

# THE NEGRO NOW BY ROBERT PENN WARREN

*Novelist, poet, essayist, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of All the King's Men, Band of Angels and Flood*

SOMEWHERE BACK IN the minds of many people, there is an image of the Negro leader—a glare-eyed robot propelled by a merciless mechanism, stalking forward over the smiling landscape, where good, clean American citizens (including well-adjusted Negroes) go happily about their constructive business. Many of us who are white—in our moments of stereotype and cartoon thinking—share that vision. In those moments, we do not realize that there is, in one sense, no Negro leader. There are, merely, a number of Negroes who happen to occupy positions of leadership.

And a number of those Negroes, some of the best advertised, did not seek such positions. Neither their training nor temperament nor aspirations had seemed to point in that direction. James Forman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Snick), who wanted to be a novelist, said to me he wished he could be talking about something other than the Negro Revolution—he wished the whole thing were over. The young Martin Luther King, Jr., with the beribboned sheepskin, proclaiming his new doctorate, to hang on the wall of his study in his first parsonage, could not

have foreseen the Montgomery Improvement Association, *Time's* cover and the Nobel Peace Prize. The whirl of history created a vacuum, and they were sucked in.

Some of them have, indeed, found in leadership a natural fulfillment. Here, the unsuspected talent and the unsuspected self have blossomed, and it is no crime for a man to feel at home with, and take pleasure in, what he can do well. Nor is it necessarily a crime to seek leadership. The will to power, grisly as it appears in certain lights, can mate, if uneasily, with love of justice and dedicated selflessness. Even in the bloody infighting among Negro leaders, more may be at stake than organizational aggrandizement or personal vanity; principles and policies may be involved too.

One should not be more appalled by complications among Negroes than by those among white people. Regardless of complexion, social movements are always powerful magnets for self-anointed prophets, spiritual DP's and deviants, sufferers from footless ambition, masochists, bloodclusters and common pilferers from the poor box; and it should be no wonder that the Negro Revolution has attracted some. What is remark-

able is that it has attracted so few—or that so few have risen to the threshold of public mention.

In general, the Negro leadership has given the public little reason to be appalled, for in a situation as complicated as this, it would not be easy to imagine a higher level of idealism, dedication and realistic intelligence. If leadership of that quality is supplanted by other, less savory types that are already lurking in the wings, and that certainly do not have any vision of a reconciled society, the white man has only himself to blame. Mayor Robert F. Wagner had only himself to blame if his European vacation, in the summer of 1964, was cut short by riots in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant; everybody knew there would be riots (except perhaps the Mayor), and everything he did afterwards by way of appeasement or amelioration could have been done beforehand and as part of a program that would have inspired the Negro community to some hope and confidence. Then, if there had been disorders, the issues would have been more clear-cut. Looters would have been looters and not liberty-looters.

If now in Mississippi—with no convictions for the Neshoba County killings of the three civil-  
continued

rights workers—terrorist organizations, like the Russian nihilists or the Stern Gang of Palestine, emerge among Negroes, then white people must, at one level, assume themselves responsible. Romantic, ruinous and desperate gestures are implicit in the situation. In reference to such a gang of “dedicated retaliators,” the Rev. Milton Galamison, leader of the New York school boycott, says: “I refuse to advocate violence as a principle, but almost all oppressed people have had such a group that will retaliate in kind, and this might serve some kind of purpose in bringing about a swifter resolution of a problem that exists.” How delicately Galamison balances the matter!

Whitney Young, Jr., of the National Urban League is right when he says that the leaders need victories in order to contain the danger of overreach and to forestall violence; they need something solid and negotiable in the Negro power market. If, in the summer of 1964, they had had something a little more solid and negotiable, James Farmer of CORE and John Lewis of SNICK perhaps could have strung along with Roy Wilkins of NAACP and the others in proclaiming a preelection moratorium on demonstrations. It seems that Farmer, in the spring of 1964, following a policy of sweet reason, had put himself on the defensive in repudiating the World’s Fair stall-ins; so, at the time of the summer riots and after, he had to insist on a stance of militancy or feel the jerk as the wild boys snatched the rug out from under his feet. If Farmer found himself forced to adopt the new stance, the white people helped force him. They had given little reason for the Negro to believe that they would surrender anything except under pressure. As Galamison put it, there was the fear that LBJ would go Right if he thought he had “the Negro people in his vest pocket.”

Negro leaders have, we can be quite certain, a sense of power, and they are willing to apply it when and where it pinches. For power is the key. What the Negro hasn’t the power to get, he won’t get. But power—as both Negroes and whites need to remember—may operate in more than one dimension. A number of Negroes, feeling the new headiness of power and not bothering to reflect deeply on the dimensions in which it may operate, think of a physical showdown in the streets as their big threat. According to the survey in *The Negro Revolution in America*, by William Brink and Louis Harris, some 52 percent of all Negroes think that if things came to gut-fighting, the Negro would win, and in the Northern slums, the percentage is higher. But among the leaders, the survey can discover only 29 percent who feel that, in a showdown, the Negroes would win; and I am certain that almost all of that 29 percent would be leaders in very low echelons. The leadership, aside from any theological or moral convictions about non-violence, is realistic. As the Rev. Ralph Abernathy of SCLC summed it up, “The white folks have more guns.” And he might have added that they have more votes, more money and more education.

Power in the absolute sense—even in the showdown short of gunpoint—is out for the Negro. Negro leadership, including even Malcolm X, is concerned with relative power, and the art of picking the spot where a little pinch will hurt a lot. For instance, in 1948, the Negro vote was significant, but in 1960, it actually elected a President. A Negro boycott might not do decisive damage to a Cadillac agency in Atlanta (and then, again, it might), but would certainly bring howling to his

knees a distributor of malt beverages in that city. The art is the art of locating the vulnerable point, and there are many kinds of vulnerability.

