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# Race Relations Reporter, 7 February 1972

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# RACE RELATIONS REPORTER

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of ballots printed in Spanish, and the elimination of laws that require endless petitions or previous election successes before a party can be put on the ballot.

According to Parra there was minimal debate at Muskegon on whether or not Chicanos should stay within the two-party system. The predominate feeling was toward the formation of La Raza Unida parties or at least independent coalitions. As with Spanish-speaking people across the country, the Midwestern-Chicanos used to be Democrats, almost to the last voter. But they have found, especially in the mid-land states, that they have received nothing for their efforts.

"The Democrats are the party of the poor people," Parra commented, "and they have been keeping the Chicanos poor for years. And the GOP doesn't even think of us as people."

Parra said the Midwest council of La Raza Unida was not organized as a formal political party but was designed to be a pressure group and a catalyst for unity in that part of the country. However there are many La Raza Unida Parties forming locally throughout the Midwest. He said there were several Chicano candidates running for local or states offices in Michigan—a state with the fourth largest Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. A Chicano, Manny Fierro, is running for governor of Kansas as an independent with the backing of a coalition made up of Chi-

canos, blacks, poor people and students. One often overlooked Spanish-speaking stronghold is in Milwaukee where a 16-square block area is called "Little Crystal City," named for the small Texas town where La Raza Unida was born.

One state with critical importance to Chicano politics is Illinois, where, according to a recent study, Spanish-speaking voters could, if organized, swing a balance of power in the 1972 presidential election. Parra said there is a large Spanish-speaking community in Chicago, but organizing there was probably one of the more difficult tasks ahead of La Raza Unida because of the strong Democratic Party machine in that city. But he said, both Mayor Richard Daley and Illinois Gov. Richard Ogilvie had recently started courting the Spanish-speaking community as never before.

At the present time Parra does not see any danger to La Raza Unida in the Daley machine's sudden interest in the Spanish-speaking community. This is due primarily to the party's broad definition of political victory. To La Raza Unida, a political success does not rest only on the fortunes of their candidates, but is also judged by the amount of unity sparked by the election campaign and the issues raised. "If we can get the other two parties talking about issues that wouldn't have been brought up if we were not organized, that is a victory," Parra said.

# Race Relations REPORTER

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## ACLU defends right-wingers' rights

In the December, 1971, issue of Commentary Magazine, Yale law Prof. Joseph Bishop offered a long and often sarcastic analysis of the concerns of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). His basic thesis was that ACLU's frequent defense of left-of-center clients was derived as much from the politics of the Union's leaders as from their civil libertarian principles. The result, he said, is that right-wingers whose civil liberties are in jeopardy would be unlikely to seek the union's help. For example, "the Ku Kluxers," said Bishop, "though still responsible for some terrorism, would probably refuse to let the Union's lawyers represent them, even if such help were needed and offered."

That statement, in particular, led to a sharp exchange of letters between Bishop and ACLU attorney George Daly of Charlotte, N. C. On Jan. 24, Daly accepted his fourth case involving Ku Kluxers from North Carolina, and the acceptance came a little more than a month after he had won a case involving the grand dragon of the North Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

The grand dragon, a legless Korean War veteran named Harold Murray, had been fired by the city of Charlotte after his Klan affiliation was discovered. Murray had been employed as a telephone operator for the Building Inspection Department of the city government. One of his primary duties was to pass complaints on to the proper authorities, and many of the complaints came from blacks. The city contended that it found having a Klansman in that position "an embarrassment." It did not allege, however, that Murray had discriminated against blacks or had performed his job improperly.

U. S. District Judge James B. McMillan (who earlier had ruled that busing was an acceptable tool in the desegregation of Charlotte schools--a ruling upheld by the U. S. Supreme Court) upheld Daly's contention that Murray's rights had been violated. "Klansmen, like Negroes, are people," McMillan said in his ruling. "They are not, by virtue of their Klan membership, disqualified from holding public employment, any more than Presbyterians, Black Panthers, or members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the American Legion or the NAACP."

