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Interracial Books for Children

Vol. 1, No. 2-3

Published quarterly by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc.

Winter 1967

Author's and Publishers' Views Revealed in Excerpts from August '66 Powell Committee Hearings

In the Words of Some Publishers . . .

*From Statements Made
At the Hearings*

OUR POSITION with respect to both classroom and library materials is as follows:

1) American Negroes and other minorities should be represented in textbooks, both in content and illustration, on the same basis as other groups in the United States. . . .

2) In subjects such as history and social studies, there should be forthright discussions of the economic, political, social, and moral questions relating to intergroup relations.

3) We will not publish an alternate version of any book or film in order to sell it to schools which do not wish to use integrated materials.

*Robert W. Locke, Senior Vice
President, McGraw-Hill Book Co.*

In addition, we have specifically directed a large portion of our new products toward motivation of the disadvantaged person, so typically urban and a member of a minority group.

*Ross D. Sackett,
Executive Vice President,
Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.*

Our present textbooks devote explicit treatment to civil rights and minority-group problems, and they are used, as earlier books were, in every state in the Union. Furthermore, it is the present policy of the company to illustrate those textbooks in which pictures of people are integral to the work with photographs and drawings that represent people of varying races. Accordingly, we have not made a practice of issuing separate editions of the same work.

*Cameron S. Moseley, Vice President,
Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.*

We do not publish one version of a textbook for the North and

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Negroes and the Truth Gap

*Statement of Dorothy Sterling before House Committee
On Education and Labor Hearings on Treatment of
Minority Groups in Texts and Library Books*

AS A WRITER OF HALF A DOZEN children's books on Negro history and life, I am convinced that Negroes in America are being as badly hurt by a "truth gap" as they are by a "job gap" or "housing gap." In the past decade I have observed this "truth gap" repeatedly in my visits to schools as a "guest discussion leader."

Zenith Books: New Series Worth Noting

SINCE 1965 Doubleday, under the imprint Zenith Books, has been publishing a series of books about minority groups. They are written at a sixth-grade reading level, with content closely paralleling many sixth-to-twelfth-grade social studies and English courses. According to the publisher's statement of purpose, they are "designed to encourage the slow, the bored, the inhibited student toward greater participation in class. At the same time, their use will give all students a more balanced picture of American growth and development based on the achievements of America's minority citizens."

Team of Writers

Each book is written by a historian-reading specialist team and is under the general editorial direction of John Hope Franklin, Professor of History, University of Chicago, and Shelby Umans, specialist in reading instruction, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Zenith Books are available in two editions: clothbound, at \$2.95; paperback, at \$1.45.

Council Announces

CONTEST

For Negro Writers

Please see back page

A characteristic encounter occurred following publication of my book "Forever Free, The Story of the Emancipation Proclamation," when a panel of boys and girls interviewed me on a radio program. In the course of our discussion they informed me 1) that Negroes were the only people in history to gain their freedom without any effort on their own part; 2) that United States slaves had been well-treated and happy; and 3) that the Reconstruction period following the Civil War was a "tragic era" of Negro misrule during which rapacious scalawags and carpetbaggers despoiled the South.

These were white boys and girls from a large New York City high school. They had been chosen to speak on the panel because they were the best history students in their class. They knew nothing of the 200,000 Negro soldiers and sailors who had fought for the Union during the Civil War. They had never heard of slave revolts or of the thousands of men and women who committed suicide rather than accept bondage. Their distorted picture of the Reconstruction era included nothing of the many solid achievements of the Reconstruction governments, of the hundreds of able Negroes who served as state legislators, United States Congressmen and Senators.

Although I was disappointed in these young "history" students, I was not surprised. I had seen the textbooks that my own children brought home from a suburban New York

(Continued on page 4)

What Other People Are Thinking . . .

INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN has just come—an excellent idea. Phyllis Whitney's idea is so important now. . . .

One thing I am sure we must keep remembering. Books come from life and evolve in response to need and interest. Nancy Larrick's article ("The All-White World of Children's Books," *Saturday Review*, September 11, 1965) was really not quite fair. She was well answered in *The Horn Book*.

Every publishing season sees more and more interracial books for all age levels—in both fiction and non-fiction. And more come as the cultural pattern changes. I'm not sure anyone would know exactly what today's ethnic balance is. And it would be different tomorrow. There are many fine new books about Negro children, in which the story and characters are basically important because they are human beings, regardless of color. This is an important criterion.

Public discussion and federal spending are having a deep effect upon all publishing, and the racial and social content of books.

The impact of the Head Start program is very great both on the nature of the contents of many new books and the vast number of children now having books to see and read.

All kinds of books are reaching all kinds of children. Title II is bringing thousands of books to schools and libraries which had few hitherto. We must realize this and go along with it.

Ruth Tooze,
Chapel Hill, N. C.

We are in dire need of good children's books. I understand the Council on Interracial Books for Children hopes to get books distributed to

children who don't have the opportunity to get hold of and read good books that they can relate to. . . . The problem is that most books talk to a way of life that these kids can't possibly identify with.

**Teacher in a
nursery school in Georgia**

I was happy to receive the first issue of INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN. Read every word and found it all interesting—a good searching-out of the problems involved. Calling attention is one of the main jobs, I should think. . . . I've sent for a subscription for me, and also for my daughter, who is raising three small children and is especially interested in these books.

Phyllis A. Whitney,
Staten Island, N. Y.

I was delighted to receive the sample copy of your new publication, INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, and I wish you every success with this worthwhile venture. It is an area in which there is a tremendous need for good books and, as Mrs. Karl stated in your lead article, a total lack of acceptable manuscripts. Hopefully, your publication will stimulate editors and, more important, authors to channel their efforts in this direction. I am sending separately copies of two of our 1965 publications.

Jean E. Reynolds,
Senior Editor Children's Books,
Prentice-Hall, Inc.

I am very much concerned about the problem of interracial books for children. I applaud, particularly, Miss Karl's editorial.

