



Photos by Frank Hoy—The Washington Post

Persons attending Reston's first Black Arts Festival pass before paper mache figure of a black man erected at Lake Anne Village.

## Focus on Black Culture

By Thomas Grubisich

The big poster, prominently displayed in the bright sunlight of the lake-front plaza of Reston was titled, "The Black Man in Virginia."

One of the entries read "1619—20 'Negars' Landed at Jamestown in August." American history being what it is most of the entries were a chronicle of suffering and degradation. But if the poster had been brought up to date it might have carried this entry "1969 — The First Black Arts Festival is held in Reston, Va."

There are only 65 or 70 black families in Reston, hardly more than 3 per cent of the population. Like their white neighbors they can enjoy the comforts of the middle class and the ameni-

ties of a New Town like Reston:

An air-conditioned home, a swim in the neighborhood pool, pleasant tree-lined walkways to the shopping center, a scotch on the rocks before the charcoal-broiled steak.

But at the same time, while they enjoy the good life of a white majority, they insist on their blackness, indeed even proclaim it.

And so this weekend, the blacks of Reston, through their "Black Focus" organization, presented the first Black Arts Festival. There was a dance Saturday night featuring "The Ambassadors" and "The Freedom School African Combo," two Washington groups.

Yesterday's exhibits, films and slides of Negro history

and culture were displayed in all the nooks and crannies of the plaza in Lake Anne Village. There was a fashion show, and music by the "St. John's Freewill Baptist Choir," folk singer Ysae Barnwell, Melvin Deal's African Heritage drummers and dancers, and the Wayne Davis jazz trio.

Mounted on the fountain in the plaza was a huge, faintly ludicrous papier-mache totem of a black man scarved in white and trailing red vestments.

The festival closes tonight with an African buffet and poetry reading by Sterling Brown. Both the Saturday night dance and tonight's buffet were sold out. And all through yesterday afternoon visitors, both black and white, were streaming

into Lake Anne plaza to see what was going on.

Robert Secundy, one of the organizers, offered this explanation for a black arts festival in suburban Northern Virginia:

"It's a way of saying to our black brothers in Washington—'We're here, we're going to link up. Come and see us—appreciate and enjoy.'"

One of the guests at Saturday night's dance was William Magness, president of Gulf-Reston, the new town's developer. "I'm having a wonderful time," said Magness, who has had to listen to complaints from some blacks and whites that Gulf Reston is not stressing the fact that Reston is an open town in advertising and promotion.

See FESTIVAL, E10, Col. 7



Forward and backward view.