

Revering the Book

BY CHARLES E. REINEKE

IN FEW PLACES HAS THE PACE OF change been more profound than in South Africa, where the Cold War's end hastened the abrupt decline of the Apartheid-based police state.

Tim McKee, MA '96, and photographer Anne Blackshaw were part of an international cadre of young activists who in recent years have traveled to South Africa to support the freedom struggle of the majority black population. As the struggle bore fruit, both noted that the voices of children were lost in the cacophony of instant analysis.

McKee and Blackshaw's new book, *No More Strangers Now*, (DK Publishing, 107 pages, \$19.95), seeks to address this omission by combining oral history and slice-of-life photography to acquaint young readers with South Africa's youth. It is a sobering introduction. Although the photos depict childhood's eternal optimism, the narratives—originating from kids on both

TECHNOLOGY MAY BE
TRANSFORMING OUR ENCOUNTERS
WITH WRITING, BUT THIS SAMPLE
OF RECENT WORKS BY MU
ALUMNI AND FACULTY AUTHORS
SHOWS THAT THE TRIED-AND-TRUE
BOOK REMAINS AN ELEGANT
MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING OUR
CHANGING WORLD.

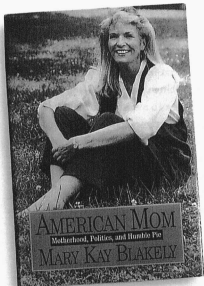
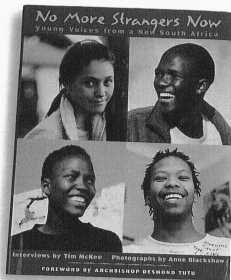
sides of the racial divide—indicate that the scars of racial intolerance run deep. The children of Apartheid may no longer be strangers, but for now at least, they're hardly friends.



CHILDREN CAN SOMETIMES REMAIN strangers in their own homes, as recent events at Colorado's Columbine High School remind us. What's a well-intentioned mom to do?

She might read *American Mom: Motherhood, Politics, and Humble Pie*, (Algonquin, 289 pages, \$19.95), a loving and sometimes harrowing look back at 20 years of mostly single parenting by MU

journalism professor and former *New York Times* columnist Mary Kay Blakely. A daughter of the feminist movement, Blakely has strong senses of social justice and political propriety that are rooted in values forged during the heady days of the



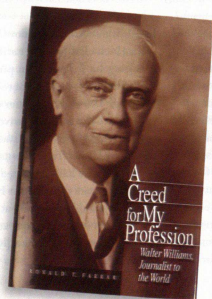
Feminine Mystique and ERA debate. Child rearing frequently tests Blakely's self-confident liberalism. She recalls thinking after the birth of the first of her two boys, "I soon began to understand that nothing would be automatic or easy again."

Few worthwhile things are automatic or easy, of course. But the wisdom with which Blakely charts the wayward course of her household shows that, whatever the obstacles, good parents can still accomplish that most worthwhile goal for guardians—raising good kids. Good doesn't mean perfect, Blakely insists. The American mom need only recognize that parenting with patience, compassion and humor might go a long way toward making schoolhouse metal detectors a thing of the past.

WALTER WILLIAMS, FORMER MU PRESIDENT AND founder of the world's first school of journalism, never passed through a metal detector. Nor did he spend much time in the classroom; even his degree from Boonville High School was less earned than honorary. Yet as Ronald T. Farrar, BJ '65, makes plain in his fascinating biography, *A Creed for My Profession: Walter Williams, Journalist to the World*, (University of Missouri Press, 246 pages, \$29.95), Williams' mom had plenty to be proud of.

From a rough-and-tumble beginning as a "printer's devil" at the tiny Boonville (Mo.) *Topic*, Williams quickly made his mark as a big-time reporter, lecturer and editor. By age 30 he was writing feature stories for national magazines, encouraging the professionalization of the news business in venues across the nation, and editing the *Columbia Herald*—a paper dubbed "America's Model Weekly" by the National Press Association.

Ensuing years only enhanced Williams' reputation. By the time he convinced his friend Richard Henry Jesse that MU should offer journalism as part of the University curriculum—a controversial idea at the turn of the century—Williams himself was known around the world as a "model journalist."



Williams' crowning achievement was his Journalists' Creed—still the profession's most influential ethical guideline. The creed's evangelical insistence that reporters bring a social and moral consciousness to news writing is, in some ways, a 19th century precursor to Blakely's contemporary admonishments. Wrote Williams: "I believe that the journalism that succeeds best—and best deserves success—fears God and honors man; is stoutly independent, unmoved by pride or opinion or greed of power, constructive, tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient...."



BORN IN JULY 1864 INTO A PRO-SLAVERY FAMILY, WALTER Williams grew up in the chaotic days of Missouri's post-war reconstruction. A less praiseworthy, though far more famous, child of that turbulent era is the subject of a thought-provoking study by Maurice Manning, BJ '85, MA '93, PhD '96. *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (University Press of Virginia, 210 pages, \$14.95) chronicles the made-up life and the intolerant times of America's breakfast-aisle icon, Aunt Jemima, the minstrel-show mammy conscripted onto cardboard by ad man James Webb Young.

Why does a black woman in bondage persist as a successful sales image? Manning attacks the question with equal doses of scholarship and outrage. One explanation for Jemima's longevity is that "The modern Aunt Jemima is a sanitized slave; she is to the issue of race what the insipid 1980s television comedy *Happy Days* was to the actual 1950s," Manning writes. "Her blackness still reminds white consumers that they are white, and that whiteness is a good thing. Her sex reminds consumers that black women belong in the kitchen."

And what about those of us who continue to buy into these reminders? James Webb Young's ditty perhaps sums it up best: "Oh see the little moron; she doesn't give a damn. I wish I were a moron! My g—d, perhaps I am!"

