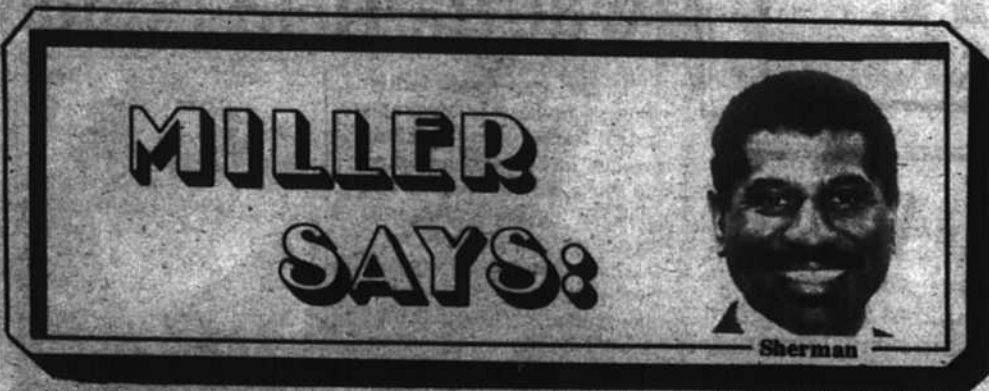


Black Bourgeoisie: Actors Or Not?

A white Delawarean recently complained to me that she felt she and her mother were treated like second class citizens in Honolulu, Hawaii. This lady said while waiting for service they were being ignored while their hosts were making every effort to serve several Japanese contingents. She claims she was inflamed when they were passed over the third time without any hint of service. This lady could not stave her anger any longer so she railed out in absolute anger. One of these Hawaiian hosts, apparently sensing that she thought him to have foreign origins, retorted by telling her he was an American, too. Does mainstream America really know the Hawaiian people?

Last year I spent a week criss-crossing the island of Oahu in an attempt to learn about Hawaiian culture. I got my first feel for the direction to which the culture was evolving when I spoke to a native young lady who works as a bank teller. She said the young people are losing the old ways. She seemed embarrassed to say that she herself understood very little of the native Hawaiian language which is still spoken by her grandparents. As I listened to her tale, I got the impression that she was like many other second generation American immigrant offspring who find little value in retaining the values of the old world.

I sensed some serious disdain for white Americans quietly festering when I overheard a Hawaiian lady's snide remarks when "Miss Hawaii's" car passed my location during the annual parade for the former king of the Hawai-



ian Islands. This lady commented detestably that it was a disgrace having a young white woman as "Miss Hawaii."

Another very moving comment gushed forth. Someone muttered that they cried the day that Hawaii became a state because they realized that all hope for the Hawaiians ever regaining their independent nation was now gone.

I got a taste of the real native Hawaiian nationalistic spirit when I spoke with Mrs. Geri Uehrtens of Honolulu. She is a member of the Hawaiian Cultural Society. I knew immediately that I was in the presence of the one of the most ardent protectors of the Hawaiian culture. She believes that mainland people do not know the native Hawaiians. Mrs. Uehrtens had a very difficult time understanding mainstream America's value system. She feels that mainstream Americans are always taking over no matter where they go. On the other hand, Mrs. Uehrtens believes that mainstream Americans show little respect for their senior citizens. I sensed that she was hurt that Hawaiian people might be perceived as a conquered nation that was absorbed

into a mighty empire.

I challenged Mrs. Uehrtens to tell me if the Hawaiian culture was dying. Mrs. Uehrtens could not accept this ill-fated forecast for her culture. She countered that the Hawaiian culture was in a state of renaissance, stating that there is a "...great Renaissance going on." She went on to say that young people are interested in their heritage and Hawaii culture is being taught in the schools.

I asked for Mrs. Uehrtens's comments on the general mood of the Hawaiian people. She painted a picture of a gentle people who are very family oriented. It was easy for me to accept her assessment because the prior day I had been traveling in the outback regions and stopped to buy some fruit from a roadside stand. I struck up a conversation with the two native Hawaiian ladies who own the stand. As I was about to leave, these two ladies said to me that everything was so expensive in the cities, they wanted me to know

that Hawaiians are very kind people. They insisted that I accept some free fruit. These ladies also told me where my family should not go to avoid becoming victims of crime.

In the midst of such beauty and hell side by side, I searched for a way to understand these beautiful and kind people. I was perplexed. But then I recalled Mrs. Uehrtens saying that although Paradise might be great for some, "Paradise is mourning and hell for others." I felt she let us know that mainlanders rave about visiting paradise but native Hawaiians are secretly humming a dirge over the loss of their homeland.

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