

Entertainment

BILLIE ROWE'S NOTEBOOK

RACISM GREASES UPWARD MOBILITY CULTURAL POLE

N'ROCHELLE, NY:—Afro-American organizations, and others of shared purposes, have been urged to "man" the dike and stem the slide of low cost minority culture in the B'way/42nd street theatrical arena. Based on an article in the N'York Times, under teh by-line of Alan H. Levine, the prognosis is bad for Afro-Americans and Hispanics along the street's theatre row. According to the report the decision of city officials and real estate developers, partners in the 42nd street revitalization, provides a small but telling explanation of why 20-yr's ago the Kerner Commission predicted that America was "moving towards two societies, one Black and one white, separate and equal." According to Levine, a civil rights lawyer who represented the 42nd Street Theatres in their suit against the City

and 42nd Street developers, the endangered theatres are in the heart of the \$2.5 billion development thrust. Perhaps the best entertainment bargain in the city with a \$5 admission price, the films are magnets pulling mostly Black and Hispanic audiences numbering 60,000 to 70,000 weekly. According to the quoted commentary, "had there been a desire to encourage the street as a place of racial and economic diversity, the theatres would ahve provided the ideal vehicle."

In his continuing opinion Levine wrote, "The idea was discounted from the beginning. Disparaging comments charged the theatres specialize in films depicting sex, horror and brutality, but there was no mention that the bulk of the films were seen at higher priced theatres around the city, he reported. "The usual talk was about drugs and loiterers, a

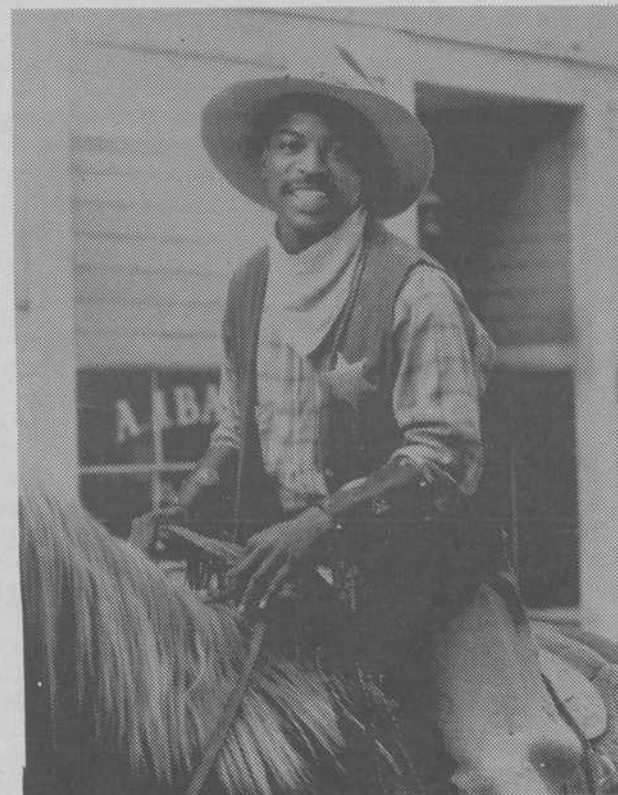
term bristling with race and class prejudice. When crowds gathered near the Met Museum or Rockefeller Center "it is a sign of urban health." But, stated the barrister, "crowds who gather near 42nd Street theatres are perceived as ominous. What is the difference except for race and class?" Both the NYPD and a consulting team headed by Dr. Kenneth Clark, the noted psychologist, debunked charges that the theatres are dangerous. However, they have been condemned to "progress." In the words of he who inspired the bulk of the above quotes: "When they are gone the area will be profitable and White. Blacks and Hispanics will go someplace else. That was what the Kerner Commission was talking about."