There is another aspect to the art of applying relative power. A man may say that he is a hard-core segregationist. But how hard is that core? Is it as hard as his love for, or need of, money? As his desire to have his children educated? As his preference for social order? As his wish to be considered respectable? As his simple inclination to stay out of jail? The only real hard-core segregationist is one whose feeling about Negroes takes precedence over all other feelings mobilized in a given situation. For instance, the feeling for segregation among the parents of Prince Edward County, Va., took precedence over their desire for education for their children. But when parents in some other Southern communities—such as Jackson, Miss.—band together to keep the schools open despite integration, though it is probable that those same parents would prefer to have the schools segregated, their desire to have a school takes precedence over the desire for segregation. In other words, in all sorts of subtle and shifting combinations, the Negro leadership is committed to playing a most complicated tune on the strings of white desires and convictions.

And the string the harpist touches most often, sometimes lightly, sometimes with an authoritative *whang*, is the white man’s desire to be a just man. For few men are willing to say: “I am unjust.”

To state it differently: By and large, the Negro leadership is concerned with relative power. There is one kind of power Negro leaders feel they have that is not relative. It is moral power. For by the white man’s own professed standards, the Negro is in the right.

It is clear to the Negro leaders that drift would doom the Revolution to a dwindling failure or a bloodbath. The floundering consequent upon such a lack of philosophy would deflate one of the proudest boasts of the New Negro—that he, for once, can set the terms on which the question of his fate will be treated. Furthermore, the floundering of the Negro leadership would invite, in the white reaction, similar floundering, similarly disastrous. And, perhaps worst of all, the lack of a philosophy would invite the adventurer to try his hand. But what is to prevent drift or confusion?

We must recognize that the option does not lie between drift and confusion on one hand and an ironbound, brass-studded orthodoxy on the other. Fortunately, a number of Negroes in key, or influential, positions are men of intellectual power and depth of purpose, and these men have put their minds on these problems. This is not to say that one man puts his mind on all the problems, but the thinking of one man supplements that of another. What is important in this communal effort is not the quick whipping up of an orthodoxy, but the envisagement of a number of possibilities, options, relations and consequences to be intellectually analyzed and imaginatively explored.

There may be, and sometimes obviously are, violent disagreements on general policy or on particular programs of action. In fact, there is always the possibility of a fundamental split in leadership, with the resultant danger of violence as some fragment of the movement spins out of control. But as long as even the characteristically uneasy cooperation prevails, centripetal force will probably continue to balance the centrifugal, and the communal effort will continue to mean that choices of action

Text continued on page 29

# WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO?

*“There is no Negro leader.” Robert Penn Warren says. “There are, merely, a number of Negroes who happen to occupy positions of leadership.” On this and the following pages, four of the most prominent occupants of those positions candidly discuss their fellow leaders and the problems of leadership.*

## Martin Luther King, Jr.

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

*“There’s always the danger that an oppressed group will seek to rise from a position of disadvantage to one of advantage—thereby subverting justice. It can lead to the kind of philosophy you get in the Black Nationalist movements—black supremacy. Many revolutions have been centered on destroying something. In this revolution, the quest is for the Negro to get into the stream of American life. It’s a revolution calling on the nation to live up to what is already there in an idealistic sense. Part of the job of leadership is to keep the hope alive and yet keep righteous indignation alive, the healthy discontent that will keep a revolution moving.”*



Stuchs.

## Whitney Young, Jr.

URBAN LEAGUE

*"One of the tragedies of the whole civil-rights movement is the inability of the white person to distinguish significant Negro leadership. For example, any Negro who achieves a certain amount of prominence—a Cassius Clay or a Willie Mays—when he utters something about race relations is treated as an expert. There are many people who now are able to write about it, make a wonderful living on it, but let's not confuse this with leadership. A great preoccupation of the white press, whether with Malcolm X or Baldwin or Adam Powell, is a kind of guilt feeling, saying, 'Beat me, daddy, I feel guilty.' . . . There aren't 10 Negroes who'd follow Malcolm X to a separate state. The only appeal he has is to give a Negro who's been beaten down all day a chance to get a vicarious pleasure out of hearing somebody cuss out the white people."*

## Roy Wilkins

NAACP

*"In the present state of Negro-white relations, and the scramble that's going on to get on record and to be uncompromising and to be militant and demanding, people say a lot of things in public about white people having to conform to this—white people must give up that—white people must recognize—white people must, must, must. This is a sure way to get on television and to get quoted and to cause tremors in some quarters—or, at least, if not tremors, head-scratching and soul-searching. They don't know us, we say. We know about them, we're so sure, but they don't know about us. Now, when they come over and try to find out about us, why don't we teach them, instead of saying to them, 'We look on you with suspicion. You're just trying to ingratiate yourselves. You don't know how to get on in the Negro world.'"*

Protect  
Her  
Future

reater Nev

REGISTER  
AND  
VOT

THE IDEA OF FRE  
ALIVE





## James Farmer

CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY

*"What is apt to happen now is a competition among Negro leadership, based on the fastest footwork. One man who has fast footwork is Adam Clayton Powell. He has no real relation to the masses—two homes and four cars. He keeps officially a little apartment someplace in Harlem—but [has] this mansion in Puerto Rico and everything else. Yet Powell knows the masses, and he can speak to them, and he becomes a lower-class leader. Malcolm is another one. Malcolm is not lower-class, but he has the footwork to keep pace. He doesn't lead the masses, but he reflects them and verbalizes what they are thinking."*

do not have to be made blind. Whatever choices may be made, the purpose is presumably to bring the Negro into full and responsible participation in American society—that is, to achieve integration. But what is integration? For some, integration is rhetoric; for some, it is lines on a school map; for some, it is a quota in a Federally subsidized housing project; for some, it is FEPC. It is, in one sense, all of these things, but at the same time, it is none. It is, ideally considered, the state of mind, the condition of the soul, in which human recognition and appreciation would be mutually possible for us all, black and white.