Inside This Issue

- New developments in Black Theater...
- Indians' Hanoi trip in jeopardy...
- Midwest Chicanos seek unity...

Much of the judge's language was taken verbatim from Daly's brief in behalf of Murray. The result of the decision was that Murray "won a pile of money," Daly said, adding that Murray didn't want his job back, and the city didn't want him back either. Thus, both sides agreed to a cash settlement.

Daly's defense of the Klansman began in an ironic way. Earlier Klan leaders had watched television news stories about how Daly had successfully represented Black Panthers in Charlotte who were trying to obtain the release of guns seized in a police raid. "The Panthers had one unregistered gun," Daly said, "and the police had used that as a pretext to seize all the guns. I was trying to figure how best to attack the case, and I decided first to accompany the Panthers down to the police station and ask for the guns back. A little surprisingly the police returned them on the spot, while the television cameras recorded the whole thing."

"The Klansmen who saw it on television had had some guns of their own seized by the police, and they said, 'Aha, here is a lawyer who knows how to get guns back.'" They asked Daly to help them achieve the return of their guns, and Daly agreed. He succeeded. Thus, when Murray was fired he came immediately to Daly and the ACLU.

"Bishop's Commentary article focused mostly on the New York Civil Liberties Union and on the rhetoric of (ACLU legal director) Mel Wulf," said Daly. "Everyone is entitled to his rhetoric and the New York chapter may not be typical. Down here we don't get too controversial--just try to keep the dirty book stores in business." \* \* \*

## Mississippi election analysis

Had blacks been better politically organized and the election been conducted more fairly, four Mississippi counties could have come under black control last year, according to an analysis of the November election by the Delta Ministry (DM), of the National Council of Churches.

As it turned out, 51 blacks won elective office, more than doubling the total in the 1967 state election. Of these, five were at the county-wide level (one tax assessor, one circuit clerk, three coroners), one was to the legislature from a two-county district, and 45 were at the "beat" or county district level (seven supervisors and 38 constables and justices of the peace).

Fifty-two other blacks could have been elected, DM concluded, but their chances were spoiled by "political mistakes," "irregular patterns of black voting," "stolen" election in "eight instances," and "too great a reliance on the tools of a past era," the civil rights movement. If they are to achieve more success the next time, DM said, "blacks must resort to tough political activity with less reliance on personality politics and generalized activity." In other words, blacks must learn to play the political game in a hard-nosed, pragmatic way, with more emphasis on calculation and strategy.

The four counties DM says could have come under black control are Madison, Holmes, Jefferson and Wilkinson, all of which have substantial black population and voting majorities. Jefferson is the home county of Charles Evers, the black gubernatorial runner, and two of its five county supervisors are black. A third black supervisor could have been elected, making Jefferson County black controlled, except for "a split--two blacks vs. one white," DM's 25-page study concludes.

Statewide, Evers proved to have "poor coat-tails," carrying several counties but failing to sweep local black candidates into office behind him. In some counties, as many as 44 per cent of black voters who cast their ballots for Evers failed to vote for local black office-seekers.

In addition to those blacks who failed to vote at all for local candidates, significant numbers (ranging from five per cent in Holmes County to 20 per cent in Jefferson) crossed over to vote for whites. This may have been because "some white supervisors in heavily black beats recognized their vulnerability and began serious campaigning four years ago. Some of them, such as the supervisor in heavily black beat five in Holmes County, effectively used their power and patronage to win the support of the black electorate. In part, this was done by setting roads as the prime function of the supervisor, and then doing a good job on roads," DM said.

