

# Beacon Man

## Danny Glover: actor, advocate and role model

By Andrea M. Thompson

As he and his daughter Mandisa stood on the corner of 116<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan in the fall of 1999, Danny Glover was humiliated and outraged as one, two, three, four, five New York City yellow cabs drove by his outstretched hand. It wasn't the first time it happened and Glover had had enough. So on Nov. 4, he called a press conference denouncing the all-too-common practice of New York City cab drivers to pass by Black men or not take Black passengers to their requested destinations.

Glover's impassioned entreaty mobilized the city government. Soon, then mayor Rudy Giuliani instituted "Operation Refusal," a sting operation that targeted, and suspended the licenses, of drivers who did not stop for Black passengers. One outspoken voice had made a difference.

Actor, advocate, fearless campaigner, Glover handles all three gracefully. Today, the man who is the Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Development Program — whose global mission is to eradicate poverty — who was one of the most prominent and forthright anti-apartheid activists in this country, and who has testified before Congress about HIV/AIDS edification, is on a different mission; but one that has as much purpose in his life.

His body casual and relaxed in a green sweater and khaki pants, Glover sits in a leather CBS armchair after shooting a segment for the local morning news show in New York City. He's talking about his role as the national spokesperson for the Anemia Lifeline, an education and awareness campaign about the blood disorder sponsored by the biotechnology company, Amgen, the National Kidney Foundation, the Wellness Community and the National Anemia Action Council.

It's not surprising that he decided to represent the Lifeline. Glover is very knowledgeable about the nuances of anemia. For the past few years he has been attending to the needs of his sister, who is being treated for colon cancer and his dad, James, who suffered from kidney disease for six years. James died in 2001 from complications of the disease. Glover's sister, father and a brother, who died of rheumatoid arthritis, all contracted anemia as a result of their diverse illnesses.

As the national spokesperson, Glover is crisscrossing the country to spread the word about the symptoms of anemia and the easy and combatable solutions for its treatment. "Because I was so close to my dad I knew when he wasn't being himself." He was unenergetic and listless all the time as a result of the anemia, Glover says. "My dad was a hypochondriac. He was at the doctor's office all the time. But his vigilance led to his anemia diagnosis and treatment." James was back to his old self soon after.

Anemia, which occurs when the body does not produce enough red blood cells to carry oxygen to its organs and tissues, can be life-threatening. Unfortunately, because it often happens in conjunction with diabetes, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and heart and kidney disease, many sufferers think their weakness and extreme fatigue are byproducts of their main illnesses.

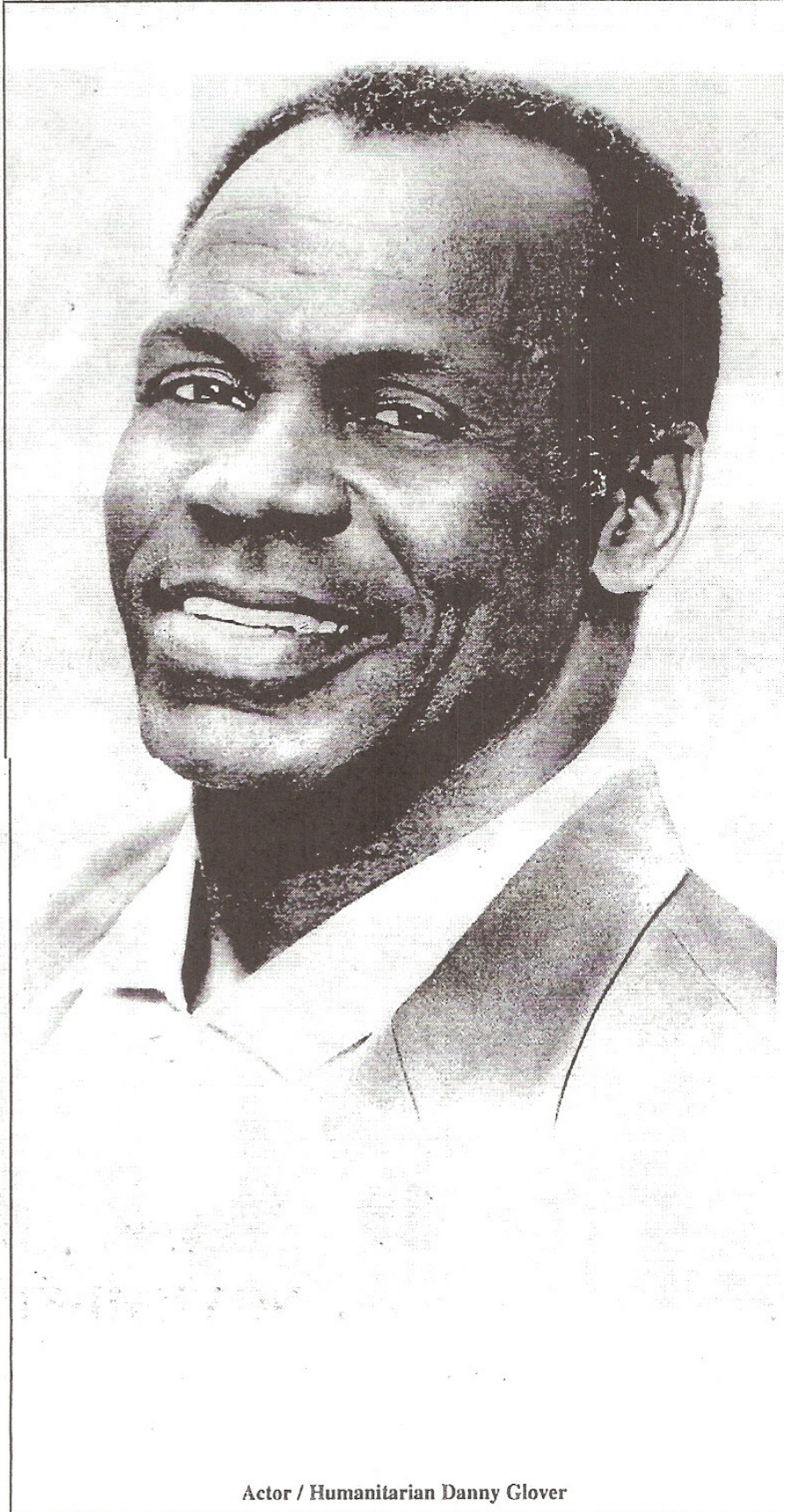
Anemia expert, Dr. Joel Neugarten, who has been traveling with Glover, says millions of cases of anemia go undiagnosed each year, even though effective therapies are available: "Present medication like Amgen's Aranesp reduces the number of times someone has to go to the doctor to be treated for this. Patients can even inject themselves at home now twice per month."

"My dad was very much in my life," reminisces Glover. "We were very close. He came to visit me on my movie sets and when I wasn't working I spent time with him." A sad and far-away look softens Glover's eyes as he mentions how very much alike he and his father were. It's apparent someone magical disappeared from his life last year.

As for his acting career, Danny Glover hasn't made a major studio movie in four years. But the actor insists the static nature of his career doesn't bother him that much. He confides matter-of-factly, "The industry has changed so much in the last few years. There aren't that many good scripts out there. Everyone wants a sequel or prequel to everything."

Hollywood's inertia and lack of creativity has made him a

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Actor / Humanitarian Danny Glover