In speaking of a state of mind and a condition of the soul, I am not complacently repeating President Dwight D. Eisenhower's notion that "you cannot change people's hearts by law." To say that a certain condition of heart must generally and ideally prevail before a social change can occur is to say that no social change can ever come except in the sweet by-and-by. We know from history that you do not achieve an ideal spiritual condition, and then set up a society to express it. Ideals grow out of the act of living, out of the logic of life; and in a long dialectic, even as they grow, they modify living. And so, for all practical purposes, we may think of integration as that process by which we exercise our will to realize and explore, individually and institutionally, that ideal of mutual human recognition and appreciation. If we take this approach, we render irrelevant all the debate about race—whether it is "real" or merely a "superstition." And in doing so, we even undercut the argument, so dear to so many liberals, that the Negro is only, as the historian Kenneth Stampp argues, a white man with a black face. For we are assuming that *if* he is more than that, he may even be more interesting. For if there is a human community to be "recognized," there are also human differences to be "appreciated"—and sometimes, we may add, criticized.

Negro leadership is inevitably concerned with trying to define the crucial points and predict and control institutional development in that process of integration. But since the process of integration is part of the process by which a free society evolves, it is very hard to predict particular arrangements. By its very definition, a free society is one in which there is a maximum range for all people in the expression of taste and preference, and it is very hard to predetermine what, under shifting circumstances, people will want.

Let us assume a time when all desirable legal, economic and social reforms have been accomplished, and there is a reasonable sincerity in white acceptance of them. Now, in that free society of civil rights, fair employment, welcoming suburbs, general prosperity and brotherly love, who has the slightest notion how many Negroes might perversely choose to live in their own communities—James Farmer and Ruth Turner of CORE predict many would—and how many would bleed off into the prevailing white society? There may be, of course, some doctrinaire bureaucrat skulking in the bushes who thinks he can plan it all out and, at benign gunpoint, make Negroes eat cake—i.e., move to Scarsdale, N.Y. But it is doubtful that, in that happy time to come, he could swing it if the Negroes didn't really want that kind of cake.

Some Negro leaders do, no doubt, want to make Negroes eat cake, but it would seem that the great majority of them merely defend the right of a Negro to eat whatever he wants, or will, under new circumstances, want—even turnip greens and

hog jowl. Ruth Turner, and others, have observed that once the barriers are down, the human need to "prove" certain things tends to disappear. With freedom, a man doesn't have to think he wants to live in a certain place merely because he is not permitted to. As the novelist Ralph Ellison says: "When the political structure changes and desegregation is achieved, it will be easily seen where Negroes were stopped by law and where they would have stopped anyway, because of income and their own preference—a matter of taste."

If Negroes can't predict as simple a thing as where they might want to live, think of the difficulty in imagining what integration in its deeper aspects might mean.

The word "integration" refers to a shifting, shadowy mass of interfusing possibilities. It refers, in short, to the future. Here, not only the unpredictability of the future is involved, but the fact that among Negroes—among Negro leaders—there is no commonly held vision of what they want the future to be.

Whatever integration may come to mean, it will mean a great change; and change, however deeply willed, is always shocking; old stances and accommodations, like the twinge of an old wound, are part of the self, and even as we desire new life and more life, we must realize that a part of us—of each individual person, black or white—has to *die* into that new life. And there is, of course, the unappeasable resentment that many Negroes must carry, and the suspicion of anything white—sometimes compounded because there is a chic of anger and an imperative of suspicion. I remember a pretty young woman who would not eat with her white guests. Her husband said to me later, "It's funny about my wife. The way she is. She just doesn't like to be around white people."

Many Negro leaders—more and more of them—are becoming aware of the fundamental need for an act of imagination to deal as systematically as possible with that fog of contingency that is the future. For many know that if you do not try to feel into, predict and examine the possibilities of the future, you will become the victim of the future.

Judge William Hastie of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals points out that the leader of any movement must play a double game: "One of the great problems of leadership is that, though ideas be oversimplified in the minds of people, the leadership with more sophisticated thinking attempts to adjust itself to the total need, viewed in a sophisticated way." In other words, the leader must be able to shout the slogan—but he must know its meaning at a level very different from that at which it starts the squirt of adrenalin in the bloodstream of the good foot soldier.

While moving through the hot dust or black mire of a backcountry road in Mississippi, Robert Moses of Snick tries "to see ahead to what the shape of this country will look like in ten years." He gets lost, he says, but he tries to see.

There is another question of means and ends that is acutely important for Negro leadership. A free society, one in which there is a range of choice for the individual, is the minimal aim of the Revolution. But it is clear that a certain amount of force is required to create the context for this freedom.

It is all too easy to call for force; it is sometimes hard to know how to pick up the pieces afterwards. Some years ago, in the course of a conversation about the 1954 Supreme Court school-desegregation decision, Carl Rowan, the journalist who became head of the United States Information

Agency, said to me that "bayonets are very educational." They are. They were used with marked educational effect in Little Rock and Oxford, and I cannot see that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy had any choice, for the duty of the Government is to govern. But I should doubt that Rowan, after his prolonged sojourn in the shifting lights and shadows of the political jungle, would now be as gaily prompted to pick up that particular hickory stick to beat out the tune for education.

In matters outside of education, it is easily understood why the Negro, suspicious or contemptuous of local and state government, turns to Washington for protection and redress. Without Federal intervention, he may not get the vote—or even live out the day; and if it had not been for the FBI, the three bodies would have lain forever under the dam near Philadelphia, Miss., and no arrests would ever have been made. I hazard, in an unwelcome way, that the Negro Revolution will work some shift in the relation of Washington to state and local authorities, and that may be all to the good. But the appeal to Washington may raise real problems, not merely legalistic ones, about the centralization of power.

THE DOCTRINE of states' rights has frequently been used, and is being used, as an alibi and a screen for some very unworthy proceedings—often quite cynically used and only for some special ad hoc advantage, with total contempt for the principle as principle. But the doctrine of states' rights, as it now anachronistically appears, is a very different thing from responsible localism, and we must ask ourselves if we are prepared to inaugurate a system in which such localisms are encouraged to wither—or to have their roots cut. One thing is certain: In the concentration of power, there is no guarantee of the virtuous exercise thereof.

There is a need for double vision: Force of any kind used for immediate tactical purposes, however worthy, has to be regarded in relation to the freedom being striven for; and the human context in which that freedom is to be exercised. What is now sauce for the goose might someday turn out to be sauce for any number of outraged ganders.

