

WHY STUDENT VOICE

There exists within the Black community of America vast untapped human resources. The struggles of Black People within the civil rights movement have occasionally offered a vehicle for the escape of some young blacks. These young Blacks escaped from degrading cycles of poverty and squalor which has generally been an Afro-American's experience in this society.

Another outgrowth of the struggles of Afro-Americans in the civil rights movement was the development of a publishing company to essentially spread the news of the movement to the white and black community for its aid and support. The early STUDENT VOICE NEWSPAPER served this purpose. As the struggle of Afro-Americans has continued, it has become increasingly clear that the movement must address itself to developing the potential of its own oppressed Black community. The ramifications of this distinct shift in policy are vast.

The question initially asked was, "How do you use the graphic arts media to communicate with an essentially non-reading public?" The STUDENT VOICE has addressed itself to that question for the past two years. One early attempt in 1965 was the "Freedom Primer" book, 'Negroes in American History'. This was a vividly illustrated Afro-American History book that projected through its text and illustrations the dramatic history of Blacks in America. To the rural or urban based community organizer the Freedom Primer was often more valuable than a car for transportation. One Freedom Primer read by 10 to 15 students in one rural community center does more to break down the grotesque myth surrounding Afro-Americans-- i.e. "Niggers never did nothing anyway--so they ain't gonna do nothing good now", than a dozen street demonstrations. Each action, the informational and the emotional has some transformational effect on the young

black student, but one provides the basis for continued growth while the other only affords in most instances a necessary avenue for an intense temporary social, or psychological release. Most people in the movement today who are community organizers, etc. recognize that they are engaged in a long range struggle with an acidic, paralyzing self hatred that is constantly inbred into "Negroes" by the distorted images and values they see of themselves projected in the mass media. Most people who are community organizers are fully aware that until we address ourselves to the battle for the right to control our image, define our identity and dignify our heritage, we have not yet begun to fight.

It is of little use to talk of a glorious African heritage to students on a street corner or an old lady on a porch if their only image of Africa is "a place that Tarzan swings from the trees and Black people dance naked and run timidly from white men". It has become almost a cliché today that the most informed people about Black Americans are white. To admit this does not to us imply that Blacks are unconcerned, or unintelligent, but to frankly face the fact that little or no meaningful information is seriously channeled into the majority of the Black community. Of what value is a 475 page study of American Negro Slave Revolts to a man who never reads a book. First of all, he will never see it--i.e. he never goes to a library, never goes to a book store. Secondly because of the criminal distortions that have been perpetrated upon him by the white information media, he will never seek it out. If you believed your ancestors were wide-eyed, cowardly, nymphomaniacs, drunkards, thieves and fools dressed in rags would you painstakingly seek out an extensive historical study to only further intensify your agony, bitterness, guilt and frank hatred of your self for what you are. How many Afro-Americans know of Sojourner Truth, Toussiant L'Overture, Nat Turner or Denmark Vessey? How many

Afro-Americans realize the extent to which they were instrumental in a number of Reconstruction governments 95 years ago? More realistically, how many Blacks are ashamed of the word Black?

You can take a boy out into the streets, you can teach him to stand up and walk, but it takes a man to stand tall and firm, bitter or happy-- in the face of adversity or hardship, agony or joy. Afro-Americans are not told of their men folk. Afro-Americans are not made aware that they came from a proud and mighty community. Afro-Americans are not allowed to be men.

The STUDENT VOICE'S Editorial Board has already composed extensive materials to be used to wage war against the corrosive images Blacks have of themselves. We are not interested in only promoting Negro History Cultural Programs where only the aware and "elite" of the "Negro" community come to intensify their 'knowledge' of George Washington Carver or Booker T. Washington. We are concerned more about producing comic books for the majority of Afro-Americans than sociological studies for the few. We are concerned more about producing placemats to be distributed in bars, taprooms, and clubs with quotes and illustrations of Frederick Douglass, DuBois and others, than producing slick magazines to convince our people to buy XYZ brand skin lightner "for that whiter brighter better more pleasing smile." We seek to aid the development of community organizations through the publication of programmed comic books that explain what a landlord can do, what a landlord cannot do, why you pay sales tax or is a non-graduated sales tax fair to a poor man, etc.

