

# SR's 1969 Anisfield-Wolf Awards

By STUART W. LITTLE

**T**he problem of how differing peoples relate to each other can be approached in a variety of ways. It can be tackled in poetry, which is immediate, emotional, and conveys sudden illumination. It can be explored through psychological study, which probes the motivations of people in exhaustive detail. It can be treated from an anthropological standpoint, which takes a more detached and historically informed view. And it can be synthesized by documenting a miscarriage of justice that occurred in a biased society. This last is the most dramatic.

All four approaches are represented in the winners of this year's SR Anisfield-Wolf Awards, given annually to books that have made a significant contribution to intergroup understanding. The awards, first presented in 1935, were founded by the late Mrs. Edith Anisfield Wolf in memory of her father and her husband. The judge this year was the anthropologist Ashley Montagu.

The four winners are *In the Mecca*, poems by Gwendolyn Brooks (Harper & Row); *Negro and White Children*, a psychological study undertaken in the rural South by E. Earl Baughman and W. Grant Dahlstrom (Academic Press); *The American Indian Today*, a series of anthropological papers edited by Stuart Levine and Nancy Oestrich Lurie (Everett/Edwards, Inc.), and *The Leo Frank Case*, by Leonard Dinnerstein (Columbia University Press), an account of one of the most deplorable anti-Semitic manifestations in American history.

In her volume of poetry Miss Brooks, who won a Pulitzer Prize for *Annie Allen* in 1950, takes us into a Negro ghetto tenement in Chicago known as the Mecca, where the poet once worked as typist for a "spiritual adviser." The long narrative title poem records the impact on the other tenants of the murder of a small child, Pepita. It is an inward-looking piece that harks back to a somewhat earlier period of our history, whereas the "After Mecca" poems, which deal with current black concerns, are self-consciously aimed at the outside world.

Miss Brooks, born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1917, has lived in Chicago since infancy. A graduate of Wilson Junior

College, she teaches poetry at Northwestern Illinois State College, Columbia College, and Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. In 1968 she was named Poet Laureate for the State of Illinois, succeeding the late Carl Sandburg. She is married to Henry Blakely and has two children.

*Negro and White Children* reports the results of a series of ability, achievement, and personality tests administered to schoolchildren. The data is supplemented with responses to questionnaires addressed to both pupils and parents. The book draws parallel profiles of white and Negro children in a rural North Carolina community which the authors call "Millfield." The thoroughness of the testing techniques and the amount of information assembled are formidable, leaving no doubt about the authenticity of the findings. Of the four groups studied, white girls scored closest to the national norms in the intellectual tests, while Negro boys scored lowest—largely, the authors believe, for motivational reasons.

The results will provide valuable material for educators. While allowing the facts to speak for themselves, the authors also offer a few recommendations for "narrowing the gap." High on the list are pre-school education and an expansion of available facilities

through educational television. Perhaps the new foundation- and government-sponsored Children's Television Workshop, which will begin programming for pre-school children next fall, will answer some of the needs defined in this volume.

Both authors are members of the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Dr. Baughman, a graduate of the University of Chicago, was chief psychiatrist at the Veterans Administration in Wichita, Kansas, taught at the University of Wisconsin, and has been at Chapel Hill since 1959. Dr. Dahlstrom took his degrees at the University of Minnesota, and has taught there, at Ohio Wesleyan, and at Iowa State University. He has been at Chapel Hill since 1960.

*The American Indian Today*, an attempt to view the Indian as he sees himself, is a collection of papers by anthropologists, showing the variety and complexity of the Indian heritage. Among the uninformed views it corrects is the notion that the Indians lived in an idyllic state before the white man came and that eventually they will become either extinct or assimilated. Far from disappearing, Indian communities are growing, and so is their desire to strengthen their ethnic distinctiveness. Some of the papers attempt to assess the effect on the Indians of Negro militancy (not very great), while others affirm the strong Indian wish to be considered separately and not thrown into a pool of civil-rights seekers.

Stuart Levine, who contributed the foreword, is chairman of the American Studies Program at the University of Kansas. His co-editor, Nancy Oestrich Lurie, who has written about the Indians' historical background and their renaissance, is professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin's Milwaukee campus.

**A**n assistant professor of American history at Fairleigh-Dickinson University, Leonard Dinnerstein took his Ph.D. degree from Columbia in 1966. *The Leo Frank Case*, his first book, was begun as his doctoral dissertation.

