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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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# BULLETIN

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VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3, 1979

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**Writing for Children—A Joy and a Responsibility  
Wanted—Black Theater for Black Children  
Mini-Course Raises Awareness of Ageism**



# BULLETIN

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**From the Authors . . .** *first of a series of articles in which authors discuss their concerns. In this article, a much honored writer notes that literary merit cannot be the sole criterion in judging children's books. This statement was presented at the American Library Association's annual convention last June in Chicago*

## Writing for Children— A Joy and a Responsibility

By Eloise Greenfield

It is a joy to write for children. In addition to the satisfactions that derive from creative activity, there is a sense of sharing the world with someone who hasn't been in it very long. It's a joy.

And yet, there are times when I wonder why anyone would want to write, to suffer the pain and frustration of trying to trigger a flow of words that won't come, and be racked by the fear that a door has slammed and locked the words inside forever. At those times I have to say to myself, "This has happened before, I've had this terror before, the words will come, they'll come." I try to remember that although words do sometimes flow unbidden from their source, it is often just this suffering, this tension, that awakens my African muse.

Almost every writer has experienced this terror and the rush of relief and gratitude that accompanies, finally, the rush of words. It is not easy, therefore, to admit that the Muse is not infallible, that she must be continually challenged as to the validity of her offerings, but we must have the courage to face that fact. Our audience is too vulnerable, too impressionable, for us to entrust our art entirely to this force that lies somewhere in the subconscious mind, that repository of accumulated knowledge, attitudes and emotions. Both the rational and the irrational, the healthful and the harmful reside there as the result of a lifetime of conditioning.

In this society, our conditioning has been, to a great extent, irrational and harmful. This country was built on a



Author Eloise Greenfield (Photo by Bob Greenfield)

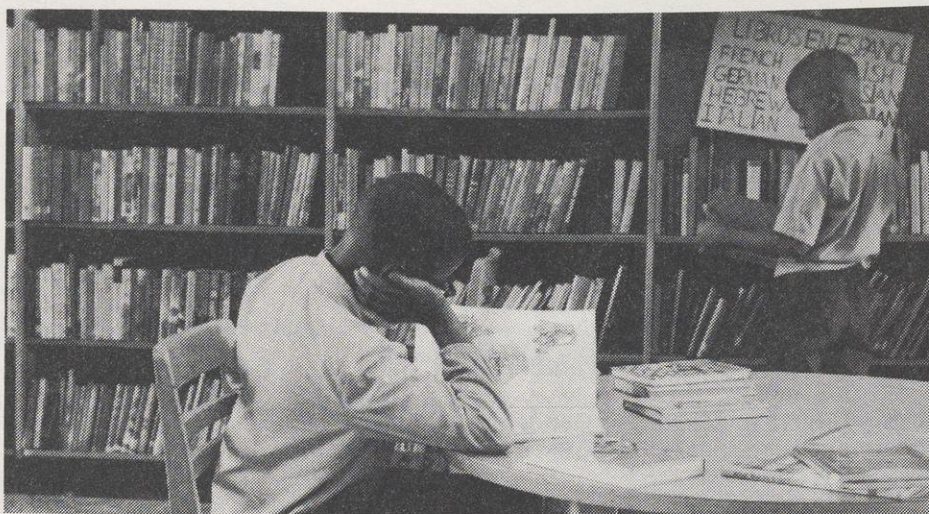
foundation of racism, a foundation which is only slightly less firm after centuries of Black struggle. Attitudes toward women, toward men, attitudes regarding age, height, beauty, mental and physical disabilities have been largely of the kind that constrain rather than encourage human development. To perpetuate these attitudes through the use of the written word constitutes a gross and arrogant misuse of talent and skill.

Librarians, no less than writers, have a responsibility to challenge their own conscious and subconscious beliefs, as well as the validity of the books they select. Standing as they do between authors and children, they are the conduit through which book messages flow. The importance of their role as selector cannot be over-emphasized. Nor can the importance of the question they must ask: What is the author saying?

There is a viewpoint which denies the relevance of this question, that holds art to be sacrosanct, subject to scrutiny only as to its esthetic value. This viewpoint is in keeping with the popular myth that genuine art is not political. It is true that politics is not art, but art is political. Whether in its interpretation of the political realities, or in its attempts to ignore these realities, or in its distortions, or in its advocacy of a different reality, or in its support of the status quo, all art is political and every book carries its author's message.

In the area of Black-oriented literature, much of what is communicated is venomous. Considerable attention has been devoted by sociologists to





*"Librarians, no less than writers," says author Greenfield, "have a responsibility to challenge their own conscious and subconscious beliefs, as well as the validity of the books they select." (Photo by Freda Leinwand)*

the study of the targets of racial abuse and oppression. The trauma, the damage to the spirit, the stifling of creativity, the threat to mere physical survival, have all been well-documented. Not enough attention, however, has been given to the study of those who, because of their conditioning, manifest delusions of grandeur, delusions that the whiteness of their skin makes them somehow special. The necessity to keep these delusions well-nourished, to fortify them against any invasion of reality, makes these people menaces to society. Some of them are writers. They wield word-weapons, sometimes overtly, sometimes insidiously, yet they disclaim all responsibility for what they say, being merely objective observers of the human scene, or secretaries transcribing the dialogue of characters over whom they have no control. Is it the writer's fault that the characters just happen to be racist?

Children need protection from these word-weapons. They need protection in the form of organizations such as the Council on Interracial Books for Children and Black literature journals such as *Black Books Bulletin*, and they need librarians who care. The library can and should become the center for regular and systematic education of children in the dynamics of racism as it occurs in literature. Even the youngest school-age child can be told: "There are some people in the world who are very sick. Some of them are so sick that they don't want you to know what a wonderful being you are."

Until children are knowledgeable enough to defend themselves, racist books must be kept out of their reach, as any other deadly weapon would be. To say this is not to demean the intelligence of children, but to recognize the power of communication to influence the thought, emotions and behavior not only of children, but also of adults. The tens of billions of advertising dollars effectively spent each year attest to this fact. And consider this—there must have been a time in our recent history when there was only one Farrah Fawcett-Majors, and now there are at least three in every square mile of the North American continent.

The books that reach children should: authentically depict and interpret their lives and their history; build self-respect and encourage the development of positive values; make children aware of their strength and leave them with a sense of hope and direction; teach them the skills necessary for the maintenance of health and for economic survival; broaden their knowledge of the world, past and present, and offer some insight into the future. These books will not be pap—the total range of human problems, struggles and accomplishments can be told in this context with no sacrifice of literary merit. We are all disappointed when we read a book that has no power, a story that arouses no emotion, passages that lack the excitement that language can inspire. But the skills that are used to produce a well-written racist book can be used as well for one that is anti-

racist. The crucial factor is that literary merit cannot be the sole criterion. A book that has been chosen as worthy of a child's emotional investment must have been judged on the basis of what it is—not a collection of words arranged in some unintelligible but artistic design, but a statement powerfully made and communicated through the artistic and skillful use of language.

We are living now in a period of rapid growth comparable to that one year in the life of adolescents when they have trouble keeping up with the changes occurring in their bodies. We are struggling to keep up with our new understanding as we unlearn myths that have existed for hundreds—in some cases thousands—of years, and as we challenge the concepts that have defined us and our goals.

*Webster's New World Dictionary*, for example, defines the word success as: "the gaining of wealth, fame, rank, etc." I am incensed each time I read it. To take beings who have the potential for infinite growing, infinite giving of their ideas and talents, of their caring, and to commend for their greatest efforts aspirations that glorify two of the basest of human attributes—greed and egotism—and not be ashamed to set it down in print, is a harsh self-indictment by the society in which we live. And this from a society that boasts of being civilized.

But we are learning. Though few of us here today will live to see it, there will come a time when positive attitudes will be so ingrained in the fabric of our society, so pervasive, that constant examination of our artistic expressions will no longer be necessary. Our art will reflect us, and we will be in a state of health. For now, though, we have work to do. We will make mistakes sometimes. We will have periods of conflict and confusion. But we owe it to children, we owe it to posterity, and we owe it to ourselves to persevere. Our place in history demands it. □

#### About the Author

*ELOISE GREENFIELD is the author of 13 books for children. Her most recent book, I Can Do It by Myself (Crowell) was co-authored with her mother, Lessie Jones Little. Their second collaboration, Child-times: A Three-Generation Memoir, will be published by Crowell in September.*



*Specific suggestions for developing plays that give children insights into the Black experience*

## Wanted—Black Theater for Black Children

By Useni Eugene Perkins

The article below is directed specifically to Black playwrights. The information and suggestions it provides, however, can be utilized by teachers, librarians and parents to teach all children about African and African American history and to inspire them to combat racism.

Although there has been an expansion in Black theater for adults, children's theater has not shown comparable growth. We need a children's theater that reflects the Black experience; to create it, Black playwrights can utilize our rich heritage, culture and history as sources for dramatic material.

This is not to say that there are no good children's plays based on Black themes (see resource list). Yet the current fare offered in children's theaters—*Peter Pan*, *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and the perennial standard, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*—have little relevance to Black children. Even more discouraging, Black children must also now endure "Black versions" of traditional Western plays. This trend of "adapting" stories written by white authors and based on the Euro-American experience should be viewed with skepticism. Such adaptations, however appealing and well-produced, can never capture or reflect the Black experience with validity.

Black playwrights should draw upon the deep reservoir of our history, myths, folklore and African and African American tradition. All can serve as excellent sources of dramatic materials. Although a Black children's theater would be no panacea for the racist ills that affect our society, it

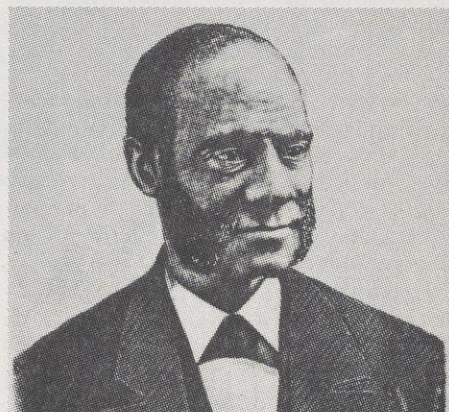
could be one positive way to counter the distorted image of Black people created by white society.

Theater need not always politicize (political awareness should have a high priority), but it should consciously attempt to contribute to the positive development of Black children. Good theater can be educational as well as entertaining (this is not one of the traditional purposes of Western theater). Black children need a theater that can raise their consciousness and challenge their intellect. They need a theater that embraces an Afro-oriented view of the world and provides a frame of reference supportive of our struggle. And they need a theater whose values are shaped by the collective needs of all Black people. There are many available resources to help Black playwrights develop such a theater for children.

### Folktales

Folktales are part of our oral tradition in both Africa and the U.S. In Africa, the tales were traditionally used to transmit a group's mores and values to children. While they were generally amusing, the primary function of the tales was moral instruction.

