

# THE BLACKSCHOLAR BOOK REVIEWS

*SEVEN BLACK AMERICAN SCIENTISTS*, by Robert C. Hayden; published by Addison-Wesley Co., 1970. 160 pp., hardcover, \$4.75.

Reviewed by KEITH THOMPSON

Easily the most interesting book that I have read about science and scientists is Robert C. Hayden's *Seven Black American Scientists*. The book is a collection of seven brief biographical sketches of black men who have achieved success and fame in the sciences in America. The volume, which is geared for students in the fifth through ninth grades, is both fascinating and enjoyable reading for students of all ages.

It begins with Charles R. Drew (1904-1950) the creator of blood plasma in 1940. Drew was later to be refused a blood transfusion in Tuskegee, Alabama, after being injured in an auto collision, and died on his way to a segregated hospital miles away. Probably just as important as Drew was Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, who in 1893 performed the first open heart surgery in history on a man who was stabbed in Chicago. Although he was the first one to do so, Williams is not generally given credit for this distinction. This is because he refused to publish a report of this event until 1897, after Dr. William Rehn, a German doctor who reported a similar achievement fully three years after Williams in 1896.

The two scientists most well known to black people are Benjamin Banneker and George Washington Carver. Banneker was a writer, scientist and surveyor who was to publish an almanac from 1792 to 1802 annually. Banneker was also instrumental in designing the city of Washington, D.C., as the nation's capital. George Washington Carver invented over 300 uses for the peanut and over 100 uses for the sweet potato. Others covered in the book are Matthew Henson (1865-1955), an explorer, and Ernest E. Just (1883-1941) and Charles H. Turner (1867-1923).

I found the book to be positive for black people's self image and pride. The only regret I have is that although the writer briefly mentions both the racial prejudice and discrimination that black scientists have to face in America, Hayden

should have stressed the obligations that the black scientist has to his people.

This criticism is not made in any way as a means to degrade the work as a whole, but rather as constructive criticism for the brother. This, to me, is most important as more and more black brothers and sisters are choosing careers in the sciences. All in all Bro. Hayden is to be commended for a clear exposition. If we are seriously concerned with the goal of black liberation, then more books like *Seven Black American Scientists* are urgently needed.

*BLACKS IN AMERICA'S WARS*, by Robert W. Mullen; published by Pathfinder, \$1.45.

Reviewed by CLYDE TAYLOR

Repudiation of the American military by black people, in uniform and out, may offer at any given time one of the most fundamental assessments of Afro resistance to racism. This reality gives weight to Robert Mullen's narrative. As a super-pamphlet or mini-book, it lacks the definitive scholarship of Ulysses Lee's *The Employment of Negro Troops After World War I* or the analytical probing of the chapter on war and racism in Sidney Willhelm's *Who Needs the Negro?* or the still sharper revolutionary analyses of several pieces in *Vietnam and Black America*. Instead, Mullen offers a quick, readable overview of Afro-American stances in relation to all American wars (making it the only work in print with that range).

Modest in interpretation, the account still makes plain the "Use them now, Drop them later" policy of the U.S. government towards its black semi-citizens in times of international trouble. The author also unearths valuable information about black involvement (on both sides) in the War against the Philippines, 1899-1902, and provides some fresh glances at black power agitation in the armed forces during the Vietnam War.

The book's many excellent photos, brief bibliography and direct writing may make this a very useful educational tool even after more comprehensive studies finally appear.