

Dr. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *writer; journalist*

Personal Information

Born on October 8, 1945, in Chicago, IL; son of Earl Hutchinson, a postal worker, and Nina (Brown) Hutchinson; wife's name Barbara (Bramwell) Hutchinson; children: Fanon and Sikivu.

Education: California State University, Los Angeles, B.S. sociology, early 1970s; California State University, Dominguez Hills, M. Hum., 1989; Pacific Western University, Ph.D. sociology, 1991.

Memberships: Black Journalists Association, Coalition Against Media Exploitation.

Career

KPFK Radio, Pacifica, CA, 1974-82; author of *The Myth of Black Capitalism*, 1970; *Let Your Motto Be Resistance*, 1974; *Black Fatherhood: Guide to Male Parenting*, 1992; *Black Fatherhood II: Black Women Talk About Their Men*, 1994; *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*, 1994; *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919-1990*, 1995; *Betrayed: a History of Presidential Failure to Protect Black Lives*, 1996; *Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America*, 1996; *The Crisis in Black and Black*, 1998.

Life's Work

Whenever the American media has provided coverage of the social issues and concerns facing African Americans, it is quite likely that Earl Ofari Hutchinson has offered his opinions. Hutchinson is a political analyst, social critic, author, and nationally syndicated columnist. He has lectured at universities and has also appeared on talk shows and radio and television discussion programs.

Learned From His Father

Hutchinson was born on October 8, 1945 in Chicago, Illinois. His father was a postal worker who went into real estate after retirement. His mother had been a talented [seamstress](#) who made clothes for family, friends and neighbors. Hutchinson's parents were loving and nurturing, and took he and his sister to church regularly.

Hutchinson's father was a role model who taught his son by example. In his 1992 book, *Black Fatherhood: the Guide to Male Parenting*, Hutchinson told the story of a family trip to California. During the trip, he learned a valuable lesson. "Each evening, as [dusk](#) began to settle, my father pulled into a filling station. He took a small blue-covered book from the [glove](#) compartment and carefully circled an address in it." His father's blue book held the names of motels or private homes where African Americans could find lodging. Due to [segregation](#), many motels and restaurants refused to serve African Americans. Hutchinson noted in *Black Fatherhood*, "I did not realize it at the time, but my father was giving me a lesson in the art of black survival."

Hutchinson received a bachelor of science degree in sociology from California State University, Los Angeles in 1969. Following graduation, he worked for a radio station in southern California

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for about ten years. He went on to earn a masters degree in humanities from California State University, Dominguez Hills in 1989. Hutchinson began a doctoral program in sociology at Cornell University. However, he transferred to Pacific Western University and received his doctorate in 1991.

In 1982 Hutchinson began a subscription newsletter, *Ofari's Bi-Monthly*, which discussed political and social issues. He published this newsletter for 12 years. Hutchinson had never considered journalism as a career option. Instead, he wanted to be a teacher. In an interview with *Contemporary Black Biography*, Hutchinson spoke about his entry into the world of journalism. "I backed into it. The week after I finished my degree work at Cornell, I was talking to a friend at the old *Los Angeles Free Press* and, in passing, he indicated they needed a piece analyzing black nationalism. I agreed. He liked it. A few days later, he told me that one of his staff writers had quit and they needed a temporary replacement. Well, as they say, the rest is history."

Published Books On Black Issues

Hutchinson went on to write for several newspapers and magazines, including the *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Black World*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Newsday*, *Nation*, *Harper's*, and *Emerge*. In 1965 he edited *The Black Book*, a book of African American quotes which was published by the Radical Education Project of Detroit, Michigan. Hutchinson's first book, *The Myth of Black Capitalism*, was published by Monthly Review Press in 1970. Two years later, *Let Your Motto Be Resistance; the Life and Thought of Henry Highland Garnet* was published by Beacon Press of Boston. Hutchinson's book, *Black Fatherhood: The Guide to Male Parenting*, examined the challenges that African American fathers face while raising their children in contemporary African American society.

