

N. Y. Afro-American Institute Presents "Open Letter to Editor"

NEW YORK — At a special meeting of the Afro-American Institute, held here at 23 East 125th Street, the executive board voted unanimously to endorse and to publicize an "Open Letter on Our People's Name." This open letter was presented by its president Richard B. Moore as a Reply to Bayard Rustin's column "What's In A Name," which appeared in the "New York Amsterdam News" of January 23rd.

Acting as chairman of the board meeting was John Henrik Clarke, first vice-president of the Institute, also associate professor of Afro-American Studies at Hunter College and visiting professor at Cornell University. "The action just taken," said professor Clarke, "is significant of the growing determination to rid ourselves completely of the noxious name 'Negro' and to adopt worthy names such as Afro-American."

In support the second vice-president Keith E. Baird, Professor of Humanities at Hofstra University, made the following statement: "This Open Letter, as presented by our president, is genuinely educational and a thorough refutation of the facile but specious arguments of Bayard Rustin in belated support of the term 'Negro' 'now being ever more widely rejected by our people.'"

Attorney Hope R. Stevens, treasurer of the Institute, expressed his regret that the institute does not yet command funds for adequately publicizing such statements. "This Open Letter," Atty. Stevens emphasized, "should be read in the first place by every person of African descent. It should also be read by Asians, and most certainly by Euro-American and European people, who need to be thus informed and to govern themselves accordingly."

A student member, Walter E. Dix, made his comment: "As a student, conversant with the prevailing attitude of youth, I can heartily give my endorsement to this Open Letter. For it shows among the elders those, who like the youth, will not tolerate complacent acceptance of searing indignity nor bowing before racist detractors."

The Open Letter questioned the propriety of the columnist Bayard Rustin in basing himself upon the "sampling" made by the Euro-American journal Newsweek, while disregarding the representative polls taken by Afro-American organs such as "Jet" and "Ebony" magazines. "Note, please," the letter summarized, "that 60% of Ebony readers, who are overwhelmingly of African ancestry, chose the names of human dignity and self-respect Afro-American and African-American, while only 8.1% were still satisfied with the masters' invidious alave term 'Negro.'"

The letter then pointedly cited the role of Booker T. Washington, who in 1906 at the instance of an Euro-American Congressman, forced the usage of "Negro," thus pushing into the background the accurate and then popular name "Afro-American." Answering Rustin's assertion that "young people think that 'Negro' is a term that whites gave to blacks," the Open Letter cited the record to show that the name "Negro" grew out of the slave trade and was thus "foisted upon people of African descent..."

Going on to Rustin's citation of Theodore Draper as a "historian" who "pointed out, it ('Negro') was a self-chosen word," the Open Letter brands this as the "big lie," and characterizes this as "one of the most vicious and despicable slanders... adding grievous insult to wanton injury." Pointing to the date of the letter of Dr. DuBois which Rustin quoted, precisely 1928, the open letter then proceeds to quote "later and more discerning statements" from "Dusk of Dawn," 1940, and "The World and Africa," 1947. The letter next stresses that

"Negro" is used, it is not what the users desire or intend that is chiefly significant" but the stereotype or picture in the mind of the hearers that the symbol "Negro" evokes. Examples are then given of journals and organizations which have dropped the name and/or usage of "Negro." Particularly noted is the action taken in Philadelphia last October of the 55th Annual Convention of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History to change its name to African-American Historical Association.

Dealing with the implications with which Rustin's column concludes, the open letter replies that "no informed advocate of change of name has ever asserted that the mere alteration of a name will solve all our problems," but "the change from a bad and debasing name to a good, self-respecting, and worthy name will tremendously aid the necessary struggle to improve our condition."

Answering Bayard Rustin's implied strictures upon youth, Richard B. Moore's open letter observed: With their "dashikis" and "Afro" hair cuts, these young people are voicing the same motivation which inspired Althea Gibson to become a tennis champion: "I always wanted to be Somebody." The question is then put: "What are you saying or doing when you walk the streets of Harlem attired in a 'dashiki', wearing your hair in the long 'Afro' manner, and displaying a modish medallion?"

According to this Open Letter, the fear implied by Rustin that young people are likely to be "fooled by names and appearances" is wholly groundless and visionary. Our generation needs rather to be concerned about how the youth will judge it. "For unless we demonstrate," the letter affirms, "forthright resistance to every form of racist oppression, the youth will reproach our age group, as they are all too prone now to do for lack of historical teaching and social information, as sad, hopeless, and outworn 'Uncle Toms,' obstructing their path to freedom and manhood."

The Open Letter concludes with a call "to strive to understand and to meet the need for change of name, as well as for a more effective stand towards the complete liberation of our people."

