



WALTER BURRELL

Hollywood Happenings

Imagine, if you will, turning on your TV set one evening and viewing, over the credits, this scene:

A young, pregnant white girl is being wheeled into a delivery room. When the camera switches to a closeup of the doctor slapping the squalling baby on its bottom, we see the infant is brown. The rest of the story is a flash-back dealing with the romance between a French girl and a black West Indian boy, complete with all the passionate love scenes.

Chances are this story wouldn't be aired over TV in the U.S. Or if anyone dared, there'd probably be a frenzied switching of channels and a torrent of protests.

However, such a format would be far from extraordinary in England. Not that there wouldn't be a small number of outraged dissenters. A certain amount of prejudice is inevitable. But in England at least such a program wouldn't be blacked out in certain areas of the country.

WHY THEN does the black actor in England, where the influx of Negroes has been fairly recent, find himself generally better off when it comes to more honest film portrayals than in America, where people of color have been a major part of the country since its inception?

For one person's answer to this unique situation we turned to noted British actor, Michael Caine, star of such highly acclaimed movies as "The Ipcress File," "Gambit" and "Alfie."

"Of course, the answer isn't simple," Caine says, "but there are certain obvious considerations. For one thing, America has for years tried to sublimate even the existence of her black citizens -- especially when it came to reflecting their images on the screen."

For the most part, according to Caine, the opposite has occurred in Britain, where West Indians and Africans were pretty much assimilated into the natural scheme of things. So it would be somewhat ridiculous to omit their presence in cinema and theatre.

"I don't mean to paint an all peaches-and-cream portrait of the black thespian in the Island Kingdom," continues Caine. "They have their gripes too -- as do actors the world over. For one thing, many object to the importation of black American actors for major British roles."

"But the fact of the matter, in my opinion, is that though the indigenous Negroes produce many actors, few are of the calibre of a Sidney Poitier."

AS AN EXAMPLE of how the overall feeling of the film industry in England runs, the Actor's Equity there has agreed to appear in apartheid-stained South Africa only before mixed audiences, though there have been occasions where a company performed equal numbers of shows before segregated audiences.

Frequently white actors will sign to play before totally segregated groups -- and then refuse to go on -- in an attempt to force a change in policy.

"But the black actor, whether in England or America," concludes Caine, "has only in recent years begun to scratch the surface of a potentially bottomless reservoir of talent."

"Film makers have only to summon enough guts to use effectively what is at their fingertips and begin adding a new chapter to the fascinating story of motion pictures."

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Move For Representation In Powell's District

NEW YORK - (NPI)--Several possible candidates for Adam Clayton Powell's vacant seat in Congress are being talked up. But all say they're not interested.

Among them are Manhattan Borough President Percy E. Sutton; William H. Booth, chairman, New York Human Rights Commission; Dr. Eugene Callender, executive director, New York Urban League; Livingston Wingate, Powell's former aide in Congress; State Senator Basil Patterson; and State Assemblyman Charles Rangel.

All say they don't want Powell's seat. Some may change their minds, however, after the U.S. Supreme Court rules on Powell's March 1 exclusion from the House.

"Please do not include my name as a potential Congressional candidate," said Dr. Callender, who was recently appointed a deputy administrator of the city's Housing Development Administration.

Dr. Callender named Patterson, Rangel, and Wingate as men "who would like very much to be candidates for Congress" in Powell's New York district.

The three, however, promptly denied having any such ambitions.

Borough President Sutton declared that he would not be a candidate under any circumstances. He could "not even be drafted" for the job, he said.

While political leaders debated for almost 10 months over what to do about Powell's seat, Harlem residents have been bereft of representation in Congress.

To offset this injustice, 11 Congressmen last week introduced a bill that would assure Harlemites a permanent Capitol Hill office to handle their problems.

Rep. James H. Scheuer (D.-Bronx), a spokesman for the bipartisan group of Representatives, said Powell's constituents had been "unfairly penalized" by having no voice in Congress.

The bill would authorize a staff of as many as four persons, office allowances, and a system for appointments to military academies.

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VISITS SPELMAN

ATLANTA - (NPI)--Famous Broadway and movie actress Ruby Dee visited the campus of Spelman College last week, highlighting a presentation of "Purlie Victorious," the laugh-filled hit play written by her husband, Ossie Davis. The play dealing with Negro life and race relations in Georgia, was presented by the Atlanta-Morehouse Spelman Players.

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"

CHICAGO - (NPI)--With members of the church's choir singing starring roles, the Chancel Choir of St. Mark Methodist church will present its 29th annual edition of George Frederick Handel's "Messiah" on Sunday, Dec. 17, in an afternoon concert. Willie Griffin, tenor, and Leonard Gordon, bass, both of the St. Mark's choir, will be featured as soloists, along with the Ira Frazier Ensemble. Another successful presentation of the "Messiah" was sponsored by the Chicago Music Association, National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc., recently.

CAPABLE REPLACEMENT

LOS ANGELES - (NPI)--Popular, sultry song stylist Della Reese last week took over the bandstand at the Westside Room from another top singer--Barbara McNair--who postponed her commitment in order to join the Bob Hope troupe's tour of South Vietnam. Miss Reese is also a recording star. Her latest disc (ABC-Paramount) is "Della on Strings of Blue."

GAINING FILM YARDAGE

HOLLYWOOD - (NPI)--Jim Brown, who used to churn up the turf during his great career in the National Football League, is now putting in a lot of film mileage for Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer studio. As soon as he completed a starring role in "The Year of the Cricket," Jim was called back to star in "The Split." Brown retired as a playing member of the Cleveland Browns team as the all-time leading ground gainer in the NFL.

BASS-BARITONE SCORES

CHICAGO - (NPI)--In a program that included the works of Handel, Schubert, and Verdi, bass-baritone Benjamin Matthews sang a very delightful concert in the Dunbar High School auditorium last week. Sponsored in the concert by the Chicago Council of Choirs, Matthews, who was giving his first concert since returning from a successful European tour, highlighted his recital with a number of Negro spirituals.

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