black history focus

CURA
RESOURCE COLLECTION
The concerted community undertaking to observe Black History Week in the Twin Cities grew out of a need, as visualized by members of the University of Minnesota Afro-American Studies Department in 1972, to promote the celebration of the heritage and culture of Black people. It was their intent to stimulate wide-scale community participation in a series of activities which would have both a visual and psychological impact.

In 1973, William L. Wilson, then director of the Office of Intercultural Programs for the Center of Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota, followed the initial course of action and also conceived the idea of a Black History Focus magazine. It was envisioned as a vehicle to give more exposure to the Black experience and to catalyze more community involvement in this annual commemoration endeavor. The talent and energy of more than 25 local artists, writers, photographers and editors have made this first issue an actuality.

This Black History Focus is really two magazines — different in style and concept — depicting the two past years under one cover. Focus '74 is a pictorial expression of the occurrences during the 1974 Black History Week commemoration, embodied in a literary work which traces some little known thoughts and conditions of Black people in America from the early 1600's to the present. Focus '75 is a documentary presentation of Black History in the Twin Cities this year. It contains articles and photographs by several contributors highlighting the history, ideals, ideas and goals shared by the community.

Through the cooperation of many people, the commemorations have been positive experiences through various modes of expressions such as plays, song recitals, speeches, art exhibits, news features, radio and television talk shows — all entertaining, educational and meaningful. Black History Focus '74 — '75 has attempted to present some of them. We hope they will be an inspiration and incentive to continue to preserve Black history in the Twin Cities and to achieve new heights of awareness.
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"You have to use the past in order to win the future. The future belongs to those who prepare for it today." Those are the words of Robert Gilmore, community worker, as he reflects on the history and culture of Black Americans and gives his views on preparing for the future in "From a Week to a Lifetime" on the following pages. He stresses the importance of creative freedom, the need for hard work and dedication and — perhaps most important — the necessity to prepare Black children to be "responsive and responsible to their own needs as a people." Black History Focus '74 is illustrated with photographs of activities presented in the Twin Cities during Black History Week 1974.
FROM A WEEK TO A LIFETIME
By Robert Gilmore

"If there’s a need for July 4th, or St. Patrick’s Day for the Irish, there’s a need for Black History Week."

—Dr. Charles Wesley

The ability to compose, the ability to create, the ability to understand. Understand! What is there to understand about a man playing music? What is there to understand while listening to music? You listen, dance, and what else is there? What other factors are there to consider other than listening and dancing?

Out of his world the slave made many creative responses to a total attempt to dehumanize and destroy him. From the slavery period came some of the deepest vibrations expressed in folklore, song and dance. Expressed in flights of the spirit and soul, they changed the cultural and social terrain of America.

The story of the Black man is the story of man, a story of slavery and oppression, but also a story of strength and achievement.

The ability to compose comes from an individual effort to strive for perfection. That effort includes years of hard work and dedication, a fight to overcome all obstacles which operate to hold him back and keep him down. During these years Black people have been subjected to murder, rape, whippings, lynchings, and almost every other type of humiliation possible. Why struggle against such great odds, against such a great overall attempt to suppress every free thought and expression? Where do we get the power to survive, the power to live on and on? Why don’t we drown when the water is over our heads? Where does that extra breath come from?

Slaves could not congregate in groups of more than two or three away from the home plantations. They could not beat drums, wear fine clothes or carry weapons. They could not protect their children or their mates. They couldn’t even get married.

In March 1856 a meeting was held in Boston to observe the anniversary of the Boston Massacre of 1770 and, particularly the death of Crispus Attucks, a fugitive slave who was killed by the British in that battle. Dr. John S. Rock, a Boston Black man, was to give an address along with a group of white abolitionists. Rock was a teacher, physician and later became a lawyer. He was one of the most
nignly educated black men of the day. In 186b he was the first Black person to plead before the Supreme Court of the United States. In a speech he said:

White Americans have taken great pains to try to prove that we are cowards. We are often insulted with the assertion that if we had had the courage of the Indians or the white man we would never have submitted to be slaves. The white man tested the Indians' courage when he had his organized armies, his battlegrounds, his places of retreat, with everything to hope for and everything to lose. The position of the African slave has been very different. Seized, a prisoner was unarmed, bound hand and foot, and conveyed to a distant country, among what to him were worse than cannibals: brutally beaten, half starved, closely watched by armed men with no means of knowing their own strength or the strength of their enemies, with no weapons and without a probability of success.