Perhaps the most important audience today is an adult one: parents, teachers, ministers, counsellors, etc.

I appreciate the direct approach of your publication. I always wonder, however, if it is not effective also to *demonstrate* the principle of "open vision." I realize that this is somewhat more difficult and certainly less dramatic than the direct view. But I think it is worth a try.

For example, is it possible to print excerpts from exemplary materials without undue comment on the values? I should be interested to know how this worked.

Esther M. Jackson,
Visiting Professor,
Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C.

Congratulations and best wishes for the success of this new project. Indeed, we feel there is a need for a group that will promote and point up the need for books that can especially meet the needs for the non-white and urban poor children.

Sophie C. Silverberg,
Manager of Library Relations,
Rand McNally & Co.

This Institute is serving 500 adults referred by the Illinois Employment Agency for training in basic vocational skills and in reading and writing. We are in the process of developing a library of material on Negro life appropriate for a group of people with limited educational experience. Please send us a catalogue of publications.

Midway Technical Institute,
Inc., Chicago, Ill.

A Council on Interracial Books for Children—what a splendid project—especially if it evolves into promoting the *writing* of "real" stories about "real" people in "real" situations—instead of the contrived and sometimes catchpenny ones being ground out by authors who are not really "with" their subject because they cannot, naturally, write from *inside*, looking out at the big, wide, and perplexing white world around them, with all its ugly, searing tensions.

Oddly enough, in mid-August, when I lectured at the unique all-juvenile Writers' Workshop in Children's Literature at the Colorado Woman's College in Denver, I brought up the situation Phyllis Whitney pointed up in her letter to the Council: *Where are the non-white writers who should be writing the books so needed at this time?*

At the Colorado seminar there was not a single Negro enrolled. (And to my knowledge, none had applied for the fellowships—not even from the immediate area.) There were no nonwhites at the conference in New Hampshire where I subsequently lectured. And it has been several terms since I've had a nonwhite student even scout my workshop in Writing for Children and Teen-Agers at New York University. And yet, some years ago a Negro librarian commuted from Baltimore to my class in New York

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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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STANLEY FAULKNER Treasurer
RUTH SHIKES Managing Editor

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50 cents for this double issue

Response of Publishers To Council's Request for Lists of Interracial Books

Toward the end of 1966, the Council wrote to all publishers of children's books to find out what titles had appeared in the past two years that the publishers themselves regarded as "likely to fill the special needs of nonwhite, urban poor children." The response to this letter has us bewildered.

Some publishers responded quickly and sent us trade books that appear to be the kind we are looking for. Others sent us books that obviously had nothing to do with our request. Several that have expressed a friendly interest in the Council—and that have published good interracial books—have not yet sent anything. One house sent us visual aids and teachers' manuals. And one seems to have a computer that stutters: every week or two we get masses of material, always in duplicate, sometimes in triplicate. It is all interesting, but very little of it has anything to do with our request.

By January 1 we had received more than 100 books from 32 publishers, and as we go to press, they are still coming. At this point, we don't know how to give a report that makes sense, so we are saying nothing except that the books are being read by committees that include teachers and children's librarians.

Now a request: **INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN** would like to know what our readers think about specific new books. If you have read any books that you think are especially good—or bad—write us about them, and *give your reasons*.

Along with the fight to desegregate the schools, we must desegregate the minds of the American people. If we merely succeed in desegregating the school buildings, we may very well find that we have won the battle and lost the war. Integration begins the day after the minds of the American people are desegregated.

From "Black Man's Burden,"
by John O. Killens

→ This is a picture of my son, James Nickson. Is there any way of getting a story published about this youngster?

His little years have been very exciting. Please send me as many copies as possible of **INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**.
Katherine Nickson, New York, N. Y.

Needed: Reevaluation of a "Classic"

By ISABELLE SUHL

Librarian, Elisabeth Irwin High School, New York, N. Y.

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1966, *Life* published an article on the filming of "The Story of Doctor Dolittle," starring Rex Harrison. The article was accompanied by an elaborate pull-out cover showing Rex Harrison in two scenes from the forthcoming film, which is to be a musical and which has a \$15-million budget. On November 20, Lippincott ran a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times Book Review* of "The Story of Doctor Dolittle," by Hugh Lofting, "now in its 52nd printing, because children today love it as much as you did when you were young." At the bottom of the advertisement was this statement: "Doctor Dolittle is now being made into a major picture by Twentieth Century-Fox, starring Rex Harrison as Doctor Dolittle."

So begins apparently a major advertising campaign to tie in the sale of the book with the movie. But how many people who once read this children's "classic," first published in 1920, remember that it has one of the most chauvinistic incidents in all of children's literature, accompanied by equally stereotyped and caricaturish pictures drawn by the author? For those who have forgotten, the incident occurs when

Doctor Dolittle, his traveling companion, Polynesia the parrot, and other friends are captured in Africa and imprisoned by an African chief. Polynesia, being a parrot, can slip through the bars—and does so. Returning to Doctor Dolittle, she tells him she has discovered a way for him to escape. She had found Prince Bumpo, the chief's son, mourning in the garden because he had fallen in love with a white princess and couldn't woo her since he was black. Doctor Dolittle has a lotion that will turn Prince Bumpo white, temporarily. Without telling him that the lotion will "solve" his problem for only a time, Doctor Dolittle bribes the prince into setting them free. With his now white skin, the prince goes off in pursuit of his princess.

There are twelve Doctor Dolittle books in all, and all are still in print. The second one, "The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle," won the Newbery Medal in 1923. They have all been translated into many languages.

Shouldn't they all be reread and reevaluated in the light of modern times and understandings? How can a new generation of children be protected from their chauvinism and racism?



Negroes and the Truth Gap

(Continued from page 1)

school. I recall two illustrations in particular from a social studies text. One showed slave children frolicking in the cotton fields. The other was a picture of a "slave cabin"—a rose-covered clapboard bungalow that closely resembled a cottage in a modern housing development!

