think half of us would be here right now,” he said. Hendricks works at KFC and still lives in the neighborhood. He’s often too busy to get back to the store.

But, he said, “I would take a day

off to help them out. They helped us become men.”

The reunion brought generations of Penny Candy kids, including current ones.

Carleen Bayne stopped by with her three children, all regulars. “They look at Nandi as a grandmother,” she said. (Plus, her daughter Ciani, 9, added, “You could get a whole bunch of candy.”)

In May, Shetty and Kuetemeyer hope to share the gospel of candy with the world via the Places of Power app, an exhibit and walking tour.

It’s the culmination of their six-month residency through the SPACES program at the Village of Arts and Humanities, where they’ve been mentoring Harris, a photographer, and Tate, a rapper, and running community workshops on filmmaking using simple tools, like the social-media app Vine. Their hope is that these skills will flourish even after the residency concludes.

Maybe, they’ll also leave behind a community of supporters who can help the Penny Candy owners keep up with their block.

As Nandi greeted old friends and new fans at the reunion, wearing a special pink-and-gold T-shirt she’d made for the occasion, all those lessons she had given over the years were finally paying off.

“You try to move forward, but every once in a while you look back,” she said. “We’re looking back today, and it looks good.”

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SIDESHOW

Piers: Give it up, Kim

Cultural analyst Piers Morgan has applauded Kim Kardashian’s skill for cashing in on her bod. But he says her latest nude selfies make her look desperate: After all, the 35-year-old mother of two already is famous. Writing in Britain’s Daily Mail, Morgan says he believes Kim’s selfies are prompted by jealousy: “Other younger members of her family have been grabbing all the scantily clad attention recently.” So are the 15 minutes of fame earned by Kim’s derriere really up?



TIRDAD DERAKHSHANI
@derakht00

Kim fires back

Mrs. Kanye West isn’t happy about the criticism. On Tuesday, she tweeted: “sorry I’m late to the party guys I was busy cashing my [\$]80 million video game check & transferring [\$]53 million into our joint account.”

PBS’s winning night

Here’s something you don’t hear often: PBS (locally Channel 12, WHYY-TV) was the most-watched broadcast network Sunday. That’s thanks to the series finale of Michelle Dockery and Maggie Smith’s *Downton Abbey*, which drew 9.6 mil viewers, according to Nielsen. Writer-producer Julian Fellowes’ period drama, which ran for six seasons, was public TV’s most-watched series of all time.

‘Dancing’ goes Trumps

ABC revealed the 12 celebs who’ll go all whirling dervish in the new season. They include *Boyz II Men*’s Wanya Morris, NFL legend Doug Flutie, TV journo and famed mustache-wearer Geraldo Rivera, and, in a special treat, prez candidate Donald Trump’s ex-wife Marla Maples. The season premieres March 21.

Meisner in facility

Former Eagles bassist Randy Meisner has been remanded to a psych facility on a 72-hour hold after threatening suicide in reaction to the death Sunday of his wife, Lanay. She’s believed to have shot herself accidentally with a rifle, TMZ says.

AC/DC postpones tour

AC/DC has postponed 10 shows, including their April 1 stop at the Wells Fargo Center, after doctors advised singer Brian Johnson he may suffer hearing loss if he continues the tour.

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La Salle student gets a dream invitation

By Molly Eichel
STAFF WRITER

A series of coincidences came together for Tom England to experience a moment he calls life-changing. If La Salle, where England is a senior, had not been on spring break when Bruce Springsteen happened to be in England’s hometown of St. Louis, it never would have happened. If England hadn’t been in the fourth row thanks to a lucky lottery draw, it never would have happened. If England’s sign weren’t ... well ... weird enough, it never would have happened.

But the gods who preside over the Church of Springsteen looked fondly on Tom England on Sunday. Springsteen, England’s idol, invited him onstage to play “Working on the Highway” with the E Street Band.