Although on many important questions there is no consensus among Negro leaders, this lack of consensus, of an orthodoxy, should be of cold comfort to the hard-shelled segregationist, for there are matters on which Negro leaders are in agreement. And these are bedrock matters.

Negro leaders have the will and the strength to demand that they be recognized and respected. As Judge Hastie emphasizes, nothing that the white man can give the Negro is as important as the respect he withholds. And he goes on to say: "As the Negro wins the white man's respect, regardless of fondness or affection, it becomes easier for the two to deal with each other. That respect can no longer be denied."

The Negro leaders are in agreement in their will to face the white man across the table, or across the gun muzzle or hose muzzle, eyeball to eyeball. Behind him, each leader feels the weight of the mass of Negroes who may walk straighter because of what he does. As Dr. King has put it, in *Why We Can't Wait*: "The Revolution of the Negro not only attacked the external cause of his misery, but revealed him to himself. He was *somebody*. He had a sense of *somebodiness*." Dr. King has also written: "The upsurge of power in the civil-rights movement has given it greater maneuver-

ability . . . to form alliances, to make commitments in exchange for pledges, and if the pledges are not redeemed, it remains powerful enough to walk out. . . ." The Negro leaders are determined that whatever change now comes in the status of the Negro will not come, as in the past, as merely a by-blow of the white man's history.

Some people say that the present success of the Negro's drive for recognition as a citizen of the United States is, again, only a by-blow of the white man's history—that as the war between the North and the South made emancipation possible, so the Cold War, in conjunction with the rise of Africa, makes success possible in the Negro's present endeavor. In one very broad sense, this is true: Nothing happens without context. But in another and more significant sense, it is false. History does provide the context in which the Negro's power—a relative power—may be used, but the will to use that power, the method of assembling it and the strategy of its deployment are the work of the Negro himself. It is clear now that the Negro intends to be a maker, not a victim, or, to use Howard Zinn's term, a mere "hitchhiker" of history.

Even those leaders who recognize that the Negro cannot go it alone are agreed on this. They even feel independent of the white money that has, in considerable part, financed the Negro Revolution. And though, as is generally agreed, it would be healthier if there were more Negro money in the pot, it still seems highly improbable that the white hand that holds the purse strings can control policy. It would require a higher-than-usual quotient of paranoia to see here a white plot to control Negro policy. For another thing, the number and variety of Negro organizations and leaders would scarcely permit white control of policy. The logic of the moment prescribes Negro leadership.

**T**HE MOST BEDROCK of all matters on which Negro leaders agree is simple: They mean business. They have been to jail, they have been beaten, they have been shot, and they are still in business. And they are in business for the long pull. However loudly in the schizophrenia of leadership they may shout "Freedom Now!" they know that the pull will be long.

Months before the college students began to pour into Mississippi in 1964 to work in the voter-registration drive, Robert Moses told me it would be ten years before the Negroes could elect a single legislator. And Ronnie Moore, a Louisiana civil-rights worker, had counted each change of heart a victory, and such victories add up slowly.

How far has the Negro come in the past decade? The major victories can be listed in a few sentences. A record six million Negroes registered to vote in November, 1964, hundreds of thousands send their children to unsegregated schools, thousands live in unsegregated houses, thousands at least feel that it is worthwhile to apply for jobs once considered automatically closed to them.

But Whitney Young, Jr., reminded me how far the Negro, and the United States, still have to go. According to his statistics, 20 percent of all Negro workers are unemployed. Family income for Negroes is 53 percent of white income, and the gap is widening. Of 1,000,000 young people (under 21) who are out of school and out of work, 50 percent are Negroes. Negroes get three and one-half years' less school than whites. The Negro adult life span is seven years shorter than the white. Negro infant mortality is actually increas-

ing. Unless the situation of the Negro can be relieved, unless he can be drawn productively into the economic mainstream of American life, civil rights become a travesty.

It will be a long pull, and the leaders are willing to face the hard fact. Many of them are even willing to face the harder fact that the iniquity of the white man is not the only reason it will be a long pull. But they can face the long pull because they know they will win. They are riding the tide of history, and they know it. And part of that tide is their own conviction of strength.

What reaction has the white man had to the Negro Revolution? And on what terms can mere reaction be converted into action?

We cannot discuss this question about the white man in a lump. For the white man is not a lump. To make the simplest relevant division, there is the Southern white man, and the Northern (or non-Southern) white man. They are different from one another, and the difference is a little more than what James Baldwin suggests when he says that the South and the North merely have different ways of castrating you.

As a basis for indicating this difference, we may set up a little formula:

*In the South, the Negro is recognized, but his rights are not.*

*In the North, the rights of the Negro are recognized, but he is not.*

But the formula needs a little footnote. If, in the South, as white Southerners like to claim, the Negro is recognized as human, this occurs only when the Negro is in certain roles. If, in the North, the Negro's rights are recognized, they are recognized only in the legal sense; the shadow of a "human right" rarely clouds the picture.

What is the white Southerner ready to concede? He has had a shock. All at once, with little or no preparation, he has been confronted with the fact that what his cook or yard boy or tenant farmer had told him is not true. It is not true that the colored folks invariably just love the white folks. It is not true that the colored folks invariably like it the way it is. It is not true that just a few "bad niggers" are making all the trouble. It is not true that just some "Jew Communists" are making the trouble. A lot of things are not necessarily true. And maybe, even, never were.

If the white Southerner is a book-reading man, he is in for another shock when he finds out that certain things he had been taught in school as gospel aren't true either. These things include some very important bits of anthropology, psychology and history—even Southern history, particularly of the Reconstruction. It is a shock, too, to discover that a high percentage of the faculties of Southern colleges (including, even after massive diaspora, a number at Oxford, Miss.) don't believe in segregation, that one professor of unimpeachably Southern origin, C. Vann Woodward, is the author of a book called *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, and that a professor of "Ole Miss," a past president of the Southern Historical Association and, incidentally, a friend of Dr. Aaron Henry of NAACP, wrote a book called *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. It is a shock to discover that 11 members of the faculty of the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University resigned when a Negro student organizing the Nashville sit-ins was expelled, or that Ralph (better known in the States' Rights party and Citizens Council as "Rastus") McGill of the Atlanta *Constitution* got a Medal of Free-

dom from the hands of Lyndon Johnson (another Southerner of dubious inclinations).