The institution of slavery in America was a system of total social, economic, political and sexual exploitation based on force and violence and an ideology of racism.

The mark of the slave, the creative slave, is very deep in the flesh of every American. America is in large part what it is because of what the slave did in response to what was done to him.

Following is a brief look at the experience of one slave.

Olaudah Equiano was sold into slavery in 1756 and brought to the new world. When he was taken to the coast of his native Africa, his first visions were the sea and the slave ship. The slave ship was riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. After first being astonished, his amazement was replaced with terror. The slave traders' complexions were different. Their long hair was strange, as was their language. As he looked around the ship he saw a multitude of Black people aboard. Expressing dejection and sorrow and many fears, Olaudah then fell motionless to the deck and fainted. When he awakened, the ship was on its way and a group of Black people stood around to see if he was all right. At this point there was no hope of ever returning to his native country or ever seeing the shore again. He became so sick and dejected that he was not able to eat or drink, and the only friend he could think of was Death. There was an hourly schedule for beating those prisoners who did not eat; this was often the case for Olaudah. He wished death would relieve him from all the harsh and unnecessary treatment. Escaping was also in the back of his mind, but so many poor African prisoners had been se-
verely cut for attempting to get away, that he was discouraged from that idea. In 1766 he bought his freedom and went to England and became very active in the anti-slavery movement.

It was slavery and the slave trade which provided the initial thrust to the American economy. George Jackson analyzed the current economic situation this way:

The economic nature of racism is not simply an aside. Built-in physical features exclude Blacks from participation, exclude them forever. These features cannot be changed. It is the relationship that must change. Racism is a fundamental characteristic of capitalism. When the White, self-congratulatory racist complains that the Blacks are uncouth, unlettered; that our areas are rundown, not maintained; that we dress with loud tastelessness (a thing they now also say about their own children) he forgets that he governs. He forgets that he built the schools that are inadequate, that he has abused his responsibility to use taxes paid by Blacks to improve their living conditions, that he manufactured the loud pants and pointed shoes that destroy and deform the feet. If we are not enough like him to suit his tastes it is because he planned it that way. We were never intended to be a part of his world. It is a silly contradiction between the enemy culture and its creation, the subculture. The only way the exploiter can maintain his position is to create differences and maintain deformities.

Slaves were taught to hate themselves and to stand in fear of every white man. Brainwashing sessions were constantly held to make each individual so full of inferior thoughts that self-pride would never enter anyone’s mind.

Slave patrols authorized by state laws policed plantation areas and made searches of slave cabins.

The power of the state, the power of the United States government and all the presidents from Washington to Lincoln stood behind these outrageous injustices. The slave master attitude remains, but the people in positions of strength walk a little more carefully than before. When legislation must be passed - forcefully - time after time, just so that an entire race can live like human beings instead of like animals, it is obvious that it isn’t done in good faith. If this country had adhered to the right principles, everyone would be living on equal terms. Any acts passed through Congress would have been passed for all the people, not just for the Indians, or just for Black people.

When will slavery-time attitudes be done away with for good? Are we living as free Black people in a modern
being looters. Yet our nation’s leaders have robbed and looted the entire world. With legal twisting and manipulation, they have done as they see fit.

How can a Black man who has lived a long, hard life look back on the achievements of his people with any type of satisfaction? How he has survived at all is almost beyond any rational explanation. He has lived in times when Black people couldn’t ride on the city transportation, couldn’t use public accommodations, couldn’t even get a cold drink on a hot day. Worst of all, Black people were not even considered good enough to use the same toilets as whites. If these rules were not followed, a person risked being beaten in the head by a club and being dragged off to jail with his blood flying all over. What kind of people would run a system wherein one person cannot even drink of the same water fountain as another, or wherein people cannot eat in the same public places?

With the forced passage of several civil rights laws, people are now able to live without most of those little problems. Freedom, however, is neither found in a toilet nor at a water fountain. Freedom is found in the hearts of a people who will not tolerate injustice.