Ignorance about the role of the Negro in American history is not limited to white children. I have spoken in schools in Harlem and the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, as well as to NAACP adult groups, and have found, far too frequently, the same lack of knowledge. Only last year a graduate of a Negro college in the South, now studying in New York for his Ph.D., talked to me glibly of carpetbaggers and scalawags but did not know that two Negroes, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce, had represented Mississippi in the United States Senate during Reconstruction.

Distorted History

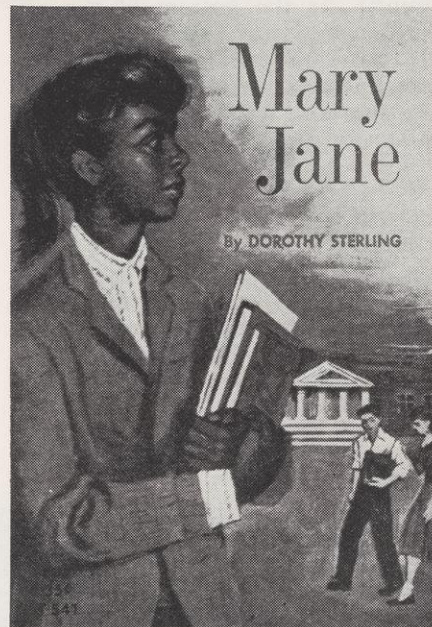
Obviously, much of this ignorance can be traced to the American history taught in our schools, which systematically suppresses and distorts the truth, whether by intent or default. Several studies have recently been made on the treatment of Negroes in history textbooks. The best I have seen is "The Negro in American History Textbooks," prepared by a panel of historians from the University of California, and published by the California State Department of Education. They found that the Negro was virtually omitted from the books they examined and that the texts "reflected views on racial and sectional themes that have been rejected or drastically modified by the best of current historical scholarship."

But I can speak only of my own experiences as a writer. My books are what are known as "trade books," bought by schools for supplementary reading rather than as classroom texts. All but one have been published by Doubleday & Company.

I first became interested in Negro history when I was looking for a dramatic subject for a book for girls and found it in Harriet Tubman, leader of the Underground Railroad. My biography of her, "Freedom Train," was published in 1954. It had a modest acceptance then and

has been selling better in recent years.

Another book, "Captain of the Planter, The Story of Robert Smalls," was a more ambitious undertaking. It required over a year of original research because, remarkably, there were no full-length biographies of Smalls to draw on. Smalls was a slave who stole a Confederate gunboat and sailed it past the guns of Fort Sumter to turn it over to the Union fleet. Hailed as a war hero—with his photograph in *Harpers Weekly*—he was awarded prize money and freedom by a special act of Congress. Until the war's end, he fought for the Union as captain of the *Planter*, the ship he had liberated.



"Mary Jane," by Dorothy Sterling, the story of a Negro girl's first year in an integrated school

Afterward he became a leader of the Republican Party in South Carolina and was sent to Congress five times. His last elective office was as a delegate to the South Carolina constitutional convention in 1895, which disfranchised the Negroes of the state.

Smalls . . . is a genuine hero figure who should appeal to children. Yet I have never seen a line about Robert Smalls in a school history text. My biography of him was published in 1958, when the South was busy saying "NEVER!" to the Supreme Court and Northern schools weren't concerned with Negroes either. Although reviewers seemed to find it well-written and researched, only 11,255 copies of it have been sold in 8½ years. In the first six months of

1966, when the Education Act provided funds for school libraries, it sold 926 copies. During the same six months, a book I wrote on mosses, ferns, and mushrooms sold more than 3,000 copies. Can we permit our children to grow up knowing more about mushrooms than they do about their fellow Americans?

Moved by newspaper accounts of the Negro children who were braving mobs to enter integrated schools, I wrote a book called "Tender Warriors," based on interviews with a number of these courageous youngsters and illustrated with fine photographs by Myron Ehrenberg. It was published in 1958 by Hill & Wang and was, I believe, the first book on school integration. Even today, any Negro, adult or younger, could find in this book added reasons for conscious and purposeful pride in his group. I say "could" because the book was a commercial failure and has been out of print for some time. I would guess that very few copies ever reached school or public libraries.

My next book was "Mary Jane," a fictional account of a Negro girl's first year in an integrated school. Doubleday published this in 1959, with twinges of trepidation. One of their salesmen told me at the time that he wouldn't dare enter a bookstore in Chicago with a book that had a picture of a Negro on its jacket. I do not know if any Chicago stores are displaying it now, but "Mary Jane" has been selling well in recent years. Total hard-cover sales now amount to 32,737 copies, with 3,752 copies sold since January 1, 1966. In addition, it has been brought out as a paperback, which is marketed through schools by Scholastic Book Services, and there have been six foreign editions.

Two Recent Books

My most recent books on Negro history are "Forever Free, The Story of the Emancipation Proclamation" and "Lift Every Voice, The Lives of W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary Church Terrell, Booker T. Washington, James Weldon Johnson." Published in 1963, "Forever Free" has sold 22,112 copies. "Lift Every Voice" has sold 12,079 copies since its publication in the fall of 1965. . . .

I am pleased at the praise my books have been receiving. But until more and better books in the same category are published, they will remain, like a handful of others,

token books. There are hardly enough titles to fill a five-foot shelf when what we need is a fifty-foot shelf.

How can we bring the truth about Negro history and life to our children? We must tell it as it was and as it is, without sugar-coating. The facts are available. Historians like John Hope Franklin, Benjamin Quarles, Rayford Logan, C. Vann Woodward, Kenneth Stampp, have supplied us with some, and there is more, a great deal more, to be uncovered. . . .

Crash Program Needed

There should be a crash program to revise school textbooks so that they conform with the best modern historiography. As a taxpayer, I object to federal money being spent for books which perpetuate outmoded racist doctrines. And there should be a crash program to re-educate teachers and school librarians. We have special teacher-training courses and summer institutes in the "new math" and the "new science." Why not in the "new history"—which isn't new at all, but which comes much closer to being true history?