His sign — “Can I work on the highway with the E Street Band?” — included a PhotoShopped picture of himself in full Springsteen regalia hanging with Bruce. “I saw him read it,” said England. He told Springsteen he plays guitar. “If you play guitar, what key is ‘Working on the Highway’ in?” Springsteen asked. “C!” England responded. Springsteen jokingly looked at the band and said, “Is that right? Is it in C?”

Next thing England knew, he was on stage with an acoustic guitar in his hand. “I hope you know what you’re doing,” Springsteen said to England. When England was supposed to come in with the band, guitarist Stevie Van Zandt looked at him and said, “You ready?” “I’ve been waiting for this my whole life,” England replied.

“I was so just happy. It felt like I was playing with my really good friends. ... It was just so surreal and Bruce was just so gracious. He’s my hero. I still just want to thank him so so much,” said England, a business school student. “I’ve never felt more alive. That was the most fun I’ve ever had in my life, and Bruce was able to make it happen.”



La Salle senior Tom England with Bruce Springsteen at a St. Louis concert. Courtesy of Tom England

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Daughters

Continued from C1

And yet, we were truly a happy family — I’ll even employ that overused word *close* — as a mother and her daughters.

But I learned as I got older that in the mix was this, too: We had the capacity to be so fiercely loving one minute, but then furious the next. It was too scary to acknowledge that I could hate my mother in brief, staccato moments, and then want to take it all back.

And now, a generation later, these amazing, much-loved daughters of mine remind me that we four are in one of the most complex of women’s relationships.

Mixed in with my presumed wisdom and devotion is the periodic accusation that I’m incredibly demanding, devouring, and, just for good measure, gift-paralytic. My daughters are gifted ar-

chers who know just where to aim the arrows.

How enormous our ability to injure one another.

Let me say right now that I am guilty of maternal sins of omission and commission and just plain stupidity. When you become a mother at 22, you have a lot to learn. And how I’ve yearned for the chance for some do-overs.

I should have listened to them more and scolded them less. I should have encouraged them to take chances. And I should never have made a fuss about how they looked.

And their capacity to hurt me? Sometimes, it’s just a fissure: One of them has promised to call back because she’s always on the run and it seems that we never finish anything. And then she doesn’t.

Or I want to make a plan — a firm plan — and, again, things are left hanging, and I’m left wondering where I am in the pecking order of their lives.

The daughter with whom I war most often is the very same one who is most like me. “Aha!” Dr. Freud might say, “You’re looking at yourself.”

And he’d be right: Each of my three daughters is a microimage of me. My flaws. My vulnerabilities. My neediness. My impatience.

Mothers, daughters are captives to our passionate attachment to one another.

So when we clash, it’s complicated by the psychological underpinnings of aspects I still don’t understand, even at my advanced age.

But then, somehow, the ominous clouds part, and we’re back to a bath of sunlight. We’re laughing in a way that only we laugh

with one another.

But not before we were blindsided by the sheer weight of our feelings.

Am I still trying, even as they reach middle age, to fashion my daughters into who I think they should be?

Am I yoked to anatomical memory — the fact that I literally carried them inside me?

Their father has a very different bond — quieter, more stable, definitely less volatile. But then, he’s a man. And as my wise friend Marsha once observed so simply, “A father is not a mother.” Not so simple after all.

I used to think this fierce love would calm down after their teens, then after their college years when they presumably knew everything. It didn’t.

I knew it would alter after the raw shock set in of their becoming mothers themselves. We would be women together, totally understanding and understood. And, yes, that’s happened.

But it’s not all Hallmark, either.

So I say this to myself every year as Women’s History Month rolls around: I’ll try harder to really concentrate on the women who mean everything to me — my own daughters. We’ll be mature and rational and calm and intelligent.

And then one unguarded conversation will carry us back to the altar of our anger, until it recedes.

My friend Kim, a psychoanalyst, will smile when I report these skirmishes to her and say simply, “There must be something in it for all of you.” And, of course, she’s right. We’re captives of our passionate attachment to one another.

There will probably be echoes of this sound and fury for my two daughters who have daughters.

But my daughters will write their own histories as women. And I, of course, will wait breathlessly to see how they read.

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