Equality — what does it mean to you? Does it even exist? How are we to determine the fullest extent of equality? It is not possible to have a real understanding of the term without a real understanding of the Black presence in America. As our people have become more educated, begun reading more, begun attending more seminars and community meetings, we have become more outspoken in expressing our demands for freedom and equality. We also have begun discovering people with leadership qualities. Black pride is very important in getting our people together. It has gotten thousands of people together for every type of event possible. It is that pride and tons of dedication that are responsible for our existence.

Creativity, too, has been important to Black people. A completely free expressive situation is essential to the creative Black person. Situations in which one must be careful of what one says or does for fear of repercussions are a great hindrance. The Black artist must be able to express ideas straight from the soul.
"Face of Poverty"
by Lucy Smith

No one can communicate to you
The substance of poverty —
Can tell you either the shape
   or the depth
   or the breadth
Of poverty
Until you have lived with her intimately.

No one can guide your fingers
Over the rims of her eye sockets,
Over her hollow cheeks —
Until perhaps one day
In your wife’s once pretty face
You see the lines of poverty;
Until you feel
In her now skinny body,
The protruding bones
The barely covered ribs,
The shrunken breasts of poverty.

Poverty can be a stranger
In a far-off land:
An alien face
Briefly glimpsed in a newsreel,
An empty rice bowl
In a skinny brown hand,
Until one bleak day
You look out the window
And poverty is the squatter
In your own backyard.

Poverty wails in the night for milk,
Not knowing the price of a quart.
It is desperation in your teenager’s face,
Wanting a new evening gown for the Junior Prom,
After going through school in rummage store clothes.
It is a glass of forgetfulness sold over the bar.

And poverty’s voice is a jeer in the night —
“‘You may bring another child
Into the rat race that is your life;
You may cut down on food
To buy contraceptives;
You may see your wife walk alone
Down some back alley route
To a reluctant appointment
With an unsterile knife —
Or you may sleep alone.”
And one morning shaving
You look in the mirror —
And never again will poverty be alien,
For the face of poverty is not over your shoulder,
The face of poverty is your own.
And hearing the break in your wife’s voice
At the end of a bedtime story,

You realize that somewhere along the way
The stock ending in your own story went wrong.
And now you no longer ask
That you and your wife
Will live happily ever after —
But simply that you
And your wife
And your children
Will live.
"Dance of the Abakweta"
by Margaret Danner

Imagine what Mrs. Haessler would say
If she could see the Watussi youth dance
Their well-versed initiation. At first glance
As they bend to an invisible barre
You would know that she had designed their costumes.

For though they were made of pale beige bamboo straw
Their lines were the classic tutu. Nothing varied.
Each was cut short to the thigh and carried
High to a degree of right angles. Nor was there a flaw
In their leotards. Made of leopard skin or the hide

Of a goat, or the Gauguin colored Okapi’s striped coat
They were cut in her reverenced “tradition”.
She would have approved their costumes and positions.
And since neither Iceland nor Africa is too remote
For her vision she would have wanted to form

A “traditional” ballet. Swan Lake, Scheherazade or
(After seeing their incredible leaps)
Les Orientales. Imagine the exotic sweep
Of such a ballet, and from the way the music pours
Over these dancers (this tinkling of bells, talking

Of drums and twanging of tan, sandalwood harps)
From this incomparable music, Mrs. Haessler of Vassar can
Glimpse strains of Tchaikovsky, Chopin
To accompany her undeviatingly sharp
“Traditional” ballet, I am certain that if she could
Tutor these potential proteges as
Quick as Aladdin rubbing his lamp she would.
African man, creator of masks that tell us of joy and rage in his land, released his spirit into dance and other human motion designed to explore all realities within the human being.

The creative Black individual still lives and maintains himself through innovative ideas, expressing himself more deeply and sincerely than many others who are involved in the same areas.

Black artists, poets, and songwriters express more about the Black experience in America than historians. The artists speak the truth. They sing about the facts. They don't lie and misinterpret what has happened. You will find many books, songs and poems, deep in human feeling, that tell of sorrow, love and the desire to define oneself within and beyond one's immediate condition.

Among the cultural expressions and presentations of Black America, the musician has continued to lead the way.
Inner City Blues

"Oh make you wanna holler
The way they do my life
This ain't livin', this ain't livin'.

