

Fabio Coen, editor of Pantheon Books for children, makes this comment: "A book even remotely discussing racial problems has to deal with the subject with the same spontaneity and honesty that is basically required of any book. To my mind, it is therefore impossible to commission one."

The newly formed Council for Interracial Books for Children operates on the principle that, given encouragement, authors and artists will create good children's books that include nonwhites, and that given the manuscripts, publishers will produce and market them. The Council, sponsored by a group including Benjamin Spock, Ben Shahn, Langston Hughes, Mary Gaver, Alex Rosen, Harold Taylor, Harry Golden, and Sidonie M. Gruenberg, will offer prizes for outstanding manuscripts and will negotiate with editors for their publication.

The crisis that brought the Council into being is described by one of its organizing members. Elinor Sinnette, district school librarian for the Central and East Harlem Area of New York: "Publishers have participated in a cultural lobotomy. It is no accident that Negro history and Negro identification have been forgotten. Our society has contrived to make the American Negro a rootless person. The Council for Interracial Books for Children has been formed to relieve this situation."

Whether the Council gets many books into print or not, it can accomplish a great deal simply by reminding editors and publishers that what is good for the Ku Klux Klan is not necessarily good for America—or for the book business. White supremacy in children's literature will be abolished when authors, editors, publishers, and booksellers decide that they need not submit to bigots.

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INTEGRATING THE TEXTS

When E. A. Johnson, a Negro schoolteacher in North Carolina, decided to publish "A History of the Negro in America" back in 1891, few schoolchildren were aware that the Negro had any history to write about. Traditional texts referred briefly to slavery, then dropped the subject. But though many still slight him 75 years later, the American Negro is now at least beginning to find his rightful place in U.S. textbooks.

Publishers' salesmen this year have called on school administration and state textbook-selection committees with sample cases stocked full of racial-history supplements, intercultural social studies and illustrated readers that show brown faces as well as white ones. In the trade, some of these new books are known as "multi-ethnic." But no sociological phrase can fully convey the sense of profound change the books represent.

Arrived: As lily-white texts are gradually retired to the ash can and replaced with multi-ethnic textbooks, reports NEWSWEEK Associate Editor John G. Mitchell, the morale and reading abilities of minority-group children themselves are being improved. In a Poughkeepsie, N.Y., grammar school where one of the new social-studies texts was introduced on a trial basis, a teacher was able to report after several weeks: "Our children identified so well with the characters that, for the first time, those who had barely said a word in class began to verbalize their emotions. They really saw themselves." What they saw were two Anglo-Saxons, two Negroes and a Puerto Rican boy collaborating on a classroom project. And in Chicago's John Marshall Upper Grade Center, one bright Negro girl looked up wryly from a new history text with "integrated" illustrations. "Well," she said, "I guess we've finally arrived."

The first real attempts to portray Negroes in textbooks came seven or eight years after the U.S. Supreme Court decision on school segregation in 1954. But the quality of the first texts, recalls Karl Kalp, assistant superintendent in the Indianapolis schools, "was pretty ragged—the materials coming out now are much better." Among the best of the 1965-66 publications:

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.'s urban social-studies series. Illustrated with photographs of children living in an integrated Manhattan housing development, the first two volumes (just published) explore the real experiences of a group of 7-year-olds. Only two of the five are Anglo-Saxon. Author-photographer Peter Buckley avoids the banalities of older texts and provides an authentic idiom: "¡Me alegro!" says Ramón, a Puerto Rican boy. "We can make more arroz con dulce."

Webster, McGraw-Hill's 1965 Skyline reading series for grades two through four. Unlike the traditional reader, in which standardized sub-