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Arts & Ideas

TELEVISION REVIEW

By WALTER GOODMAN

THE MERROW REPORT Growing Up in the City: Family Portraits

Channel 13, tomorrow at noon

In this second of three earnest and generally upbeat reports, John Merrow talks about race with pupils at Middle School 44, an open-enrollment school, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. At this West 77th Street school, which pupils may attend without living in the neighborhood, Mr. Merrow finds that the situation is not strictly a case of black and white. Since the school is made up largely of Hispanic adolescents, their shadings, both of color and ethnic derivation, complicate matters. The mixture can be perplexing to teenagers, but the program suggests that theirs may be a model for a changing America.

Mr. Merrow discovers that despite the existing racial gaps, when the youngsters are brought together, they get along comfortably. A Russian émigré known as Sasha to his hockey pals says, "Color doesn't mean nothing." Another of the rare white students, whose mother took her out of private school and sent her to Middle School 44 to give her "an opportunity to be a minority," has had some difficult moments, but she seems to have settled in, and her mother remains enthusiastic.

Mr. Merrow acknowledges that the school is pretty special, but he is left with the impression that given support from teachers and especially from parents, prospects for amity around New York are brighter than they sometimes seem to adults.

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