It is a shock to realize that in Marietta, Ga., the biggest single airplane factory in the world employs high-placed Negro engineers, mathematicians and technicians, and, more horrendously, Negro foremen bossing white workers; that an Arkansas bank president is willing to hire Negro tellers because, as he puts it, "It's coming." It is a shock to realize that the Memphis *Press-Scimitar* strongly supported the civil-rights bill. Or to read an editorial in the student paper of Vanderbilt University rebuking the dean of women for trying to ease out a co-ed who had allowed herself to be kissed good-night by a Negro student (not a Vandy man) at the dormitory door:

"In dating the Negro, the co-ed was violating no rule of this University. Any rule forbidding such conduct would be incompatible with the tenets of the institution, which prides itself as being a center of tolerance for diverging behavior, so long as the behavior violates no valid, legal or moral rule. That is why we see Dean —'s behind-the-scenes enforcement of a regional social norm as placing the University in a somewhat hypocritical stance. If there are any man-made institutions that still can afford to respect integrity of principle, it seems that a university should make the greatest effort."

**S**UCH ITEMS are even more shocking to many white Southerners than the discovery that Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James E. Chaney had really been butchered and buried under the dam, and had not run off and hidden just to get publicity, as Neshoba County Sheriff L. A. Rainey had chosen to believe. The discovery of the corpses under the dam is not as shocking because, deep down and unacknowledged in his guts, the Southerner knows that that event, evil as it is, is implicit in the structure of the society in which he lives.

The other discoveries are not, he had thought, implicit in his society. Therefore, he is shocked. It is not evil that shocks, it is the unexpected.

Long before these recent shocks, the white Southerner, in one dimension of his being, had harbored the scarcely specified memory of a gallantly defeated nationalism, and had felt himself part of a culture waning sadly before the dominant American ethos. Now, when the world, which even in its decay had seemed stable, begins to crack, he is shaken to the core. He is then inclined to strike back blindly.

With the white Southerner, the striking back has a special desperation, for, in a way, he strikes at the part of himself that has sold out, that is the household traitor, that lusts after the gauds and gewgaws of high-powered Yankeeedom. He is killing his bad self, and suddenly stands clean in the good self, guilt washed away—by somebody else's blood. The mystical, compulsive thing comes out over and over: I have had a dozen Southerners involved in the "resistance" tell me they didn't expect to win, they "just somehow had to do it."

So, if the Negro is experiencing a "crisis of identity," the white Southerner is too. And now and then, we get hints of some sort of mutual recognition of the fact. The jailer in Jackson, Miss., comes down to tell Stokely Carmichael of Snick good-bye, and clasps the steel bar and weeps and tries to explain what is happening to him. He wants to be understood. And in some sort of recognition springing from his own plight, he knows that the



Negroes are "sincere," that they have to do what they have to do. And the same thing appears with the sheriff of Canton, who, as Robert Moses reports, said to several Negro Snick workers: "Well, you are fighting for what you believe is right, and you're going to fight. And we are fighting for what we believe is right, and we're going to fight also." Here and elsewhere, we find the sense of both the Southern white man and the Negro being caught in the same unspecified thing—acting out a role.

It is easy to say to the Southerner that he should give up his Southern-ness and just be a good American. It is easy to say to the Negro that he should give up his Negro-ness and just be a good American—in incidental black face. Negroes and white Southerners do, in fact, want to be Americans, but by and large, they want to be themselves too; and the fact that both belong to minorities means that both may cling defensively to what they are, or what they take themselves to be. They may refuse to be totally devalued, gutted and scraped before being flung into the melting pot. But that is one solution, and some Negroes and white Southerners, in self-hatred or in self-seeking, accept it; they "pass."

It is not the only solution. For the Southerner, a much more significant and healthy solution is to inspect what his Southern-ness really means. If he chose to dip into the history of his South, he would find that it is a very complicated thing; that the orthodoxy of slavery (for which, in later times, read "segregation" as the emotional equivalent) was a very late growth, and did not number among its adherents many a man who gallantly wore the sacred gray, among them Robert E. Lee; that Charleston, S.C.—in fact, the whole Confederacy—between 1861 and 1865 was more tolerant of the dissident than is Mississippi today; that segregation was a latter-day artificial phenomenon that many a Confederate veteran, in his self-certainty, would have found absurd, or perhaps an insult to his own personal liberties.

**T**HE modern white Southerner, if he looks a little deeper than the rhetoric of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the hustings, might decide that being against segregation would not necessarily mean that he is spitting on Grandpa's grave, or is lacking in piety for those who held ranks up Cemetery Ridge on July 3, 1863, or for those who rode with Nathan Bedford Forrest. The white Southerner might realize that human history is a story of the constant revision of values, and that the mastodon frozen in the glacier is not necessarily the creature most worthy of emulation. He might realize that a revision of values was implicit in the very past that commands his piety. He might find many ancestors, spiritual or biological, who would not see eye to eye with Faubus, Wallace, Paul Johnson or Bull Connor. Yes, the white Southerner might find some ancestors who, were they alive, would not agree with the current heroes of Klan or Council, and would not be afraid to say so. That fact might even give the present-day Southerner the courage to say that he, too, disagrees.

Discovering his past, the Southerner might find himself, and the courage to be himself. He might free himself from a stereotype that does violence to some of his own deeply cherished values and to the complexity of his history. He might realize that the obscene caricatures of humanity who have made Philadelphia, Miss., newsworthy are

scarcely the finest flower of Southern chivalry or the most judicious arbiters of the Southern tradition. He might rediscover the strong and cantankerous brand of democratic temper that is part of his heritage—and then reapply it. He might begin the reapplication by insisting on his right to reject the ready-made attitudes of the local press or the local politico or the local bully boys, and to seek facts and make judgments for himself.