Inflation, no chance
To increase finance;
Bills pile up sky high,
Send that boy off to die.
Make me wanna holler."

Not only have some of our most creative Black individuals been musicians, but their work provides the only valid frame of reference in which to examine the efforts made by Black novelists, playwrights, actors, filmmakers, painters, sculptors and all others who consider their artistry an extension of Black consciousness. Black music also serves to define particular social attitudes.

"Heritage"
by Countee Cullen

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea
Jungle star or jungle track
Strong bronzed men or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved
Spicy grove cinnamon tree
What is Africa to me?
Frederick Douglass, in one of his great speeches, had this to say:

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. If there is no struggle there is not progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the oceans without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will. Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.

One area of almost unlimited success for Black people has been in the arts. This success has opened other areas of endeavor for Black people to explore. When Black people free their minds, bodies, souls, they put together some of the greatest creations that have ever been assembled. Today we have a higher number of successful writers, musicians, poets, dancers and athletes than ever before.

But in our communities, there are areas where there has been little progress, and we must appeal to our leaders for help. Where are these successful people? Can't they hear our cries?

We have been taught for a long time to be individuals and not consider group needs because European, white Americans always have felt threatened by groups of brothers and sisters together.

In Africa, tribes have advanced as a people by focusing on the abilities of the collective body rather than on the individual. American Black nationalist, Ron Karenga, has borrowed from this life-style in formulating his Seven Principles of Blackness presented on the following pages.
UJIMA (collective work and responsibility)
To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers and sisters problems our problems and solve them together.

KUUMBA (creativity)
To do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and bountiful than when we inherited it.

KUJICHAGULIA (self-determination)
To define ourselves, name ourselves, instead of being spoken for by others.

UMOJA (unity)
To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community and race.

NIA (purpose)
To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

UJAMAA (cooperative economic)
To build and maintain our own stores and shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.

IMANI (faith)
To believe with all our heart in our parents, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

In dealing with these values or principles, our hopes and dreams can be made into realities with help of all the people from the elders to the children.
JJIMA (collective work and responsibility)
To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers and sisters problems our problems and solve them together.

KUUMBA (creativity)
To do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.
KUJICHAGULIA (self-determination)
To define ourselves, name ourselves, instead of being spoken for by others.

UMOJA (unity)
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UJAMAA (cooperative economic)
To build and maintain our own stores and shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.
IMANI (faith)
To believe with all our heart in our parents, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.
"Boys Black"
by Gwendolyn Brooks

Boys Black Boys
Be brave to battle for your breath and bread
Your heads hold clocks that strike the new time of day
Your hearts are
legislating summer weather now
    Cancel Winter

Up, boys. Boys Black. Black Boys
In invade now where you can or can't prevail
Take this
There's fertile ground beneath the pseudo-ice
Take this
sharpen your hatchets. Force into the green

And, boys in all your turnings and your churnings
remember Africa!
You have to call your singing and your bringing
Your pulse, your ultimate booming in
The not-so-narrow temples of your Power —
You have to call all that that is your Poem, Africa.
Although you know
So little of that long leaplanguid land,
Our tiny union
is the dwarfmagnificent
Is the busysimple thing.
You have to use the past in order to win the future. The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.

If we as a people do not prepare our youth to be responsible and responsive to their own needs as a people, somebody else will teach them to be responsible to somebody else’s needs at our expense and to our detriment. It is time to focus our attention on our all-important children. The time ahead will demand of our children unknown effort, unknown discipline, unknown dedication. It will demand from us the willingness to act now to build institutions that will instill in our children the motivation and necessary skills that will be valuable in serving Africa and African people. Again an emphasis for the need of the people to educate their own if they wish to keep their own. When we turn our children over to others we run the risk of losing them forever. “Children are the reward of life.” To neglect our children during their critical early years would be a cultural crime of the highest, because if our children, in their later years, are to be responsible to us, we, in their youth, have to be responsible in educating them.

Voices from within the confines of our colonized areas are the voices of our children. They need as much help as we can give them. They are crying for help! Can’t we hear them talking?