There is some danger of turning out formula books—books written to order that lack literary quality. But it is a minor one. After all, not all the books published each season are deathless prose.

The great importance of the kind of books we are talking about is that they will be widely read, not only by Negroes, but by white children and adults as well. When the role of the black man in our history is better understood, white America will discover that it, too, has reason to be proud of the Negroes' partnership in our nation. Only then will we be able to resolve the contradiction that Thurgood Marshall once identified by saying that if America is a melting pot and the Negro hasn't melted, it's because he hasn't been allowed to get into the pot.

* * *

Since writing my statement, I have had some correspondence with a librarian in Brooklyn. I would like to quote from her letter:

"A local poverty program in the ghetto in which I work gave the boys and girls an assignment: bring in the biographies of two famous Puerto Ricans and one famous Negro. We checked the "Reading and Study Guide of the World Book Encyclopedia," which lists the names of

Book Trade Journal Comments on Hearings

From an Editorial in Publishers' Weekly, September 19, 1966

. . . The impression created at the hearings was that these new books have not, as yet, made much of an impact in the educational marketplace. Their adoption and use so far have been spotty, publishers said, while civil rights spokesmen asserted that integrated books have not yet reached the level of the neighborhood school. Here the problem is partially the old one that has plagued educational publishers for years: In response to educators' demands, they create new books (which in itself is a time-consuming process), but acceptance of the books is long delayed by cumbersome adoption procedures and by the woefully small percentage of school budgets that is allocated for books.

But specifically with respect to racially integrated materials, the

famous people by nationality—and Puerto Ricans are not listed. We also checked the "World Book" for the biography of Harriet Tubman—and it is not there."

She further explained, "The 'Reading and Study Guide' is a separate volume. It lists among other things the names of prominent persons broken down by nationality (a frequent homework question kids are given in school). Puerto Ricans are not listed here, and since I work in a neighborhood with a heavy Puerto Rican concentration and where community groups and schools are stressing ethnic history, we find this omission not only hampering, we find it downright discriminatory."

The "World Book Encyclopedia" that she consulted was copyrighted in 1964 and is published by Field Enterprises Educational Corporation. Although a biography of Harriet Tubman is not included, there are 38 other Negro biographies.

D. S.

problems may run deeper. The Powell hearings really didn't get down to the related matter of dual editions, one for the North and one for the South (are publishers to be believed when they say they don't publish them anymore?); the textbooks whose "integration" is phony (the "change-the-color-plate books" or the "color-me-brown books"); and the disproportionate textbook purchasing power wielded by the state-adoption states of the South. Though textbook publishing executives may recognize that the big cities are "where the action is," their sales departments are not likely to be happy if this means giving offense to those who write those big state contracts in the South. Such market considerations can result in editorial caution that is inappropriate in the year 1966. . . .

"Escape by Night"— Why Not a Reprint?

During the 1940's and '50's, books with interracial themes sometimes had a short life. It might be worth culling these "prematurely pro-integration" books to find some that have gone out of print and could be reprinted today.

Underground Railroad

One which has recently been called to the Council's attention is "Escape by Night" (Winston), a story of the Underground Railroad, by Helen Wells. Unlike other fictional accounts, which portray the Railroad as a white benevolent society that lent a helping hand to ignorant slaves, "Escape" includes courageous, intelligent Negroes and even one Negro stationmaster in its cast of characters. It is a fast-moving adventure story with a particular appeal for boys. Its illustrations, too, are attractive.

However, if "Escape by Night" is reprinted, Miss Wells might want to heed one suggestion that has been made to the Council: tone down the dialect, which in one or two places has a stereotyped ring.

And here is a further suggestion, to our readers. If you know of any out-of-print interracial book that in your opinion should be reprinted, please write to us about it.

Information, Please

The Council on Interracial Books for Children would like to have a list of all college courses that are being offered in Children's Literature and in Writing for Children. If you have such a list—or part of one—please send it to us, together with addresses of the colleges and names of the teachers.

Office, Anyone?

The Council has temporary office space through the generosity of our Treasurer and Attorney, Stanley Faulkner; but the Council needs a permanent home. It should be large enough to house a reference library of interracial books for children.

We will heartily welcome any offers of free space. Suggestions about how to get a rent-free office will also be welcome—particularly if they are accompanied by an offer of the time and energy necessary to do the legwork to locate the space. All those working for the Council are overemployed at their regular work. They do not need more projects to execute nearly so much as they need more people to execute projects.

How To Achieve Ethnic Balance at Book Fairs

From Randolph C. Sailer, of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, comes an idea that we pass along:

When a Book Fair is to be presented in your local school, be sure it offers books that include Negroes.

Find out what agency supplies books for your local Fair; then contact this agency long in advance of the event. It often takes a long time to get books from publishers. Insist, then insist again, that certain specific titles be displayed. Unless you do this, the agency that arranges the Book Fair may want to put their efforts into moving the stock they already have on hand—and this stock may not be at all balanced from an ethnic point of view.

Publishers Speak

(Continued from page 1)
another version for the South or any other section of the country. . . . We believe that the children of minority groups must find in their textbooks situations familiar in their everyday experience and people with whom they can identify.

Lee C. Deighton, Chairman,
The Macmillan Co.

Houghton Mifflin Company subscribes to the principle that textbooks should present a fair and balanced treatment of all groups—racial, religious, and national—in American society.

George Manuel Fenollosa,
Vice Pres. Houghton Mifflin Co.

John Day Produces Excellent Visual Aids For Use in Classroom

WE RECENTLY asked publishers to send us interracial trade books for possible review. The John Day Co. sent us, along with several trade books, a set of visual-aids materials for classroom use entitled *Urban Education Studies*. This material is so attractive we urge all elementary-school teachers to write to John Day Co., 62 West 45th Street, New York, New York, for full information.