In *Blacks and Reds: Race and Conflict, 1919-1990*, Hutchinson explored the links between African Americans and communism during the 20th century. The book detailed how the Communist Party in America had attempted to win the support of African Americans. Paul Robeson, an African American actor and singer, was greatly admired in both African American and white communities in the 1940s. On one occasion, he made comments that seemed to praise communism. These comments caused Robeson to fall out of favor with the American public, and he was called upon to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Journalist W.E.B. DuBois, who had worked for the [NAACP](#), also supported the Communist Party. In addition to DuBois and Robeson, Hutchinson related how the Communist Party in America had influenced other prominent African Americans, including Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver.

In *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*, published by Middle Passage Press in 1994, Hutchinson discussed his views on how the African American male is portrayed by the media in a consistently negative fashion. He also examined the perceptions of American society toward African American men, and called for greater respect and understanding. Hutchinson originally published *The Assassination of the Black Male Image* himself, and sold 30,000 copies before signing with the publishing house Simon & Schuster. The book was a tremendous success, and was eventually released in paperback. In its review of *The Assassination of the Black Male*

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Image, *Kirkus Reviews* remarked, "He [Hutchinson] argues that the overwhelming mass media image of black men is of evil incarnate, and that Americans--including many black women--are ready to [pounce](#) any time a black man slips up, from O.J. Simpson to Michael Jackson to Clarence Thomas to [Louis Farrakhan](#)." Hutchinson also argued that racism, poverty, gangs, drugs, family roles, and male-female relationships are among the greatest challenges facing African American males.

Commented on Social Issues

During the year-long murder trial of former football star and television commentator O.J. Simpson, Hutchinson served as a media trial analyst for [MSNBC](#) and KCBS-LA. In 1996, he wrote the book *Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America*. The book discussed the O.J. Simpson trial and its social implications. Lillian Lewis, in a review for the American Library Association, noted that "Hutchinson offers compelling comparisons of recent cases involving white and black male defendants with similar charges, yet with [disparate](#) dispositions. Not only were the white males treated differently by the courts for the same crime Hutchinson is seemingly building a strong case for the view of the black male as a [menace](#) to society

In his 1998 book, *The Crisis in Black and Black*, Hutchinson discussed several topics dealing with social issues and prominent African Americans such as Clarence Thomas, O.J. Simpson, and Louis Farrakhan. A reviewer for the American Library Association remarked, "Hutchinson's style and [candor](#) provide an excellent commentary on ... contemporary issues. He begins each chapter with the scientific approach of stating an opinion and raising the questions to debate. After a brief and engaging analysis, including statistics, the chapters end with a final comment that dispels and challenges the opinion."

In addition to his career as an author and journalist, Hutchinson was the co-director of the Sherrice Iverson Justice Fund and an official [spokesperson](#) for the mother of Sherrice Iverson, a seven-year-old child who was murdered in a Las Vegas casino in 1997. In his online column for *Davey D*, Interview/Analysis, Hutchinson remarked, "Strohmeyer [the man convicted of Iverson's murder] is middle-class and white. Iverson is African-American, and her parents are working class. This virtually guarantees that it will be a highly charged trial in which race, income and public attitudes often determine legal fairness." He also noted in his online *JINN* magazine column for the Pacific News Service that, "The murder of Sherrice Iverson is a near textbook example of [indifference](#), insensitivity, and [disdain](#) toward black victims, no matter how young and innocent."

As director of the National Alliance for Positive Action, Hutchinson has voiced his desire to have the word "[nigger](#)" eliminated from the Merriam-Webster dictionary. The National Alliance for Positive Action, which was founded by Hutchinson, is a multi-ethnic public issues advocacy group whose mission statement, in part, is to "promote justice and fairness for America's dispossessed." Merriam-Webster officials told Knight-Ridder Newspapers that, "We do not believe we can make offensive words go out of existence by leaving them out of the dictionary. People do not learn these words from the dictionary nor would they [refrain](#) from using them if we left them out." Hutchinson disagreed and remarked to the Knight-Ridder/Tribune News

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Service that, "a word as emotionally charged as 'nigger' can reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes." The word is defined in the 1996 edition of *Webster's* as: 1. A black person--usually taken to be offensive. 2. A member of any dark-skinned race--usually taken to be offensive. 3. A member of a socially disadvantaged class of persons. The NAACP also gave its opinion, stating that the definition needed to be changed from "a black person or member of any dark-skinned race," to simply a derogatory word and not one that was another name for African Americans. Hutchinson said in his *JINN* column, "If the word must be dictionary defined--and several dictionaries have deleted it--it should be 'deracialized' and defined simply as 'a racially derogatory term applied to African-Americans.'"

