

Entertainment

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

Progress-Promise Black History Month's Centerpiece

N'YORK CITY:—February is Public Television's finest hour. It ran the gamut to fill the period with the historic achievements and contributions of Afro-Americans worldwide. Though heavily theatrical and sports weighted, there is a dazzling and lasting jewel in its crown -- the six-part premiere series, "Eyes On The Prize." Presented by PBS through WGBH, Boston, it was created and produced by Blackside, Inc. of the same city. It is perhaps the most comprehensive and dramatic film record of America's second revolution, the 1954/1965 Civil Rights years yet produced. It was in '54 when the new Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, then chief mouthpiece NAACP, led a battery of legal heroes into the U.S. Supreme Court to argue the Topeka, Kansas, Brown vs Board of Education case, before the court. The eventual decision profoundly changed our nation. In '55 Mose Wright did the

unheard of, stood up in a Mississippi court and pointed out two White men whom he accused of killing his nephew, Emmitt Till. In '57 the standoff of states-rights versus federal power, caused the president's use of the federal troops to protect Black students integrating Little Rock's Central High School. In '60 students begin sit-ins through the South to desegregate public facilities. '61, our now newest congressman from Georgia, John Lewis, was one of the freedom riders to put his life on the racist line to end segregation on buses and related public transportation. '63 more than 250,000 marched on Washington, D.C. in support of the Civil Rights movement. It remains the largest protest gathering in history. '64 hundreds of White and Black students developed a southern summer project to teach Freedom Schools and register Black voters inspite of threats of grave bodily

harm. '65 ushered in the 5-days march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. The event has entered the history of the time as the last great gathering of the coalition of Civil Rights activist In NYC Sammy Davis, Jr forged a huge benefit at the Majestic Theatre, "B'way Salutes Selma." He was the marquee topper there in "Golden Boys."

Those historical facts and more are part of the

masterful montage of America's second conflict in the search for the heart and soul of freedom. State Senator Julian Bond is narrator of this film resuscitation of the courageous stand of both famous and lesser known humans who filled the trenches of non-violent blood letting, but not blood taking. Then now they were and are the brave ones.

WRITE HONORS:— Pride and purpose packed

Carnegie Hall to witness the big annual inaugural presentation of Associated Black Charities' "Black History Makers Awards." Its judges very wisely selected three standout, which nobody could deny, cutting down controversy. Paul Robeson, Jr. was the presenter of the Richard Allen Award to Rev. Dr. Leon H. Sullivan. Sharon Robinson presented the James Forten Award to Dr. Clifton R. Warton, Jr. and Leontyne Price received the Elizabeth Greenfield Award from the hands of Attalah Shabazz, Malcolm X's daughter. Ms Price's heartfelt thank'you stole the moment and made the event a warm relaxed happening. She made this scribe feel that really he had not left home, but just changed places. Roberta Peters was the replacement speaker for Isaac Stern, on behalf of the Carnegie Hall Bd. Hosts were Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee who was confined to a wheel chair having slipped on the ice a wk. earlier. Billy Taylor, Carmen De Lavallade and the Alvin Ailey Rep. Co. performed. "Four Black Immortals," a musical tribute, conducted by Ernie Wilkins, was a V1 part salute to Malcolm X. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Jackie Robinson and Paul Robeson. George Faison staged the show. Lionel Hampton and Bobby Short were in the audience to the delight of the intermission autograph hunters. The early party at the Russian Tea Rm. overcrowded the two allotted spaces and the after show reception was a little late for alarm wakerups. The proportion and purpose of ABC overshadows its beginner's cramps. It seems to have taken roots. How it will target equality's major aims and needs through sharing in a mixed arena of deeds and a growing environment of greed and need, only history will record...Freedom's Bk.'s forced resignation of Tab

Buford, its astute prexy, did him a favor. His job offers from at home and abroad are with propositions difficult to turn down...

DOT'S ALL WRITE:— It would not be wise to invite exotic song stylist Eartha Kitt and the members of the Toronto branch of the Black Music Ass'n to the same rap-session. The organization called for a general boycott of the "Kitten's" appearance at the Royal York Hotel just an engagement ago. The tiff was over the feline's movie set appearance in South Africa to star in a flick...The million selling "Sun City" album bottom line came in and Harry Belafonte, "Mr. Charity," can count \$100,000 to support African Nat'l Congress education projects. That was another reason ANC's president Oliver Tambo was mostly all smiles during his recent U.S. visit...The way to go! Eddie Murphy TeeVee enterprise has locked a deal with Home Box (HBO) for eye/ear leveling of "Uptown Comedy Express. The opus features four Black comedians and one White, Barry Sobel. Arsenio Hall, Cris Rock, Robert Townsend and Marshall Winter are the majority "cats." Eddie's uncle, Ray Murphy, will emcee this Cotton Club type opus. Marsha Warfield, whom you have eyed on ABC's "Night Court" is the female cast member.

...A monument honoring Otis Redding is planned for Atlanta. The singer was killed in a plane crash in '67. The dedication is set for Lake Monona, the site of the crash...Carole Shorenstein Hays won the rights to bring "Fences" to B'way next month. This remarkable play had its world premiere at Yale Repertory Theatre in April '85. Its debut had virtually every producer beseeching Y.R.T. for the rights. However they lacked the unique commitments of Ms Hays, uppermost, "Her passion for new American drama on B'way, which is seemingly a missing trait these days. The play, which won the '86 American Theatre Critics Award, "Best Play of the Yr.," will bring Earl Jones back to B'way in the lead role. Lloyd Richards will direct it for a late March opening...STAY LOOSE...Billy Rowe is a syndicated columnist.



JAMES EARL JONES stars in August Wilson's *Fences*, beginning March 17 on Broadway and opening March 26, directed by Lloyd Richards. *Fences* begins performances February 6 and plays through March 8 at San Francisco's Curran Theater. *Fences* is produced by Carole Shorenstein Hays in association with Yale Repertory Theatre.

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