

INTRODUCTION by the Editor

As the Euro-Settler phase of North America's thousands of years old history comes to an end, writers and artists must pay attention and, through writing, warn the gullible among us to be wary of prolonging an oppressive situation by accepting the vision of us created by others. The Occupation has billions to support an attractive propaganda effort through film, television, books, and Broadway, which lure the vulnerable. So slick is this insidious poison that Cherokee scholar Geary Hobson notes that he rooted for the cowboys when he was a child. The list of offensive packages is endless. They might include "West Side Story," "Miss Saigon," "Hamilton," "The Wire," "Power," and one of the most recent disgraces, "Hightown," in which Latinos and Haitians sell drugs in Provincetown. An Asian American actress is a prostitute. A Haitian teenager sells fentanyl to upper-class white kids who die from an overdose. The white producer of this slime is Rebecca Cutter. The trend of hiring Brown and Black kids to play drug dealers was begun by David Simon's "The Wire," which was applauded by Blacks and Browns, even though one of the featured actresses said that the series insulted Blacks because it suggested that Blacks didn't care about their neighborhoods.

This is further proof that the depictions of us created by outsiders are no different from those of Jews promoted by Nazi media. Those who doubt this should check out *Julius Streicher: Nazi Editor of the Notorious Anti-semitic Newspaper Der Sturmer*.

There are enlightened white writers. Nancy Mercado has enlisted some of them to enter tributes to Miguel Algarin. But not all white writers are as enlightened as Bob Holman, who has collaborated with Blacks and Nuyoricans for decades. Bob Holman brought the idea of Slam Poetry to the cafe from The Poetry Project at Mark's Church, which the late Paul Blackburn and I founded. Our founding of the project in the mid-sixties was acknowledged only recently.

After the owner of Le Metro unleashed some thugs on members of the famed Umbra Workshop during a poetry reading, I told Walter Lowenfels, who was reading that night, to stop his reading, or I'd never speak to him again. I had helped him organize the anthology *Poets of Today* and the sound recording *New Jazz Poets*. I had gotten Doubleday to publish his anthology *Why We Are In Vietnam*. (They also published N.H. Pritchard's poetry collection, *The Matrix*, at my suggestion). That was the end of Le Metro, which sent Paul and me shopping around for another place. Unlike some of the other whites on the downtown art scene at the time, Blackburn and sculptor Aldo Tambellini were not racists.

The minister at St. Mark's Church said we could hold the readings there.

Those who are not as hip as Bob, Blackburn, and Tambellini, get to write scripts, direct and produce products that demean us-- literary, cinematic, and theatrical hate crimes in the guise of art.

White nationalists in academia, the arts, and the media backed by their billions will use every means to hold on. They will even

use surrogates who resemble us to prolong the life of their decadent racist Empire.

Take, for example, the attempt to divide and conquer during the Obama campaign. The white nationalist media argued that Latinos would never vote for a Black man. Latinos had voted for Obama when he ran for the Senate. Blacks voted for a Latino candidate in Los Angeles. Latinos voted for a Black mayor in New York.

There exist tensions between Latinos and Blacks. I hear things when I visit New York. On the other hand, Blacks and Latinos can boast of one of the most successful cultural alliances in history. It is approaching seventy years. Uptown people like Afrika Bambaataa defused gang activity and allied Black and Latino Hip Hoppers. Blacks in Philadelphia and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles launched the modern Graffiti Movement. Downtown it was the Nuyoricans. Like Bambaataa, they were ambassadors who cemented a collaboration between Blacks Latinos, and hip whites. The prime mover of these collaborations was Miguel Algarin. "The philosopher of the sugar cane that grows between the cracks of concrete sidewalks." The Nuyorican movement began in Miguel's apartment a building that should have landmark status. From there it blossomed into a worldwide movement.

The founders might have been pressured to remain the cafe as a Nuyorican site, exclusively, in what was formerly an Irish bar. Miguel's big heart and cosmopolitan attitude included Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Alvin Ailey. Amiri Baraka and I could get our plays done there, plays which would have

offended the seventy percent of those who can afford to buy tickets to Broadway plays.

Challenging the cliché stereotypes used by the media to woo those who yearn to see us brought low becomes an act of resistance. The Lower East Side/ Loisaida. And now those early artists, including Miguel, have become iconic. Miguel Piñero, Pedro Pietri; Sandra María Esteves, Lucky Cienfuegos, Jesús Papoleto Meléndez and Lois Griffith. The Last Poets. Ntozake Shange. Nancy Mercado.

Nancy Mercado's hard work has assembled the following voices to salute our leader, the Godfather of the downtown art scene. Miguel Algarin. She is not only one of the Nuyorican's key figures but the protector of its legacy and its librarian.

Ishmael Reed