

Changes Urged In Schools To Stress Black Culture

By KIRK WEEKS

A plea to change the American educational system to reflect the culture and history of Afro-Americans was made Wednesday night by Mrs. Beatrice Young, education director of the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, at the fourth session of the week-long "Focus — Black America" programs at Indiana University-Kokomo.

Mrs. Young dramatized her appeal for institutional changes within the educational system by quoting extensively from Negro writings, historical interpretations and cultural contributions which have received little or no attention from American educators until the last few years.

She also denounced American historians for teaching for many years that enslaving the American Negroes was necessary — at least for a time — in order to "civilize" them and for perpetuating the "Sambo" and "Uncle Tom" images.

Teaching Afro-American culture and history from black America's standpoint is only half the job which must be done, Mrs. Young said, adding that white America must remove from its history books "racist assumptions" and "anti-Negro" distortions.

"What we need are new insights into the nature of slavery — insights which would allow us to share the human reactions of the slaves to their condition," Mrs. Young said, "a course in Afro-American culture must be based in the slave era with the imprint of African culture upon America's forced immigrants clearly visible."



MRS. YOUNG

In teaching Afro-American culture educators who have been influenced by traditional American history will have to "demythologize" their thinking, Mrs. Young said. "This traditional history, which has been a bulwark of the prevailing system of racism in this country has been allowed to flourish in our academic institutions," Mrs. Young charged.

"White America created the myth of the contented slave and the wretched freedman and thus destroyed for nearly a century any possibility of seriously teaching about Afro-American culture," she said.

Mrs. Young also scored some modern

educators who have defined Afro-American culture in terms of cultural deprivation: "Most educators who tend to ignore the cultural contributions of Afro-Americans . . . imposed the term 'culturally deprived' on millions of black and white children of the poor. Imagine the educators' dismay, however, when some of the same students whom they supposed were suffering from cultural deprivation began to demand courses in Afro-American culture and history."

The black student movement currently disrupting many campuses across the nation is a result of educators who still cling to some of the old racist assumptions which have characterized the American educational system, Mrs. Young said.

"If there is a lesson to be learned from a survey of Afro-American culture it is the obvious fact that we cannot simply make changes in our course structure and write new curriculum guides," Mrs. Young said, "we must simultaneously seek creative ways to sensitize teachers to the need for change given the nature of racial attitudes and prejudices.

"Such an essential sensitivity to black bards and black historians might find a beginning in planned in-service workshops and programs dealing not only with Afro-American culture and history but also the history of anti-Negro attitudes and actions, called racism," she concluded.

The "Focus — Black America" program will continue tonight at 8:15 Havens Auditorium with a panel disc-

sion on "Black Power: Development in the Black Community." Participating on the panel will be William Crawford, organizer for the Black Radical Action Project of Indianapolis; Mrs. Kenneth Fowler, secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP who also serves on the state executive board of the Indiana branch of NAACP; and Algie Rousseau, a former educator and minister currently employed at Delco Radio.

About 70 persons attended Wednesday night's Black America program on black culture and history — this was an increase of about 20 people over Monday night's lecture session which dealt with a different aspect of the same subject.

Black Culture Sources Cited

Mrs. Beatrice Young, education director of the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, dramatized her talk and illustrated the need for incorporating black culture and history into the American educational system by extensively quoting writings and books by

Afro-Americans and others who view history and culture from a "black perspective."

There was much interest shown by the audience who attended Wednesday's "Focus — Black America" session in her bibliography. A list of that bibliography follows:

"Souls of Black Folk in Three Negro Classics" by W. E. B. DuBois, John Hope Franklin, 1903.

"The Book of American Negro Poetry" edited by James Weldon Johnson, New York, 1922.

"The Book of Negro Folklore" edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bon-temps, New York, 1958.

"The Negro in American Culture" by Margaret Just Butcher, New York, 1956.

"Life and Times of Frederick Douglass" originally published in 1892, New York, 1962.

"Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery" edited by B. A. Botkin, Chicago, 1945.

"The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten" edited by Ray Allen Billington, New York, 1953.

"A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States" by Herbert Aptheker, New York, 1966.

"The Negro Caravan" by Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee, New York, 1941.

"The Negro in American History" by Kenneth M. Stampp, et al, California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento, 1964.

"The Selected Poems of Claude McKay," New York, 1953.

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" reprinted in "Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century," Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, New York 1965.

"Paul Robeson" by . . .
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