DM attributes black electoral failures to several factors: BAD CAMPAIGN TECHNIQUES, including "lack of thorough precinct organization...too much optimism and taking the electorate for granted...people waiting around for someone to do things for them...inability to involve all groups or factions in the entire election machinery." POOR CANDIDATE SELECTION. "In most counties," DM wrote, "the first black who stands up and says that he wants to run automatically becomes the candidate, regardless of his ability to win the allegiance and respect of the whole black community...Little strategizing went in to build the most powerful ticket." POOR STRATEGY. "Frequently, the best vote-getters chose to run for the county-wide positions which are logistically more difficult to win, without considering the equally (or more) powerful positions of supervisors." ELECTION IRREGULARITIES. These, according to DM and other observers of the election, were widespread. They ranged from harassment of voters and candidates by election officials to out-and-out cheating by white election officials. "These occurred particularly where the white community was facing what they believed to be a severe challenge to their rule," DM remarks.

Summing up the election, DM concludes that blacks did better than the doomsday visions by the national press would indicate. And they did it with far fewer black voters (only 265,000 blacks were eligible to vote in November) than the 307,000 credited to them by the authoritative Institute of Politics in Jackson. Finally, DM's study let Charles Evers's campaign off the hook. Although it had been the target of much criticism, Evers's race "had little to do (either favorable or unfavorable) with the outcome of local elections, DM said. \* \* \*

# Black Drama Finds New Audience

BY BERNARD GARNETT

Broadway was never like this when Cole Porter and Jerome Kern reigned supreme.

At the Ambassador Theatre, an ex-postman, who's fed up with "The Man," shoots and kills a policeman for slaying a young, black theft suspect. In the song, "Put a Curse on You," a raggedy old black woman chides complacent whites and blacks who do nothing about the deplorable conditions in black ghettos. These are two hard-hitting scenes from "Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death," by Melvin Van Peebles, producer, director and leading actor in the controversial black film, "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song."

A block away at the Ethel Barrymore—named after a member of the former First Family of drama—a prostitute, a drug pusher, and a purse snatcher take turns arguing, in song, that their ways of life are no worse than the everyday corruption of the system. The show stopper is a rousing, gospel-style song in which a black performer and the audience interact in revival fashion. This is "Inner City," by Eve Merriam, author of *The Inner City Mother Goose*, and Helen Miller, composer of several hit songs for black and white pop musicians.

"Ain't Supposed to Die," "Inner City," and several off-Broadway presentations represent the most important new development of the current theatre season. Seemingly, the abundance of black-interest dramas in New York, the theatre capital of America, signifies a new acceptance of plays portraying black problems and aspirations. The vast majority are written by black playwrights, performed by all-black casts, and directed by blacks.

Despite its white authorship, "Inner City" is listed here for two reasons. First, much of the play deals with conditions in poor black communities. Secondly, the black performers seem to dominate the musical.

Off-Broadway, the New York Shakespeare Festival has been featuring "The Black Terror," Richard Wesley's tense melodrama that raises critical questions about the direction of black revolution. Until recently, the Martinique Theatre offered "El Hajj Malik," a drama based on the life of Malcolm X. "Black Girl" played a limited engagement in New York and embarked on a road show engagement, stopping first in Baltimore. Of course, there always have been the numerous black theatre offerings, including those of the Negro Ensemble Company and the New Lafayette Theatre.

*Though black and black-interest drama are nothing new, its becoming almost a staple of the white theatregoer's diet certainly is. It's unusual for an uncompromisingly black play like "Ain't Supposed to Die" to be successful on Broadway, recently passing its 100th performance, the mark of success by Broad-*

*way standards. In the past, there might have been a "Blues for Mister Charlie" here, or a "Raisin in the Sun" there, but never the abundance of the current season. Broadway has been a particularly hard nut to crack, making it "The Great White Way" to blacks, in more ways than one. The traditional black role on Broadway has been as servant, a work-weary Negro singing "Old Man River," or some other stereotypical part.*

The situation changed a little in the 1960's, as a few blacks found their ways to important backstage positions and bit parts before the lights. In comparison with earlier years, Diana Sands's lead in "The Owl and the Pussycat" and Pearl Bailey's heading of an all-black cast in "Hello Dolly" were racial milestones. If a play had a racial theme at all, it often was presented in a manner acceptable to the affluent, predominantly white set that has traditionally patronized Broadway, as in "West Side Story." Oscar Brown Jr. staged a black musical, "Kicks and Co.," in the early 1960's. But the show flopped. "Purlie," 1969's Tony Award-winning musical about blacks who outsmart a racist plantation owner, seemed about the closest Broadway would get to "black theatre" for quite some time.

