

Gerd Bräuer

Goin' Down South

I

Landed in Atlanta, Georgia
Largest airport in the US
Taking I-85 N to Emory University
Home of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Its earliest mega sponsor COCA COLA
Olympic-size swimming pools indoors / outdoors
Golfing? Not on campus but
Just a few minutes driving away
Check in to the International Guest House
Where The World Comes Home
Spacious apartments with elaborate furniture and design
You will be cared for by our Afro-American staff 24/7
You bet
Welcome to the South
What will your contribution be?

II

A multilingual online student newspaper
What a great idea
What a splendid learning opportunity
What a wonderful way to collaborate across borders
Ich schreibe auf Deutsch.
Yo escribo en español.
J'écris en français.
Scrivo in italiano.
News articles about travelling / philosophical questions / political debates
Interviews
Short stories
And, yes, POETRY
About living in Atlanta, for example

III

In a metropolitan area
With millions of people and cars
Tap water you can't drink
Streets you can't walk safely
Filthy air creating spectacular sun sets
Best viewed from the top of Stone Mountain
The sun plunging into the skyline of midtown Atlanta
POETRY
Can also be read out loud at *open mic*
At *Java Mokey Coffee House* located in lovely Decatur where
The lives of the white middle-class seems still peaceful
Family affairs
Low-sized fences
Well-groomed yards

IV

On the other side of the railroad tracks
Low-income housing
"No Littering" signs perforated by gun shots
In front of the community library
Afro-American boys playing basketball
MF pass it!
MF get it!
MF kill it!
A car door slamming
SILENCE at the bb court
The chatting comes from inside
Two visitors entering the library
SILENCE also in the reading room
A boy jumps up at his feet
His right arm pointing
Look at her!
SILENCE indoors / SILENCE outdoors
Look! A white woman!
SILENCE indoors / SILENCE outdoors
The librarian asks the blonde 8-year old if she
Wants to become a member
Of the library

V

Later at the auditorium of the university
Packed with students
Blacks to the right / Whites to the left
Blaming each other for
A still divided city
Polluted wit hate / crime / disregard
Spike Lee at the podium asking *WHY*
An Afro-American student tells his story of
His grandfather sitting at the dinner table blaming him for
Having a white girlfriend while he
In his teens still had to travel along
The *Green Book* on his way to his grandparents
Who lived on Sapelo Island, Georgia
Still speaking *Geechee* and making *moonshine* and singing
Old songs from their native homeland in West Africa

VI

On another trip
The International Online Student Newspaper had taken off nicely
With L2 writers and readers on both sides of the Atlantic
Another *Welcome to the US!* In the midst of
The second term of the George W. Bush Jr. administration and its
GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM
Please do not leave your luggage
Unattended

Unattended

Luggage will be confiscated and destroyed

Take I 85 N and then the nicer route on Hwy 23 to Clemson, SC

Muggy weather already in March

Tornado season had just passed

Dogwoods blooming white and pink

Flushing the lush green landscape

An ocean of rhododendron blossoms just a few days away

Sophisticated listeners in front of you

At the conference

Linguists / L2 specialists / writing experts

Dinner at Art Young's house

Hefty Southern food

Intriguing conversation at the patio

The air moist and musty

In the backyard the Great Smokey Mountains waiting

To be hiked

Dotted with trees old enough

To have witnessed the *Civil War*

On the way out our airplane ready to

Nose-dive due to unexplained engine problems

Our lives at stake and

The plane spilling thousands of gallons

Fuel on the clueless inhabitants of Atlanta, Georgia no matter what

Color of skin

Lucky us

We got away

Ready for dinner on board and a nap

Before landing the next morning in safe haven *home*.