The Yankee, like the white Southerner, has been in for a shock. He has lived in his dream world too. I have heard many a Yankee say of Negroes, "Who do they think they are?" Or: "They've got every chance anybody has if they'd just get off relief." Or: "Look at the way they're acting, after all we've done for them up here." However little he likes the fact, the white man on the commuter train to Westchester has had to lift his eyes from the *Wall Street Journal*, to paraphrase Whitney Young, Jr., and look up the streets of Harlem. Or Harlem has come busting into his living room to dominate the TV screen. The Yankee white man, at last, has had to recognize the Negro as a human being, sometimes a rather appalling human being. And he has had to realize that the legal rights he had so complacently regarded all these years as his largess to the Negro hadn't, in themselves, amounted to a hill of beans.

If the Yankee is a liberal—even if he is what is called a "fighting liberal" and has signed statements and sponsored dinners and rung doorbells and made speeches and gone to biracial parties and has a life membership in the NAACP—he is apt to discover that nobody is very grateful to him. Nobody is going to be very grateful to him just because he gives a "freedom dance" (discreetly integrated) in Westchester or a "freedom garden party" on Long Island, tickets \$100 a couple, and sends the take to help liberate Mississippi. In fact, in regard to Mississippi, he might find it a penitential exercise to ponder a remark by James Farmer, who says that, among Northern supporters, he has observed a slightly greater willingness to give to a project earmarked for Mississippi than for one next door, "for it is always easier to slay cobras in Borneo."

Not only may the Yankee liberal find that gratitude is in short supply; he may find that even the most charitable Negro is apt to regard him as a quaint figure of fun, a curious relic in the body politic like the spleen, without function. The only way he can be sure to regain function, and even then not in all circles, is to go to jail or get his head cracked by the "rosewood"—which is what the cop's stick is called in Harlem. Even then, his function is to play third fiddle and take orders. He is declassified; and this is the worst shock of all.

No, the worst shock for the Yankee is to discover what he, himself, really feels. He has to find out if he really wants a Negro family next door. If he really wants to take orders from a Negro department head. If he really wants to be arrested by a Negro cop. If he really wants to have his children bused into a school in a Negro neighborhood. If he really wants a tax boost for a crash program for the "disadvantaged"—i.e., Negroes. If he really wants his daughter on mixed dates. If he really wants for himself this, that and the other thing that he used to think was just fine for somebody else—usually some degrees of latitude down the social or geographic scale. He is, in fact, not only going to find out what he really wants. He is going to find out what he himself really is.

And if he is a book-reading man, he may find out, too, what his grandfather was. Even if his grandfather was a dyed-in-the-wool, card-carrying Abolitionist who regarded Abraham Lincoln as a minion of slaveocracy and, to quote Wendell Phillips, "the hell-hound of Illinois," he is apt to find out that the old boy—his grandfather—was also a dyed-in-the-wool racist. He is apt to find out that most Northern states then denied Negroes the franchise, and, even after the Civil War, Connecticut, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and Kansas voted down proposals for Negro suffrage, and that it wasn't until 1870 that the Fifteenth Amendment was passed; and that in New York City, a Negro couldn't ride the streetcar or attend an unsegregated ward school. He is apt to find out that Reconstruction was a time replete with shame, brutal grabs, ignoble deals on the back stairs and defaulting on high pledges, and that all this was not south of the Ohio River. He will find out that the noise he heard in his dream was somebody knocking the molasses jug off a very high shelf, and now he has to pick up the pieces, and they are sticky. He has to leave his dream and put reality back together again—the reality of America and himself.