There were times when these tales were told in a setting that provided all the elements of theater, particularly after dusk, when work was done and people drew together for an evening's entertainment. The tale-teller was someone with superior dramatic talent; the ability to mimic animals, to recreate traditional tales in order to draw upon contemporary events, and to interact with the audience were all



*The lives of African Americans who struggled to win full equality are a rich source for dramatic material; above, Henry Highland Garnet, who urged slaves to rise against their masters, and below, Ida B. Wells, who crusaded against lynching.*







*The Harlem Children's Theater is a unique repertory group providing professional children's shows by professional children. In the summer of 1978, the group visited European countries on a goodwill tour to commemorate the International Year of the Child (IYC). The group's address is 420 West 42 St., New York, N.Y. 10036.*

essential skills. Music and dance were integral parts of these sessions.

Many of these folktales were brought by Africans to the U.S. and to the Caribbean. Anansi, the popular trickster-hero of the Asante of Ghana, survives as Annancy in Jamaica in the West Indies. Louise Bennett, the noted Jamaican folklorist, and Ranny Williams, the popular comedian who portrays Annancy, have often used the Annancy stories in the annual Christmas pantomime. They have effectively demonstrated how Jamaican culture can be utilized to create effective entertainment and continue a valued tradition. Their example is most instructive. The folktales of many African people—the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Asante of Ghana, the Shona of Zimbabwe and the Kamba of Kenya, among others—would provide playwrights with equally rich source material. Such resources would also lend themselves to the incorporation of various dance forms and the lyrical quality of many African languages.

There are two precautions Black playwrights should heed when adapting material based on African traditions. First, the material should be

completely understood; second, the values expressed must be treated with meticulous respect and presented in a manner that accurately portrays the significance of a custom and tradition in a particular society. This is especially true when rituals or ceremonies are involved.

The Africans brought their storytelling tradition to the U.S.; they brought untold numbers of favorite tales and familiar and well-loved animal characters. Soon the tales began to reflect the African American experience (the African hare became Brer Rabbit and the tortoise became Brer Terrapin, for example). Children need to be aware of the links between African and African American culture and the ways in which African American culture was shaped. They also need to be aware of the fact that folktales here became an instrument of political retaliation that helped Black people survive the repressive system of slavery.

Many African American folktales have been misinterpreted by whites who failed to understand the tales' symbolic nature and true intent. Many misconceptions can be traced to the influence of Joel Chandler Harris,

who is generally credited with the collection and preservation of the African American folktales known as *The Tales of Uncle Remus*. Commenting on the role of Brer Rabbit, Harris ridiculed the slaves for depicting "the weakest and most harmless of all animals" as the triumphant protagonist. That the tales had other, deeper meanings and symbolized, in this case, the triumph of the "weak" but witty slave over the "powerful" master totally escaped him.

## Poetry

Oral poetry is one of our oldest art forms. In Africa, poetry is a vital part of rituals, ceremonies and special celebrations. Many of the common poetic forms—praise songs, chants and verses for special occasions—appeal to children and can be incorporated into dramatic presentations.

The poems of James Weldon Johnson, Margaret Walker, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks are excellent resources. Dramatic readings of Johnson's "God's Trombones" have often been staged complete with music, song and dance, and the poetry of Hughes has been put into every conceivable dramatic form.

## African and African American History

It has long been customary for Western playwrights to turn to historical sources. Similarly, Black playwrights can draw upon our rich history to create powerful dramatic fare for Black children. The exploits of Piankhi the Great of the kingdom of Kush; of Nzingha, the warrior queen of the Matamba; of Chevalier St. Georges of Napoleonic France; and of Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe of Haiti can be brought to life to give Black children a sense of the history of peoples of African descent.

Black playwrights have another rich source in the lives of African Americans who struggled—and continue to struggle—to win freedom and full equality from slavery to the present. Such well-known figures as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, Jr. should certainly be depicted. But playwrights should also draw upon the deeds of

*Continued on page 22*



## RESOURCES FOR DRAMATIZATION

Teachers, librarians and parents can also use folktales, poetry, historical events and contemporary materials with children. The following list of selected materials, by no means comprehensive, will prove helpful. Books not readily identifiable by their title are briefly annotated. Some books that are out of print (o.p.) have been included because they are outstanding and may be available at a library.

### African Materials

#### Biographies

*African Heroes and Heroines* by Carter G. Woodson, Associated Publishers, 1538 Ninth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, 1949, grades 8-12.

*Sundiata, An Epic of Old Mali* by D.T. Niane, Humanities Press, 171 1 Ave., Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 07716, 1967, grades 6-up.

#### Folktales

*Adventures of Spider, The* by Joyce C. Arkhurst, Little-Brown, 1964, grades 2-4.

*African Myths* by Carter G. Woodson, Associated Publishers, 1538 Ninth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, 1928, grades 3-6.

*Agikuyu Folk Tales* by Ngumbi Njuri, Oxford University Press, 1966, o.p., grades 4-up.

*Fourteen Hundred Cowries: Traditional Stories of the Yoruba* by Abayoma Fuja, Oxford University Press, 1962, o.p., grades 5-up.

*Lion on the Path, The* by Hugh Tracey, Praeger, 1968, o.p., grades 3-up. (Excellent collection of Central African folktales, with musical interpolations.)

### African American Materials

#### Biographies

*A Special Bravery* by Johanna Johnston, Dodd, Mead, 1967, grades 4-6. (Exploits of Black heroes told in blank verse.)

*Don't Ride the Bus on Monday: The Rosa Parks Story* by Louise Meriwether, Prentice-Hall, 1973, grades 5-6.

*Freedom Ship of Robert Smalls, The* by Louise Meriwether, Prentice-Hall, 1971, grades 1-4. An account of Robert Smalls for older children is *Captain of the "Planter," The* by Dorothy Sterling, Doubleday, 1958, grades 8-12.

*Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the*

*Underground Railroad* by Ann Petry, T.Y. Crowell, 1955, grades 6-8.

*I, Charlotte Forten, Black and Free* by Polly Longworth, T.Y. Crowell, 1970, grades 5-8.

*To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester, Dial, 1968, grades 4-8. (Excerpts from slave biographies presented in a form which lends itself to dramatization.)

*Two Tickets to Freedom: The True Story of William and Ellen Craft* by Florence B. Freedman, Simon & Schuster, 1971, grades 5-up.

#### Folktales

*Black Folktales* by Julius Lester, Grove, 1969, grades 5-up.

*Book of Negro Folklore* by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., Dodd, Mead, 1958, grades 5-up.

*Days When the Animals Talked: Black Folktales and How They Came To Be* by William F. Faulkner, Follett, 1977, grades 4-8.

#### Plays

*Black Scenes* by Alice Childress, ed., Doubleday, 1967, grades 7-up. (A selection of scenes drawn from plays dealing with the life of Black people and selected for use with youths.)

*Escape to Freedom: A Play about Young Frederick Douglass* by Ossie Davis, Viking, 1978, grades 5-12.

*When the Rattlesnake Sounds: A Play About Harriet Tubman* by Alice Childress, Coward, 1975, grades 5-12.

#### Poetry

*Black Poets, The* by Dudley Randall, Bantam, 1979, all grades.

*Dream Keeper* by Langston Hughes, Knopf, 1932, all grades. (Poems especially selected for children.)

*God's Trombones* by James Weldon Johnson, Viking, 1927, grades 4-6. (Seven poems patterned after the dramatic style of the African American folk preacher.)

*Golden Slippers: An Anthology of Negro Poetry for Young Readers* by Arna Bontemps, ed., Harper & Row, 1941, all grades.

#### Junior Novels

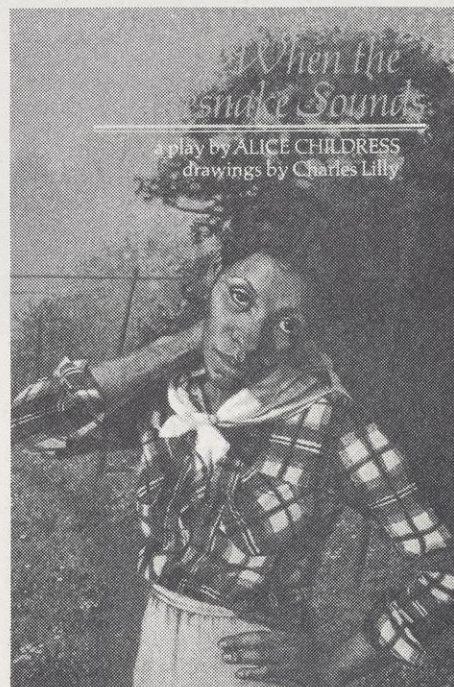
*All Us Come Cross the Water* by Lucille Clifton, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973, grades K-4. (Excellent for developing creative activities based on the heritage of Black people.)

*Growin'* by Nikki Grimes, Dial, 1978, grades 4-6. (Recommended for showing the closeness and supportive relationships that can develop among the residents of a city block.)

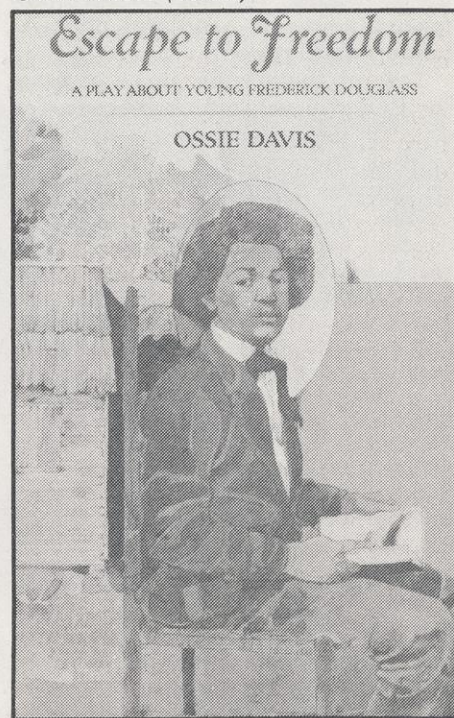
*Sidewalk Story* by Sharon Bell Mathis, Viking Press, 1973, grades 4-6. (A

young girl exercises great ingenuity in securing aid for her friend's family in time of their distress.)

*Song of the Trees* by Mildred D. Taylor, Dial, 1975, grades 4-8. A Newbery Award-winning sequel to this account of a Southern sharecrop family's resistance to white oppression is *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by the same author and publisher.



Excellent plays for children have been written by Alice Childress (above) and Ossie Davis (below).





## Mini-Course Raises Awareness of Ageism

By Ruth Ford

The mini-unit on ageism described below can be adapted to fit different grade levels. It is ironic that the successful project outlined below has been discontinued because the CETA funding that supported it has run out.

Recognizing the increasing number of older people in our society and their too frequent isolation from the mainstream, the Catholic Committee for the Aging in San Francisco began a Youth/Aging Project last year. Among its goals were 1) the creation of a curriculum that would increase the awareness of young people about the older people in our society and 2) the facilitation of a more positive view toward aging as a natural phase of human development.

