

Editorial Page

WE STAND FOR . . .

GOOD GOVERNMENT

HIGHER LIVING STANDARDS

BETTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SOCIAL JUSTICE . . . IN MISSISSIPPI

Whatever The Title:

The first Negro comic books, brought on the market around ten years ago, represented an attempt to capture the Negro audience by drawing an image with which the Negro could identify. Most of these comics went out of business because they were only white comics splashed with brown color.

In short, they were ridiculous. How could we be comfortable with a funny book character that was supposed to represent us when the character had neither the facial characteristics nor the attitudes of Negroes. What could be more depressing than reading about a car accident between a Negro boy and girl, each on their way home from their daily round of tennis at some private club, who fall in love arguing over whose Corvette hit whose Rolls Royce?

This same absurdity is active on the covers of some paperbacks about Negroes. The cover of a paperback, written by a white, whose title is Black Ghetto might be graced with the picture of a blond haired, blue eyed siren on the lap of a just as fair headed man sitting on trashy porch steps.

And so it goes with newspaper ads and flesh colored band-aids . . .

The Negro has been denied his reflection in today's mass media. As far as our general mass media is concerned, the Negro does not exist.

Unlike other minority groups, we have been visually deprived of positive pictures of ourselves in relation to our daily lives. We have been deprived of indulgence in the visual fascination of ourselves. Sketches have come a long way from "Aunt Jemima" to the "New Negro," but even the image of the new Negro, which seems to be a term for any variation of the "Black Sambo" theme, is a symbol which reflects an idea and not individual Negro personalities.

Because the Negro must go through the daily activities of eating and drinking he is unwittingly forced to buy from manufacturers who consider the Negro, if they consider him at all, a generality, not an individual.

Forced to forge our own image, we have attempted to distinguish ourselves from other Americans by developing a style of language, a way of life that clearly differs from the negative stereotype that America has created in ridicule and in ignorance, through the need of keeping the Negro socially and economically "in his place," and humanly non-existent.

Negro newspapers and magazines, and civil-rights protests, have begun to piece together the broken mirror of the Negro. The Negro newspapers and magazines are faced with the problem of presenting a positive Negro image without also presenting the Negro with false material values and bleached concepts of beauty. Unfortunately, most Negro magazines have failed to realize and overcome this problem.

The one who suffers most from the material re-creation of image is the Negro with low income. He cannot keep up with the Joneses, or the Willie Mae Smiths, for that matter. He does not have the easy substitute, that is, the material symbols which indicate to the world that he exists. He doesn't own a Cadillac to wash in order to feel the Shinola throb of pride and of self. His child, who depends verbally upon the pronoun "I" in order to show who he is, has trouble in group work and play because he is in the habit of deriving satisfaction from his individual prowess, thereby making him partially insensitive to the desires of others.

His child is accustomed to seeing his image nowhere. It is difficult for him to see anything in our commercial media that positively sanctions his existence.

Is it he, after being fought and stoned in his attempt to receive an education, who rushes into the house saying, "Look, Ma! No cavities!"?

Oh, no. He has a difficult time keeping his teeth.

And so it goes with dolls and flesh colored crayons . . .

The third largest advertiser in television, the Lever Brothers, have agreed, spurred by CORE, to use a "fairer representation of Negroes" in the commercials of the television programs it sponsors. "A fairer representation" probably means that there will be one or two Negroes watching in the far background while a shopper mistakenly picks brand "X" for the softest and whitest hands.

Nevertheless, using Negroes in commercials is an overdue admission of the Negro's existence, and of his growing importance and power in the United States. It is a dramatic break-through, opening new employment opportunities, and opening mass channels through which the Negro can present himself as a human being, and in turn, sustain the Negro's image of himself.