

Burrows Gives Stunning Performance

by Bernie Mixon

Vinie Burrows, actress, writer, director and producer showcased her one-woman show entitled "Walk Together Children," a collection of, in her words, "voices," that she has heard from the past and present, on February 16 in the CUB. These voices come from the many black writers, poets and playwrights who have portrayed the experience of life as a black person in a predominately white oriented society.

The first characterization that Burrows conjured up from the past came from "Membrances" by Jenny Proctor. The character is that of an old woman as she tries to relate her experiences as a slave to her great grandchildren. Burrows applied much feeling and emotion and facilitated the scene with a cape draped over her head. Her body was slumped in the position of a woman who is tired and has seen many trials and tribulations in her life. Burrows went on, in character, to describe how as a slave she was beaten to within an inch of her life due to eating a biscuit which was discarded, and in those times considered a luxury to slaves. The audience could feel the pain in every

stroke of the tail whip which was used to discipline disobedient slaves.

The next portrayal by Burrows comes from "I Walk Alone" by Anita Eckford. The stage was set in the 1960's and the character was not an adult but a schoolage child. This is reminiscent of the real life denial by the school board of Little Rock, Arkansas, to admit a black girl into its high school based upon her skin color.

The excitement that bubbled from the child could be identified with by this audience as it reminded them of their first day of high school. The mood swung when the jubilation turned to terror as the guards displayed their bayonets and the mob of white students proceeded to barage the little girl with a string of defamatory phrases.

"Let America be America again" by Langston Hughes capped off the night of portrayals by Burrows.

The performance that Vinie Burrows gave at Capital was astounding as she captured her audience and she made them feel the anguish and the joy of her characters.



Photo by Kyle Weaver

Burrows Urges Continued Fighting Against Racism

by Michele Hart

Vinie Burrows, speaking to a packed BCAC Feb. 16, told the audience that American racism began in the early years of this country.

Burrows, on campus as a part of Black History Month, said that this country was founded on two massive acts of genocide—the forced migration of Native Americans and the kidnapping of six million Africans to become slaves.

Burrows said that she speaks from her personal experience of how

being black has affected herself and those around her. She sent her children to private schools because she said that New York public schools had a two-track system.

Education, according to Burrows, is an area that still practices racism. The number of blacks holding Ph.Ds is low she said because, "They have been kept out. Having a Ph.D means having perks, and the question comes up about excluding blacks from those."

The media and the film industry continue to develop and perpetuate myths and stereotypes about blacks, she said.

"It is acceptable for black people to bring entertainment to white people. But there are still not opportunities for a legitimate black actress on Broadway," she said.

The political arena also does not offer opportunities to blacks, she said.

"None of us can say that

politics doesn't affect us. If we don't take care of politics, politics will damn well take care of us," she said.

Burrows said that there has been a rise in racial crimes and violence during the Reagan years. "They (racists) have seen that there is a climate for their acts."

Schools are particularly good places to start to break the circle of racism. "One of the ways that racism manifests itself is in our ignorance of people that are different," she emphasized.

Black History Month is one way of ensuring that the ignorance does not continue", said Burrows.

She said that we have a Black History Month because it is an IOU to blacks. "The text books have lied about the role of blacks in history," Burrows said.

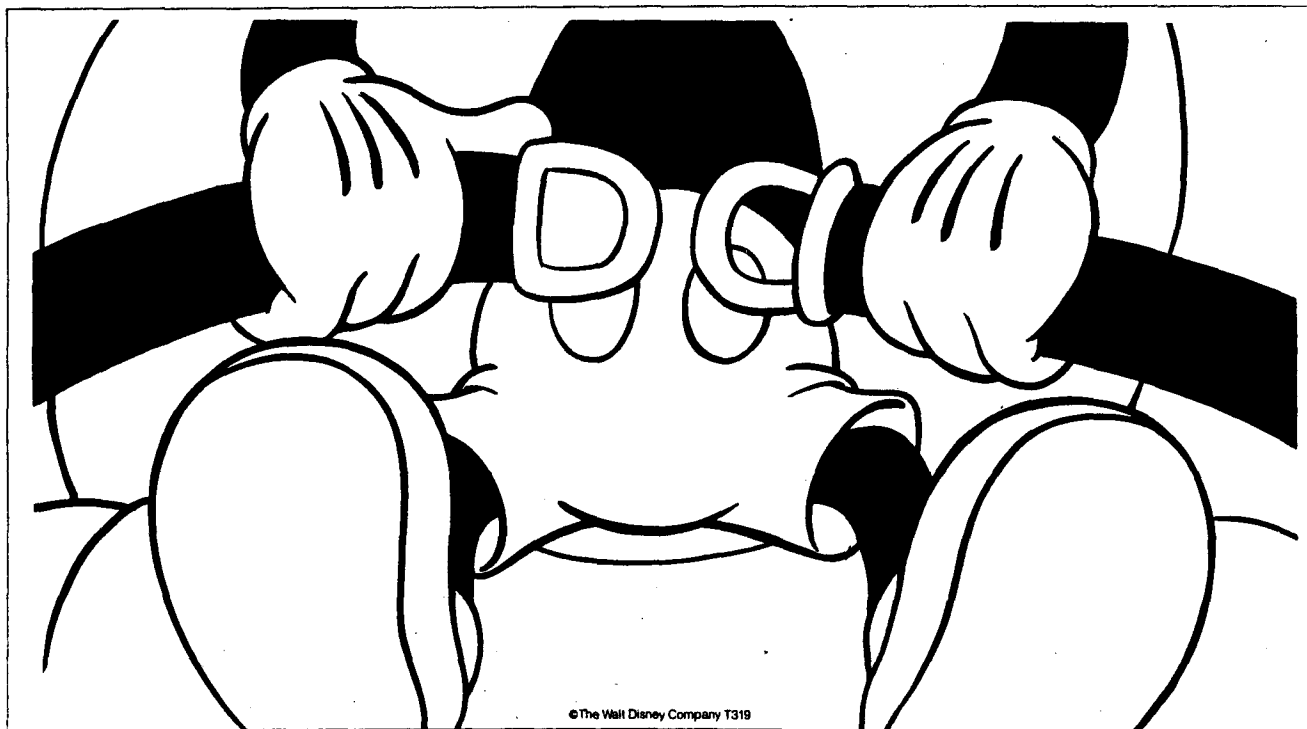
According to Burrows, blacks and whites have a responsibility to society. "It is not wrong to want the good things for yourself, but you've got to take the me-me blinders off."

It is easier for young black people to say and recognize that they have that responsibility because the experience of blacks in America has been very different than other ethnic groups that came to this country.

During the course of her afternoon visit, a discussion of racism at this institution was started. The group in the BCAC agreed unanimously that Penn State is a racist university, but it has made strides in the past few years.

Burrows said that the universities new diversity program would not have happened five years ago.

At the end of her talk, Burrows told the audience, "If anything would happen because I was here . . . I would like to see you examine yourselves."



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