

Spotlight On: *Black Focus*

by Joan Falkman Stiebel

I came to Virginia from New York City expecting to lead a quiet country life. But things are popping! On Labor Day weekend September 4 to 7, "Black Focus", the Third Annual Black Arts and Cultural Festival, will be going hot and strong on Lake Anne Plaza in Reston.

'Black Focus' is a non-profit educational group of Black Restonians, led by Dr. George Tolbert, created to let everyone know the Blacks' cultural achievements and contributions to the world.

Afro-American Dance and music will be staged on the steps of the Washington Baptist Church. Black merchants from Washington will display Afro-American wares. The embassies of the African nations will exhibit, and representative private collections are Elio Gasparetti's pictorial educational exhibit of the Civil Rights movement in the South "Fight for Freedom", and the Anacostia Museum Mobile Exhibit of Science, showing

inventions of the black man from the time he came to America till today. Restonian Grandison Jones has an exhibit on 'Black Men of Achievement and Carleton Funn, Alexandria school teacher, a film, exhibit, and a lecture on Afro-American history.

The Festival Concert will be in the magnificent setting of Wolf Trap Farm on September 5 at 8:30 p.m. Among the artists will be Oscar Brown Jr. and Jean Pace, Folksingers; singer Diane Destry, from Washington; the Donald Byrd Quintet. Jazz musician Donald Byrd is on the Music Faculty at Howard University. Other local talent are Herndon teenager Denise Ellis, who sings at the Herndon Baptist Church, performing on September 6 from 12 to 12:30 p.m. at Lake Anne Plaza; Washingtonian Maggie Jones, who will dance to rhythmic prose from 12:30 to 1 p.m., and at 4 p.m. — hold it! — the "Now Explosion" — a Washington group who will shatter their audience with Afro-Cuban music and dance.

September 4 there is a dance, and on the 6th, before the concert, a soul supper. Important speakers are The Rev. Jesse Jackson, one-time righthand man of Dr. Martin Luther King, and prominent Mississippi leaders Mrs. Fannie Lou Hammer, and Mr. Aaron Henry—active with Dr. King in founding the Freedom Democratic Party of Mississippi. Other Festival highlights will be Gospel and Sacred and Secular Music on Sunday, September 6, and the Inner Voices, the Lorton Reformatory Prisoners' Dramatic Group, on September 7.

Carole Green's Afro-American modern art show and sale is at the Heron Gallery. New Yorker Jim Hinton exhibits photographs 'Black Experience in Urban Life' and shows a film on drug addiction. Mississippian Larry Jacobs runs a film depicting conditions of life in the Mississippi Delta. This film is particularly apt, because there is another purpose to this Festival — and that is to raise money for HUMP — the Howard University Mississippi Project.

What is HUMP? It is the brainchild of students who were in Mississippi when the Civil Rights movement was at its height. They saw how conditions were — how

hopeless life was — how the very necessities for existence were lacking. They came back to Howard determined to do something about it. And they did. They started HUMP and pinpointed Marks, in Quitman County, the poorest county in Mississippi, the poorest in the USA. Roughly 20,000 people live there. 70% are Black, and they average about \$962 a year. What's that in terms we can understand? Say about \$20 a week to live on. That is even less than the poorest in the big cities have. For the people of Marks have no hospitals, no welfare, nothing. No help in obtaining even their barest needs. The Howard University Mississippi Project will meet their needs for medical, dental and preventive care. Doctors, dentists and nurses—complete with mobile medical unit — are being sent to Marks to care for their black brethren and to train them to help themselves. And the 30% white people, who are equally poor, will benefit from the project too.

These people are poor in the midst of plenty. To help them HUMP needs help — and it needs your help. Come to the Black Focus Festival at Reston. Be fascinated by new sights and sounds. Know that by so doing you are contributing your help where it is so very greatly needed.

Herndon Tribune - Aug. 27 1971