The set consists of eight volumes of very large—and very fine—realistic photographs of urban life. Negro children, Negro families, ghetto scenes, incidents of interracial friendships and human warmth are prominent in these evocative pictures.

Each photograph, reproduced on heavy cardboard, is large enough to be displayed on an easel or stool or desk, so that discussion groups of ten or perhaps fifteen children can easily see it. The titles of the volumes, which are arranged by grade levels, give an idea of the range of themes covered: "Growing Is," "A Family Is," "A Neighbor Is," "A



Photograph by Reginald Jackson,
From "Teacher's Guide To Accompany the
Albums of Urban Education Studies"

City Is," "Work Is," "Opportunity Is," "Recreation Is," "Renewal Is."

With each set of pictures are detailed aids to the teacher who uses the pictures to stimulate the development of language skills and learning. And although the materials are intended primarily for urban children, one teacher of integrated classes in a country school, Mrs. Cynthia Imbrie, of New Jersey, tells us that they can have great value for rural children, too.

Recent Evaluation of High School Texts

"The Negro in Modern American History Textbooks" is the title of an evaluation of thirteen new textbooks that were available for use in junior and senior high schools in the fall of 1966. Included in this booklet is a list of six important points which almost all of these texts fail to make about the role of the Negro in American history.

The author of "The Negro in Modern American History Textbooks" is Irving Sloan, and the booklet is published by the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, 716 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60611. Price: \$1.00 a single copy, \$10.00 for 25 copies.

Harry Golden, Ill

As this issue was being prepared, word came that Harry Golden was seriously ill. The members of the Council join a very large number of other Americans in wishing for the early recovery of this distinguished foe of racism. He has aided the Council's work by sponsoring it and by appearing as guest of honor at a fund-raising party. Mr. Golden also helped launch *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN* by contributing an article, "Segregated Textbooks," to its first issue, and one of the last things he did before going in the hospital was to send the Council a check to help us expand our work.

We are sure Harry Golden would be pleased if some of his admirers sent him good wishes in the form of checks made out to the Council. If we do receive such checks, we will let Mr. Golden know at once.

Request for Paperback

In the first issue of *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN*, Eve Merriam praised "Bronzeville Boys and Girls," a book of poems for children, written by Gwendolyn Brooks. Miss Merriam, on the basis of her experience in reading poetry to children, believes this book ought to be available in paperback. Somehow this point got left out of Volume I, Number I; but it's in now. Harper (or some other publisher), please take note: There is a request for a paperback edition of "Bronzeville Boys and Girls!"

What Kind of Interracial Books? What Do You Think?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE, *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN* plans to publish comments from our readers on several books and articles that touch directly or indirectly on the reading problems of nonwhite children. Below are quotations from these publications. Read these brief quotations and, if you can, the publications themselves. After that, give your own answer to the question "What kind of books should children read?"

I am more and more convinced that it matters very little what a child reads so long as he enjoys it. It is the reading habit that counts.

Orville Prescott, quoted by George W. Norvell in "What Boys and Girls Like To Read" (Silver Burdett Co., 1958)

How can we account for the curious fact that books which have delighted and instructed thousands are often regarded by teachers as bad, whereas books that have bored generations of school children and turned them against reading are thought of as good? . . . Such views (about books) . . . derive from an abstract literary standard that treats books as ends in themselves, quite apart from any immediate interest or usefulness these books may have for the reader. . . . Suppose we try a different standard, and define as good that book which gives the student a meaningful emotional experience.

John Rouse in "In Defense of Trash," Media and Methods, October 1966

It is interesting to speculate how long interest will last in some of the "trash" which Rouse defends. Stories about hot rodders, gasoline attendants, and airline hostesses are rather short-lived even if the interest in them is currently great. Reading such books adds up to nothing. They become a form of busy work . . . pacifiers for the relief of teachers. . . .

Remember . . . that some of the "trash" have such drawbacks as vocabulary difficulty or inadequacy, structural involvements, abrupt shifts in the identity of the narrator, and irregular placing of events—all disadvantages which make for hard reading for the adolescent to whom

Rouse recommends "the trash." English teachers continue teaching the classics because, unlike the transitory "trash" with its superficial appeal, the classics have something of lasting value to say to adolescents and adults in any generation.

Oscar H. Fidell in "The Classics Need No Defense," Media and Methods, November 1966

. . . Within the range of morally acceptable materials, what (children) enjoy at a particular stage of their development is good for them at that particular time.

George W. Norvell in "What Boys and Girls Like To Read"

It was found that the so-called reluctant reader and the slow learner were not so reluctant or as slow as certain teachers previously thought. Provided with books that interested them, they were no longer reluctant or slow. Over and over again, these students concluded that they learned more by reading something they liked. . . . It was found that the near-illiterates in many classrooms were now reading whole books albeit that many of these selections would not be considered meritorious from a literary point of view. Nevertheless, they were reading and enjoying this new experience.

Daniel N. Fader in "Hooked on Books" (Berkley Publishing Corp., 1966)

When assessing new reading material for children, recall that in the past the authorities have labeled as dangerous or trashy: Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Treasure Island,

the Waverly novels, Dickens in toto, and dozens of others startlingly new works of genius—they didn't conform to accepted canons. The same will, of course, happen again. . . .

The most serious barrier to change is the mental attitude of the arbiters of the field.

George W. Norvell in "What Boys and Girls Like To Read"

Contrived writing can stunt the growth of the natural reader by destroying his faith in the power of books. . . . Children whose privileges have been few should especially have the best. . . . If no children's books were published for the next ten years, there would still be enough good ones, in great enough variety, written in the last one hundred years to satisfy boys and girls during the short span of time that they are reading children's books.