“Who am I? I’m a child that hopes for love and happiness in the future or someday.” “The block I live on looks like a jungle, but instead of having trees and animals on it, there are ugly buildings, big and small.” “I just see my imagination moving, sending me to another world. It is a world where there is only terror, hate and blood.” “When you love a person you feel so shining and your eyes sometimes shine like luminous.”

Today our children are a part of a society in which poverty, sickness and dirt are the basic realities. Prostitution, alcoholism and drug addiction haunt the streets and playgrounds.

Schools have not been of a high enough caliber for our children to advance properly. Many teachers have not been prepared by their background and experiences to be able to deal with our children in a positive manner. When principals and teachers have the idea that they are dealing with uncontrollable heathens who have no capacity for learning, the learning process has already been destroyed. This sick
attitude has taken place in many cases before the first home work assignment has been given. It is up to us to make sure that these attitudes are wiped away for good.

We have to make sure that in the future our struggle will go on. It has been continued, and the only way we can attain our goals is to prepare our children in the right way.
"Save the Children"
by Marvin Gaye

Who really cares?
Who's willing to try, to save a world
That is destined to die.
Little children today
Are really gonna suffer tomorrow.

Oh, what a shame, such a sad way to live,
Live life for the children
You see, let's save the children
Let's save all the children.
Save the babies, save the babies,
If you wanna love, you got to save the babies
All of the children.

But who really cares
Who's willing to try
To save a world that is destined to die?

Be it one year from now or five, fifteen or twenty-five,
our struggle must go on. Progress must be made. Every part
of life should be used to show some advancement. We must
learn from our experiences and use the past to our advan-
tage. We must focus our sights on tomorrow, for it will be
a better day. But what about today?
References and Acknowledgements

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"Dance of Alakweta" by Margaret Danner and "Face of Poverty" by Lucy Smith from New Negro Poets, U.S.A., 1964.
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INTRODUCTION

Some of the highlights of Black History Week 1975 in the Twin Cities are presented on the following pages. While, regrettably, all events could not be covered, those that have been show what the Black community has done in celebrating Black accomplishments and bringing its people together in the discussion of ideas.
PICKING UP THE PIECES

Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Marcus Garvey, Jimi Hendrix, Billie Holiday, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ron "Superfly" O'Neal, Sylvester "Sly" Stone, Carter G. Woodson, Malcolm X – what do these Black people have in common? Their portraits, drawn by artists Amandelo Mmelika and Bob Stone, clad the walls of The New Way.

The occasion was The New Way's Black History Week celebration, "Picking up the Pieces." The program, coordinated by Real Visions, Inc., included an art exhibit, dramatic performances, a video tape presentation and a free soul food banquet. Additionally, bean pies, carrot cakes, and white fish sandwiches were among the delicacies sold by the followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. African folktales were read by local actress Tene Cameron and interpreted in dance by Linda Cobb of the Uchawi Dancers at the community banquet.

Throughout the day, Real Visions, Inc., repeated a varied one-hour video tape presentation which included a speech on the history of Black rebellions by Imamu Amiri Baraka; an interview with the Reverend Jesse Jackson; a recitation with visuals of Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" by Amandelo.

Separate video tape presentations included the now-famous Dick Cavett show on which Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier appeared, followed by the Ali-Foreman fight.
SHARING ORAL HERITAGE

Mattie Clark, storyteller, has some important things to share. That was apparent as she began telling a roomful of children, gathered at Sumner Library for a story hour, her repertoire of Black folktales. This, along with a host of other activities during the week, was planned by librarian, Sister Raymona Jones.

It was obvious that the stories, some of which were passed on by her grandmother, were entertaining. But they had another thing in common — they were educational. Each story had a moral. After Sister Clark had told a series of tales, she would ask the children if they knew the lessons the stories taught.

While some of the children may have been too young to understand the deeper meanings of the stories, they may hear them again someday. And perhaps they will be able to do what Sister Clark was doing that day, passing on a part of the Black heritage.

POETRY, SONG, DANCE ... HISTORY

Community residents gathered at Hallie O. Brown for an evening of music, dance and poetry. Pom pom girls from Minneapolis Central High School performed one dance routine. Reciting their original poetry were Jacki Richardson, Ivory Giles and Robert McClain. Lee Lamber read selections from Langston Hughes and others.

Dancing her impression of “what Black is” was Kathi Gagnon. Arthur Posey and Robert Davis sang solos.