Toward these ends, those of us at the Project developed a mini-course on various aspects of aging, including current and historical attitudes. The project was carried out by two coordinators who initiated and "sold" the course to interested schools and teachers. Consisting of six lesson periods for juniors and seniors, the mini-course was conducted wherever we could find a teacher willing and able to make room for it in the curriculum. The course subject matter and its flexibility made it suitable for classes dealing with history, psychology, sociology, religion and economics. Once a teacher agreed to fit the mini-course into the curriculum, the coordinator handled the rest—conducting the classes and supplying all the needed resource material.

When we started this program in January, 1978, we decided to contact the Catholic high schools first. We

guessed that we might find a greater autonomy among parochial schools and their teachers than in the public school system, and we thought that our sponsorship by the Catholic Committee for the Aging might give us an easier entree into the classrooms. Our feelings proved accurate, for in spite

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### Questionnaire for Mini-Course

A project-designed questionnaire was first distributed a few days before each course, and the students' anonymous responses helped to determine class content. The same questionnaire (with two additional questions asking students to evaluate their course) was distributed at the end of each course in order to determine if—and how—students' attitudes had changed. Among the questions asked:

- How long would you like to live?
  - Do you see any advantages or privileges connected with old age? If yes, describe two or three.
  - What, in your opinion, are some of the problems of old age?
  - List some of the ways you would like to spend your time after you are sixty-five.
  - Are you now in any way involved with an older person?
  - Check your particular topic of interest in regard to aging. (Among the topics listed were social, physical, emotional or financial aspects; food and nutrition; transportation; services to older people; consumer concerns; social and community action; and older persons' organizations.)
- 

of very strong efforts over a period of three months to gain entry into public high schools, we were unable to present a single course in any of them. We have, however, completed courses in six out of the twelve Catholic high schools, doing from one to three classes in each school.

Our mini-course began with an eight-point questionnaire given to the class members a few days before the start of the course (see box). This questionnaire, to be returned unsigned, was designed to determine pre-course attitudes and interests to help the coordinators decide which areas to emphasize during the course.

At the first class we talked about what we hoped to accomplish and invited questions and comments from the students. We began to create an awareness among the students of some of the misconceptions, myths and erroneous beliefs that many of them held about older people. At the end of the first class, we gave the students copies of "A Perspective on Aging," excerpted from *Views of Aging, A Teachers' Guide*,\* and a glossary of terms dealing with aging. In addition to covering age-related terms such as geriatrics, medicare and senility (most of them negative, which is in itself indicative of societal attitudes), the glossary also covered such terms as ageism, cliché and myth, since one of our tenets is that societal attitudes and institutional practices combine to delegate mature citizens to a minor and separate—almost alienated—role in our youth-oriented society.

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\*Published by the Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan-Wayne University, pages 137-145.



In the second class period we reviewed the first class and continued discussion of the points raised for about ten minutes. Then we asked the students to put away their pens and pencils, relax in their seats, and close their eyes. We then took them through a guided fantasy. We asked them to begin by imagining themselves at about age twenty-five; then continued as follows, pausing after each question:

"You get up in the morning and plan your day. As you dress and see yourself in the mirror, what do you look like? How do you dress? What will you be doing during the day? Whom will you have lunch with? Or will you be alone? Will others be with you at dinner time? How do you spend your evening before going to bed? Retire now, and go to bed. Now you awaken in the morning and you are thirty-five years old."

The "instructions" given for age twenty-five were then repeated. The instructor led the students by ten-year increments through their lives until they were seventy-five years old. The students were then asked to open their eyes, refreshed, and be back in the present.

This exercise provoked a good deal of discussion. We emphasized their own life planning and awareness of their current age as being a part of a continuing process. More awareness can be achieved by asking such questions as, "Did you enjoy being seventy-five?" or "Did anyone imagine that they had financial difficulties at any period?" Such questions led to discussions comparing their fantasies to the realities that older people face today.

At the third session we dealt with questions arising from the reading materials assigned on the first day. Discussions sometimes focused on how the loss of physical and/or financial independence often affects freedom of choice for many older people or on the fact that aging does not necessarily affect character.

At the fourth session we showed one of two 16mm films obtained from the San Francisco Commission on Aging, either "Peege," an emotional study of a family dealing with an aging grandmother in a nursing home, or "Shopping Bag Lady," the story of a relationship between an elderly woman and a teenage girl. (Both films are reviewed in this issue's Media Monitor.) The films are each about 25 minutes long, and a short discussion period followed the showing. Since the



Above: Carol Burnett's characterization of an older woman in the TV adaptation of the play "Twigs" was found to be particularly demeaning. Burnett's TV series (now in syndication) has been singled out by the Grey Panther Media Watch as the most offensive show in stereotyping and ridiculing older people. Left: In "Peege" a family visits a dying grandmother—and all but one of the family is uncomfortable. Below: "Shopping Bag Lady" deals with an extreme condition of old age. (Both films are reviewed in the Media Monitor, page 18.)





films have a highly emotional impact, the discussion was sometimes carried over to the next class meeting.

For the fifth class we arranged for an active, older person to volunteer as a guest speaker. These speakers demonstrated by example that most of the stereotypes about "old age" are simply untrue; their vitality alone helped to counteract many of the false ideas that the students had about older people. The speakers also provided a role-model for the students by making clear that "old age" could be

a positive time. One difficulty we had with this part of the program was that many of the older people whom we asked to participate were so busy that they had little time to do so. The scheduling for this session must be done several weeks in advance.

Classes three, four and five need not be done in the exact sequence portrayed. Availability of the films and/or guest speaker usually determined the schedule.

At the sixth and final session of the course, we divided the students into

six groups of four or five students each, and on the blackboard we wrote six current concerns of older people. These were selected from the following: Housing, Food and Nutrition, Transportation, Employment, Retirement, Finance, Hygiene and Health, and Medical Care. We assigned a topic to each group and asked them to discuss it and come up with ideas which might be solutions to each concern. A secretary-spokesperson was chosen by each group, and during the last 20 minutes of the class the results were shared with and discussed by the entire class. Finally, we again distributed the questionnaire on attitudes with two additional questions: "Do you think this course was worthwhile?" and "What, if anything, did you learn from this course?" This questionnaire was picked up at the school a few days after the end of the course.

A comparison of the "before" and "after" questionnaires does reveal some changes in the students' attitudes. One question, for example, asked, "What, in your opinion, are some of the problems of old age?" Before the course began, the largest number of students (36) answered "boredom and loneliness." After the course, only 13 gave this answer. (Boredom and loneliness are of course real problems for many older people in our youth-oriented society; the problem is that a stereotypic view of older people had led the students to assume this was a necessary aspect of "old age.") Conversely, before the course no student mentioned "discrimination/stereotyping/societal attitudes" as problems. At the end of the course, 12 students did.

Although not all the comparisons were as dramatic, we were encouraged by the comments of students who took the course. They seemed open to discussing issues with older people and concerned about the need for mutual understanding between themselves and older people. As we had hoped, students also became much more aware of the continuum of the aging process. Said one student: The course "made us see them [older people] as our future." □

#### About the Author

RUTH FORD was one of the coordinators of the Youth/Aging Project of the Catholic Committee for the Aging, San Francisco, Cal.

## Suggested Classroom Consciousness-Raisers

One way to sensitize students to stereotypes about older people is to have them analyze the portrayal of older people in various media. (The absence of older people conveys its own message.) Some suggestions follow:

Divide the class into groups to monitor different TV stations. Ask them to note the portrayal of older people in TV programs (particularly sitcoms and variety shows) and in newscasts and commercials. Questions similar to those listed below may be used as a guide to the TV viewing. Students may then be encouraged to develop their own guidelines for

- the analysis of advertisements
- the treatment of older people in comic books
- the portrayal of older people in movies.

Suggested questions for monitoring commercials: 1) What kinds of products are older people usually used to advertise? 2) Are older people shown with other people? If so, who are these other people? How do they behave toward the older people? How do the older people behave toward them? 3) What kind of personality does the older person have? Is the older person someone you would like to know or spend time with? Why or why not? 4) How are the older people dressed? What kinds of activities do they engage in? 5) How many commercials show older people as healthy and active? As weak and feeble?

Suggested questions for monitoring TV variety shows and sitcoms: 1) How many older people have leading roles in these shows? 2) What kind of characters do they play? 3) How many of

the variety shows have skits in which older people are portrayed? How are these older people portrayed? How are they dressed? How do they look, act and talk? 4) What ideas are you supposed to get about older people from watching these skits? 5) How do these skits make you feel about growing older?

Another consciousness-raiser is to have students recall familiar sayings about older people ("There's no fool like an old fool," "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," etc.). Then discuss the negative implications of these clichés and their possible effect on older people.

Teachers interested in planning a curriculum on aging may also wish to consult "Action Against Ageism: Consciousness-Raising Exercises," which appeared in Vol. 7, No. 6 of the *Bulletin*. The issue also contained a list of background reading materials and other teaching resources on ageism, as well as a two-part article presenting the findings of the first major study of ageist stereotypes in children's books. The third and final part of that study appeared in Vol. 7, No. 8.

A useful classroom resource not included in the *Bulletin* issues noted above is *Network*, the quarterly publication of the Grey Panthers, a national organization of older and young people committed to fighting institutional ageism. A year's subscription to *Network* is \$3 (individuals) and \$6 (libraries, institutions and non-U.S. addresses); the publication is free to persons unable to pay the subscription price. Write 3700 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa. 19104.



In the BOOKSHELF, a regular *Bulletin* department, all books that relate to minority themes are evaluated by members of the minority group depicted.—Editors.

## Poochie

by Ted Pontiflet,  
illustrated by Mahiri Fufuka.  
Dial Press, 1978,  
\$7.50, 40 pages, grades p.s.-3

It's always a pity when excellent artwork is wasted on a mediocre story. And it's more the pity when wasted on a negative and unpleasant tale.

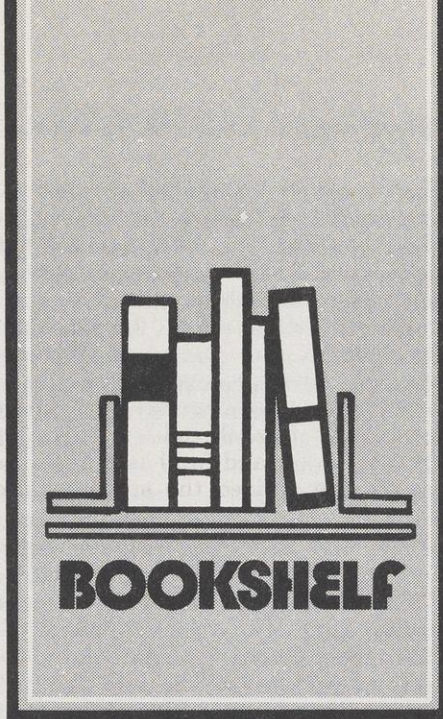
This story of four young Black children—three boys and a girl—lacks warmth and carries many overtones of violence. The children play only “cops and robbers” games. They show no remorse over setting an accidental fire or breaking the front tooth of the little girl. One of the youngsters is ridiculed because of his size and girth. One mother, tired from “day work,” spansks her son with a large leather strap. All of this leaves a distasteful impression, hardly supporting the book jacket's claim of a “light hearted, delightful story.” [Beryle Banfield]

## A New Mother for Martha

by Phyllis Green,  
illustrated by Peggy Luks.  
Human Sciences Press, 1978,  
\$6.95, unpagd, grades k-5

People respond very differently to the loss of a loved one and therefore *A New Mother for Martha* should be seen as a description of one family's adjustment rather than a guide book. In one sense, this book—part of the publisher's series of Self-Awareness Books for Young Readers—is more appropriate for adults than it is for children because it most successfully depicts the strategies adopted by the adults to convince Martha, a six-year-old, that her mother's death is permanent and that her father has chosen to re-marry.

