

Black film roles confined to stereotypes

by Vivian Keasler

Virtually all roles for black actors and actresses until very recent years have been confined to narrow stereotypes. Unfortunately, the Hollywood concepts were long accepted by both black and white viewing audiences as an "accurate statement about the black experience," said Donald Bogle in an interview and lecture here last Tuesday.

Bogle presented a lecture and slide program on the roles of black actors in the movies in conjunction with Black Emphasis Week at Meredith. His book on the same subject, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, won the Theatre Library Association Award for the best book about film in 1973.

Bogle stated that the roles given to blacks could be classified in five basic images, the earliest of which was the "Tom" figure with the filming of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1903. "Uncle Tom" was played by a white actor in black face, for in the early years "blacks were not considered qualified to play themselves."

The "Tom" figure was a good, stoic Christian, and never questioned the established society. The "Tom" character usually died at the end of the film, content, however, since he had always been good to his white master.

The roles of black actors in film changed to meet the needs of audiences. In the '30's,

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson appeared as a "Tom" figure with Shirley Temple in many movies. Considered by many as the best dancer ever recorded on film, Robinson and Temple danced across the screen, "exuding an optimism" needed by audiences of the post-depression years.

The "Coon" image was a second film stereotype, the funny, grinning black male who was always the sidekick and never the star of comedy teams, but who always managed to steal the show. Bogle cited Eddie Rochester Anderson who appeared in several movies with Jack Benny.

A third role was that of the "tragic Mulatto," always "a whore figure." She was pictured as a white girl "doomed by one drop of 'Negra blood'." Because of the extremely limited roles available, such beautiful, talented black actresses as Fredi Washington eventually disappeared from Hollywood. Lena Horne also began in pictures as a "tragic Mulatto" figure. Bogle pointed out that Horne was too "wholesome" yet also too "sleek and sophisticated" to be a convincing whore, and therefore was able to transcend such a narrow role and survive as a performing artist.

The "Buck" image of the sexual black male has in more recent years appeared in such films as those of actor-athlete Jim Brown. Bogle noted that while such films are attempts

to show a film character taking a more aggressive action in established society than previous movie images, the image remains a stereotype all the same.

The "Mammy" figure had to be "large enough to carry the weight of the whole world on her shoulders." The most famous, of course, was Hattie McDaniel who appeared as "Mammy" in *Gone With the Wind*. Far from the classic stereotype, McDaniel brought to the screen a strong, forceful character who banished any notions of inferiority. She was the only one who knew Scarlett O'Hara's every motive, and never hesitated to look her straight in the eye and speak her mind. McDaniel, consequently, became the first black to receive an Academy Award when she won an Oscar for "Best Supporting Actress" in 1949.

"The stereotypes themselves should be dismissed," stated Bogle. The important fact is that the great black actors were able to bring with them something more powerful and unique which transcended their narrow roles.

Bogle commended such actresses as Diana Ross and Cicely Tyson for their work in breaking through stereotypes, and attributed the success of such "box office champions" as *Shaft* and *Superfly* to the need for black audiences to see films which are "even remotely connected to the

black experience."

The source of the stereotype problem for black actors, Bogle stated, lies in the small number of blacks behind the scenes in both film and television. He pointed out that even in the TV version of

"Roots", none of the script writers were black. He called for more black directors, producers, writers, and technicians. Whites unsuccessfully have been "trying to interpret the black experience," Bogle said.



Kim Hewlett and Hunter Hirschman rehearse for the Meredith production of "Come Blow Your Horn" which plays next week, February 24, 25, 26. Tickets will be available at the door.

International Student Day

Students see capitol

by Rosie Bowers

Have you ever thought about spending a day in a foreign country learning about its government and seeing its politicians in action? Five Meredith international students had the opportunity to do just that as they attended the First In-

ternational Student Day at the North Carolina capitol Thursday.

Denise Byrd, Marizela Notz, Greta Østergaard, Francisco Yarur, and Elizabeth Agreda joined 250 other students representing 56 countries in an exploration of N.C. state government. An introduction by Secretary of State, Thad Eure, was followed by a film on the N.C. legislature and a panel discussion by three representatives and senators. After eating lunch at First Baptist Church, students were given guided tours of the legislative building and the governor's mansion.