Neither "Ain't Supposed to Die" nor "Inner City" attempts to placate the traditional Broadway theatregoer. The former, for example, is spoken and sung throughout in the vernacular and music of the black ghetto, with no attempt to explain anything. Practically every song alludes somehow to white oppressions, and most white characters are villains, played by blacks in pearl white masks. "Inner City," though not so caustic as the former, also makes no attempt to spare the feelings of corrupt, racist, or indifferent government employees or politicians. It also is harsh on those who flee the city for the suburbs.

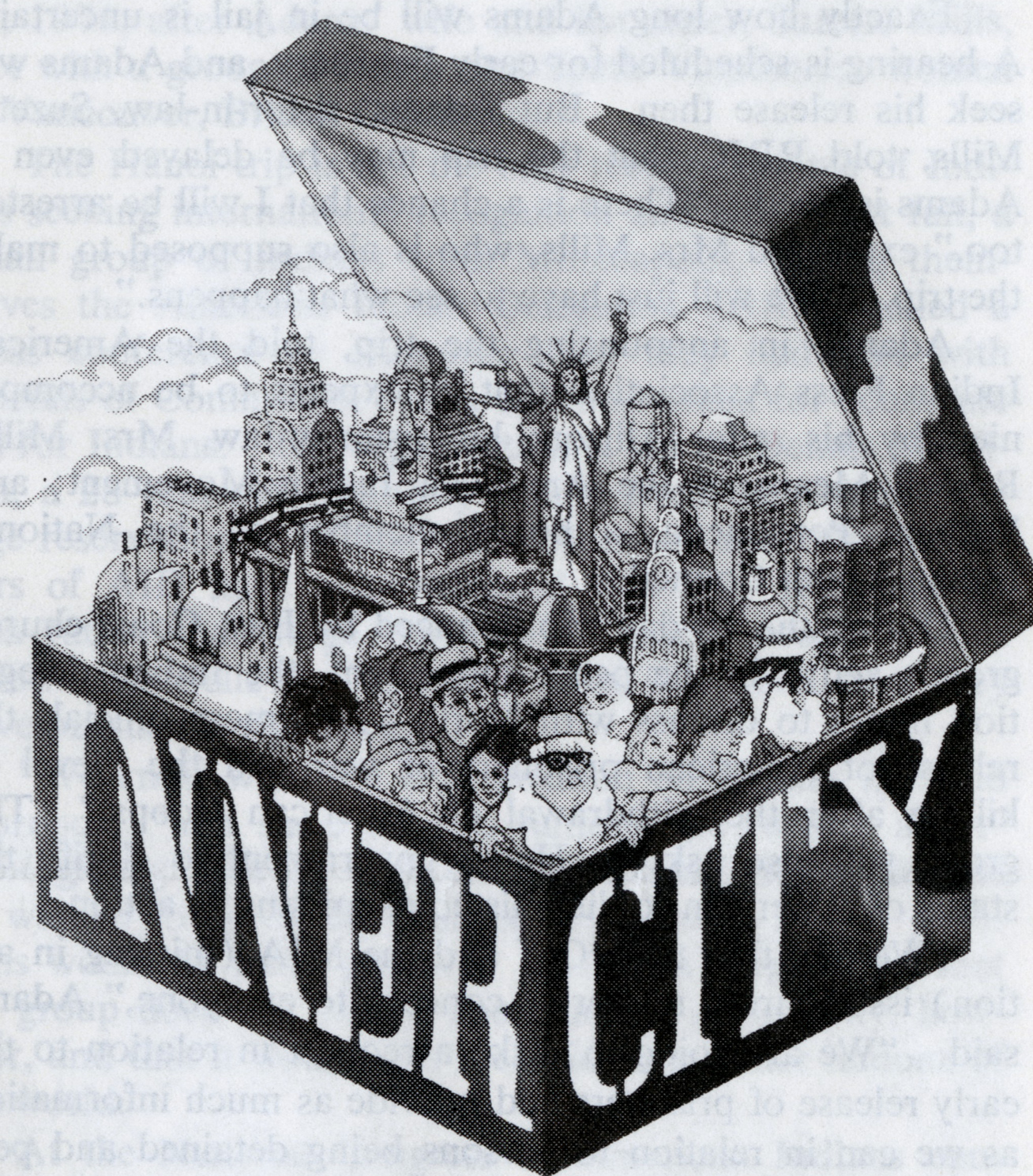
*New York Times* critic Clive Barnes's assessment of Van Peebles's play somewhat sums up both of the black-interest musicals on Broadway. "Whites can only treat (the play) as a journey to a foreign country, and on those terms I think it has the power to shock and excite," he wrote. "It is by no means a comfortable evening, and many Broadway theatregoers will not understand what it is saying (I am not sure I understand with anything more than my mind) nor will they appreciate the almost operatic free style of the way it is being said."