The printed word has been made sacred in this land. The photograph has become the unquestionable source of all truth. The text book ranks beside the Bible as the source of all that is good, correct and proper. We must begin to aid our community organizers through aggressive posters

and pamphlets, leaflets and newsletters that raise questions about the very often . over looked facts of life for Afro-Americans. We must awaken Afro-Americans to the reality that the American Dream has passed them by. Lester Maddox did become governor of Georgia; the man who last year started investigation of Adam Clayton Powell was also cited for his exuberant spendings of government monies, but only the national news media constantly drained in on Powell, the most powerful Afro-American politician in the tired, tragic and weary history of Afro-Americans in this land. Newsweek, Jan., 1967 accused Powell of sandbagging liberal legislation in New York City in 1950 by attaching anti-discrimination amendments to them. How do you sandbag or hold back a "liberal" program if you ask it to include your own political constituents in its program. What is so "liberal" about programs that only advance a select racial group. More important, how do the thousands of Afro-American college students who do read the Newsweeks', Times' and other "moderate" magazines then react to Powell when they don't ask themselves questions about who really is so "liberal"? These students are breast fed on the scraps of American History. They are denied the real meat and guts; "it might disenchant them." To them the labor movement is thought of as a sign of expected American progress in the great tradition of this country. They are not told that the white labor movement only advanced on the backs of their own black fathers and brothers. These college students read William Fulbright's treatise on American foreign affairs "Old Myths and New Realities" and are heartened that there is still a "common sense liberal around." They are not informed that Fulbright gave his "brilliant 97 page treatise on liberal foreign affairs during a week of Southern based filibuster against Afro-Americans getting the elementary right to vote in 1957".

The Editorial Board of the VOICE has in preparation a college magazine

to encourage creative writing and serious thought and controversy about many faced problems which face the Afro-American community. We intend to raise questions, ideas and challenge sacred cows so that "Negro" college students will not come out of their schools only more intent on marrying "the highest, brightest and almost, but not quite whitest girl" because naturally she's the best.

We have seen the transition in this country from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban population.. This trend is also taking place within the movement. Organizers who gained their first battle scars in Greenville, Mississippi, Natchez, Miss., Nashville, Tennessee or Albany, Georgia now see their prime responsibility as being that of helping their brothers and sisters entombed on the reservations of Harlem, N.Y., Watts, Southside Chicago or Vine City, Atlanta. As the movement's direction changes and it confronts new issues and dilemmas, some of its fundamental problems still exist. How do you inform, arouse, educate large numbers of people when you have limited manpower and resources.

In Lowndes County, Alabama the weekly Sunday night mass meeting bridged this gap. But how do you have a mass meeting in Atlanta with 220,000 Negroes spread over a 139.2 square mile area. One vehicle to fill this serious void for honest hard biting information is that of a sincere grass-roots newspaper. In Atlanta the Nitty Gritty newspaper came about in response to this need, at that time for a reinterpretation of the Julian Bond Ouster, last Jan. 6, 1966. The Nitty Gritty was one of the few Atlanta papers which took the trouble to reprint the full controversial SNCC anti-Vietnam statement, which so many papers editorialized about but never fully reproduced. The Nitty Gritty raised the cry about evictions and slum housing in Atlanta before it was ever popular to do so. Now it's a clique. The Nitty Gritty presented the first simplified account of the

Ghanian coup that a person with seventh grade vocabulary could comprehend and enjoy. The Nitty Gritty did this in essentially 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ issues. (second issue never fully printed due to press breakdowns and lack of skilled personnel). The Nitty Gritty will again come out, and like its predecessor will be "telling it like it is". The paper will be distributed anywhere in the Atlanta area that a Black man, woman or child might possibly be sitting down, i.e. bars, barbershops, pool halls, cafes, schools, churches, newsstands, bus stops, colleges, book stands, etc. The Nitty Gritty and other publications of the STUDENT VOICE are the beginnings of the battle of Afro-Americans to control our image, define our identity and dignify our heritage.