



## GUEST COLUMN

### What Were They Thinking! By La'Vonne Delaney

Whenever I get an idea for a new novel, the first step is to construct the characters for the story I'll tell. The name bestowed upon an individual often creates a mental picture of the person I wish to create, as well as the time in which that person was born.

When was the last time a proud parent named a bouncing baby boy Homer or Clyde? So when you hear those names, your mind automatically drifts back to the early 1900's. Billy Bob? You think about the South, right? Jean Paul and Andre usually conjure up images of Frenchmen. If your character is named Dixie or Stella, she could easily be a waitress, or a gum-popping hairdresser who lived in the 1950's.

I am currently writing a novel entitled: *Lingering Secrets*. Much of the storyline is set in the Roaring Twenties. Therefore, my characters were born at the turn of the last century. I named the protagonist, Eva, a popular name of that time. Eva is a lovely songstress. Had she been a barmaid, I would have most likely selected a name like Pearl or Flossy.

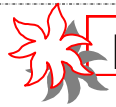
The era in which a person is born has everything do with the name he or she is given. If a novel is set in the early 1900's, I daresay a contemporary name like Latoya would stick out like a sore thumb. I begin the process of selecting names by going to the Social Security database, and keying in on the year my character was born. It was while visiting that site that I discovered some pretty interesting, and I might add, humorous facts.

Did you know that in the 1800's, over twenty-four hundred baby boys were given the name Lemon, Bessie, Rose, and Alice? Yes, I said boys. Over two thousand strapping males were named Sarah and Maude. Also in that same time period, twenty-one hundred baby girls went through life with the name, Robert, Frank, William, and George. Seriously. What were they thinking? Granted, some of the popular female names back then were no prize. Maymie and Wilhelmine were all the rage.

Interesting to see history repeat itself. Years ago, when you heard the name Emma, Hannah, or Abigail, you thought of an older woman. But in the twenty-first century those names are at the top of the list for baby girls.

What'll be interesting is when girls with names like Latoyna, Tasha, Keisha, and Laquita become grandmothers. Grandma Shamika?

*La'Vonne Delaney began her writing career in 1970. Visit her website at: [lavonne-delaney.com](http://lavonne-delaney.com)*



## BOOK REVIEW

I am a “Remember the Titans” movie fanatic. That being the case, other football movies just don’t ruffle my feathers with excitement like that one does. I found a movie that comes close to a little peacock feather movement: **The Blind Side**.

*The Blind Side: The Evolution of a Game* is a biography written by Michael Lewis about football player Michael Oher (pronounced Oar) in 2006. The Blind Side movie came out in 2009 starring Sandra Bullock.

Having grown up watching football all of my life, I was able to follow the “plays” of the movie. It’s about the popularity of the left side tackle position on the football field. That position gained popularity after Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theisman was tackled and “downed” from playing football for the rest of his life. All because no one covered Joe’s blind side. Thus, the value of the left tackle was emphasized.

Michael Oher was the perfect specimen to play the left-side tackle position for big, amble, and fast. Yet, Oher had a drug-addicted mother, a father he never knew, was a homeless runaway who passed along in school, and grew up in the worse projects in Memphis, Hurt Village. The odds of him becoming a star professional football player were minimal, especially since so many young black men even with greatest athletic potential seem to get sucked up into the system of crime, drugs, and jail.

Oher had a chance to get up and out of his seeming destiny. The Blind Side is not a story about white folks helping the little black child out of poverty for Oher in his own rite had a knack for survival, desire to overcome obstacles, and strong sense of being a protector to those for whom he cared. The book and movie teach lessons about stepping outside your comfort zone to care for others no matter what others may say and the value of the left-side tackle. Football lovers and non-football enthusiasts will enjoy the movie, and should enjoy the book, too. I know I loved both.