Both presentations look beyond the "Broadway theatregoer" for patronage, however. While the traditional fur coat set certainly is welcome, the promoters of "Inner City" have lowered its rates, to accommodate those who usually cannot afford Broadway's steep admission prices. Van Peebles's most notable promotional scheme has been to feature guest appearances by black television, film and recording stars. Also, the blacks in general have exhibited a willingness to promote one another's plays.

*How are the season's black-interest offerings being accepted, especially by whites? This is very important in a city where stage enthusiasts dutifully check critical reviews the way businessmen check the latest stock quotations. In New York—perhaps more so than in any other American city—a few hundred words from a critic can make or break any presentation.*

All of the dramas mentioned earlier have received at least one favorable review from the New York press. Appraisals of "Ain't Supposed to Die" resemble a chorus of hosannahs. But there have been several harsh criticisms, as well. Naturally, if an article appears unfavorable to its subject, that subject will take exception. But at a time when black artisans are questioning whites' capabilities to evaluate black culture, reactions to white criticisms bear some mention.

Ed Bullins, a prominent black playwright and one of the driving forces behind Harlem's New Lafayette, recently commented on white critics' negative reactions to his theatre's presentations of "The Psychic Pretenders," an Afro-jazz ballet on black unity. "It doesn't matter whether they (whites) appreciate it," he said. "It's not for them. They believe niggers come from the moon and don't have a message."



N. R. Davidson, author of "El Hajj Malik," suggested that whites get disturbed by the poignant messages of black drama. Commenting about white reactions to both his work and "Ain't Supposed to Die," Davidson recently concluded, "White people would rather see us singing 'Old Man River.' They don't come to black theatres for a message; they come for entertainment." Helen Miller, referring to today's style of play in general, contended that New York's three leading newspapers need young critics with young ideas "to replace those old men who can't understand anything new."

