Author Bio:

SISTER SOULJAH

Born in the Bronx, New York and raised in the projects, Souljah is a fighter who came up from the bottom. A graduate of Rutgers University, she earned a degree in American History and African Studies. She also attended the Cornell University Advanced Placement Studies, and studied abroad in Europe at the University of Salamanca.

A global student, Sister Souljah traveled throughout her college years to England, France, Spain, Portugal, Finland, and Russia. Her academic accomplishments were reinforced with first hand experiences. She worked to build a medical center for families in Bindura, Zimbabwe. She worked with refugee children from Mozambique. A major participant in the international student anti-apartheid movement, she helped to create a momentum, movement and fervor which liberated Nelson Mandela and brought about the divestment of millions of dollars from corporations doing business with apartheid South Africa. Her travels in Africa also included Zambia and South Africa. She believes it is essential that African professionals work together, invest in and help to save, shape and further develop our continent, resources, families, and children.

As a student activist in America, Souljah created, financed, and implemented the African Youth Survival Camp, a six week summer sleep away academic/cultural camp for 200 children of homeless families. With a skillful curriculum, which she designed, this camp ran for over 3 consecutive years and inspired major celebrities to start their own camps and schools, and to build charities and institutions to give back.

As a community activist, Souljah organized against racially motivated crimes, police brutality, and the miseducation of urban youth. She produced and promoted several outdoor rallies and concerts, in Harlem NY, which drew nearly 30,000 youth each time, as well as the participation of top Hip-Hop and R&B celebrities.

In the field of entertainment, Souljah has been on many platforms including radio and television. Before the political shutdown and attack on American 1st amendment rights, she was the young voice in NY radio that spoke to the hip-hop audience about politics, culture, business, and social organization. This includes being a featured speaker at the Million Woman March, appearances on Oprah Winfrey, Larry King Live, and the cover
of Newsweek Magazine. As a Hip-Hop artist, Souljah's CD entitled "360 degrees of Power," sparked international debate over issues of race, culture, sexism, and politics. Additionally, the entire world awaits the release of her first film, The Coldest Winter Ever.

Today, Souljah is a 21st Century multidimensional woman. From 1995-2007 she was the Executive Director of Daddy's House Social Programs, the charitable wing of Bad Boy Entertainment. At Daddy's House Sister Souljah created cultural and academic programs which were offered to urban youth and housed at Columbia University. Souljah also created, designed and directed summer sleep away camps and international youth travel groups which have had a powerful impact on many youth in America. She is the author of 4 national best sellers, The Coldest Winter Ever (Fiction), Midnight, A Gangster Love Story (Fiction), Midnight and The Meaning Of Love, (fiction) and NO DISRESPECT. In 2008 within one week of the release of Midnight, A Gangster Love Story, Sister Souljah became a New York Times Best Seller entering the charts at #7. In 2011 Souljah remains a full time author, wife of nineteen years, mother and world class traveler.

Many people attempt to silence, interrupt or alter Sister Souljah's powerful voice. An influential woman who has achieved so much yet remains down to earth, can be quite intimidating. Still she has been blessed to reach and touch those who are interested in adding to the good in the world, and not the evil.

[From author’s web site]

Summary:

The trials and tribulations of young Winter Santiaga are described in gritty detail in this coming-of-age novel, the first by the phenomenally popular rap star who frequently lectures on the themes of this novel: overcoming teenage pregnancy, fatherless households, and drug use in African American communities. As the oldest daughter of a successful drug dealer, Winter lacks for nothing. But after her father moves the family from the projects to a mansion on Long Island, Winters life begins to come apart. Her beautiful mother is shot, her father is sent to prison, and the familys possessions are seized by the government. Winter and her three sisters, Mercedes, Lexus, and Porsche, become wards of the state. Finally, arrested and convicted of transporting drugs in a boyfriends car, Winter receives a 15-year jail term. Sister Souljah herself appears as a character, urging Winter and other young black women to stand up to the men in their lives, abstain from drugs, and practice safe sex. (From Library Journal)

Questions:

1. What is the meaning behind the title of the novel?
2. What was Winter’s relationship like with her mother? Father? Sisters? Friends?
3. There are several themes in the novel: life/death, time, drugs, spirituality, and role models. Discuss the various themes and their significance in the novel.
4. What does Winter discover about her father when she takes her mother to visit him in prison? What impact does this have on the Santiaga family?

5. Why did Sister Souljah include herself as a character in the novel?

6. What was Sister Souljah trying to achieve by writing the novel?

7. Rick Santiaga, Midnight, and Bullet appear throughout the novel. How are these characters juxtaposed against one another?