The committee for International Student Day planned the day in hopes of giving North Carolina's international students an informal experience in which they could learn more about the state and its government. A second purpose was to enable students to discover others from their own countries who were in N.C. Thirdly, students could meet and exchange impressions of the U.S. with people from many countries.

Elizabeth Agreda, a senior business major from Bolivia, has had the opportunity to learn about Raleigh from her experiences of working in the Raleigh courthouse.

Marisela Notz from Venezuela and Francisca Yarur from Chile both enjoyed the opportunity of getting to know other students who shared experiences from colleges and universities all over the state. Meredith students agreed with the others that the only disappointment was the Governor Hunt could not attend as planned, but that on the whole, the day was a most successful one.

Rowlett proposes security alternatives

by Debbie Doss

In response to the recent dissatisfaction with Meredith's security system, Betsy Rowlett, chairman of Legislative Board, has proposed two alternatives to

our present operation.

Miss Rowlett has expressed her concern over the fact that the majority of the night security force must remain in Johnson Hall in order to check IDs and escort

girls to the dorms, and that only one guard is available to patrol the rest of the campus.

In a memo to members of the administration, she related this concern and said, "I feel that this is a waste of abilities, time, and talent of our security officers, and that it is not conducive to the safety of Meredith students."

Therefore, Miss Rowlett has proposed that the campus change to a key or card entry system in which the students would be responsible for getting themselves into the dorms at night.

Under a key entry system, a student returning to the campus after closing hours would show her ID and obtain a key from the security officer on duty, indicating the time and her residence hall, Miss Rowlett explained. "Upon receiving the key, each student would have ten minutes to reach her residence hall, let herself in, and call the security officer to report that the door is secured and the key dropped in the locked box provided," she said.

The Legislative Board Chairman sees many advantages in the key entry system. Only one security officer would be stationed in Johnson Hall, she explained, leaving the other officers free to patrol the campus."

The noise factor would be lessened, according to Rowlett, because large numbers of students would not likely be returning to the residence halls at the same time.

In addition, dorms could be locked earlier on weekends, thus making students feel safer, she said.

Included in the proposed key entry system is the stipulation that any student who loses a key would be held responsible for resulting costs, such as replacing locks.

"The keys would remain on campus at all times, insuring no losses of keys off campus," Miss Rowlett asserted.

However, she does not anticipate that loss of keys would be a problem.

"If you can keep up with your car keys, I don't see why you couldn't keep up with the key to the dorm," she added.

The second proposal, a card entry system in which students would obtain a card from the security officer and insert it into an electrical device that would open the residence hall door, would be very similar to the key entry plan. "However, the card system would be much more expensive," Miss Rowlett said.

Club gets charter

by Carolyn Morton

A chapter of the Circle K service organization has been organized here on the Meredith campus. The club received its charter January 31 and has enlisted 16 members. Dr. Alden Peterson of the business department will be the club's faculty advisor.

Senior members include Debbie Finch, Betty Hoffman, and Debbie Thompson. Junior Jessica Watson will serve as the vice president. Sophomore members are Alisa Rhodes, president; Beverly Toler, treasurer; Cathy Fleming; Elizabeth Wall; Janet Surles; Carolyn Morton; Anne Timberlake; Anita Wolf; Kathy Davis; Carol Lancaster. Mary McLeod, secretary, and Nancy Clendenin represent the Freshman class.

Circle K is an international service club sponsored by the Kiwanic Club for college students. According to President Alisa Rhodes, it is the largest collegiate club in North America.

Circle K sponsors such projects as The March of Dimes and the League of Women Voters. The Meredith Chapter is currently working at the Haven House for boys, the Governor Morehead School, and the Haven Hill Convalescent Home.

"We hope to get involved with the Consumer Protection Agency. The club especially wants to help students become aware of their special consumer problems," commented Miss Rhodes.

Miss Rhodes feels that Circle K will be an asset to the Meredith community. She added, "We have some very good service clubs here on campus, but their memberships are so large. We want to give Meredith students a chance to help people on a one-to-one basis. Not only are we helping others in Circle K, but we're having loads of fun doing it."

Circle K meetings are held in 111 Joyner, every Monday night at 7:30. Anyone who is interested is encouraged to attend.