Ruth Hill Viguers in "A Pinch of This and a Dash of That," The Horn Book Magazine, February 1966

Though our library has more War Stories than any other kind, they are not the most popular of our books. That distinction is reserved for another category, comprising about 50 titles, or 10% of the list. These are books exclusively by or about Negroes, and they are read many times more often than the War Stories which are their nearest competitors. This phenomenon has several possible explanations—the Negro population at the Maxey School, which fluctuates between 40 and 60%; the climate of racial concern in the United States—but its probable explanation seems to me to owe at least as much to the quality of books by authors like James Baldwin and Richard Wright, our most popular writers, and John Howard Griffin, author of our most popular book, "Black Like Me." The books these men write each contain a cry from the heart that black and white alike can hear and respond to. We have tried to discriminate our readers and we have failed. Books by and about Negroes are read equally at the Maxey School by white and Negro children alike.

Daniel N. Fader in "Hooked on Books"

Question

Does anyone know of a summer Writers Conference that offers one or more scholarships for Negro writers?

Does anyone know of a Writers Conference that makes a special effort in some other way to attract nonwhite and Spanish-surname students?

We will pass along to our readers any news we receive in response to these questions.

What Other People Are Thinking...

(Continued from page 2)

—for a whole year. She has had six or seven books published now and is writing steadily, both of her own people and on other subjects.

The Negro students I have had at NYU in the eight years I've taught there have often chosen to write about white families and their problems—and these stories were as superficial and contrived as some of the "integrated" tales presented by white authors today.

By all means, if this council can encourage the qualified writers to produce the material so urgently needed to achieve an integrated society, I'm doubly for it—and here is my subscription and a starter contribution to the cause.

**Lee Wyndham,
Morristown, N. J.**

I thought the first issue of *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN*, which I got this morning, was swell. It's about time!

**Jeanne Bendick,
Rye, N. Y.**

I liked the Newsletter you sent me. It is good that at long last books about Negroes are being accepted by publishers, and I agree with Phyllis Whitney that more Negroes should be writing them. I asked a Negro teacher's aide in a public school why there weren't more Negroes writing, and she said, "Well, you know, Negroes feel kind of shy. They aren't used to writing and sending stuff out." I think she is right, and no doubt some Negroes beginning to write would feel rebuffed and discouraged at the first rejection slip. It is hard not to feel this way after years of experience.

Books about Negroes, if they are to have any impact, must be not only important but readable. And that means they must not *all* be about the problem of the Negro. There should be some like Sidney Taylor's "All of a Kind Family," which is about a Jewish family and tells about how much fun it is to be Jewish. I think a writer back in 1905 would not have felt like writing about what fun it was to be Jewish, because it wasn't fun at all. It is only now that Jews feel free enough to write the kind of book that all kinds of kids will read. We want children to like each other, and for this we must free them from guilt.

**Eleanor Clymer,
Katonah, N. Y.**

Thank you for sending me a copy of the first issue of your quarterly. I found it very much to the point and especially liked the articles by Phyllis Whitney and Jean Karl.

When I write a book about a Negro child, I never know if I'm doing it right, or if I'm doing more harm than good. Writing about poverty is also frustrating (I don't believe all books about Negroes should have a background of poverty, because this merely helps to perpetuate the stereotype), because even though I am on more familiar ground here, there is so much about poverty that is not fit reading matter for children and some things that must be approached gradually because they make adults flinch, and these books must pass through the hands of adults before they reach the children. Books for older children are getting more and more realistic, and I hope this will also happen to books for younger children. One must beware that realism doesn't end in despair, which children in poverty have enough of already, and yet realistic stories must have realistic solutions.

If there is any bottleneck in the way of more books about nonwhite children and the urban poor, I believe it is the writers. In my experience, editors have welcomed such books with open arms, beginning before federal aid and before the war on poverty. It is good to see that more of these books are published every year, and it is heartening that such an organization as yours has been formed.

**Joan M. Lexau,
New York, N. Y.**

INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN is excellent. I enjoyed reading it very much.

**David Scott, Peace
Education Division, American
Friends Service Committee**

Mrs. Clara Jackson, who teaches courses in children's literature and library work here, would like to use *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN* in her classes.

**Ruth Rehfus, Department of
Library Science, Kent State
University, Kent, Ohio**

Wouldn't it be a good thing if the next lists of interracial books for children could have a title that would indicate the books were not for an all-white world of children but rather for children of the world?

I do think that there has been a good deal of change but not enough on the racial and social content of texts and illustrations in books for children. I think now the problem is how to reach more nonwhite and urban poor children. This is one of the problems that we are trying to solve with some of the Scholastic books in paperbacks that might be put in a packet to use for migrant schools and for the other projects relating to OEO, so that these could be replaced easily but might be used in many ways. For instance, each night a child can take home a book and bring it back the next day. Naturally, we would love to have them keep books for a while, but at least this gives them some books at home and a change in books.

**Amy Hostler, College of
Education, Arizona State
University, Tempe, Ariz.**

Congratulations on the *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN* committee. It is a splendid idea.

You may be interested to know that my last two books have a non-white hero. One is "Rakoto and the Drongo Bird," a picture book which Lothrop Lee just did. The other is "The Boy Who Woke Up in Madagascar," which Putnam is publishing in the spring of 1967.

**Robin McKown,
New York, N. Y.**

We are currently collecting children's books dealing with Indians with the intention of working up a bibliography of "acceptable" material. . . .

There is a crying need for books that update the American Indians, to make them contemporary instead of historical.

**Mary G. Payne, Director,
Public Education, Association on
American Indian Affairs, Inc.,
New York, N. Y.**

The Interracial Council Bulletin is very good.

**Rose Wyler,
New York, N. Y.**

I was greatly interested in your project and would like to say it is most worthwhile.

**Diane Lewis, Assistant Manager,
Books for Young Readers,
Doubleday & Co., Inc.**

Library of Congress Publishes

List of Children's Books 1965

"Children's Books 1965, A List of Books for Pre-School through Junior High School Age," compiled by Virginia Haviland, Head of the Children's Book Section, Library of Congress, and Louis B. Watt, Chief of the Educational Material Center, Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, published by The Library of Congress in 1966 lists 207 titles. One of our readers looked over this list and recognized nine titles that include contemporary Negro or Puerto Ri-

Antioch College Reports On Special Program

In 1963, Antioch College began to offer a college education to a group of what it called "disadvantaged" students. Three years later, Dixon Bush, Director of the Antioch Program for Interracial Education, summarized the differences that had become apparent between the so-called disadvantaged students and others. First among the differences was this: "They do not believe in the printed word. . . . Books of many kinds are for them partially unreal."

