

Black Culture

FESTIVAL, From EI

And Magness freely acknowledged, "We probably have been somewhat lacking in this, but we are trying to change that."

Kusai Abbabio, who is on the board of the Freedom School, talked bitingly of suburban blacks, "who put on a black-power medalion." A black Reston woman leaned toward him and said, "I know—you're thinking we are all bourgeois blacks. But black people are human and they react the same way as white people. There should be a choice—the city or the suburb."

"It's American reasoning," said Abbabio, unimpressed.

The woman, pursuing her point, asked Abbabio if what he saw about him, didn't indicate that blacks of Reston

could appreciate the same things as blacks of the city.

Couldn't they all enjoy the "Freedom School" African combo?, she asked.

"Tonight's the first time they didn't get into their thing," said Abbabio. "You have to have an emotional unity—you identify with your reference group." Whites, and maybe some blacks, were not part of Abbabio's reference group, he indicated.

But both Abbabio and the black Reston woman came to an agreement of sorts. Perhaps it was the ambience of the evening, but maybe it was something more.

"We have the common bond of being black," said the woman, to which Abbabio added, "and it can't be broken."

Arts Festival poster before paper mache figure of a black man erected at Lake Anne Village.

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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.

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