



AFRICA in Today's World

By CHARLES I. WEST, M.D.

Lewis Nkosi, 27, a former Johannesburg newsman, studied at Harvard University as a Nieman Fellow in 1961 and now is a free-lance writer in London. The following article was written for the London Observer.

I HAVE JUST spent three months in the United States probing behind the dark and bitter life in the Negro slums for the signs of the Negro revolution that is talked about everywhere.

I lingered in the bars and streets of Harlem, watching, listening, even arguing. In the Roxbury slums of Boston, in the Negro ghettos of Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago and Washington, I allowed myself to be lectured at length by black men speaking in slurred, querulous voices of what they were fighting for in America today.

In the North and the South I joined demonstration lines and watched Negroes mount boycotts and voter registration projects. At the end of three months I began to see the Negro revolution from the bottom where the majority of the 22 million American Negroes are trapped.

I suppose that with some part of my mind I was also making the effort to discover what 300 years of separation had done to my blood relatives. In a much deeper sense I was trying to find out what would have happened to me if I had been sold into slavery and if I had survived to tell the story. Joyous at the reunion, I was also often shocked and surprised.

A NEGRO TEACHER in Dallas, Thomas Tolbert, said, "You Africans are always looking down upon us. I've heard that you Africans think we are not militant enough, and you think of yourselves as superior to American Negroes."

"Some of these Negroes you despise had to hold their hats in hand in front of white people and say 'yessah' in order to get anything done for them. They got jobs that way and they sent their children to school that way. The present generation calls them Uncle Toms, but without those Negroes they wouldn't be where they are today, doing what they are doing. We've had a very difficult history and needless to say you sold us into slavery!"

I was bewildered and angry. I am, after all, not merely an African but also a South African who has suffered almost as badly under white oppression and colonialism. It had not occurred to me before that some day I would be accused of having sold anybody into slavery.

The teacher then went on to give an exposition of the Negro revolution as he saw it.

"Don't get the idea from what we are doing that Negroes hate this country. We love it; and we are just as American as any Irish or Italian American. Ours is a moral revolution. We are not trying to exchange this system of government for another. What we want to see is this country living up to the ideals of the Constitution."

MEETING MANY Negroes who talked exactly like Thomas Tolbert, mostly middle-class professional individuals attempting to enter the mainstream of American life, I began to sense the awesome conflict in the minds of many Negroes. For the Negro is both American and not fully American. His soul has been forged on American soil out of the fire of contending cultures and to a large extent, though partially an outsider, he shares many of the American white's assumptions about the nature of society, even

EDITOR'S MAILBOX

Dear Sir:

We have been asked by the VOICE, in the interest of fair play, to answer certain allegations made by Mr. Art Grant against Radio Station KRAM. For this we wish to extend our thanks to The VOICE for allowing Radio Station KRAM to use their columns to state the position of Radio Station KRAM and to offer a refutation to certain statements made by Mr. Grant against Radio Station KRAM.

Mr. Grant says, "As a Negro Salesman I was required to charge my clients almost double the price a white salesman in the same area charged - so I quit selling". According to the published rate card #9 of Radio Station KRAM, the cost for a one minute announcement from 7:00 pm to 12:00 midnight is \$4.20. Mr. Grant requested and was allowed to charge the rate of \$5.00 per spot so that he could receive \$1.00 per spot for "sales commission," and "talent fee". Radio Station KRAM received a net of \$4.00, 20 cents less than rate card per one minute announcement and Mr. Grant received \$1.00.

It may also be added at this point, that Mr. Grant received a more than fair salary for his broadcast work on KRAM in addition to the compensation he received for selling broadcast announcements on his own program.

Mr. Grant alleges that, "As a Negro with the required Federal license and endorsement I was not allowed to spin a record even on a remote broadcast." KRAM operates on a directional pattern from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am and the Federal

the American prejudices and confusions about any society less than capitalistic.