Possibly the attitude of these students toward books would have been different if, from earliest childhood, they had seen books in which there were characters with whom they could identify—books in which Negroes were given their full place in the world. It is hard to think books are real if the only ones you see seem to say you do not really count.

Any Writers for Writers Workshops?

Following the 1965 riots in Los Angeles, Budd Schulberg started a Writers Workshop in the Watts headquarters of the Westminister Neighborhood Association, a social agency. After a slow start, the project took on a very exciting life.

The fascinating story of this project among teen-age Watts residents was told by Mr. Schulberg in a *New York Times* article that was reprinted in the September-October *Authors Guild Bulletin*, and it gave us an idea:

Why shouldn't writers—and editors—who specialize in books for children follow Budd Schulberg's example and set up workshops in juvenile writing in some of the ghetto areas of America's major cities?

can characters in text or illustration. An additional four titles dealt with Negro or Puerto Rican history, and four titles were concerned with Africa.

We would like to know what readers of Interracial Books for Children think about the value of the Interracial books included in this list. We would also be interested in hearing from readers if they believe that important books that were published in 1965 have been omitted.

Wanted: A Secretary!

The Council on Interracial Books for Children, which has functioned so far as an organization of volunteers, sorely needs a full-time executive secretary.

The duties would include editing our quarterly, *INTER-RACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN*, launching and executing projects, managing the office, and raising the funds necessary to carry on the Council's work.

Anyone interested should write to the Council, giving qualifications and stating salary.

Our Aims Restated

We believe books can do much to create the will and enlarge the capacity to achieve an integrated society. Our aim is therefore to encourage the writing, production, and effective distribution of books to fill the needs of nonwhite and urban poor children. Through such books, we think all American children will gain a fuller awareness and a keener understanding of one another.

The Council is developing a program in several steps. The first calls for publication of this quarterly bulletin devoted to what, for lack of a better term, we call interracial books for children.

As a second step we are announcing prizes for the best manuscripts submitted by Negro writers.

Soon we hope to offer guidance to authors whose work has merit but who might benefit from professional help.

We also look forward to the time when exhibitors will take intercultural books into areas where they are most needed in order to rouse the interest of teachers, parents and children.

If you, too, believe in the Council's goals, please indicate your support by sending a check to help us continue and expand our work.

Illustration by Frank Cieciorka from "Negroes in American History: A Freedom Primer," by Bobbi and Frank Cieciorka. This 54-page book may be obtained from the publisher: The Student Voice, Inc., 360 Nelson Street, S. W., Atlanta, Georgia. Price: \$1.50 each; more than 10 copies, \$1.00 each.



Comment: Culled from Other Publications

From a Child Specialist

I speak from the vantage point of one who is concerned with and responsible for the physical and mental health of children: the Negro writer has a mandate to strengthen and preserve young minds.

To the young black mind, the Negro writer must provide a sense of worthiness, pride in heritage, and a knowledge of the contributions of his people to society.

To the young white mind, the Negro writer must lift the veil of myths and unrealities which if allowed to persist, imprisons one in a cell with gilded bars. . . .

Dr. Calvin Sinnette, Lecturer in Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, (speaking at the Conference on the Negro Writer's Vision of America, April 25, 1965)

A Heritage, Not a Bayonet

Throw out the rule book of education. Create a National Board of Education dedicated to the task of stopping the maiming of black children's minds—and give them a heritage instead of a bayonet. And stop the systematic production of racist-minded white children.

Floyd B. McKissick, Chairman, Congress of Racial Equality (to the Senate Committee on Urban Affairs, December 8, 1966)

Spanish-Language Children

An interesting Title I experiment is taking place in West Las Vegas, in grades one through five, where Spanish is being taught to pupils whose first language is Spanish.

"The children's Spanish is not very good, though," says the teacher, Humberto Gurule. "We want the children to be truly bilingual, but how can we expect them to become literate in English if they are illiterate in their own language?"

Although Mr. Gurule uses an audio-lingual approach in his teaching, he also puts a great deal of stress on proper grammatical usage and vocabulary building. Knowing that young children can become easily bored with grammar and word drill, a visitor to Mr. Gurule's class is pleasantly surprised at the hand-

waving, eagerness-to-answer atmosphere in the class.

Ray Leger, the youthful-looking bilingual superintendent, credits this enthusiasm not only to Mr. Gurule's patient teaching methods but also to the delight the children take in being able to use their own language at least one period a day. "It is helping many of our children see for the first time that their own tongue may be used as a medium of instruction," he says.

Other teachers have also commented on the favorable side effects of the elementary Spanish classes. The children who have been taking Spanish seem to find it easier than before to learn other subjects where the instruction is given in English.

Byron Fielding, NEA Journal, September, 1966

It would be interesting to know what books these children read in Spanish and what additional Spanish-language books their teacher would like to have if he could get them.—Editor.

"Disadvantaged" Children

One-third of the 3,700,000 children enrolled in the nation's fifteen largest school systems are culturally disadvantaged, one of every three. The prognosis for 1970 is one of every two.

John M. Brewer, Principal, Miller School, Pittsburgh, Pa. (at the Annual Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 30, 1964)

Actual Negro Experiences

One area in which education is doing an appallingly poor job and where suitable material is difficult to find is that phase of history which deals with the background of current racial problems. . . . It seems imperative . . . that students be given a chance to study books which emphasize the actual experiences of Negroes.

Frank Updike, Chairman, Department of English, Burlington High School, Burlington, N. J. (in Media and Methods, November 1966)

Mexican-American Dropouts

In 1960 more than half of the Spanish-surname men and almost half of the women over 14 years old and older had not received an education beyond the eighth grade. The Mexican boy or girl in California will almost certainly become a school dropout.