New York *Amsterdam News* entertainment editor Clayton Riley had one of the most scathing reactions to whites who panned "Ain't Supposed to Die." In the *New York Times*, last November, he wrote:

*... their declarations, despite what any urban scholarship may tell you, or whatever ... may have been recorded by many of this day's White (sic) drama critics, their (black playwrights) declarations are mostly expressions of love. ... Unless you feel that love, affection, caring are the exclusive province of the extravagantly beautiful, the rich, or the ex-wives of dead Presidents. Those White critics who were offended by the show failed to mention that no call for Whites to feel guilty is ever made in it. What I think confounded many reviewers was that Van Peebles has written a show in which the players ... express themselves in deeply moved and moving terms to other Black people. Some White critics seem to have the continuing and rather paranoid impression that any expression of love that does not mention Whites specifically is in fact an expression of hatred toward them.*

Blacks in New York theatre are aware of the breakthrough, this season. But they take more pride in the growth of black theatre companies in cities around the country. They regard their entry into drama as more than a chosen profession, and they are interested in more than just "getting a break"—that is, they see black drama as a means of reaching the black masses. As Van Peebles put it: "We want to heighten the consciousness of our people." He added, "It doesn't matter whether white people like it or not."

A brief analysis of two presentations shows how various playwrights go about "heightening the consciousness." "The Black Terror" is a no-holds-barred look at revolution. Wesley, a 26-year old who graduated from Howard University at the dawn of its black student activist movement, said he was inspired to write the play in 1970, after the police raids on Black Panther Party headquarters in Los Angeles and Chicago. "The Man" in "Ain't Supposed to Die" is not only the brutal cop; he is a white symbol above the stage, who pulls the strings over the black ghetto as if the residents were puppets.

While the surge of black drama is welcomed by blacks, many criticize what they consider an emphasis on the negative. *Jet* magazine critic Peter Bailey, for example, praised "Ain't Supposed to Die" and "Black Terror." But he added, "Even if just for novelty's sake, it would be great to see a play where black folks move and groove together to accomplish a desired goal." This feeling was echoed even by some of the cast of "Black Terror."

Such a presentation would be "The Psychic Pretenders," in which all ends well, with united and learned blacks moving forward. Wesley maintains that "Black Terror" is positive, inasmuch as the deposed revolutionary survives and already has vowed to engage in tedious community organization.

But whether the drama is "negative" or "positive," today's black in the theatre—regardless of his age—feels that his primary target is the black audience. This is true of veterans like Earl Sydnor, who portrays a black middle-class Uncle Tom in "Black Terror," and "Inner

City's" Paulette Ellen Jones, a relative newcomer. Ed Bullins said this is because, "unlike the cracker culture, we have something to work for—nation building." Some say that though they accept lucrative roles "downtown," they would prefer—and feel their basic responsibility is—working in black theatres "uptown."

But several also feel they have a message for whites—as well as well-heeled blacks. They have different ways of doing this. The blacks in "Inner City," for example, convey the message mainly by injecting their black personalities into their roles. Miss Jones, adlibbing, sometimes will demand the audience's attention while she talks about a black domestic "Cinderella" whose story ends in despair.

A striking example is Minnie Gentry's "Put a Curse on You," the chilling finale to "Ain't Supposed to Die." Following the rape of a black woman by two policemen and the police slaying of a fleeing theft suspect, a superstitious old woman (Miss Gentry) "casts a spell" on the audience. Often, she confronts front-row customers almost eye-to-eye. The "curse" is the same ills of the ghetto visited on the affluent who allow the conditions to continue.

*"That's the way I personally feel," she explained backstage, recently. "From the very beginning, when I move on to the stage at the opening parade, this is building from each situation and each incident. It's building within me, personally; the character is me. And finally, at the end, I mean that. I think it is valid, and I believe it."*

Chances are, developments of the current season signal the beginning of a new trend. Though the crowds have not been flocking to the Broadway presentations in record-breaking numbers, promoters obviously are aware of the interest blacks are beginning to show. Whether black playwrights will be given absolute control over their material is not certain. Some blacks are doubtful, though Van Peebles has encountered no censorship. Whether white critics and audiences will come to accept this bold, new drama *en masse* is uncertain. Most of the blacks contacted by the *Reporter* do not seem to have cared enough to give the matter much thought.