The false conviction of Leo Frank for the murder of a thirteen-year-old girl in Atlanta in 1913 is one of the most horrifying examples of American injustice. Frank, a Northern Jew, was regarded as a symbol of an alien, urban, industrialized society by a South that was struggling to maintain its agrarian traditions. The author analyzes the social forces—racial hatred, ignorance, economic insecurity, ruthless political ambition, press irresponsibility, impassioned regionalism, mob psychology—that led to the lynching of the innocent Leo Frank.



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## Toward a New Language

A black extremist breaks into church services, shouts his demands for race reparations, and later asserts that his action was justified because the white community understands only the language of force.

A white teen-ager in Chicago shoots into a Negro home. He doesn't know the occupants, but it makes no difference. The blacks must be taught a lesson, he says, in the only way they understand—force.

An Arab spokesman declares that violent reprisals against Israelis are necessary because this is the only language the Israelis understand.

An Israeli spokesman declares that violent reprisals against Arabs are necessary because this is the only language the Arabs understand.

A Pentagon spokesman, appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, calls for maximum bombing of North Vietnam because the direct application of force is the only language Hanoi understands.

A Hanoi spokesman calls on the North Vietnamese to redouble their efforts against the United States because force is the only language Washington understands.

What a man really says, of course, when he says that someone else can be persuaded only by force, is that he himself is incapable of more rational means of communication. The total effect, both on the small-level and the large—from the university campus to the international arena, from the tempers of the individual to the outbursts of large aggregations—is that life on

this planet has become increasingly disfigured and hazardous. Men who insist on communicating through force in a nuclear age disqualify themselves for meaningful survival.

In an environment of violence, life becomes not only tentative but cheap. The sense of beauty, the capacity to be awakened and enlarged by a tender experience, the possibilities for compassionate thought—all these are being crowded and pressured by the language of force. The mind of man is rapidly being hammered out of shape by the constant pounding of explosive accusations, denunciations, and vilifications—all tied to the casual and precipitate use of force.

Nothing multiplies more easily than force. Whatever man's other shortages—food, learning, work—he has no shortage of devices or instruments for expressing his raw anger. Guns have a way of materializing more readily than the commodities that sustain life or the undertakings that dignify or enlarge it.

In its grossest and most lethal form, force is represented by groupings of people into nations. This makes possible a concentration of collective effort with a minimum of restraint and a maximum of fury. Any one of five such major groupings in today's world possesses enough force to squash all life. They are piling up explosive upon explosive, as though the test of a nation were not how much sanity and progress it can provide for its citizens but how much devastation it can carry out in their name. At least two of these

groupings are breeding and accumulating vast stores of bacteriological organisms that could make of the earth's people a retching, writhing mass of diseased and helpless creatures.

It is folly to believe that the surest way to restore the life of reason and to vanquish violence is to make it more difficult for the individual to have an outlet for his anger. A law that can help to control the acquisition of a gun by an individual is logical enough, but what about the logic that makes it possible for the United States, or any nation, to have salesmen traveling around the world with bargain offerings of guns and bullets by the millions, along with fighting planes, tanks, howitzers, and hundreds of other items that can kill on a mass scale? Is it only madness in the singular that concerns us?

It will be increasingly difficult for any society to demand morality and respect for life in its citizens in the absence of such morality in the affairs of nations. We can fill the cells of all our prisons with angry young people, but this will not add to the common safety—not so long as we condone the fact of lawlessness among nations and the irrational and volatile ideas that go unchallenged when voiced by the sovereignties.

Similarly, it will be difficult for university officials to cope with student protest over ROTC and military contracts when the university itself has failed to become a vital center for building a saner and more peaceful world. Only a handful of American universities offer courses in what is literally the most important subject in the world—world law or peacemaking as an essential science. Only a handful of universities have discerned any connection between organized knowledge and the need to combat lawlessness in the world arena. The university, like everything else, has been preoccupied with intermediate problems and issues.

If we would make sense out of our lives, we can only begin by asserting a collective responsibility to match the collective power. The world has been superbly organized for everything except the life of its people. The knowledge and the means have been assembled to turn the world into a radioactive wasteland. But there has been no comparable collective effort to govern the relations of nations or to make them truthful and responsible or to keep them from becoming inimical to life. Even if we do not succeed overnight in accomplishing this purpose, the fact that we can identify it as a prime need and are prepared to talk about it might do some good.

—N.C.