J. Wilson McKenney (in California Teachers Association Journal, March, 1965)

Freeing the White

The Negro alone cannot win this fight that transcends the "civil rights struggle." White and Negro must fight together for the right of human beings to make mistakes and to aspire to human goals. Negroes will not break out of the barriers of the ghetto unless whites transcend the barriers of their own minds, for the ghetto is to the Negro a reflection of the ghetto in which the white lives imprisoned.

The poetic irony of American race relations is that the rejected Negro must somehow also find the strength to free the privileged white.

Kenneth B. Clark, New York Times, April 4, 1965

Reforming the English Curriculum

It is a false and misrepresented world picture that we present to our adolescents through the literature that is selected and taught in secondary school classrooms across the nation. . . .

As we teach of the nation's westward movement, as we trace the development of a sectional literature, what has happened to that large body of writing devoted to a condemnation of slavery? The question is not answered by the condescending polemics of white writers but with the righteously indignant verses, stories, and plays of those miraculously schooled objects of persecution, Negro writers. Where is this portion of the American student's heritage? We have a few rarely anthologized, weak verses of Phillis Wheatley and some of the joking rhymes of Paul Laurence Dunbar, but the statements of pain rendered in dialect by Dunbar are missing.

The pathetic plea, in excellent epis-
tolary style, of Benjamin Banneker
to Thomas Jefferson, for recognition
of his race, is nowhere to be found
in high school anthologies.

Examining our own Twentieth
Century, where are the verses of
Campbell, the writings of Braith-
waite, Corrothers, Grimke, the essays
of Chestnutt, poems of Zora Hurs-
ton, Pulitzer Prize-winner Gwen-
dolyn Brooks, James Weldon John-
son, Countee Cullen? Novels, stories,
poems, and plays that speak realis-
tically of the Negro working class
and middle class, such as Walter
White's "Flight," Richard Wright's
"Black Boy," Langston Hughes' "Simple
Speaks His Mind," Lorraine
Hansberry's "Raisin in the Sun,"
Lofton Mitchell's "Bimshire," James
Baldwin's "Go Tell It on the Moun-
tain," are relatively unknown by
high school students, yet these are
the same students who have some
acquaintance with Mrs. Stowe's
"Uncle Tom's Cabin" and Margaret
Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind."

**Pearl Thomas, English teacher,
Francis Lewis High School,
Queens, N. Y. (in Changing
Education, Fall 1966)**

And What in 1967?

In 1960, 1 of 10 Americans was
nonwhite. Today, 1 of 9 is nonwhite.
Today, 1 of 7 American children
under 14 is nonwhite; of infants un-
der a year, 1 in 6 is nonwhite.

**Theodore H. White, in "The
Making of a President" (1964)**

Indian Youth

The Indian youth is not effectively
identified with his Indian heritage,
nor can he identify with the hostile
white world around him.

**Rev. John F. Bryde, S. J.,
Superintendent, Holy Rosary
Indian Mission,
Pine Ridge, N. D. (at a confer-
ence of the Association on
American Indian Affairs,
November, 1966)**

Language Skills

Language skills depend to a large
extent upon a knowledge of the de-
tails, the manners, the objects, the
folkways, the psychological patterns
of a given environment.

**Ralph Ellison in "The Writers
Experience," a lecture
presented at the Library of
Congress, 1964, and reprinted
in "Shadow and Act"
(Random House)**

Difficult To Con Kids

Increasingly—but oh so gingerly—
brown faces are being put into books
for children. A ghetto child, some
publishers now see, does not quite
identify with Dick and Jane and
their milky suburbia. And white
middle-class children, some publish-
ers now agree, should read about
children of other colors and other
environments than their own.

What most publishers and most
authors still forget, however, is that
it is difficult to con kids. You can
block their capacities (see John
Holt's "Why Children Fail"), but
you can't, for example, make them
believe that you know more than
they do about the way to live.

**Nat Hentoff, Book Week,
April 24, 1966**

Opportunities for Identification

Teaching materials that have
meaning to Negro children also must
be developed. Books, illustrations,
audio-visual materials, songs and
stories that describe a middle-class,
all-white world with trees, flowers,
pets, zoos, parks, toys, and comfort-
able living conditions are incom-
prehensible to many Negro young-
sters. Not only are the scenes and
situations foreign to him, but they
continue and reinforce his under-
evaluation of self, intimidate and
disorient him. He must be given
materials that allow opportunities
for identification and recognition.

**Whitney M. Young, Jr.,
Executive Director, National
Urban League, in "To Be
Equal," 1965**

Nobody Listening

The American Negro has made
not one but several good beginnings,
and he has seldom refrained from
speaking his mind. The trouble was
that nobody was listening. If this
can now be changed, it may be pos-
sible to consolidate in the hearts of
his listeners some of the things they
have accepted in their minds.

**Arna Bontemps, Book Week,
Fall Children's Issue
October 31, 1965**

For the Spanish Surnamed

Until someone writes the remark-
able biography of California's Cesar
Chavez or Arizona's Graciella Oliva-
rez or Colorado's Corky Gonzalez or
New Mexico's Tom Robles or Texas'
Henry Munoz, we can, at least, find
food for thought, as both teachers
and socially concerned activists, in
this small paperback—that might
have started its title as "Mexicanos"
or "Latinos" or "Hispanos" or "Chi-
canos." Not just the youth but the
generations of Spanish-surnamed in
the United States have usually been
forgotten, even when they have
reached the cross-roads by any of
these names, derogatory or aristo-
cratic in their usage and vocal in-
flexions.

**Herrick S. Roth in Changing
Education, Fall 1966 (in a
review of "Mexican-American
Youth," by Celia S. Heller)**

Contagious

Becoming interested in books is
a little like catching the measles; a
youngster has to be exposed to them
first.

**New York Times Magazine,
April 11, 1965**

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JOHN O. KILLENS,

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