*This is because they fear that there is no way black drama can become a trend, without accommodating white tastes, which they fear means watering down the content. They are hopeful that the steady growth of black patronage of black drama will continue, in black areas of every locality. Many believe it will, now that more plays to which blacks can relate are available. Several said they also hope black critics will be more responsive to black drama. They accused black reviewers of what Wesley called "waiting for the white critics to say it's all right."*

Eve Merriam and Helen Miller, whose "Inner City" hasn't shown very much box office strength, are hopeful that this season's offerings have started a trend on Broadway. "It certainly took Broadway long enough," chided Ms. (she's a feminist who dislikes "Miss" and "Mrs.") Merriam. Commenting on the possibility that Oscar Brown Jr.'s "Kicks and Co." was a bit ahead of his time, she corrected, "No, Broadway was behind the times."

## Indians seek More Recognition

BY FRYE GAILLARD

A five-member delegation of American Indians is scheduled to visit North Vietnam in February or March at the invitation of Hanoi's Committee for Solidarity with American People. But the trip is now in jeopardy because its organizer, Hank Adams, has been jailed in the State of Washington.

Adams, a young Assiniboine Indian who heads the Survival of American Indians Association in Tacoma, Wash., turned himself in to police late in January after warrants were issued for his arrest. A six-month suspended jail sentence had been hanging over Adams' head since last year. He had been convicted of two counts of illegal net fishing during an Indian fishing rights demonstration three years ago.

State Prosecuting Attorney Smith Troy asked for an arrest warrant for Adams as soon as the Hanoi trip was announced. He acknowledged to Washington newsmen that the proposed trip prompted the request for warrants.

Exactly how long Adams will be in jail is uncertain. A hearing is scheduled for early February, and Adams will seek his release then. But Adams' sister-in-law, Suzette Mills, told RRIC that the trip may be delayed even if Adams is freed. "There is a chance that I will be arrested too," explained Mrs. Mills, who is also supposed to make the trip. "We will just have to see what happens."

Adams, in announcing the trip, told the American Indian Press Association that he expects to be accompanied by his wife, Allison; his sister-in-law, Mrs. Mills; Russell Means of the American Indian Movement; and William Pensoneau, a board member of the National Indian Youth Council.

During the 10-day trip financed by East Coast church groups active in the peace movement, the Indian delegation hopes to discuss with North Vietnamese officials the release of American prisoners of war and the "level of killing after the withdrawal of American troops." The group will also ask the Hanoi government to clarify the status of American soldiers listed as missing in action.

"We feel that the POW and the MIA (missing in action) issues are a matter of concern to everyone," Adams said. "We are going to make a request in relation to the early release of prisoners and provide as much information as we can in relation to persons being detained and persons who have died."

In an interview with the American Indian Press Association, Adams elaborated on the purpose of the trip. "We go to Vietnam as pro-American Indian people," he said, "holding, however, a judgment that America has been predominantly wrong in its roles in Vietnam. We're not anti-American. Indians in the U.S. have a more favored position than Indian people in virtually any other country in the Western Hemisphere—with the exception of those who have lived unmolested in the countries which have grown up around them."

Adams said he opposes what he calls "aberrations and deviations from the American spirit and purpose, not the spirit and purpose themselves. Our basic approach is going to be to get Vietnamese forces to conceptualize the importance of Indian people in the Western Hemisphere—not just in the U.S. alone—as critical to any revolutionary posture. Indian must be restored to international stature."

Russell Means, who also plans to make the trip, told RRIC the main purpose as far as he was concerned was to "seek international recognition for Indian nations." He did not say whether he meant formal diplomatic recognition, or simply an informal acknowledgement that Indian groups hold a place of importance in the world.

Adams said that, in addition to the possible jailing of members of the delegation, there are two factors that might endanger the trip. One is the hostility of the Communist Party U.S.A. to some of the Indians' stated positions, and the other is the possible intrusion of alien viewpoints and rhetoric by white-dominated peace groups who are serving as intermediaries. He said the Indians are unwilling simply to be used for purposes of others.