The center exhibited art work by T. Lipton White during the week.

Alvin M. Stafford, cultural arts director at the center in remarks on the printed program, conveyed the spirit intended by the program:

“The dance, poetry and song tell a story about the struggle of Black people for the last 400 years. Emotion, enthusiasm, bitterness and happiness (in various art forms are indicative of performers’ cultural awareness and feeling.”
Black community leaders and businessmen were honored at a dinner given by the Black Student Union of Augsburg College during Black History Week.

Greg Finnean, student union chairman, welcomed the gathering of about 60 people. He spoke briefly of the need to establish reciprocal ties with the community. He told the group that the Black Student Union is upset because Augsburg has no Black people among its faculty and only one full-time Black administrator. That administrator is Ralph L. Crowder, coordinator of Black student affairs.

Brother Finnean surprised those present with a powerful interpretation of the poem, "Habaro", by Felipe Luciano of the Original Black Poets. He was joined by Brother Frank Wharton, whose soulful melodies on vibes made for a liberating synthesis of music and rap. Brother Wharton, formerly with the rock group Skye, is now with Shangoya, which plays Caribbean-jazz music. He is also youth advocate counselor at St. Paul Central High School.

Kojo Odinga, defense investigator for the Neighborhood Justice Center, was the evening's featured speaker. The thrust of his speech, "Concept/Community", was an analysis of American political and social structures and institutions. Blacks should oppose any form of exploitation or oppression, he said.

In terms of direction, he had high regard for socialist political systems. Students must build organizations that include the average working Black person who has to punch a clock and usually is too tired to attend rhetoric-filled meetings, he said, reminding students of collective responsibility to defend and uplift Black people.

Members of the Black community presented certificates of appreciation were: Brother Odinga; Brother Kojo Watu, director of Project Breakthrough, Minnesota Health Careers Council; Brother Joe Avent, academician; Brother Wharton; Brother Robert Biddell, artist; Dr. Thomas Johnson of Plymouth Avenue Medical Center; Brother Seitu, Curator, Afro-American Cultural Arts Center; Brother Mahmoud El Kati, Macalester College instructor; Brother Harry Davis of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Co. and Sister Pam Smith, University of Minnesota law student.
THEATER OF BLACK LIFE

Two one-act plays by Richard Wesley were presented at Rarig Center, University of Minnesota, during Black History Week. The first, “Alicia, Goin Thru Changes,” is the story of a young Black couple who might have made it if not for two meddling friends and a bitter mother-in-law.

The play revolves around happily married, soon-to-be parents Darnell (Geoffrey Ewing) and Alicia (Doris Spears). When Darnell expresses his dream of playing semi-pro basketball to “get some extra bucks,” security-minded Alicia is more concerned with his losing his job and their “winding up in some dump run over with rats and roaches.”

The trouble begins when Darnell begins to practice for tryouts and Alicia begins to feel neglected.

Goaded and teased by her mother (Mazie Johnson) and best friend Mae (Tia Mann), Alicia increasingly nags Darnell. This results in more frequent fights.

Nate the playboy (Willie Young) and T.C. the alcoholic (Larry Loud), Darnell’s friends, compound the confusion by telling him he can’t be successful and happy at home.

The couple’s tragic ending is set in motion when Darnell’s athletic dream is shattered.

The other Wesley play, “8 Ball,” is a short conversation between a father and son meeting for the first time in a pool hall. The son, Eddie (Kenneth Miller), is bitter toward the father, Earl (Willie Burks), for “not being around when I need you.” Earl tries to explain the reason he and so many other Black men, including his own father, don’t stay and deal with their own responsibilities.

He advises Eddie to break the cycle and stay with the child he is expecting so that this scene would not be repeated in 20 years.

“Your child is the future. I am the past. Forget about me,” Earl says. One gets the feeling that is just what Eddie does.

Both plays were directed by Horace Bond, University theater and speech professor.
AWARENESS
THROUGH MUSIC

To instill greater cultural awareness among Black people is the goal of the Sounds of Blackness, according to their director, Gary Hines. The group presented a Black History Week concert at Phyllis Wheatley Community Center.

WEST AFRICA EXPERIENCE

Malik Simba, local historian, presented a West African slide show as part of Sumner Library’s Black History Week observance. The slides of some of the highlights of his trip showed many aspects of the West African culture. He also had handmade articles of clothing to show his audience.

