

# A critical essay on sistah souljah's "the coldest winter ever" essay sample

[Family](#), [Father](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **A critical essay on Sistah Souljah's "The Coldest Winter Ever" Essay Sample**

Fathers more often than not, have a profound influence over their children's lives. Aside from being the traditional breadwinner of the family, fathers in the event that they spend meaningful time with their children, can help shape their young consciousness on how to view life and the world at large. To a certain extent, they exercise control and authority in the household, leading children to look up to their fathers as role models they hope to someday emulate, regardless of whether fathers want this to be the case or not.

In Souljah's gripping tale of life in the underbelly of New York, the protagonist is a young, feisty girl - Winter, named after one of the city's worst snowstorms - the daughter of a Brooklyn drug lord. Her father, Ricky Santiago, was able to provide his family with a comfortable lifestyle through illegal trade in arms and drugs. He was a powerful man respected and feared in their neighborhood, and when it came to the women in his life - his wife and daughters Winter, Porsche, Mercedes and Lexus - nothing was too good nor too expensive for them.

Despite being a gangster, Ricky was very much a family man who loved his street-smart daughter and was fiercely protective of her: *"He loved me like crazy but was getting nervous about the way men, young and old, was checking for me."* (Souljah 2000, 6) Ricky makes it clear that *"Winter is not a woman yet. None of these lowlifes are going to make a trick outta my flesh and blood"* (Souljah 2000)

Though we see in this passage the genuine concern of a father for the welfare of his daughter, still there is his own interest involved in the matter. After all, he was a prominent figure in the community and any untoward action done to his daughter, or any member of his family for that matter, would be viewed as harm done to his person. Thus in protecting the members of his family he was also protecting his own standing in the community.

Winter on the other hand looked up to the man who lavished his attention on his family and seemed to favor his eldest child, and had this to say of her father: *" I loved my pops with a passion. He was the smoothest nigga in the world. When he came into a room he made a difference. He never used the drugs he sold. He collected his money on time and made examples of any fool who tried to cheat him."* (Souljah 2000, 2)

Yet this affection would all come crashing down later on, when her father is no longer in the position to grant her every heart's desire, and upon discovering that despite his façade of the doting family man, he had not remained faithful to his wife. In a visit to her father jailed for illegal arms and drugs trade, she discovers that the man she had adored had a mistress a few years older than her, with whom he had an infant son.

In a rare moment, she felt anger towards her Pops and somehow pity for her Momma who had earlier been shot by a rival gangster and with the family's economic downturn had turned to drugs for solace. Thus the cherished image of a happy, affluent family their neighbors had looked up to had

effectively been smashed by the discovery of her father's betrayal and the realization that he too, was less the man that she had always thought he was.

In terms of parenting style, it appears that Ricky Santiago was too lavish for his own good. He dresses his wife like a queen and spares her and his daughters no luxury. Money was obviously not an issue, even naming his twin daughters after luxury brands of choice - "Lexus" and "Mercedes," and another daughter "Porsche." He ended up spoiling his daughters, particularly Winter, the apple of his eye, who grows up thinking she could get whatever she wants and the world merely owes her that much.

Because they all were accustomed to so much luxury, it comes as no surprise that his family is materialistic to say the least. Their affluence was manifested in the manner typical of what old money would call *nouveaux riche* (new money). As if to make up for all prior deprivations be it in childhood or to some long-ago chapter in the family's history, the *nouveaux riche* flaunt their money for the entire world to see.

Ricky Santiago was certainly no exception. For him appearance and social prestige matters significantly, thus the need to project himself in a position of strength, and claim for his family social status and prestige for the entire neighborhood to envy. The lavishness of the lifestyle they were accustomed to would eventually have negative effects on how his daughters would grow up, and the way they would later on face the challenges life had to offer.

Winter is a case in point. Contemptuous of everything but the best in brands and labels, she is very materialistic that it would appear that money and having what she wants is all that matters to her. At the beginning of the story one could hear her negative comment on the author with such biting remarks: *“ How is this bitch supposed to help the community when she don't know how to rock her shit? I checked her arm, no Rolex, not even a Timex, nothing. No weight on her neck, nothing. Her hairdo was phat but that don't mean nothing when you don't know how to accessorize.”* (Souljah 2000)

Used to a life of luxury, when their family fortunes took a turn for the worse, she refuses to adapt to her new social position brought about by the imprisonment of her father, the confiscation of their properties, the new role she must play as breadwinner. Witty, attractive, and having a nose for business, it would appear that she had inherited her father's tricks in the trade, which helps her survive the rough and tumble world of New York's gangster neighborhoods.

Her upbringing and the way she had observed her father's own dealings and views on life had instilled in Winter that in order to survive the rough world of gangs they inhabited, she had best learn to look after herself for in the end, survival entails putting yourself first among all others. In order to get ahead, one had to fully utilize all resources at one's disposal, and Winter, in a way reminiscent of her father, had put all of hers to good use - beauty, sex appeal, cunning and trickery.

Ruthless yet still surprisingly sympathetic in her own way, Winter refuses to accept her new status and desperately wants her old life back. This leads her to various reckless schemes which not only endangered herself but obviously tested the limits of the people who have been trying to help her change her fool-hardy ways. Yet with her fascination and attraction to power, and her intolerance to those she deems beneath her, she proves herself ill-prepared to face head-on the neighborhood tough guys.

She is too caught up in her selfishness, of her materialistic desires, her illusions about life and herself which lead her to believe that she could get whatever she wants that she turns a deaf ear to those who speak a language of life, hope and love so radically different from her own. In a way she remains a sympathetic character because despite the bad girl image, she is still very much a struggling, confused young girl trying to make sense of the harsh realities of life, who had took the lessons her father taught her too heart, even if they would eventually prove detrimental to her own well-being.

Reference:

Souljah, Sistah. The Coldest Winter Ever. Pocket Books/Simon and Schuster, New York: January 2000.