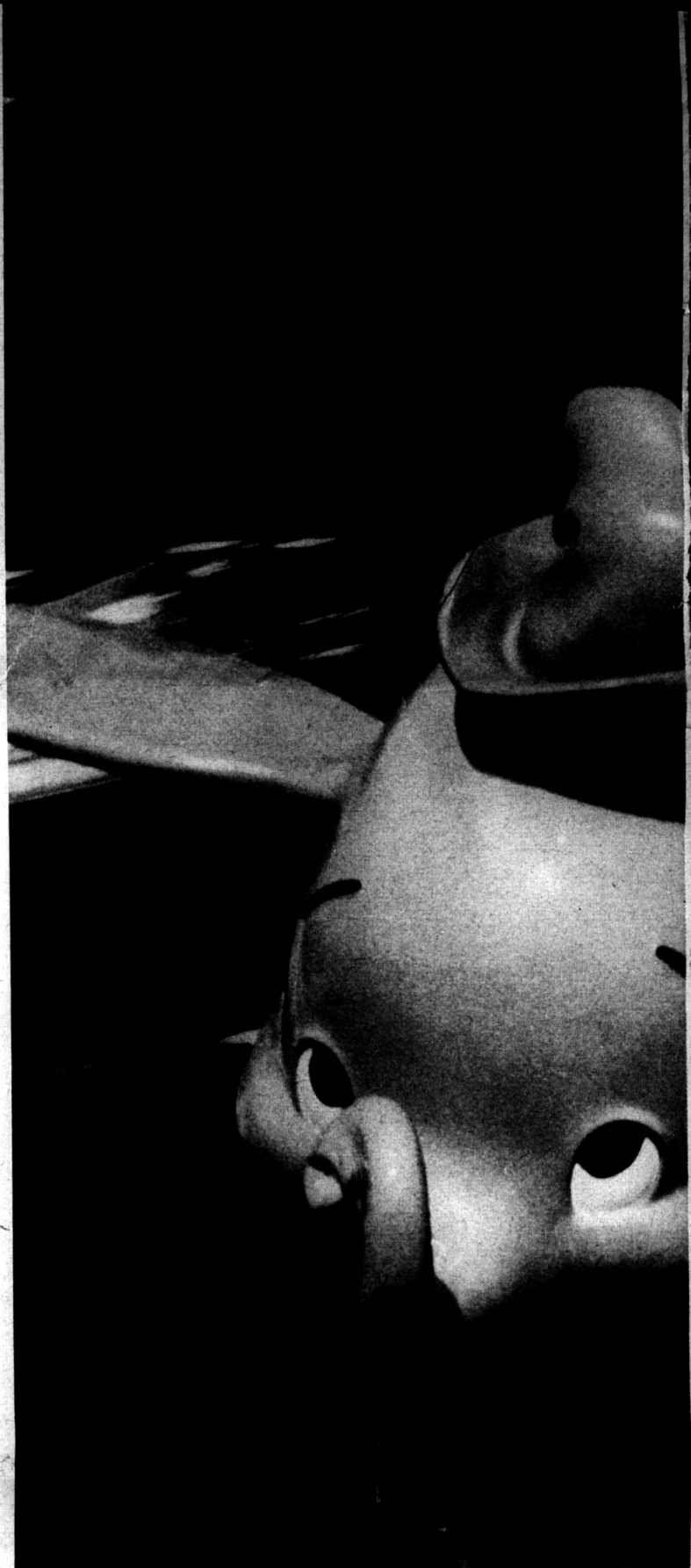
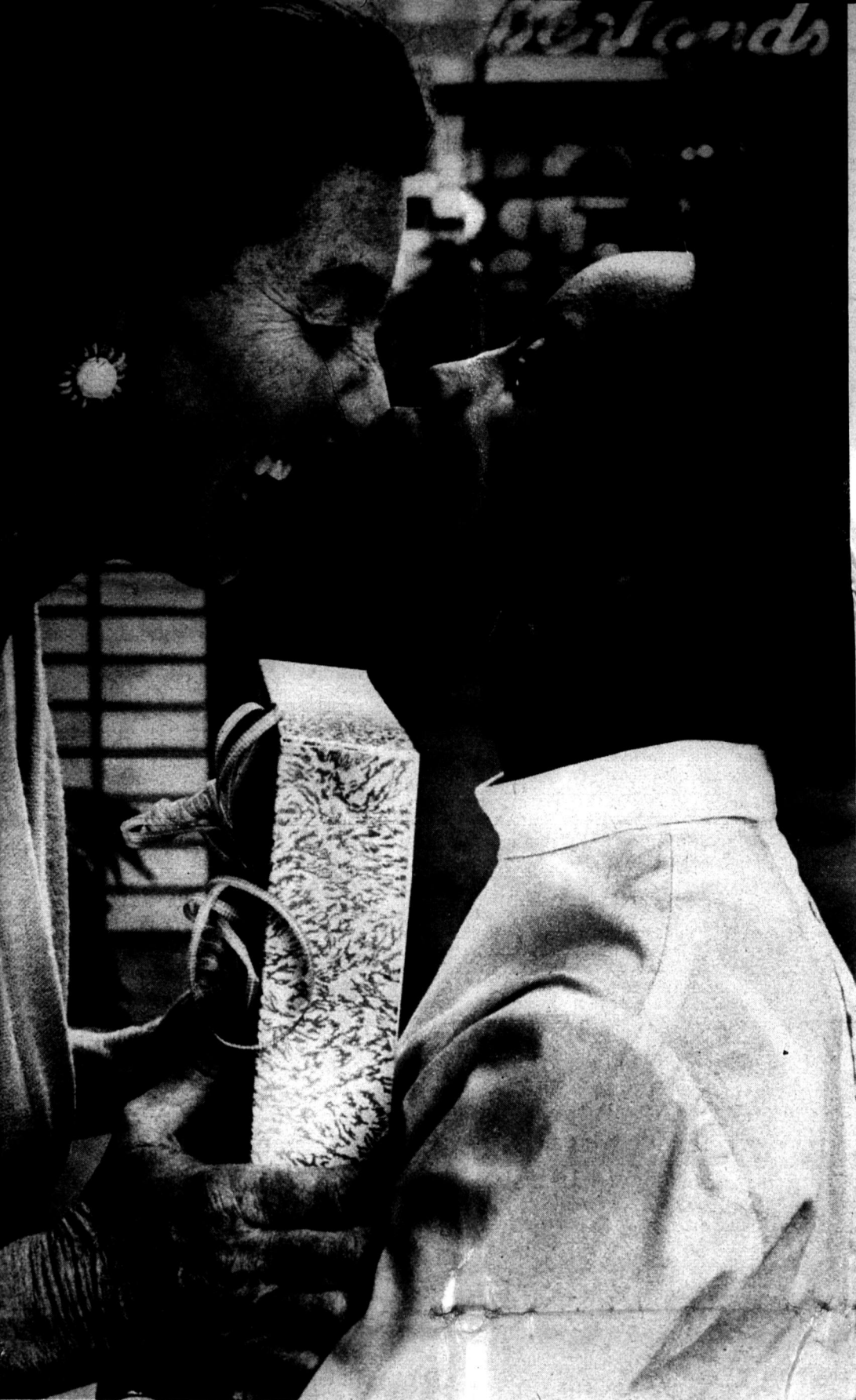
**O**UT OF THE TWO different kinds of shock that the Southerner and the Yankee have had, they may now be able to extract recognition of the desperate gravity of the situation. Out of the shock, they both may extract, too, self-discovery. Face to face with the Negro, and recognizing his human reality and the basic justice of his demands, they may now be able to substitute reasoned action for automatic reaction: to the Negro and to each other.

There is one kind of sentimentality that the white man cannot afford: a sentimentality about himself. He cannot afford to feel that he is going to redeem the Negro. For the age of philanthropy is over, and it would be a vicious illusion to think that, if he acts now to resolve the problem, he is giving something away, is being "liberal," or is performing an act of charity, Christian or any other kind. The safest, soberest, most humble and perhaps not the most ignoble way for him to think of grounding his action is, not on generosity, but on a proper awareness of self-interest.