Mrs. Royster Host to Ladies Ushers' Union

The Lookout Committee of the Ladies Department of the Durham Ushers' Union met with Mrs. Edna Royster in her home on East End Avenue Saturday, March 20. After a brief devotion, Mrs. Royster, the chairman of the committee, preceded with the discussion of business on hand, after which Mrs. Ollie Mae Rayand Mrs. Cornelia, co-hostesses, served a delicious dinner to the following members: Mrs. Louise Harvey, Mrs. Grace Jones, Mrs. Minnie Ford, Mrs. Curley Harris, Mrs. Mattie Canty, Mrs. Hattie Fields, Mrs. Thomasina Langley and Burch Coley and Mrs. Ruby Wilson.

SENIOR USHERS OF ORANGE GROVE SPONSOR PROGRAM

The Senior Usher Board of the Orange Grove Baptist Church on East End Avenue, held its annual program Sunday, March 20. The Rev. H. L. Bridges, along with his choir, ushers and congregation from both of his churches, Cameron Grove and Silaom Baptist, were guests. Rev. Bridges delivered a very fine sermon. The singing and sermon were enjoyed by all. Rev. P. H. Amey is pastor of Orange Grove.

Street Sleepers

LONDON — An estimated 1,000 homeless men and women sleep in the streets of London—a higher number than at any time since the 1920s, a

East Cedar Grove to Conduct Workshop At S. S. Convention

The General Sunday School Convention of the East Cedar Grove Association will conduct a workshop, Saturday, March 27, 1971 from 10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. at the Greater Saint Paul Baptist Church, on Juniper Street.

This workshop is designed to last about two and one-half hours, consisting of three things for all superintendents, teachers, and workers of the Sunday School.

1. A thorough acquaintance with the work of the General Baptist State Convention's Unified Plan.

2. An acquaintance with methods for teaching in the Sunday School and Baptist Training Union.

3. An acquaintance with the relationship and responsibility of the local Sunday School to the State Baptist Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress.

We would like for all superintendents to stress the importance of attending the workshop. A state worker will be conducting the workshop.

WASHINGTON—Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, calling for a United Nations commission to protect the environment in which Red China should take part:

"China has a grave pollution problem and a grave population problem."

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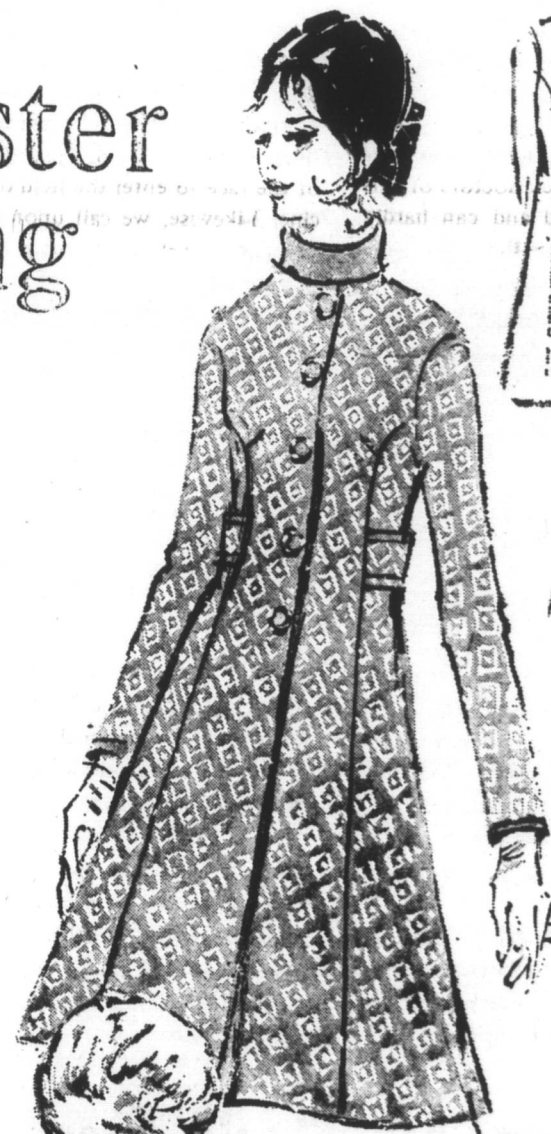
Boys And Girls Are Getting Ready For The Easter Bunny Romp

... girls will be girls, especially when they're wearing this white and aqua delicately flowered spring look from the Buffy Collection by Cinderella. 50% rayon/50% cotton. Little sister's hi dirndl or big sister's lean low look. 3 to 6x, \$7.00. 8 to 12, \$9.00.

... Buffy lover this ethnic-inspired dirndl (100% cotton). She knows Cinderella took great care in creating the multi-striped shirt paired with the white bodice, the long sheer sleeves abloom with embroidery. Sizes 3 to 6x. \$10.00.

Hippity hop to our Children's Shop and pick that little gentleman an Easter wardrobe sure to put him out front in the Easter parade. Suits and sportcoats with matching slacks (sold separately) for a suit look. Sizes 2 to 12. \$5.50 to \$78.00.

Children's World... Third Floor



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