Martha's father and stepmother are almost too perfectly understanding in the ways they deal with Martha's



conviction that her mother will return. But it would be very difficult to write a children's book which also conveys the mistakes, the emotional trauma, the intrafamilial struggles that typically occur when difficult and unexpected events upset normal routines.

One plus: the portrayal of Martha's father as nurturing and gentle. One minus: the ageist portrayal of the housekeeper who cares for Martha while her father and stepmother are on their honeymoon. But overall this is a sensitive book and both the text and the engrossing illustrations in subdued blue and rose are sensible and comforting. [Child Care Resource Center, Cambridge, Mass.]

## Understanding Africa

by E. Jefferson Murphy.  
T.Y. Crowell, 1978 (revised edition),  
\$8.95, 185 pages, grades 9-10

An assessment of E. Jefferson (Pat) Murphy's revised edition of *Understanding Africa* illustrates why white Americans continue to hold negative images of Africa and its people. Pat Murphy is a layman, recently turned scholar, who has spent most of his professional life working with Africans in an effort to promote African development and to encourage African-American understanding.

*Understanding Africa* was first published in 1969, when most available texts reinforced negative myths and stereotypes about Africa. In that context *Understanding Africa* was a welcome addition. It was well-organized and well-written, noted the stereotypes which abounded about Africa and challenged some of them, viewed Africans sympathetically, and contained a short but comprehensive bibliography. It therefore represented a good first step toward developing new views of Africa.

Unfortunately, the revision of *Understanding Africa* does not continue in this tradition. It has considerable strengths, the most important being an awareness and appreciation of the people and problems of modern Africa. There are four, perhaps five, paragraphs throughout the text which have been inserted to make it more timely and more accurate. They do a good job. Nevertheless, the book does not reflect the new scholarship in the field and it continues to view the continent from a Euro-American rather than an African perspective.

The original edition noted the enormous power of language in shaping attitudes. It correctly identified terms such as “jungle,” “tribe,” “civilized” and “primitive” as loaded words which reflected and reinforced negative images of Africa. Unfortunately the text itself used many of these pejorative words. The revision continues this practice.

Too frequently the author speaks of “guerrilla” war in Zimbabwe but of “freedom fighters” in Mozambique; successful resistance apparently makes the more positive term acceptable. Terms which Africans embrace are used; for example, Pat Murphy accepts African rather than European names for nations (these changes do not apply for lakes, however). But all too often there are lapses because the entire text has not been carefully scrutinized and updated.

The outdated notion of race permeates the text. The important fact is that the majority of Africans are black, the minority white. The text should explain that the problem is not that some Africans are white but rather that white Africans must accept Blacks as equal if racial harmony is to exist when minority re-



gimes are ultimately overthrown. Detailed descriptions of the "Negroid" appearance of the various ethnic groups do not add to our understanding and appreciation of the people either.

The presentation of Africa's geography is another weakness. Geographic isolation is emphasized and contacts with other cultures—both to the east, north and west—are downplayed.

Murphy asserts, "Century by century the history of Europe has gone on, from achievement to greater achievement. The history of Africa, on the other hand, seems to indicate a much slower climb—indeed, a leveling off that has lasted for centuries. Why?" (page 93). Murphy attributes this "slow climb" to Africa's harsh physical environment. His discussion of medieval Sudanic empires—Ghana, Mali and Songhay—reinforces this theme. He also states that there was little advancement during the flowering of Mali and Songhay except for the introduction of Moslem writing, which is indeed open to challenge. So too are his assumptions that the conquest of surrounding territories and the development of improved ways to generate internal wealth are the requisites for "an expanding civilization."

In addition, there are portions of *Understanding Africa* that are historically inaccurate, a problem linked to the text's European perspective. For example, the acceptance of North Africa as part of the continent is explicit but the acceptance of Egypt as a Black African nation is not! It is about time that students know that one part of the Greco-Roman-Egyptian culture which forms the basis of the Western heritage is the result of activities of Black people.

There is an excellent discussion of the slave trade which works as well today as it did ten years ago, although the summary of its effects could be more comprehensive.

Murphy's treatment of the colonial period and the rise of African nationalist movements has also stood the test of time. Yet a close reading of the original and the revision illustrates the need to reassess the text in terms of new scholarship. The negative colonial experience is not made clear.

The so-called "benefits" of colonialism are stated definitively. The book's assertion that colonial powers did not actively and vigorously resist nationalist aspirations and activities is invalid. At the same time, the rationale for and the rise of nationalist movements is well documented.

Military governments are viewed unfavorably (with the exception of Ghana) and political stability is highly touted. Murphy seems to have forgotten the revolutionary heritage of the U.S. and the instability experienced during the "critical period."

The concluding chapters of the text are excellent. The discussions of African economic development, the problems of nation-building and the current dilemmas which confront political leaders and citizens alike provide an excellent framework within which Africa 1979 can be assessed.

The illustrations which are generously distributed throughout the text are unfortunately not fully labeled. They are often misplaced and contribute to reinforcing stereotypes (why a portrait of a Masai with a spear: why not with cattle?). The Bibliography has been expanded from the original but some of the more recent, worthwhile publications have been excluded.

Nevertheless, *Understanding Africa* will inform an important audience about an important continent. But ten years after its original publication, it is a new edition rather than a revision which is required. Perhaps Pat Murphy will some day write the excellent text for this age group which is still needed. [Evelyn Jones Rich]

## The Creek Indians

by Grant Lyons,  
illustrated by David Kingham.  
Messner, 1978,  
\$7.29, 96 pages, grades 3-6

Unlike any other children's history book that I've read, *The Creek Indians* sincerely attempted to make Muskogee (Creek) history understandable for children. Unfortunately, the book too often subtly perpetuates erroneous impressions of Native Americans. The illustrations by David Kingham, de-

void of stereotypic imagery, are the only completely positive aspect of this work.

The text's best feature is the way in which the Muskogee Creation story is presented. Most authors begin their history lessons about the origins of the Native American with the Bering Strait Theory. They write of an ancient people who crossed over a land bridge from Asia to North America thousands of years ago and claim that these people were the ancestors of Native Americans. The Bering Strait Theory is, however, just one of many unproven theories, and it was a pleasant surprise to find a Native American theory in this book. I did question the sentence, "They crawled up out of the ground through a hole like ants" and wondered if the original drew an analogy between men being born from the earth and ants. Unfortunately, no references are cited.

In Chapter 2, "The Muskogee Way," the book's viewpoint is clearly demonstrated. The author writes that the Creek government resembled the U.S. government "when it was created many years later." In fact, it was the U.S. government—when finally formed—that resembled the Creek and other Native systems of government. The book doesn't begin to explore U.S. history from a Native perspective.

Of course, no children's book about Indians would be complete without scalping, and *The Creek Indians* is no exception: "Like other Indians of North America, the Creeks fought fiercely. They often tortured captured enemies. And they cut off the scalps of those they killed in battle." The stereotype lives on.

The last chapter is devoted to "The Creeks Today." The final statement, made by Pleasant Porter, a Creek chief, exemplifies the "white is right" philosophy. He says, "The best blood of our ancestors has mixed with that of white statesmen and leading citizens." What is "best blood"? Does that statement mean that the Creeks and other Native people who intermarried with people of color were less than the best? Children might deduce that from the book.

I wouldn't recommend this book. While it has a good deal of relevant history, there are too many areas that



will continue to perpetuate false impressions about Native Americans. [Donna Lovell]

## Full Circle

by Martha E. Munzer.  
Knopf, 1978,  
\$5.95, 84 pages, grades 7-up

From the vantage point of seventy-nine years of life lived to the fullest, an unusual woman writes of her childhood and early adulthood in a reflective manner. Martha Munzer highlights the events and people who influenced her as she grew up in an upper-class family in the New York of the early twentieth century. The sexism of the era is revealed as the author tells of the dominant role her mother played in the home, responsible for the ethical training of the children, while her father was a shadowy figure who was responsible for providing his family with the "better things" of life. Munzer candidly acknowledges the social pressure for marriage for a young woman, a pressure to which she succumbed at the cost of four "troubled" decades of life

with her husband. Yet this teacher and author of eight books just as candidly reflects upon her own remarkable enrollment at M.I.T. in engineering and the extra-marital affair she continued for most of her marriage. She is currently working with young people on ecological issues and is also involved in community planning and the Euthanasia Society, among other causes.

The lessons of a life fully lived have brought the author "full circle." She has no chip on her shoulder, no ax to grind. She gives the young reader an insight into the wit and wisdom of age, a perspective on life which can only come from one who has lived and loved well. It should be noted that the book's slow-paced, philosophical tone may put some readers off—and the author's privileged white perspective may put off others. [Virginia Wilder]

## Don't Forget Tom

by Hanne Larsen.  
T.Y. Crowell, 1978,  
\$5.79, 32 pages, grades k-4

## Janet at School

by Paul White.  
T.Y. Crowell, 1978,  
\$5.79, 32 pages, grades k-4

These two books portray an effort to introduce very young children to the usually unfamiliar topic of children born with disabilities. *Janet* gives a description of both the abilities and limitations of a child with spina bifida, which confines her to a wheelchair. *Tom* discusses various aspects of mental retardation.

Both books treat their subjects as individuals and avoid stereotypes, providing a fair picture of their physical and intellectual limitations (diagrams show which parts of the body are involved). The photographs of their daily interactions provide material with which most youngsters can identify. Without a doubt someone who can't use her legs doesn't just have to sit in a chair all day, and someone who is mentally impaired doesn't have to just stare into space.

The only flaw in these books is that they are guilty, along with so many

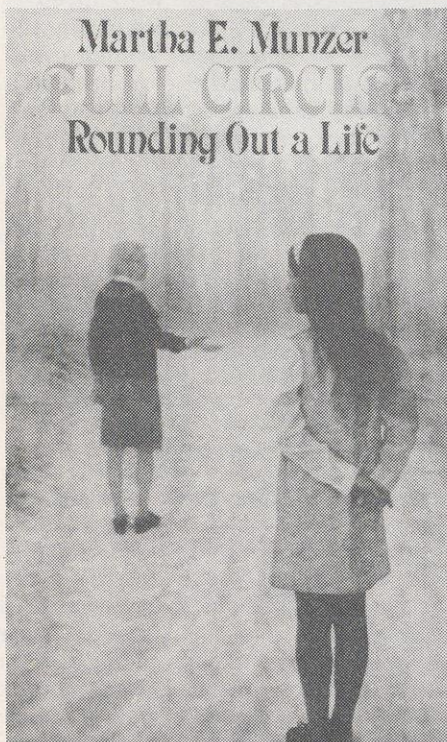
similar books, of depicting only well-to-do white families with disabled children. Because these families can obtain special services and expensive aids, the reader is led to believe that *everyone* can obtain them. The issue of accessibility for Janet is limited solely to the problem of finding a camping area flat enough for her wheelchair, and for Tom the issue of adequate educational services is solved simply by providing him with a private tutor at home. The options in real life are just not so available.