It is self-interest to want to live in a society operating by the love of justice and the concept of law. We have not been living in such a society. It is self-interest to want all members of society to contribute as fully as possible to the enrichment of that society. The structure of our society has prevented that. It is self-interest to seek friends and companions among those whose experience and capacities are congenial with and extend our own. Our society has restricted such a quest. It is self-interest to want to escape from the pressure to conform to values that we feel immoral or antiquated. Our society has maintained such pressures. It is self-interest to want to escape from the burden of vanity into the hard and happy realization that in the diminishment of others, there is a deep diminishment of the self.

It would be sentimentality to think that our society can be changed easily and without pain. It would be worse sentimentality to think that it can be changed without some pain to our particular selves—black and white. It would be realism to think that that pain would be a reasonable price to pay for what we all, selfishly, might get out of it: our own freedom.

END



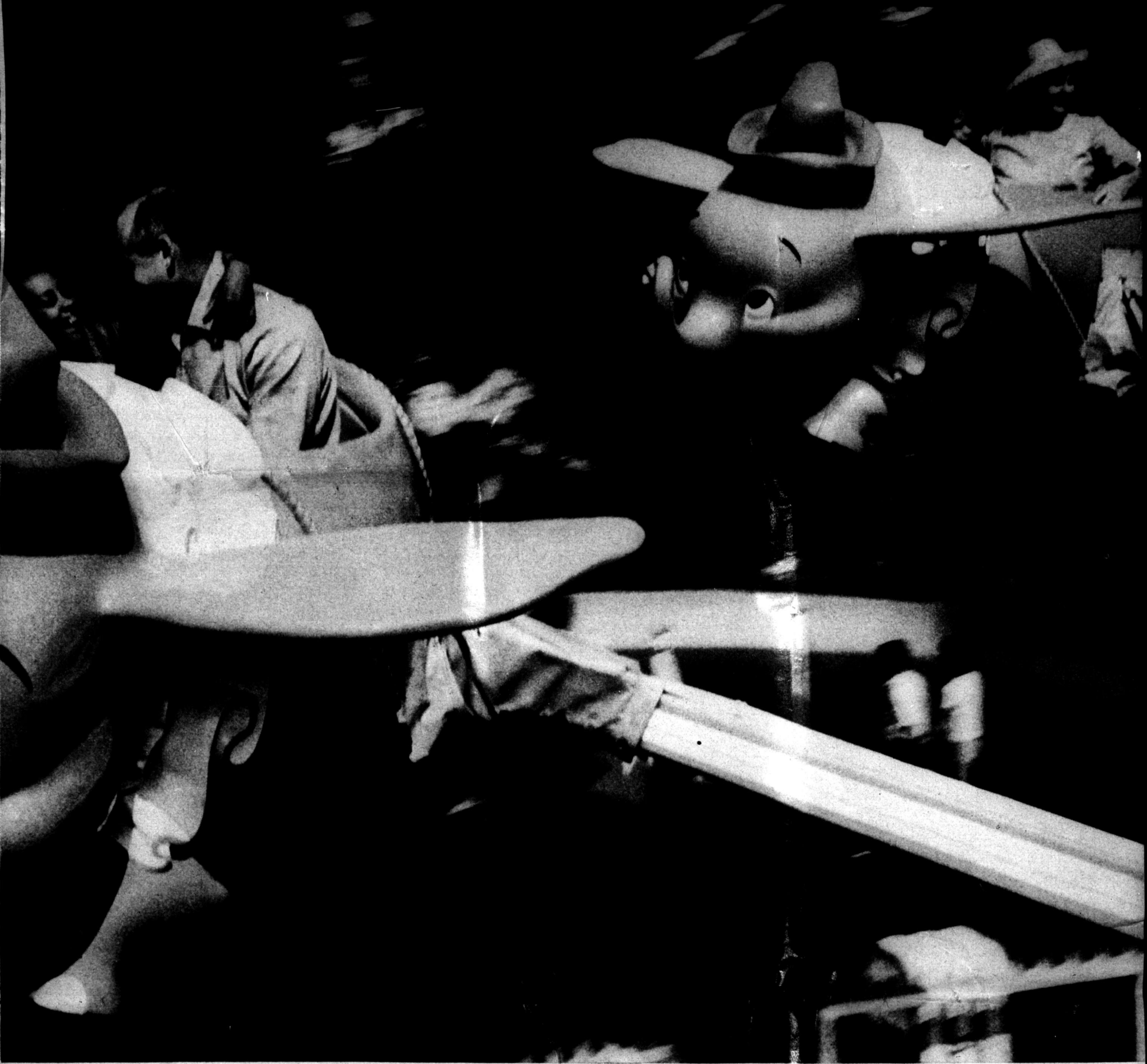
# *A rare lesson about love*

**1957** When Look first visited the interracial family of Sam and Katherine Roberts of Long Beach, Calif. (below), their part-Negro daughter, Kim, was a cute 4-year-old.



**1965** The girl kissing her mother (above, left) and taking a spin in Disneyland with her father (above, right) is an ordinary 12-year-old in an extraordinary situation. Kim Roberts and her family have a personal stake in the long struggle against racial hate. Kim was adopted privately at the age of three weeks from a white mother in Florida. When Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Roberts discovered later that their new daughter was part Negro, they took the tack of courage and love. They adopted for her a brother and sister with equally mixed backgrounds—Celtic-Norwegian-Spanish Sammy, now 11, and Caucasian-Japanese Mitsu, now 8. What the Roberts have learned may help solve a major U.S. problem: the growing number of homeless minority-group children.

PRODUCED BY STANLEY GORDON    PHOTOGRAPHED BY EARL THEISEN



*On a shopping tour with a friend, Kim pretends to be a high-fashion model. She loves to buy dresses, changes outfits three times a day. At left, Kim, Sammy and Mitsu talk to Pinocchio at Disneyland.*

*continued*

**RARE LESSON** *continued*

**Being 12 is having secrets,  
sharing life. High  
school may bring troubles.**



*Kim and her pal, Nancy Salem, love sleep-overs at each other's homes. They can talk "horse talk," a language peculiar to 12-year-olds, well into the night. Kim excels in softball and spelling at school, wants to be a nurse when she grows up. All of Kim's present playmates and friends are white. This may mean trouble when she gets a little older and faces the problem of dating.*

*continued*