Perhaps because of the close ties between the Negro and the African, and because the African is seen as nearing the goal which has so far eluded the American Negro ("Africa will be free before we can get a lousy cup of coffee"), the African is often treated as an unwelcome witness. I was often surprised to see how an attack on the United States by an African visitor brought to the surface a complex of unexplained tensions and, painfully, brought to the surface the supreme irony of them all: the fact that at some point the Negro must defend a country that has not only failed to live up to all its promises in respect to his condition but is also in many parts declaring war against him.

ONLY LATER does it emerge that although the attack may be secretly welcomed as an instrument of blackmail against white America, if it is made persistently and seriously the Negro begins to see it as an attack on himself--an attack on his faith, which is very profound, in the ultimate capacity of America to fulfill her promises. Needless to say, this is true mostly of the middle class, whose despair is not as extreme as that among the lower working class...

"Now that you have seen our South," said my American friends, "where would you prefer to live if you had the choice between South Africa and the South of the United States?"

The answer is certainly difficult. But, ultimately, I believe the answer would be South Africa; and the reason is not just patriotism.

In the Republic of South Africa, the black people have the numbers; they also know white people are afraid, and they can see no irony in an African child being told that in 30 years he might be the president of the Republic. For some of these reasons, I believe the situation of the black man in the South African Republic--however unpleasant it is now--is more hopeful than that of the American Negro.

Communications Commission requires that any operator operating a broadcast station while the station is on a directional pattern must have a First Class license.

While it is true Mr. Grant has an FCC license it is only a Third Class license and by law he is not allowed to touch any equipment while the station is on a directional pattern. It might be well to note here that when new FCC rules went into effect as of April 1, 1964 that any operator must have a non-restricted Third Class license, Radio Station KRAM held classes in its studios for all announcers in Las Vegas. Mr. Grant was one of those persons who attended our class sessions to study for a Third Class license and it was through this instruction that he was able to pass his test. No charge was made to anyone attending these classes and it was done as a public service to all broadcast announcers in Southern Nevada.

Mr. Grant further avers, "I objected to working in a teenage 'play' room rendezvous, with kids climbing in the window and entertaining their girl friends in the studio where I worked while the station was on the air." KRAM operates from its transmitter at 25th and Owens from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am and our regular staff announcers who are on duty between 6:00 pm and 6:00 am operate from this point. This is no play room as Mr. Grant avers but is where our actual transmission equipment is and if it is good enough for our regular staff announcers to work in it certainly should be good enough for Mr. Grant.

Mr. Grant further states that he was not able to pick music for his show. It is the policy of this station and most broadcast stations that the Program Director of the station is solely responsible for the musical content of any program broadcast over its facility. The Program Director of KRAM is given the authority and it is his duty to select music which is broadcast over this station and it is not the judgement of the disc jockey or announcer on the program. This is a station policy and no change from this format may be tolerated. In addition, Mr. Grant's background does not qualify him as a judge of music - as played on KRAM.

Mr. Grant objects to a show being advertised and sold as the Art Grant Show and any other part of it being done by any other person. Mr. Grant was charged with the responsibility of two remote broadcasts and while he operated from a remote point the records had to be played from our studios. This is normal operating procedure and takes place on all remotes done on KRAM.

Mr. Grant further states that he was only hired by KRAM to get more Negro votes for KRAM. Nothing could be further from the truth, because KRAM feels it should program to all ethnic groups. Prior to Mr. Grant's employment we were broadcasting a program Sunday nights from 6:00 pm to 11:30 pm consisting of rhythm and blues music. It was the feeling of the management of KRAM that we would like to have a Negro do this program but most important, in line with the policy of KRAM to not make any differential between white or Negro. When Mr. Grant applied for the position of disc jockey on the program we were pleased to hire him.

As to De Facto Segregation, KRAM on May 20, 1963; June 5, 1963; June 24, 1963; June 26, 1963; broadcast strong editorials urging the Nevada State Legislature and the U.S. Congress to pass Civil Rights Legislation.

Mr. Grant further states that he resented rhythm and blues being played on Sunday when no time was allowed for gospel music or West Side religious programs. Mr. Grant is now on another radio station doing a religious program

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