Children have an insatiable curiosity, so such books as *Janet* and *Tom* can be useful as a first introduction to the subject of disabilities. [Betsy Gimbel]

## Tales of Indentured Servants

by Joseph and Edith Raskin,  
illustrated by William Sauts Bock.  
Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1978,  
\$6.50, 126 pages, grades 3-6

The eight tales in this collection are, according to the authors, derived from historical accounts of indentured laborers in colonial America. Indenture was a grim business, and the authors have focused on one of its most heinous features: the kidnapping of children for sale into forced servitude. The world these stories depict is, in general, one of unrelenting brutality and inhumanity. For example, one protagonist is a small English boy whose father, a nobleman, squanders the family fortune, then proclaims his son dead so that he may legally sell his lands. Then the father and an uncle arrange for the boy to be kidnapped and sold as a servant abroad. In another story, a teenaged girl is sold by her drunken widowed father. In a third, a college student in England is wrongly accused of stealing a library book; as punishment he must choose between having his hand burned or spending seven years in America as an indentured servant. It is a world in which justice, reason and compassion seem to have fled: the poor are legally punished for wearing fine clothing, even if purchased, and people pay extra for window seats at





taverns facing the site of public hangings.

The book is racist in that American Indians make only one appearance, and that as bloodthirsty, vengeful raiders of colonial settlements. Also, there is no indication of the fact that indenture has been the scourge of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants to the Americas as well as those from the United Kingdom. Women are generally portrayed as either submissive or cruel. But then so are the men in these pages.

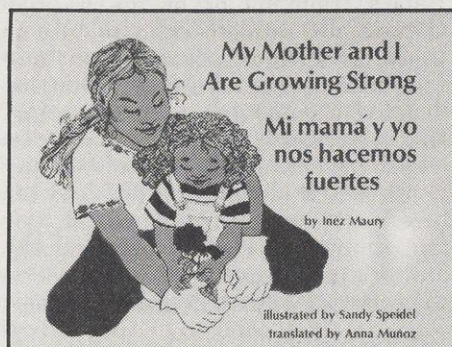
The most objectionable aspect of this book, however, are the endings of these biographical sketches. After learning the details surrounding each character's capture and of the privations and humiliations they suffered during their indenture, we are told either that nothing more is known of their lives or merely that they spent their remaining years in this country, or even only that "it is likely that he had joined the ranks of early Americans who by their labor helped to build the New World." One story ends with the protagonist achieving some local fame as a plantation school master because of his ability to make children "behave" by giving them occasional whippings!

And of the little boy whose kinsmen swindled him of his property by selling him into near life-long exile, the authors tell us this: in his adulthood he met by chance some of his English school chums who remembered his noble birth. They testified to his identity so that he might regain his lands. The case dragged on for years during which he died. In conclusion, we are told: "Nevertheless, before he died, James had the satisfaction of knowing that he, who had spent a good part of his life as an indentured servant, finally achieved some recognition that he was the real Lord Altham." A dubious and elitist sort of satisfaction.

There seem to be no decent morals to be drawn from these stories. Some of the characters resign themselves to their enslavement while others escape it through flight or litigation. Unfortunately, in either case, their ultimate rewards—when there are any—are due to chance or more powerful people rather than to their own efforts. In one story, a young woman's freedom

from her cruel employers is purchased by a group of pitying neighbors. It ends with one of them saying to her: "What interesting tales you'll be able to tell our children!"

In sum, the endings make the authors appear to be apologists for the indenture system, though this was far from their intentions. [Maxine Fisher]



## **My Mother and I Are Growing Strong/Mi mamá y yo nos hacemos fuertes**

by Inez Maury,  
illustrated by Sandy Speidel.  
New Seed Press (P.O. Box 3016,  
Stanford, Cal. 94305), 1978,  
\$2.00, 28 pages, grades 1-6

Once in a long time it is possible to feel really enthusiastic about a children's book—to feel that something fresh, imaginative and also rooted in today's social reality has been created. This is such a book.

Lupe and her young daughter Emilita live alone; the father has been imprisoned for an assault he committed in response to a racist insult. They take over the father's job as gardener, learn how to use mechanical equipment, chase away a would-be burglar, become physically strong. They are two females working to survive in a home without a man, and they learn to do so with delight and pride.

At the same time, the book shows their continuing love for the father, their visits to prison, their hope of his being paroled. We see three very real human beings and their development: Lupe, the mother, with her strong principles, her combination of gentle-

ness and determination; Emilita, the daughter, with her curiosity and creativity, her moments of adult-like perception alternating with moments when she just wants to be a beloved child; and the father, José, who doesn't want his wife to work—but whose mind just might be open to a new way and a new day. The absolutely marvelous illustrations reflect all the humanity, beauty and wit of the story.

The book is about a Latino family but aside from the father's imprisonment and its cause, there is little that reflects the culture and historical experience of any Latino people. Possibly the authors felt that the insertion of such material would make the book similar to those children's books about Latinos in which eating some tortillas and saying "Si, señor" are to be taken as signs of cultural authenticity. This is no easy question to resolve but it seems there must be a solution which the authors did not find. At the very least, we could know what Lupe and Emilita think about the reason for the father's imprisonment.

But this weakness is small when compared to the book's strength as a whole. Lupe, Emilita and José are wonderful, believable working-class people. Lupe and Emilita have the power of working-class women of all races and nationalities. A children's book that expresses this power with beauty and imagination is a very rare treat—indeed, something to treasure. [Elizabeth Martinez]

## **Brothers Are All the Same**

by Mary Milgram,  
photographs by Rosmarie Hausherr.  
E.P. Dutton, 1978,  
\$6.95, unpagged, grades p.s.-3

*Brothers Are All the Same* is a photographic essay about transracial adoption that attempts to show that adopted children can be genuinely accepted by their siblings. A sceptical schoolmate tells two sisters that their adopted brother Joshie can't be a "real brother" because he doesn't look like the rest of the family and because he was older and "walking around"



when he became a part of the family. (Joshie is Third World and the other children are white.) The two sisters "prove" that Joshie is a brother because he does "dumb" things and all "brothers are dumb."

It is unfortunately true that in our society children learn to label one another "dumb," but why should adults encourage it? The book seems particularly insensitive to the importance of counteracting racial stereotypes. Calling any children "dumb" is bad enough. Calling the only Black child in the story "dumb" is dumb.

The book's most positive aspect is that it depicts the girls as capable, imaginative and unwilling to play subordinate roles to their male friend.

The black-and-white photographs are engrossing. They capture the children in different activities at home and at school and fit the text well. Joshie is depicted as being appropriately mischievous for his age. However, he is also consistently excluded from the older children's play. This may be a realistic portrayal of sibling interactions, but when the adopted child is also of another racial background, it conveys mixed messages about whether the child will ever be a respected member of the family. [Child Care Resource Center, Cambridge, Mass.]

## **Babe Didrikson: The World's Greatest Woman Athlete**

by Gene Schoor.  
Doubleday, 1978,  
\$6.95, 185 pages, grades 7-up

In the 1950's, Babe Didrikson Zaharias was one of the few role models available to athletic girls. With her outspoken style and her amazing athletic versatility, Babe was a highly visible symbol of female athletic accomplishment.

In *Babe Didrikson: The World's Greatest Woman Athlete*, Gene Schoor manages to catch some of the excitement and controversy Babe created, as he chronicles her life from her parents' emigration from Norway, through her triumphs in basketball, track, field and golf, to her death of

cancer at forty-two. Overall, however, Mr. Schoor's effort is not successful. Readers learn very little about Babe as a person and even less about the work and effort it takes to become a great athlete. Babe's early life is viewed as an idyllic interlude with no glimpse of the grinding reality of growing up poor in south Texas. Similarly, little indication is given of the time, work or pain that went into Babe's triumphs or of the barriers that women athletes had to face in those days (and to some extent still face today). The two pages that are devoted to such barriers seem to imply that while a woman athlete's femininity was often questioned, a little nail polish and a steady date resolved the problem.

The book is a disappointment because it occasionally provides glimpses of what it could have been; unfortunately however, it more often slips into rosy superficiality and stereotypes. Even the title, *The World's Greatest Woman Athlete*, perpetuates the stereotype that while men are athletes, women are women athletes. More important though is the book's attitude toward winning. It is no accident that one of the author's other books is *Football's Greatest Coach—Vince Lombardi*. Lombardi's famous quote about winning also seems to be the motto of this book: "Winning isn't everything, it is the only thing." [Patricia Campbell]

## **Tatterhood and Other Tales**

by Ethel Johnston Phelps,  
illustrated by Pamela Baldwin Ford.  
The Feminist Press, 1978,  
\$10.95, 164 pages, grades 3-6

This is an offering of 25 tales drawn from the folklore of Asia, Europe, India, Africa and the Americas. All have been selected because their female heros act truly heroically; i.e., unlike those whom we've met in more familiar tales, these heros save the day with their courage, strength or wit. They command ships that sail for far-off, uncharted kingdoms, do battle singlehandedly with bears and wolves (not to mention sinister trolls), trick giants, elves and unjust men,

and brave the unknown dangers of forest and moor in their determination to solve a problem. It is the men in these stories—in their roles as brother, husband or desired lover—who lack individuality and who are, for the most part, the passive objects of all these activities. The result is a collection of stories whose plots closely follow the familiar formulae of traditional folktales, with the single exception being that the genders of the main protagonists are reversed. Ideally, one wishes for a more equitable distribution of characteristics between the sexes in such stories, but given the generally anti-feminist nature of folklore, this collection is a specially welcome gift. (Occasionally, a sexist element surfaces; for example, marriage clearly remains the ultimate goal of these heros.)

The book is delightfully anti-ageist. Not only are children capable of monumental achievements, but the old folks who cavort through these pages are vital, cheerful and fearless. They ride through the moors unafraid at night, unabashedly take tea with notorious shape-shifters, and one grandmother slings a fainted wrestler over her shoulder and carries him to her house!

Best of all, in most of the stories the magical elements do not obscure the fact that determination, ingenuity, courage and selflessness are needed to solve life's problems. Values such as beauty, wealth and conformity, on the other hand, are undermined. This is best exemplified in the title story about a princess with "odd" habits: she wears rags, rides a goat and waves the wooden spoon with which she was born. Her prospective prince is at first revolted by her unseemly appearance and unconventional behavior. Through magic she shows him that she is able at will to transform her rags, goat and spoon into the more traditional trappings of a fairy-tale princess. By the end of the story the prince comes to realize that her personal style is one that she has chosen, and it is for this reason—not external adornments—that she is to be cherished. A good lesson for us all!

