

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR FOR THE BLACK PANTHER NEWSPAPER . THE NEW
NEGRO T.V. STEREOTYPE . San Francisco, CA :
Black Panther Party , 1968 .

The New Negro T` V` Stereotype

Released by
Third-World Press

Paul Krassner once had an article in THE REALIST about the death of actress Louise Beavers, who used to play the part of Beulah on the television series of the same name. Beulah was a fat, dumb but loveable, black woman who shuffled around the suburban home of a benevolent white family, frequently saying, "Yess, Mister Harry," to the head of the family she worked for.

Those were the days of "Amos and Andy," and the revolutionary movement was just beginning to grow. It seems a lot longer ago than it actually is.

Anyway, the REALSIT piece talked about how Louise Beavers had been 'used.' She was a college graduate, a good actress, and not particularly fat. She had to learn to speak like the tommying Beulah character. They even made her gain weight for the part, a demand that was sadistically cruel and damaging to her health. When she died, the racist mass media managed to find only a short paragraph to say nothing about her. Krassner was careful not to put her down for the role she had played. It is not easy now for a black actor to get work. It was harder then.

The scene changes and television has to stop showing the "Amos and Andy" returns and they will never produce another show with a character like Beulah. So for a couple of years they confined themselves to guest shots by Sammy Davis Jr' (I'm not talking now of "variety" shows, but of filmed series.) Then they tried Bill Cosby in "I Spy," as a faithful pig agent of U` S` imperialism.

The death of Martin Luther King and all of a sudden television has a conscience. This year they have a whole crop of black actors and actresses in a variety of roles.

But the characters are all sterile. They have taken Sidney Poitier and adapted him for television. To watch Poitier movies you would think he never has a love life. And TV has taken the whiter than white Poitier thing and is creating a new stereotype.

Instead of 'tommying Beulah,' we have 'bourgeois Julia.' Diahnn Carrol plays the part of a widow with a small child who lives in an "integrated luxury apartment." In the course of her plastic life she encounters various mild racial indignities and the program tries to make its point that prejudice is no good.

Example: Her kid is missing so she calls the pigs. Two racist hogs arrive and instead of talking to Diahnn Carrol they begin talking to one of her lily-white friends who is visiting. Dig on - they thought Diahnn Carrol was "the maid."

Example: In the same episode it turns out the kid isn't missing at all. He hid in the truck of the telephone repairman. The repairman, a young black man, drives the kid home and says to him, "I

could lose my job for this ..." whereupon Diahnn Carrol says, "That's really swell of you risking your job to bring my kid home," and the repairman replies, "I don't care so much about the job. I'm studying engineering at night school. Education is important you know ..." and Diahnn Carrol says, "Yes, Especially 'for us'." Wow!

Then there is something called "Mod Squad." It is about three little pigs who are supposed to be young and too hip. One of them is black and wears his nair natural. It manages to touch all bases.

Example: "When will these kids learn to run TO a pig instead of away from him?"

Example: "How does a high school kid get himself a gun?" sighs the white racist dog. "It's easy, Pete," says his black pig associate, "you just walk up to the counter and buy it ... just like bubble gum."

Example: The pigs have just helped cause the death of a black high school kid who was mixed up in some stolen car ring. His girl friend is thinking about quitting school. So the black hip pig who has disguised himself as a teacher to pump information from her (which leads to the death of her boyfriend) comes on as follows: "It's a crazy world, but at least if you stay in school you have a chance to make it." She seems unconvinced so he looks heavenward and says "Some men see the world as it is and say 'why,' I see the world as it should be and say 'why not.'" Then he looks at the sister and says, "A great man and he died for it, too," (The pig Robert Kennedy dies in June and in October they have that racist hog immortalized on "Mod Squad.")

There are others with more of the same bullshit. The point is that there are more black women in the country who have to sell their labor to white racists to get by, like Beulah, than there are who live in white racist dog. "It's easy, Pete," says his black pig associate, "you just walk up to the counter and buy it ... just like bubble gum."

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And a really good TV show would be one about a black maid and what she REALLY thinks and how she REALLY lives. But that won't happen until the media belong to the black people. And by then - "there won't be any black maids!"

By then -- there won't be any 'so-called negroes,' only Black sisters and brothers who related 'the gun' to 'revolutionary politics' and of the white washing of racist T V