The Central High School dance line, directed by Irma Jackson, Physical Education Department Chairperson, entertained during intermission. The dancers, junior and senior girls, performed “Rhapsody in White” and an untitled number.
‘HAPPINESS’
ON STAGE

"Hotel Happiness," a farcical play set in a tenth-rate hotel, offered carefree entertainment to its audiences in The Whole in Coffman Union, University of Minnesota. The Margaret Ford Taylor play, staged three nights during Black History Week, came to life under the direction of Allen Johnson II.

Residents, visitors and hangers-out in the hotel found themselves embarrassingly involved with a body whose owner pulled one last “fast one” by choosing to die in the arms of a lady of the streets in the midst of a business transaction.

Deciding what to do with the body to escape the wrath of the police and a house detective led to a series of shenanigans by the prostitute who witnessed the death, the neighborhood thief, a dope peddler, a drifter and other characters. The cast included Kevin King as Lennie, the hotel manager; Diane Bradley as Belle Star, the prostitute; Lori Roberson as Mamma Mary, a resident; and Stan Morrow, as Smitty the thief.
APPRECIATION OF JAZZ

Two former classmates got together during Black History Week and shared their experiences as jazz musicians with an enthusiastic audience at the University of Minnesota. Saxophonist Dr. Nathan Davis and pianist Dr. Ronald Buckner teamed up with local bass guitarist Paul Cotton and percussionist Donald Thomas for a concert at the University's West Bank Auditorium.

Davis is director of jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh and Buckner is an associate professor in the department of music and Afro-American studies at the University of Minnesota.
Changes in the emphasis of Black History Week through the years was the focus of a Sumner Library "Fireside Chat" with Mahmoud El Kati.

In the beginning the observance was concerned with a virtual "Who's Who" list, with Black people producing a hero to complement a white counterpart, according to the Macalester College instructor-counselor. Since then the emphasis has shifted to institutions, he said.

Black History Week now should go outside the confines of the United States and become universal, he said, pointing out the fact that Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led the first successful slave rebellion, was Haitian.
The Third World Caucus at the University of Minnesota School of Law combined the expertise and views of various segments of the system of justice in composing its panel discussion, "Is Justice Colorblind?"

Panelists were Willie Mae Dixon of the Legal Rights Center; James Eubanks, Stillwater inmate; Mahmoud El Cati, Macalester College counselor and instructor; and Stephen Rollins, officer on the University Police Force.

Panelists agreed that Blacks are the most consistent victims of criminal injustice. As long as Black people cannot afford good legal assistance, they will continue to be victims, students were told. Students were urged to enter criminal law to help alleviate the problem.
AFRICAN MEMORIES

The banner on the wall explained that the exhibit "African Memories," was "designed to read like a book. Its main purpose is to show African retentions in Afro-American culture..."

The exhibit at the Afro-American Cultural Arts Center 24 E. 31st St., Minneapolis, examined the journey of Black people from slave-holding Africa to America.

A slide presentation of West Africa and her people greeted the exhibit's visitors. Coordinated with a speech by a center staff member, it related the African experience to that of the Afro-American.

Similarities in the two cultures were expressed through African artifacts, jewelry, furniture and musical instruments on display. The exhibit relayed direct extraction from Africa, such as some of the "soul food" and language currently found in Afro-American society. Another aspect of the exhibit that delighted children especially was the filmstrip/cassette presentation of African folktales.
PARTICIPATION IN HISTORY

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center offered children week of exciting activities. They had a chance to become involved in or see friends involved in re-creating events of and portraying people who have become a part of Black history.

One of the week’s events was a dramatization presented by the Metropolitan Cultural Arts Center. A group of children enacted the incident in which Rose Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man and thus sparked the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in 1955. The children also were entertained by the Interpretive Dance Theatre Company and the center’s dance class and by the Phyllis Wheatley Players, a young rhythm-blue group.

