

BILLY ROWE'S NOTEBOOK....

THE WRITE SAGA

NEW YORK CITY — There are emotionally disturbing elements in the out-coming publication of Alex Haley's adventures in pen-pointing another saga of slavery. His latest tome, "Roots," is headed for the October book stalls, and will be followed in January by a 12-hour condensed telecast version in the ABC-TV continuing series, "Novels." The twin exposure is a plus for black "write talent," but fraught with emotional complications for young black audiences who have been forced to eye too much black minuses and so little contrasting pluses. Haley has worked too hard to suffer an ignoble end to what, according to reviewers in a literary gem. However in our view its appeal is limited for the story of slavery is a continuing twice told tale and its cruel aftermath has stunted the grown of ambition in the breast of too many of our generations which have not been as constantly reminded that at some stages of world history, every race on earth has suffered the ignominy of slavery.

Briefly the book revolves around life aboard a slave ship; the filth, the horror, the chains, the suffering and the unspeakable torment and torture suffered by Kunta Kinte. Haley discovers that he is a descendant of this maimed and tormented piece of human cargo and embarks on a detailed hunt, tracing his ancestral tree back through the generations to Sept. 29, 1767. Kunta was then 17 and comes on the scene as he's pushed down a gangplank and onto a Maryland dock. The writer methodically traces Kunta's beginnings in Juffure, an obscure Gambia village, through life in the shacks of American slavemasters, and finally to 1921 when he was born into the family.

The story is a well written chronicle which documents the terrible saga of human suffering. There will be tears from watchers and readers. But when they are all wiped away and the audience has composed itself, what else but pity will this great epic arouse in the breast of the scavengers of democracy? The story of human bondage has been told again and again. The public has become increasingly aware of the horrors perpetrated on most of our innocent foreparents more than 3-centuries ago. It need not be told again no matter how much more vivid is the latest account.

We have yet to pen our first novel, but in our humble opinion Haley's could have been an enduring literary masterpiece among blacks as among whites. He could have presented the spectacular contrast, life in the slave era the Black America through the 20th century riveting tremendous links in the human chain of events. Kunta, the ignorant Black, and King (Martin Luther), brilliant man of God and gladiator in the fite for human rights. Kunta, a symbol of complete human degradation contrasted with those waging an incessant struggle for recognition. Among these were the great black Americans of at least the last century: Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Walter White, Marion Anderson, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Paul Robeson, William E. B. DuBois, Robert L. Vann, Robert S. Abbott, Duke Ellington, Josephine Baker, Clarence Muse, Ethel Waters, John Hope Franklin, W. C. Handy, Cab Calloway, Charles S. Gilpin, Sen. Ed. Brooke, Cong. William Dawson, Cong. Adam Clayton Powell and Sammy Davis, Jr. We could recite a litany of accomplishments by an army of brothers and sisters who stand as beacons over the darkness of the slave years. Haley has lived at least through some of this most compelling period. But he ignores the subject.

He could have woven into the search for his ancestral tree the battle for freedom. From darkness to light, from despair to hope, the contrast in Black philosophy, the evolution from the slave humility to his descendants' humanity. How indeed they have overcome since those dark days of Kunta Kinte is the story that needs to be told. What a vehicle

for Mr. Haley's tremendous write hand talent! We are in no way downgrading his work for his Kinte saga is full of suspense and redolent with pathos. But how much more on target if in his quest for his linear roots he could have found traces of the great Emancipation Proclamation and the powerful black leaders who emerged from that time on: the surgeons, the inventors, the lawyers, the professors, the creators of America's one culture and those who followed in science, industry, sports, the theatre, government and education.

As Haley's book stands it will probably win numerous prizes as it is probably the first time that a Black author has spent so much time and knitted together so many words around his own ancestral tree. But when all is said and done the conclusion will be: "Yes slavery was degrading (sob-sob)," but there is much more to the black saga than that. In fact the one difference between the black and white Americans is that the Blacks came from freedom to subjugation and the whites from subjugation to freedom. For that reason it seems to us that Haley missed an opportunity to give a more rounding quality to his moving story, the contrast between the old and the new.

Give us Black pride, not Black tears. And for heaven's sake, let us all — STAY LOOSE.



Billy Paul and the Trammps on Soul Train

Two current favorites, Billy Paul and The Trammps, are featured artists this week on Soul Train, television's soul entertainment showcase.

An original and innovative song stylist, Billy Paul sings "When Love is New," "People Power" and "Let's Make a Baby." Now at the peak of his career which began at age 12 in his native Philadelphia, Paul's first break came with his recording of "Me and Mrs. Jones" although he had appeared in concerts with such stars as Charlie Parker, Dinah Washington, Nina Simone, Miles Davis, The Impressions, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Roberta Flack.

Also hailing from Philadelphia, the Trammps are 11 talented and versatile musicians who signed their first record contract in 1975. For their Soul Train debut, they perform from their album of the same name, "That's Where the Happy People Go" and their chart-climbing "Hold Back the Night."

The VOICE Has IMPACT!

Join Ray Willis and Maria Donoso for a look at what minorities are doing in Southern Nevada.

Along with special local and nationally known guests, they make this an interesting and informative half-hour

Sat. 4:30 PM Sun. 7:00AM



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