

BOOKS

for Negro Children

By DICK MILLER
Highland School Librarian

THE HIGHLAND COLLECTION

IN THE LIBRARY at Highland School there is a rather unique collection of books of a special nature; all of the books deal with the subject of Negro children. It will be the purpose of this column to discuss children's literature in general and to review and discuss Negro children's books--like the ones in the above mentioned Highland Collection--in particular.

Augusta Baker, in her pamphlet "Books About Negro Life for Children," published by the New York Public Library, states: "Books



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can perform a unique function in the plan for intercultural education. They provide a means for gaining knowledge, attitudes, ways of thinking and social skills so that they reinforce each other. They are a way of developing awareness and can carry readers into the experiences and feelings of people different from themselves. Books cannot take the place of first hand contacts with other people. However, they can prepare children to meet people, to discount unimportant differences, and to appreciate cultural traditions and values unlike their own. They can also give children a pride in their own racial heritage and a knowledge of themselves."

The books for the Highland Collection are chosen carefully. They are books for children that give an unbiased, accurate, well-rounded picture of Negro life in all parts of the world. Also, certain other standards have been applied and these standards were developed by Miss Baker, from whom we again quote:

"When considering the factor of language, it is important to eliminate books which describe Negroes in terms of derision, which use derogatory names and epithets. When the latter are used for historical accuracy or forceful action, it should be done in such a manner that their unacceptability will be obvious to the reader.

"The next point to consider is the theme of the book. Is the Negro character a clown and a buffoon, the object of ridicule, and the butt of humor, or is he a person who is making some worthwhile contribution to the progress of society?

"The third factor is illustration. The depiction of the Negro is exceptionally important in books for children. An artist can portray a Negro child and make him attractive or make him a stereotype and a caricature. A Negro

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Advertising revenue is the life-blood of every non-subsidized publication anywhere--and the VOICE doesn't happen to be subsidized (although we've had some interesting offers).

Most newspapers are able to defray part of the cost of production and distribution by charging readers for each copy. But in order to assure saturation coverage of the \$30,000,000-plus Westside consumer market, the VOICE is distributed WITHOUT CHARGE except for a small number of copies sent through the mails.

In short, the VOICE is completely dependent upon revenue from its advertisers to stay in

business. By the same token, no advertiser will continue to use the VOICE as a sales medium unless YOU, the reader, makes it profitable for him to do so by purchasing the products or services he offers for sale in the VOICE.

It all boils down to a very simple equation: NO ADVERTISERS, NO VOICE!

Fortunately, a vast majority of our advertisers have found the VOICE an excellent sales medium--thanks to YOU, the consumer. That's why we've been able to keep rolling along quite nicely in a modest sort of way.

BUT WE'RE NOT SATISFIED WITH BEING A MODEST, LITTLE PAPER!

We want to give West Las Vegas and the rest of the colored community in Nevada the BIGGEST and BEST community newspaper in the whole, wide world! We want to expand our coverage of events that concern and interest YOU and YOUR CHILDREN! We want to be better able to PROMOTE your interests and the interests of the community as a whole! We want to make YOUR VOICE heard loud and clear wherever and whenever it will be to OUR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE!

But to do all these things we must obtain MORE REVENUE. And the only way we are interested in obtaining MORE REVENUE is by obtaining MORE ADVERTISING.

In trying to build and improve this publication for YOUR benefit as well as our own, the big problem hasn't been KEEPING advertisers once they come in with us. Our repeat business has been gratifyingly high. Results are the only criteria for success in the highly-competitive newspaper game and, happily, we've been able to deliver when given the opportunity. (Again, thanks to YOU.)

The real problem has been getting NEW accounts--getting a CHANCE to prove our value to business people who are delighted to cut in for a slice of YOUR consumer dollar but who

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child who sees pictures which ridicule his race may be deeply hurt, feel defeated, or become resentful and rebellious. The white child who sees the stereotyped presentation of the Negro begins to feel superior and to accept this distorted picture or 'type'."

The author of this column has had some experience with people of different races in school situations in half a dozen countries. The basis of the Civil Rights problem seems to lie in one race refusing, or at least finding it extremely difficult, to understand the other race. If one were to trace the trouble to its roots it would, perhaps, lead to the childhood of today's trouble-makers. What kind of problems would we have today if yesterday's children had been able to read and study books such as the ones in the Highland Collection? What kind of problems does the future hold now that today's children have access to these books, which try to show the basic equality and the necessity for amiable coexistence of various races? Only time will tell.

It is our hope and expectation that these problems will diminish and eventually disappear. In the interim, however, the world could be plunged into a war of black against white. It is not impossible. Ask anyone in Watts.

This writer believes it would be a good idea to make the Highland Collection a temporary traveling book exhibit and send it on a journey throughout the elementary school libraries of Clark County. This would place the books in the hands and minds of children of all races and color.

Perhaps the future could be a little brighter for all of us if such a program was initiated. The world would be a better place tomorrow if today's children would read a book from the Highland Collection, and think a little... and then read it again.

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