A spokesman for the National Indian Youth Council, which Adams helped to found more than ten years ago, said Adams began planning for the Hanoi trip back in the mid-1960's. The invitation was formally extended July 19, 1971, after Adams' wife and her sister, Suzette Mills, met with a group of North and South Vietnamese women in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Hanoi trip is not the only recent example of Indians seeking international recognition and aid. Last fall, a small group of Indians from Minneapolis, calling themselves the American Indian Delegation (AID), called a press conference to announce that they had met with officials of Communist China and had asked for economic aid for Indians. The organization is led by Dennis Morrison, a 28-year-old Objibway Indian from the Grand Portage reservation in Minnesota. Morrison and other members of AID have acknowledged that they represent an idea rather than large numbers of Indian people at this point. But believing that their idea is a good one, they have pursued it vigorously.

"We know what the U.S. position on Indians is," said Morrison, "and since no two nations are further apart" ideologically than the U.S. and Communist China, he said he wanted to see if the Chinese response to Indian problems would be more positive. Morrison emphasized that his group does not have a communistic philosophy, however, and that it would also seek aid from other nations of the world.

At the National Congress of American Indians convention last November, Morrison and two associates, Donald Gurnoe and Paulette Fairbanks, proposed a resolution asking NCAI in effect to seek independence for American Indians. The resolution, which was tabled, called for "a general referendum among all American Indian people and tribal governments to re-establish and form a separate, sovereign United American Indian Nation composed of all reservation land and existing ceded treaty lands not yet settled in the Indian Claims Commission." It also asked the United Nations and the World Court to "assist American Indians in the just settlement of illegal land

losses imposed by the United States government to date." Although the NCAI failed to act on the resolution, Morrison said he plans to continue seeking the goals it contains.

## Chicanos Unite in the Midwest

BY STEVE NICKESON

When most people think of Chicano political activity they relegate the entire effort to the Southwest. It's a myth that Spanish-speaking leaders would be happy to do without. While it is not a demeaning stereotype, it is a nuisance to nationwide Chicano unity. And it has also diverted attention from other Spanish-speaking people in the country and left them on the short end of the stick when it comes to programs and money from the federal government and private foundations.

"For years the federal bureaucracies, publishing companies and foundations have thought that if they affect Chicanos in the Southwest, they are affecting Chicanos nationwide," Ricardo Parra, executive director of the Midwest Council of La Raza Unida, told the *Reporter*. "But it just isn't true. The federal programs aren't even touching the surface of the problems here.

"There are 1.5 million Spanish-speaking people here in the Midwest and we are going to start letting people know we are here and that we are part of La Raza."

Parra said there have been two milestones in the organization of Midwest Chicanos. First was the initial meeting in April, 1970, when the Midwest Council of La Raza Unida was formed. The second was the recent Mi Raza Primero Conference held in Muskegon, Mich. He said the general indifference toward Chicanos in the Midwest had slightly retarded the development of interstate communication between Spanish-speaking people in that area. But he added, "We are together now."

The main purpose of Mi Raza Primero Conference, according to Parra, was education—the promotion of self-identity and political awareness. About 900 people attended the meeting, and represented 16 states. The main organizational emphasis was placed on the 10 Midwestern states from Ohio to Kansas, Missouri to Michigan. Specific political strategizing was limited to individual state caucuses, but the entire group passed four resolutions of a broad political nature.

Three of the resolutions asserted the group's support of all Spanish-speaking candidates and all candidates who are running on La Raza Unida's ticket, plus a commitment to support or create La Raza Unida Parties wherever possible. The fourth resolution was aimed at the democratization of election laws. Parra said the main impediments to La Raza Unida organizing in all sections of the nation were election laws designed to keep all political power in the two major parties and thwart the growth of third parties. The resolution passed at the Muskegon conference called for the elimination of high filing fees that were prohibitive to poor candidates, the legalization