

Black Heritage Month Should Have Meaning

By Eugene Skinner

Too often Americans, black and white, seem to take their unique heritage for granted. Black Americans have a rich, ennobling history. Unfortunately the contributions of blacks have been systematically omitted from the basic textbooks in America's schools. The protests of the late sixties have forced school systems to demand from publishers that the contributions of Black Americans be included in textbooks. The result was a superficial treatment of the black experience. One still has to resort to libraries and resource centers to get a more in-depth treatment of blacks, usually authored by black scholars and a few Jewish historians or social scientists.

A dictionary definition of heritage simply stated

in history. Alex Haley, in his epic chronicle "Roots" had to resort to oral accounts and griots in Africa to obtain much of his materials. There would seem to be a fertile field for writers and researchers to write definitive articles and books on black history and black culture in America.

It would seem appropriate in Black Heritage Month



Travis Dixon... instilled faith in youth through volunteer work within the community.

to pay tribute to a few exemplary individuals who have made a difference in the development of youngsters in our community. Although the list is not as comprehensive as it should be, it would include: John Butler and Josh Gibson, North Branch YMCA, Alice Wilson, Woodson Center; May Taylor, North Christ Child Center; Gladys Ervin and Lois Guode, North Branch YMCA who later became teachers in the Omaha Public Schools.

Scout Masters in our ghetto were wholesome male role models for hundreds of my contemporaries. They, as the individuals cited above, helped youngsters develop self respect, worthy goals and a sense of our potential for achievement. While the list is not all inclusive, it would include: T. P. (Pop) Mahamitt; Dr. Craig Morris (dentist); Mr. Charles Dickerson, I; Dillard Crawford; and Arthur McCaw.

McCaw exemplifies the type of role model who touched me and many of my peers at a crucial time in our lives. As an adolescent at Tech High who was counselled by a coach to take courses in cooking, Mr. McCaw simply stated, "Gene you're going to college"—and that was it!

Mr. McCaw provided a living example of what he preached. He overcame many obstacles to achieve some lofty goals. From the County Assessors Office, he became Nebraska's State Budget Director—one of the first in America. He later administered fiscal programs in Korea after the Korean "police action." He ended a distinguished governmental career in the nation's capital as Deputy Administrator Food and Nutrition Service in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The youth subculture always have youth leaders who influence their peer for good or bad. Two such leaders in north Omaha's ghetto were Marty Thomas and Travis Dixon. They spent countless hours, without pay, day and night coaching talented youngsters in the fundamentals of track, basketball, football and baseball. For their patience, compassion and the faith they instilled in us, I would salute them.

These men were underemployed. Today they would be acclaimed as outstanding coaches in metro area schools.

Travis Dixon was teaching physical education at Howard Kennedy. In 1939, he was insightful and thoughtful enough to write me in North Carolina. He suggested that I apply for a job teaching in the Omaha Public Schools. At that point in history blacks had not been contracted to teach in Omaha and most midwestern cities above the Mason-Dixon Line.

Our heritage has been enriched because of the struggle, perseverance and strength of character of these 'freedom fighters' and many more like them. Because they paid the price, many minorities have more options both in government and the private sector today.

Cuasa Black History Month Celebration

Creighton University's Afro-American Student Association will be ending their Black History celebration with a talent contest, dinner, slide presentation and a community play beginning this week.

On Friday at 8:30 p.m. in the Upper Brandeis, the talent contest will begin. Prizes are \$75 for first place, \$50 for 2nd place and \$25 for 3rd place. Immediately following the contest will be the Black History Month Jam.

Monday, February 28 there will be a soul food dinner and slide presentation in Upper Brandeis, immediately following in Walsh Lecture Hall will be the Highlight of the year's celebration; the original cast from the Center Stage's production of "Ain't Misbehavin'" will perform live at 7:30 p.m.

The public is invited for all activities. For more information call 280-2749.

Urban League Sponsors Discussion Panel On Major Issues Confronting Black Community

On February 25, The Urban League of Nebraska, Inc. will sponsor a Panel of elected officials and agency representatives. Their ideas on major issues confronting the black community will be discussed.

The event will be held at OOIC, 2724 North 24th Street, from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

There will also be black art exhibits.

The public is invited to share information with members of the community and voice concerns.



Arthur McCaw... scout masters provide "wholesome male role models."

is "something handed down from one's ancestors of the past, as a cultural, tradition." This heritage would include "the rights, burdens, or status resulting from being born in a certain time or place

Because of the horrendous obstacles that blacks have faced—slavery, oppression, the pervasive cancer of racism, blacks should cherish their heritage even more, while knowledgeable whites should respect and admire a people who survived despite overwhelming odds

Omahans, black and white should be aware of and proud of the Great Plains Black Museum. Because of the untiring, dedicated efforts of Mrs. Bertha Calloway, the Omaha museum is recognized as one of the finest of its kind in the nation. This acclaim has been earned despite that local corporations, foundations and individuals within the city have not seen fit to generate funds, support or visibility as has been afforded Joslyn Museum, Western Heritage Museum, et al.

Too often we fail to recognize people, often "grassroots persons, who have served Omaha with dedication and commitment. Omahans who have made a difference in the lives of children and youth in the past are generally unknown by residents and the agencies they served at this point

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