Other activities included films, poetry readings, an African History Week quiz, coloring and essay contests. Mrs. Josephine Brown, special programs director of the center, coordinated the second annual coloring contest which not only familiarized the youngsters with their roots, but also rewarded them financially. More than 31 children competed for prizes of five dollars, three dollars and two dollars for the best renderings of Lois Mailou Jones’ “African Village.”
Music transmits the message of the retention of our African roots . . . of our survival . . . of our beauty.
The interaction between generations brings forth understanding of the richness of our African-American heritage.
A TRIP INTO STORYLAND

Puppets and puppeteers took their young audiences at Hosmer Branch Library, Minneapolis, on a trip through African storyland during Black History Week. Using puppets they had made themselves, staff members put on two shows. The first was an adaptation of the book “A Story a Story” by Gail E. Haley, which familiarizes children with African spider stories. The second show told of Nomi and the Magic Fish, characters in a book written by a 15-year-old African girl.

Spider stories are tales about how small, defenseless men or animals outwit others and succeed against great odds. Kwaku Ananse is the star (sometimes villain) of these tales.

Joanne Bondy, Mary Lawson and Genevieve Jackson of Hosmer used stick puppets to tell how Ananse cunningly gained possession of the Sky God Nyame’s treasure of stories.

They switched to colorful hand puppets to tell of Nomi’s rescue from her sadistic stepmother with the help of a magic fish.

In keeping with Hosmer’s Black History Week theme, “Afro-American as author,” the library invited the community to share a favorite story, poem or speech from Black literature. Sylvia Frisch, substitute librarian, read several poems from Nikki Giovanni’s “My House.” John A. Jones, a Lakeville resident, read “Observations” by Sonia Sanchez and “The Funeral of Martin Luther King” by Sister Giovanni.

Community members shared their reflections on Black History Week and most agreed that Black contributions should be a vital part of the American experience 52 weeks a year.
LEARNING EXPERIENCES

With the objective of providing activities that would serve as learning experiences, the Black Cultural Resource Center of St. Paul sponsored Black History Week programs put on by several elementary schools.

On a day set aside for students in grades kindergarten through third, Hill School, Open School and the Social Environment Learning Center took part in a program at St. Paul Central High School. Mrs. Charmayne Branch, a team leader at the Cultural Resource Center, coordinated the programs.

Hill students portrayed the problems and triumphs in the life of Olympic gold-medalist Jesse Owens. After their play, more Hill children were in the spotlight as they told the meaning of brotherhood — letter by letter — and sang "Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand" and "Mary Mack." At the end of the Hill program pupils went to a classroom where they discussed such famous Black people as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jackie Robinson and Frederick Douglass.

Open School followed with several spirituals which speak to the Black experience: "Prayer for Africa," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and "Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham."

Social Environment Learning Center students sang "Lift Every Voice" and explained Kwanza, the Black Holy Days, a celebration traditional in the African world marking the harvesting of the first crops.
Black History Focus '75

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"Where do we go from here?"

We hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine as much as we have enjoyed putting it together for you. We have carefully nurtured it, coordinating many efforts, suffering setbacks and watching it finally become a reality. Many thanks to those who lent physical labor and to the many others who lent their constant support.

The commemoration of Black History Year and the publication of Black History Focus 1974-75 have been valuable experiences for us as a community because they have served to facilitate our coming together. This is aptly illustrated by the activities the magazine has highlighted and by the communal effort that went into producing the magazine.

A very likely question at this point is, "Where do we go from here?" Black History Week has always been functional for enhancing our sense of self and sense of community, but in different ways at different times. At its inception in 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson conceived Negro History Week as a time to acknowledge and present new facts about the race to fill the void in our educational system. In the recent past, Afro-American History Week has concentrated on celebrating past achievements by various cultural representations for the same enrichment purpose. While fulfilling this same need, Black History Week today and tomorrow might well be a time for attuning ourselves to perceive with greater clarity the economic, social and political issues confronting us. This would be done by both artistic and academic interpretations as well as presentations. Delving into the complexities and ramifications of our historical situation will not only assure a solid understanding of the past years but lay a firm foundation on which to build the next.

We believe analysis and celebration should go hand-in-hand, if Black History Week is to continue to be meaningful. Our commemoration must positively contribute to the development of Black people and provide some focus or direction for the future. Otherwise, we make history just what we claim it is not—sterile accounts and vacant memories. While it is the past, it has bearing on the present and implications for the future. History is living and functioning. A bit of it we have shared with you in these pages.
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