

Are writers and publishers at fault? Yes—and so are school administrators, history teachers, librarians, book reviewers—even Congressmen. The whole Nation is at fault for proclaiming the doctrine of white supremacy and practicing racism for three centuries, and then attempting to undo the damage with token integration in schools, jobs, and public places.

I am pleased at the praise that "Mary Jane" has been receiving. But until more and better books in the same category are published it will remain, like a handful of others, a token book. There are hardly enough titles to fill a 5-foot shelf when what we need is a 50-foot shelf.

How can we bring the truth about Negro history and life to our children? We must tell it like it was and like it is, without sugar coating. The facts are available. Historians like John Hope Franklin, Benjamin Quarles, Rayford Logan, C. Vann Woodward, Kenneth Stampp, and others, have supplied us with some and there is more, a great deal more to be uncovered.

I would like to see Federal funds for research in Negro history. For 50 years the Association for the Study of Negro Life & History has struggled along, sometimes with barely enough money to pay postage. They should be helped. So should libraries like the Schomburg collection in New York and the libraries at Howard and Fisk Universities which are rich depositories of information about the Negro past.

There should be a crash program to revise school textbooks so that they conform with the best modern historiography. As a taxpayer I object to Federal money being spent for books which perpetuate outmoded racist doctrines. And there should be a crash program to reeducate teachers and school librarians.

We have special teacher-training courses and summer institutes in the "new math" and "new science." Why not in the "new history"—which isn't new at all, but which comes much closer to being true history?

In my own field I would hope to see writers and publishers with a greater concern about books that tell children about Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans. A newly formed Council for Interracial Books plans to offer awards for books about minorities and to set up workshops for young writers.

But the Authors Guild and the various publishers associations should be doing the same thing. There is some danger of turning out formula books—books written to order that lack literary quality. But it is a minor one. After all, not all the books published each season are deathless prose.

The great importance of the kind of books we are talking about is that they will be widely read, not only by Negroes, but by white children and adults as well. When the role of the black man in our history is better understood, white America will discover that it, too, has reason to be proud of the Negroes' partnership in our Nation.

Only then will we be able to resolve the contradiction that Thurgood Marshall once identified by saying that if America is a melting pot and the Negro hasn't melted, it's because he hasn't been allowed to get into the pot.