The entertainment dimension of the stories is rather inconsistent, but most of the tales are genuinely amusing. [Maxine Fisher]



## Attacks on Bookstores in Great Britain

In the past year there has been a definite pattern of systematic attacks against Black and leftist bookshops in Britain. Bookstores have been firebombed, painted with racist slogans and received threatening phone calls. In addition, there have been attacks on private homes as well as assaults on Black people and people of other minorities.

Because bookstore owners and other concerned citizens feel that the police have been less than responsive to their needs, they have formed a Bookshop Joint Action committee "to continue fighting the dangers of fascist terror to the existence of our shops and cultural centers." The committee urges readers—both in Britain and elsewhere—to express their concern to the British Home Secretary, the Right Honorable Merlyn Rees, House of Commons, London SW1, England.

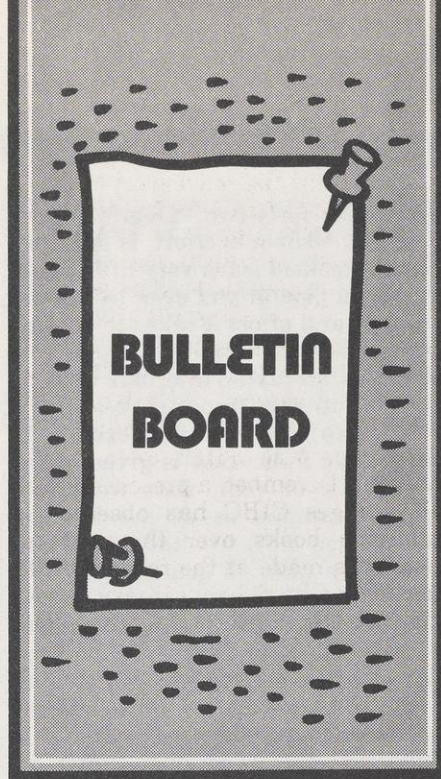
Readers interested in obtaining more information about the attacks and the efforts to combat them are urged to write Bookshop Joint Action, c/o Bogle L'Ouverture, 5a Chignall Place, Ealing, London W13, England.

## Sexism, Sexism and More Sexism

Recent studies reveal that sexism, unfortunately, continues to pervade "the real world" just as it does children's books. Statistics show that:

- the economic status of women in higher education has been declining. According to a report released by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the percentage of women faculty members on the nation's campuses decreased from 22.5 per cent in 1974-75 to 21.7 per cent in 1975-76, and rose again only to 22.4 per cent in 1976-77. The AAUP report also notes a decline in the rank distribution of women faculty, and no change in the salary gap between male and female academics—women still earn 5.1 per cent less than men of the same rank. Copies of the study, "No Progress This Year—Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 1976-77," are available for \$2.50 each from the AAUP, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036.

- according to an update by the



American Council on Education, the 156 female chief executives of institutions of higher education represent less than 6 per cent of the total number of positions. (Reported in full in *Comment*, March 1978.)

- although 67 per cent of all public

## Women's Conference Scheduled

Mothers & Daughters, a "multi-generational conference," will be held **April 20-22** in New Paltz, New York. Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program at the State University of New York at New Paltz, the conference will feature speakers and workshops on a variety of topics ranging from "Mothers and Daughters in Literature" to "The Black Woman: Special Mother-Daughter Issues," "The Hispanic Woman: Special Mother-Daughter Issues," and "Coming Out to Your Mother and/or Daughter." Registration fee is based on income and ranges from \$7.50 to \$25. For further information, write Mothers & Daughters Conference, Continuing Education, Grimm House, SUNY New Paltz, New York 12562, or call Nancy Schniedewind, coordinator, or Sue Gambill, program assistant, at (914) 257-2273.

school teachers are women, only 7 per cent of the nation's high school principals are women (according to a survey just released by the National Association of Secondary School Principals). This is a decline from 10 per cent in 1965.

- women hold .2 per cent of top jobs in 1300 U.S. companies (about the same percentage as five years ago) according to a recent survey by *Fortune* magazine.

- out of 441 occupations listed in the Census Classification System, the majority of working women are found in only 20. The National Commission on Working Women (1211 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036) will focus on the needs of the 80 per cent of women in the workforce in low-paying jobs.

- of the 12 major construction and manufacturing trades which represent 65 per cent of all apprentices, women make up .9 per cent (report by Rj Associates, 1018 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22209).

There has been *some* good news. Studies also indicate that:

- more than 460 colleges now offer athletic scholarships to women, seven times as many as were offered in 1974 (*PTA Today*, May 1978).

- of professional degrees awarded in 1975-76, women received 16.2 per cent of the total in medicine (compared with 8.5 per cent in 1969-70). Dentistry, veterinary medicine and law also showed increases as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The first report appeared in the *Spokeswoman*, August 15, 1978; the other statistics appeared in recent issues of *WEECN* (Women's Educational Equity Communications Network).

## Tucker Collection Assembles Black Materials

The William Tucker Collection has been established at the North Carolina Central University, Durham, North Carolina, to assemble original materials by Black authors and illustrators.

The collection contains manuscripts, correspondence and/or statements by Elton Fax, Tom Feelings, Nikki Giovanni, Lorenz Graham, Eloise Greenfield and Louise Meriwether, among others.

The collection is open to librarians



and teachers; readers interested in visiting the collection should write to Annette L. Phinazee, Dean, School of Library Science, North Carolina Central University, Durham, N.C. 27702. (Contributions—either originals or copies—to the collection are of course welcome; please write to Ms. Phinazee if you have relevant materials.)

## ERA Alert

Last October, when CIBC published a special lesson plan on the Equal Rights Amendment, there was national concern over whether or not Congress would approve an extension for the passage of ERA. We were relieved, of course, when the extension passed, and we have received favorable comments about the usefulness of the lesson plan. But following the Congressional action, the drive for ERA ratification has lost some of its urgency, while in fact there have been setbacks.

In the past month the senate in Illinois (the only northern industrial state that has not already ratified ERA) defeated an attempt to require simple majority approval of the ERA ratification in that state; Montana took the first step toward becoming the fifth state to rescind previous approval of the ERA; and the Oklahoma house speaker announced that he would refrain from putting the ERA to a floor vote this session because it was likely to fail.

In light of recent events, we urge teachers and librarians to redouble their efforts to raise the consciousness of students and through them their parents about the threatened status of ERA. The CIBC lesson plan mentioned above is designed for middle grades but may be adapted for other age groups. It consists of lesson plans for four class periods, an ERA Fact Sheet, a special Information Sheet for Students, and suggestions for student follow-up actions.

## CIBC on the Road

A joint action project has resulted from a CIBC presentation to the Modern Language Association's Children's Culture Session (CCS) last December 30 in New York. The topic was ageism in children's books, and a lively discussion ensued on teachers

of children's literature taking a leadership role in the movement to affect change in children's books. As a step to action, CCS and CIBC will survey the content of children's literature courses to determine how much attention is being given to the problem of stereotypes. Interested teachers are asked to write Tom Moylan, English Dept., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1500 University Dr., Waukesha, Wisc. 53186, or to CIBC.

Also in December, a presentation on the changes CIBC has observed in children's books over the past ten years was made at the request of the New York City School Library Association by Dr. Banfield and Dr. Albert V. Schwartz at the *New York Times* Building. The presentation elicited so much enthusiasm that it will be continued at the group's spring meeting March 24.

"Stereotypes in Children's Books—Harmful to Whom?" was the theme of a presentation by CIBC President Beryle Banfield, January 9 at the New Jersey chapter of Concerned Persons for Adoption. Most of the parents at the meeting had recently adopted children from Asian nations, and Dr. Banfield cautioned against the tendency to separate children from their Asian culture in favor of a strictly Euro-American culture. A cooperative program between the Concerned Persons for Adoption and CIBC was proposed to identify materials that parents can use to celebrate and reinforce their children's Asian heritage.

During the week of January 15-20, Dr. Schwartz conducted workshops for media directors and teachers in five suburbs of Minneapolis, including Moorehead, for a federally sponsored project on sexism and racism in education.

February activities for Dr. Banfield

included a workshop February 2-3 on multi-cultural education for the Albuquerque Public School System and a keynote address on "Multicultural Education: Myth or Reality" for the Delta Sorority in Albuquerque.

On February 8, Dr. Robert Moore gave a presentation on racism and sexism in social studies materials to the social studies textbook selection committee of New Albany, Indiana. February 14, Dr. Moore addressed the project directors of the Women's Educational Equity Action Program meeting in Washington, D.C. on the need for guidelines to avoid sexism and racism in the development of print and A-V materials.

On February 28, Dr. Banfield was the keynote speaker at a Staff Development Conference on Reading and Language from an Urban Perspective, sponsored by the East Oak Cliff Sub-District of the Dallas Independent School District. Her topic was "The Social, Historical and Political Role of the Language of Black People."

During March, Dr. Banfield spoke on "Racism and Sexism in Curriculum Materials: How to Detect Them and How to Combat Them" for the Division of Equal Opportunity of the Indiana State Department of Education. On March 17, she was again the keynote speaker at a conference sponsored by Teachers Center Inc., New Haven, Conn., discussing "Is Little Black Sambo Really Dead?"

On March 9 CIBC representatives Ruth Charnes and Brad Chambers made a presentation on handicapped stereotypes to the McGraw-Hill Book Company Editorial Managers Committee. They joined Dr. Frieda Zames, president of Disabled in Action (DIA), in a discussion with the editors about how to prepare guidelines on the treatment of disabled people in McGraw-Hill materials.

## Sexism in Award Winners

A recently completed project on sex stereotyping in education includes interesting statistics on sexism in award-winning children's books. The study by Dr. Patricia Campbell notes the following:

	Featured Females	Featured Males
Caldecott Medal winners	10%	90%
Newbery Award winners	25	75

Instructional units based on the study are available. For further information, contact Dr. Campbell at P.O. Box 218, Red Bank, New Jersey 07701.



## TV Still Discriminates— On Screen and Off

Minorities and women continue to be poorly cast and underrepresented both on the television screen and behind it, a new U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report reveals.

The study, "Window Dressing on the Set: An Update," looks at 1977 employment data for 40 major market commercial and public television stations, prime-time network dramatic offerings for 1975-77, and network news programs broadcast in 1977, and compares them with data for 1969-74. The earlier data were published by the Commission 17 months ago (see *Bulletin*, Vol. 8, No. 8, pg. 18).

The study also contrasts employment patterns at ABC, CBS, and NBC headquarters with those of network-owned local television and radio stations.