In his work for the Coalition Against Media Exploitation, Hutchinson was able to convince President Clinton to pardon African American sailors who were court martialed in the 1940s for refusing to load ammunition onto Navy ships following an explosion. This incident occurred during World War II, when mostly African American sailors were ordered to load live ammunition onto Navy ships bound for the Pacific theater. At the Port Chicago Naval Magazine near San Francisco, an explosion on July 17, 1944, killed 320 men and injured almost 400. The African American sailors who survived were ordered to continue loading ammunition onto the ships. However, 50 sailors refused to [obey](#) the order because they were afraid that another explosion would occur. These sailors were accused of disobeying an order, court martialed, convicted of [mutiny](#), and jailed. In December of 1999, President Clinton granted a [pardon](#) to one of two known surviving sailors, 80-year-old Freddie Meeks.

As director of the Coalition Against Media Exploitation, Hutchinson openly criticized the lack of African American actors and producers both in television and the movies. He told *Jet* magazine, "African Americans are still mostly invisible on and especially off-screen in Hollywood." Hutchinson accused television producers of segregation when one network announced that it would put most of its African American-themed programs into a single time block. He also challenged network executives who believed that white viewers would not watch African American oriented television shows. Hutchinson noted that the success of African American sitcoms from the 1970s and 1980s, such as *The Cosby Show*, were due to the fact that they appealed to viewers of all races.

Hutchinson has a syndicated column that appears in over 150 newspapers nationwide. He is also a columnist for the *Los Angeles Daily News*, and his writings are often published in the *Los Angeles Times*. He is a regular commentator for Pacifica National News, and writes for Pacific News Service. In regard to his future plans, Hutchinson told *CBB*, "I'm a writer. That has always been the emphasis--I'm first a writer, second a writer, tenth, twentieth a writer. I would like to see essentially my place established as a leading authority, or to be recognized in many circles as a prominent and even cutting edge issues person, to influence opinions, to help make changes in public policy."

Awards

Outstanding Book Award, Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1995, 1997;
Best Published Article in a Series, Parts 1 and 2, National Association of Black Journalists, 1997.

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Works

Selected writings

- *The Myth of Black Capitalism*, 1970.
- *Let Your Motto Be Resistance; the Life and Thought of Henry Highland Garnet*, 1972.
- *Black Fatherhood: the Guide to Male Parenting*, 1992.
- *The Assassination of the Black Male Image*, 1994.
- *Black Fatherhood II: Black Women Talk About Their Men*, 1994.
- *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919-1990*, 1995.
- *Betrayed: a History of Presidential Failure to Protect Black Lives*, 1996.
- *Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America*, 1996.
- *The Crisis in Black and Black*, 1998.

Further Reading

Books

- Hutchinson, Earl Ofari. *Black Fatherhood: The Guide to Male Parenting*, Middle Passage Press, Los Angeles, 1995, p. 133-134.

Periodicals

- *Essence*, April 1996, p. 140.
- *Jet*, December 14, 1998, p. 12.
- *Kansas City Star*, (Missouri) December 24, 1999, p. A-1, A-6.
- *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service*, October 16, 1997.

Other

- Additional information for this profile was obtained from www.daveyd.com/earlchasepol.html ; a 1995 American Library Association review of *Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America* at www.amazon.com; a 1996 Kirkus Associates review of *The Assassination of the Black Male Image* at www.amazon.com; a 1998 American Library Association review of *The Crisis in Black and Black* at www.amazon.com; an Author Biography Media Sheet from Middle Passage Press; a Coalition Against Media Exploitation Media Release published at www.theafrican.com; JINN, Pacific News Service, September 26, 1997 and August 18, 1998 columns at web site www.pacificnews.org/pacificnews/jinn; and an interview with *Contemporary Black Biography* on January 6, 2000.

— Sandy J. Stiefer

SOURCE: Answers.com at <http://www.answers.com/topic/earl-ofari-hutchinson>