NEWS & COMMENTS:— The Nat'l Newspaper Publishers' Ass'n resuscitated its annual dinner at the Nat'l Press Club in DeeCee to augment a serious "Black Press Month" dialogue. The major spotlight of the affair was focused on the late Howard

B. Woods, publisher of the St. Louis Sentinel and Frank P. Thomas, publisher of the Mobile Beacon. Both were enshrined into NNPA's Distinguished Publishers' Archives, Howard U. . . . Buoyant by his medical issued clean bill of health, Dr. Maurice Dawkins is hot to trot for the GOP's Senate nomination that's up for grabs in northern Virginia . . . Howard University's widely heralded Sickle Cell unit has been put in dire jeopardy. It has been stricken from the Nat'l Institute of Health grants list which is addressed every five years. Howard, which has received NIH funding some fifteen years, will be plagued by this \$1 million shortfall. The clinic could become extinct without private and corporate support. As of now comprehensive services and staff are cut back targets

. . . In the Big Apple, Harlem Hospital is reaching out for some of its most distinguished "Blessed Events" to celebrate its century as a community guardian of life and health. Sammy Davis, Jr. tops its wanted list . . . The Dolly Parton/Smokey Robinson duet has added heat to her latest video . . . "A Streetcar Named Desire" is a perfect example that there is a time when producers should let sleeping classics luxuriate in fond memory. The Tennessee Williams' masterpiece is well into that category. And this is no reflection on the acting abilities of Blythe Danner, Aidan Quinn, Frances McDormand or Frank Converse who top the cast of characters. However, The Circle in the Square Theatre seems like a most unlikely stage for such a drama. Not at all conducive to the mood or the intent of the celebrated playwright.

THIS IS NEWS!—BLACK JOURNALISTS are pointing to passages of the 20 yrs old Kerner Commish report that the media were (then) "shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training and promoting Afro-Americans." So what else is new? The Association (ABJ) is planning action against both the print adn electronic media. While they're beefin' I hope they will find time to lend a hand and give some respect to the Black Press which opened whatever crack there is in the doors through which many of them



LeVar Burton, popular veteran host of public television's highly acclaimed *Reading Rainbow*, will return — earlier than ever — for the show's sixth season. Traditionally scheduled to coincide with summer vacation, a time when many beginning readers stop reading, *Reading Rainbow* will premiere April 9th on more than 300 PBS stations nationwide. Burton will tape five new *Rainbow* episodes for the '88 season while on hiatus from his new role in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. As host of *Reading Rainbow*, a program designed to get kids excited about reading, Burton travels to locations around the country to show children the wonderful worlds that books and reading can open for them. (Check local television listings for exact date and times.)

have walked . . . The Ladies of N'York's Spelman College Alumnae gathered recently to embrace former classmates and recreate some school days memories. The posh confines of the Phelps' Stokes Foundation were a most conducive location. The group was rewarded with a personal eye to eye with Dr. Johnnetta B. Stokes, the first African American female prexy of this 106 years old institution of learning. Her ascent to the top office of the college is the fulfillment of a long and smouldering desire. A month or so, facing 10-yr's, ago an appointed male prexy caused an upheaval. Students locked up the trustees and demanded that a woman be named . . . Our bedimpled Virginia Brooker is "ill sitting" lovely grandmother Barbara Jacquet who is a shut-in recuperating after a date with asurgeon . . . Tab Buford is in South Africa continuing the loan of his know-how of keeping the only native owned bank in the black, and that's no pun

. . . Summer is expected to inaugurate a number of "Economic Damage" suits filed by Black entrepreneurs facing unfilled promises. In a large measure such have caused an overestimated number of bankruptcies and bad credit ratings and the credibility of Black business ventures . . . For some unexplained reasons DeeCee's Mayor Marion Barry made Playboy's new annual edition "the year of sex" with text and photos of shocking events that happened to famous people vintage '87 . . . Essence's praise agent, Terry Williams has turned in her veep name plate and gone in business for herself. However she remains on the mag's premises I'm told . . . Stan Scott, Ken Drew, Jewell LaFontant, T.M. Alexander, Lee A. Archer, Art Fletcher, Ernesta Procope, Lionel Hampton and hector Hya-sinch were among a cadre of well heeled Afro-Americans who "Saluted Vice President George Bush" offering their

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