### Principal findings include:

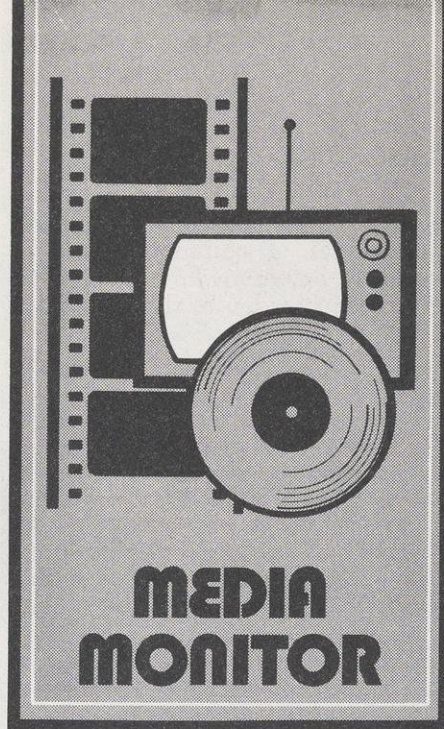
—In the 40 stations, there have been no significant increases in employment of women or minorities. White males continue to dominate the decision-making process. In 1977, they constituted 64.9 per cent of all officials and managers. White females were 21.3 per cent; Black males, 5.2 per cent; Black females, 4.4 per cent; Hispanic males, 1.7 per cent; Hispanic females, 0.8 per cent. Other minorities were 1.7 per cent.

—White males constitute 62.2 per cent of the officials and managers in network-owned stations and 75.6 per cent of the officials and managers at network headquarters.

—In dramatic programs, women and minorities are given a disproportionately high number of immature, demeaning and comical roles. Minorities are seen more as service workers and students. The stereotyping is greatest during family hour.

—Women comprise only 27.7 per cent of the prime-time dramatic characters, although they constitute 51.2 per cent of the U.S. population. Among the ten most common types of occupational roles they portray, not one is a well-paying professional or managerial occupation.

—Despite some increases, minorities and women continue to be underrepresented as network television news correspondents. The percentage of minority female correspondents *decreased*. A sampling



of the content of 15 network news programs showed no minority newsmakers appearing as "experts," and female "experts" appeared only as authorities on women's issues.

## Films about Aging

In the lesson plan on ageist stereotypes appearing elsewhere in this *Bulletin*, reference is made to two films. Since we had not previously reviewed them, we asked the Grey Panther Media Watch to provide readers with their evaluations. These follow.

**Shopping Bag Lady;** 16mm, color, 21 minutes; 1975; \$295 purchase, \$25 rental three days; Learning Corp. of America, 1350 6th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.

While "shopping bag ladies" are a grimly increasing phenomenon in a city like New York, they nevertheless represent an extreme condition. For this reason, some may question this film as an introduction for young people to the facts of ageism. Moreover, the older people in the film are portrayed in essentially negative ways, and the solution given—a very negative solution—is the "old age home." What makes the film useful for a high school classroom is the interaction depicted between a teenager and two older people. A relationship that begins with hostility is transformed into one that is warm and caring. In that respect the film

gives a positive message which teenagers will especially relate to. We suggest that when presenting the *Shopping Bag Lady*, the discussion leader view it before presentation and then interrupt the actual showing to briefly point out the stereotypes. An opportunity for student responses and full discussion can follow the completed showing. [Grey Panther Media Watch Collective]

**Peege;** 16mm, color, 28 minutes; 1973; \$395 purchase, \$40 rental one day; Phoenix Films, 470 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10016.

A family's Christmas visit to a dying grandmother in a nursing home is the setting for flashbacks that depict scenes of an earlier and happier relationship. Only one of the grandsons in the family of five shows the grandmother any understanding and warmth. The rest of the family is unable to cope and clearly resents the burdens posed by the elderly woman's blindness and failing mental capacities.

The film has difficulties of its own. It is very white and middle class, perhaps upper middle class; who but a privileged few can afford a private room in a luxurious nursing home? The film is also dated. Noticeably absent are modern therapy procedures to reverse the grandmother's immobility and isolation. Instead we are presented—as in *Shopping Bag Lady* reviewed above—with an extreme condition of old age. The film thus reinforces, rather than counteracts, old-fashioned stereotypes. The comparison with *Shopping Bag Lady* goes further: this film, too, is redeemed by the interaction of an older with a younger person, and students of high school age may readily identify with the grandson and feel compassion for the older woman. In the hands of a skilled discussion leader, *Peege* can be used to advantage. [Grey Panther Media Watch Collective]

## Film on Race Relations

**A Minor Altercation;** color, 30 minutes; \$395 purchase, \$45 rental; produced by The Filmmakers and distributed by Tricontinental Film Center, 333 6th Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10014 or P.O. Box 4430, Berkeley, Cal. 94704.

The Filmmakers, a young bi-racial group, have produced a superior film





*A scene from "A Minor Altercation," which explores the reactions of a Black and a white family to a school crisis.*

that achieves exactly what it was designed to do—stimulate discussion which focuses on the feelings, attitudes, perceptions and fears about race that underlie open racial conflict in school situations.

The open-ended film deals with an altercation between two high school girls—one Black, one white. Debbie, a fifteen-year-old Black girl, has recently been transferred to the school. She has also been switched from college prep courses to a business curriculum without her consent. Included in this curriculum is a computer course. Paula, a fifteen-year-old white student, is in business education and is anxious to take the computer course for which she had signed up the year before. She has not been admitted to the course. When she learns that Debbie has been admitted even though she had not signed up for it, Paula immediately assumes that this is because Debbie is Black. A locker room confrontation between the two girls leads to a fist fight and both girls are suspended. From this point on the film explores the reactions of both Black and white families to the situation. In doing so, it touches on many issues, such as the differing perceptions of Blacks and whites toward treatment of Blacks and the attitudes of school personnel toward parents.

The excellent discussion guide which accompanies the film provides suggestions for planning sessions that involve participants in role playing; it also suggests facilitating problem-solving activities. Antici-

pated difficulties are also identified and suggestions for handling them are provided. The discussion leader is also given helpful background information on key issues such as the differences in the degree of discrimination experienced by Blacks and by white ethnic groups; hints on dealing with misconceptions concerning affirmative action and reverse discrimination. Also provided are suggestions for follow-up activities and a brief but valuable resource list.

This film is highly recommended for use by *any* group interested in developing an understanding of racial tensions and conflicts. [Beryle Banfield]

### About Women's History

**The American Woman: Portraits of Courage;** written by Anne Grant and Gaby Monet; 16mm, color, 53 minutes; junior high - adult; \$695 purchase, \$51 rental; McGraw-Hill Films, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020.

This is an excellent introductory film to use for a group beginning to consider the role of women in U.S. history. That is, it is an excellent film if the person showing it is prepared to discuss the film's few goofs in short segments about Harriet Tubman and about the views of young Black women today.

Narrated by Patricia Neal, the cast includes a number of well-known movie stars. There is inspired camera use

of old historical photos blended with the well-written and well-acted portions. The "portraits" include Abigail Adams, Deborah Sampson, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Belva Lockwood, Amelia Earhart and Margaret Sanger, in addition to Harriet Tubman and a nice bit about Mother Jones. Other women are included briefly.

It's almost all enjoyable and interesting. The film's flaws include a young Black woman, at the start of the film, complaining about woman's role being restricted to a sheltered life—just the opposite of the real-life experience and complaints of Black women. This scene is sure to cause hostile guffaws among Black viewers. Another scene—of Harriet Tubman running through a snow-covered forest—brought the house down when shown for this review. Tubman is wearing heels, a white frilled petticoat under an elegant outfit, and carrying a purse as she daintily runs. If these points are discussed with viewers, the film's positive strengths make it well worth ordering. The film guide may be useful for a senior high school class or for undergraduates just starting to study Women's History.

### Film on Disability

**Even Love Is Not Enough: Children with Handicaps;** a series of four sets, each with five color filmstrips plus records or cassettes; price \$230/series or \$65/set; Parents' Magazine Films, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

This is a series of filmstrips dealing with mental, emotional, physical, learning and behavioral disabilities. Designed as a general introduction to disability, the films are, however, so general that they fail to provide enough information to be useful or really meaningful. In addition, the filmstrips about physical disabilities did not include any information about children with visual or auditory problems. Instead, this portion of the series dealt only with motor disabilities and made much of the distinction between congenital, acquired and "subtle motor handicaps" without dealing with more complicated issues.

I would not recommend this series and would suggest that those looking for a general introduction to disabilities look elsewhere. [Paula Wolff]



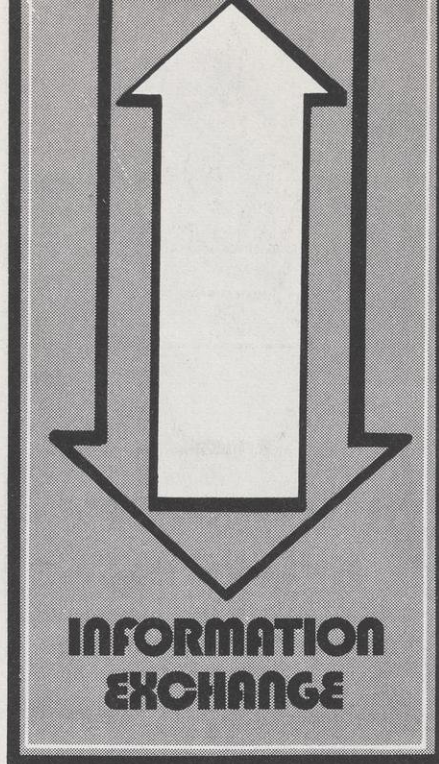
*Clearinghouse for Civil Rights Research* has resumed publication. This quarterly presents syntheses of recent social science research with policy implications relating to **minority groups**. A recent double issue examines racism in IQ and aptitude tests. The next issue will focus on "desegregation, resegregation." Subscriptions are \$8 a year. Write Center for National Policy Review, Catholic University Law School, Washington, D.C. 20064.

The International **Black Arts Museum** has produced a handsome 1979 calendar featuring striking examples of modern and traditional African art and artifacts. Birthdays of famous Africans and African Americans are indicated as are the major holidays and festivals observed by various groups in the U.S. \$4. per calendar plus 30¢ postage; 10¢ postage for each additional calendar. Order from International Black Arts Museum, 909 Brown Ave., Evanston, Ill. 60202.

*Confronting Racism and Sexism: A Practical Handbook* contains a rationale for integrating personal and social change through education; a set of activities to heighten awareness of personal and institutional **racism and sexism** for educators; ten curriculum units on racism and sexism for grades K-12 and bibliography. This 340-page sourcebook is \$5. from Commonground Press, 155 Plains Rd., New Paltz, N.Y. 12561.

Women Make Movies has just issued a catalog of new releases. It lists a variety of films related to **feminist** concerns including "Being Prisoner," which looks at the problems faced by incarcerated women; "The Chicago Maternity Center Story," which deals with women's struggle for good health care; and "Cat, A Woman Who Fought Back," about a young woman boxer. For a catalog, write the group at 257 West 19th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

The Asian American Bilingual Center has prepared a series of bilingual storybooks as part of a social studies curriculum. The inexpensively produced books (English/Chinese, English/Filipino) are available free to



teachers who agree to participate in a pilot test of these materials. The titles are also available for \$1. each. A teacher's guide (\$19.50) and several charts (50¢ each) are also available. For further information write Linda Wing, Asian American Bilingual Center, 2168 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Cal. 94704.

"Index/Directory of Women's Media" lists periodicals, publishers, news services, writers groups, courses, bookstores, individuals and other related resources. Also included is an annotated index that covers two years (1977-78) of *Media Report to Women*. The 81-page sourcebook is \$8. from The Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 3306 Ross Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

The self-adhesive small (1½ x 1⅛ inch) blue and silver foil label shown below can be used effectively on correspondence, notices, press releases, etc. to increase public awareness about the issue of **access for the**



**disabled**. The labels are \$30. per 1,000 (5,000 minimum) from Seton Name Plate Corp., 217 Boulevard, New Haven, Conn. 06505. The company also produces bumper stickers to promote barrier-free design, embossed braille identification plates and related graphics. Send for a descriptive price list.

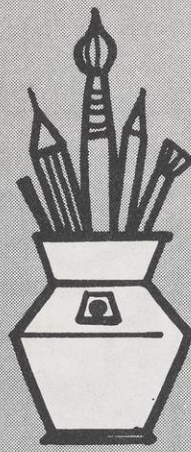
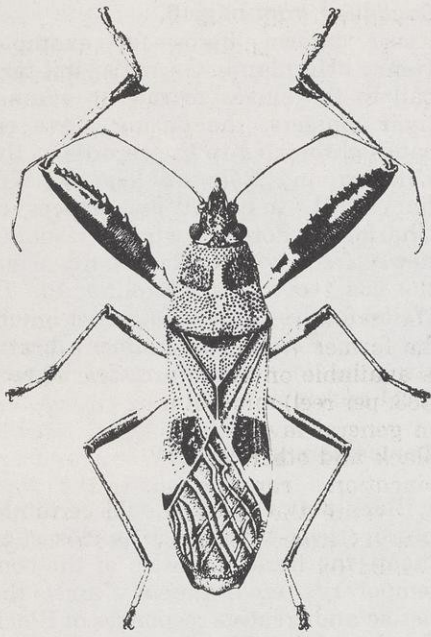
The **women and law** collection of the former Women's History Library is available on microfilm. The 40-reel (\$33. per reel) microfilm has materials on general law, politics, employment, Black and other Third World women, education, rape/prison/prostitution, etc. Write the Women's History Research Center, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, Cal. 94708.

*Science Career Exploration for Women* by Walter S. Smith and Kala M. Stroup is aimed at science teachers, counselors and others who work with young **women** in high school and college. It is designed to provide tools to assist young women in exploring careers in science and it contains background information, resources and activity modules. The 77-page booklet is available for \$2.50 from the National Science Teachers Association, 1742 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

"Books for Today's Children" is an annotated bibliography of **non-sexist** picture books. It includes books about working mothers, single parents, adoption, Third World themes, etc. Books are rated on a scale from highly recommended to not recommended. The 33-page booklet is hole-punched for a loose leaf notebook. Compiled by Jeanne Bracken and Sharon Wigutloff, the bibliography is available for \$1.50 from The Feminist Press, Box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568.

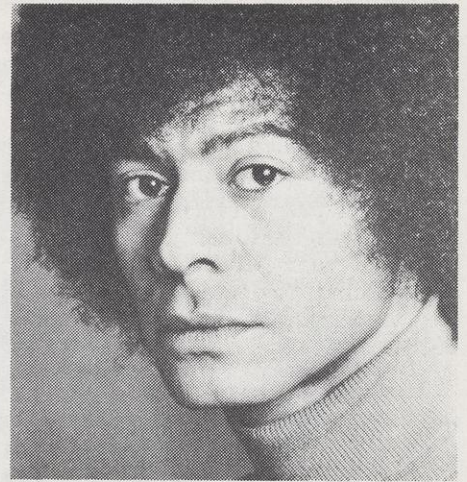
"Guidelines for Nonsexist Language in APA [American Psychological Association] Journals" provides ways to avoid sexist terminology and gives a bibliography on sexism in language. To obtain single copies of the guidelines, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Publication Manual, Change Sheet 2, American Psychological Association, 1200 Seventeenth St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.



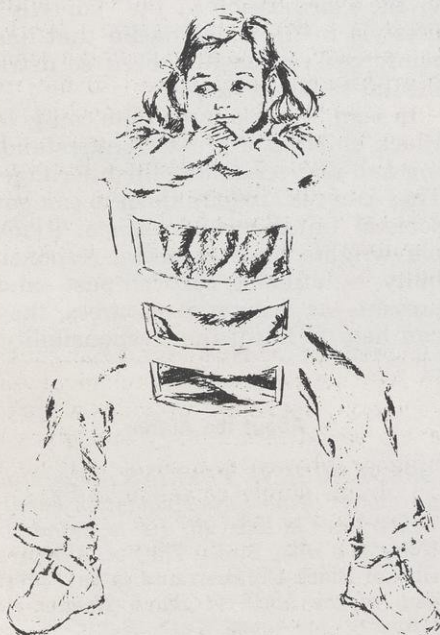


## ILLUSTRATOR'S SHOWCASE

This department brings the work of minority illustrators to the attention of art directors and book and magazine editors. Artists are invited to submit their portfolios for consideration.



**Dawn McKenzie** (work at left), has a B.F.A. from the University of Connecticut. Her work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the New Muse and appeared in various publications. Ms. McKenzie can be reached at 135 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11238; tel. (212) 857-4813.



**Charles Carr** (work at right) graduated from the High School of Art and Design and was awarded a scholarship to the Art Students League. He also studied in Paris and at the New School. Mr. Carr can be reached at 285 Hawthorne St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11225; tel. (212) 771-7875.





Dear CIBC:

In regard to my article about the Children's Book Group ("Sexism in Story-Telling Hour Spurs Consciousness-Raising Group," Vol. 9, No. 7), I would like to clarify the Introduction. It seemed to implicate Portland librarians for promoting stereotypes at story hour. This was certainly not our intention. In fact, area librarians were very co-operative as we did our research and supportive of our goals. Many of the libraries have wide selections of non-biased books.

Unfortunately, throughout society, children are exposed to some ideas that others deem stereotyped. Though it is deplorable I wish to emphasize our belief that single incidents do not alone create stereotyped attitudes. It is important that adults know these can be turned into learning experiences. In addition, they must continue to share with children ideas which build positive images of all people. These will not only help minimize the effects of biases they encounter but also enable children to internalize humanistic values.

Susan Alperin  
Portland, Oreg.

Dear Mr. Brad Chambers:

As a non-tall person, I am appalled that it has taken a small Vermont publisher (Paul S. Eriksson, publisher of *Growing Up Small, A Handbook for Short People* by Kate Gilbert Phifer) to bring the problem of heightism to the attention of the American public. You in New York City with all your tall buildings probably think height is the number one standard for judging everything and every person.

I have read all your standards for judging children's literature and can find nothing—repeat, nothing—about the poison of heightism. It's *high* time you had your consciousness *lowered* a little.

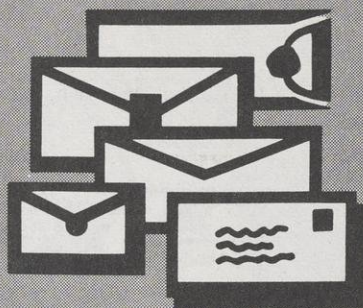
I'll bet you're six feet tall and proud of it. (I've only seen your photo.) And I hope you can stoop to the challenge of publishing this letter. Rebuke a wise person and he or she will thank you for it.

Think about it.

Stoop and find some new friends.

Get your head out of the clouds of prejudice and reconsider your supposedly lofty attitudes.

Betty Harmon  
Kenosha, Wisc.



## LETTERS

We welcome letters for publication in the *Bulletin*, and unless advised to the contrary, we assume that all letters to the CIBC or *Bulletin* may be published.—Editors.

Dear CIBC:

The issue on Title IX (Vol. 9, No. 8) is excellent.

—I've distributed copies of "Women May Run . . ." to guidance counselors, teachers, administrators.

—I will urge teachers to use "A Guide to Exploring Title IX with Students." The information sheet will be particularly helpful.

I often marvel at people who marvel at the fact that so few students register Title IX complaints. How many students *know* about Title IX? How can they demand their rights if they don't know what their rights are? It is our job as educators (and parents) to inform young people of their rights—*after* we inform ourselves, that is. . . .

Adelaide Sugarman  
Title IX Coordinator  
Wm. Penn School District  
Yeadon, Penn.

**Correction:** In a recent *Bulletin* (Vol. 9, No. 7, page 20) mention was made of the 1978 Coretta Scott King Award being given to author Eloise Greenfield for *African Dream*. We neglected to note that the award was jointly given to illustrator Carole Byard for her work on that title.

*Continued from page 6*

lesser known heroes—for example, Henry Highland Garnet's militant call to the slaves to rise up against their masters; the daring slave escapes chronicled in the records of the Underground Railroad kept by William Still; the rich experiences of Charlotte Forten when teaching newly freed slaves at Port Royal off the coast of South Carolina; Ida B. Wells' fearless crusade against lynching; and Fannie Lou Hamer's heroic struggles to overcome racial bigotry in Mississippi.

### Contemporary Realities

Black playwrights should certainly not overlook that which is closest to them—the harsh realities of the contemporary environment and the heroic and creative responses of Black people today. The impact of being bused into unfriendly areas; the effect of unemployment and low wages on the fabric of family life; the paucity of medical care; the cramped housing; the tragedies of arson—all can provide themes to develop in Black children a desire to take action to bring about constructive social change.

Equally, the warm, supportive relationships that develop among community residents who may be poor in purse but not in spirit and who struggle against oppression should be celebrated. The productive Black middle class, often neglected, should also be represented, and the achievements of our creative people recognized. These depictions should serve as an antidote to the glorification of the "superfly" lifestyle in the mass media that has reinforced racism and been so detrimental to Black youth.

In sum, Black playwrights can give Black children a greater understanding and appreciation of their heritage. They can also inspire them to combat societal injustice and racism. Black playwrights have a special responsibility; by utilizing our rich past—and present—as dramatic resources, they can help to fulfill that responsibility.

□

### About the Author

*USENI EUGENE PERKINS* is executive director of Better Boys Foundation Family Center in Chicago, Ill. He is author of *Home Is a Dirty Street: The Social Oppression of Black Children* and is past president of the MidWest Black Theater Alliance.



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## WHAT IS THE COUNCIL ON INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN?

CIBC is a non-profit organization founded by writers, librarians, teachers and parents in 1966. It promotes anti-racist and anti-sexist children's literature and teaching materials in the following ways: 1) by publishing the *Bulletin*, which regularly analyzes children's books and other learning materials for human and anti-human messages; 2) by operating the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, which publishes reference books, monographs, lesson plans and audio-visual material designed to develop pluralism in schools and in society; 3) by conducting workshops on racism and sexism for librarians, teachers and parents; and 4) by initiating programs that bring to public attention the unrecognized talents of Third World writers and artists. For more information about CIBC and a free catalog of its Resource Center publications, write us at 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023.

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