

Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man

as told by



John P. & C. Buck West

TO GIVE A SATISFACTORY reason as to why "Hidden History" is being featured in this column, we can think of nothing that better fits the subject than the words of J. A. Rogers, outstanding author and pioneer in the field of anthropology and history of the Negro.

In Rogers introductory remarks of volume I, World's Great Men of Color, he presents an explanation that we would be quite proud to have authored. We quote this celebrated historian. He begins with a gem from the pen of Edmund Burke, who wrote "A people will never look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors."

J. A. Rogers explains "How and Why This Book (The World's Great Men of Color) was written. Rogers also speaks for the authors of "Hidden History."

I HAVE OFTEN been asked what led me to begin my researches on what for a better name I will call Negro history. As I look back on it now I think it really began in my early childhood when it was firmly impressed on me by the ruling classes that black people were inherently inferior and that their sole reason for being was to be servants to white people and the lighter-colored mulattoes. The blacks, I was told, had never accomplished anything in all of history, which, of course, began "with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden," and that such signs of civilization they now showed were due to the benevolence of Christian whites who had dragged them from Africa and cannibalism thereby plucking them as "brands from the burning" of hell and eternal torment.

The Christian blacks, themselves, said amen to this and joined in spreading the doctrine. My Sunday School teacher, an almost unmixed Negro, told us that black people were cursed by God and doomed to eternal servitude, to white people because Ham had laughed at his drunken father, Noah. To clinch his argument he read to us from the Bible, which we were taught was infallible. Doubt but a single word, try to change but a title, and you were doomed to burn in hell forever and ever. The slavemasters and kidnapers had indeed done their work well. They had so incorporated their iniquities with the Christian religion that when you doubted their racism you were contradicting the Bible and flying in the face of God Almighty.

AS FOR THE DEVOUT Christian Negro who taught us that so great an impression did he make upon me that I still remember his features and his name though nearly half a century has passed. Of course, it was understood that if one had a mixture of "white" blood, which was true in my case, one's future was not so entirely hopeless still, he could not ever reach the heights of intelligence and accomplishments of an unmixed white person for any visible degree of Negro strain immutably consigned one to be "lower than the angels," that is, the whites. This latter degree of eternal inferiority included me. However, even at the risk of the eternal torture awaiting me I could not swallow what this sincere, but glib, tool of the master class told me. Even then there was a streak of logic in me that prevented it. I had been told that God was good, why, then, I asked myself had he doomed millions and millions of people to such an ignominious fate simply because their "ancestor" thousands of years ago had laughed at his father because the father had been acting like a pig. Was God so much in favor of drunken fathers?

I had furthermore noticed that some of the brightest of my schoolmates were unmixed blacks and were some of them more brilliant

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EDITORIAL

Don't Teach Your Child to Hate

By ERNEST BOYNTON
ANP Feature Writer

THUMBING THROUGH a national magazine some weeks ago, I came suddenly upon one of the saddest pictures I have ever seen. The photograph had been taken at a black extremist rally.

In the background, high against the sky, a white man hung, in effigy, ready for burning. In the foreground stood a tall man, holding a torch. Near him stood his wife, holding their baby in her arms. The caption read "Burn, whitey, burn."

How tragic! Here was hate, like a communicable disease, being passed on from one generation to another. The young child, bright and aware as children are, was undoubtedly open to anything; to love and laughter, to kindness and compassion.

Yet, he was being taught to hate. Ancient errors were being kept alive.

A vicious cycle was being forced to spin on and on. Another racially-prejudiced man was being molded for the world.

than some of the white ones. The principal of the school, too, was a mulatto. I also saw around me black physicians and lawyers, all graduates of the best English and Scotch universities. If Negro strains were inherently inferior why had these black people been able to accomplish these things, and be more advanced than some of the barefooted white adults I knew? Still I did not contradict this Sunday School teacher. I was not supposed to. My business was to swallow what I heard. One word of doubt and I would have promptly been dubbed "infidel," which was at bottom being worse than a criminal because a criminal could be saved and go to heaven while special torment in hell, à la Dante, was reserved for deliberate unbelievers. If you did not swallow all the good things the existing order told you, including the yarn about the whale swallowing Jonah, and Moses turning his stick into a snake, you were not only not a good Christian but not a good citizen. I distinctly recall two individuals I had been specially taught to look down on: One was a man who used to argue with my father on the miracles of the Bible which he called "rubbish"; the other was a relative, a light mulatto, who had married a black woman. Race prejudice, religion, and good citizenship went together. They remind one of the patient who when asked by a psychiatrist whether any members of his family suffered from insanity, replied, "No, they don't suffer from it; they enjoy it."

JIM-CROW AND upright Christian living are held to be indivisible by millions of whites, especially in the United States and the British colonies and dominions. As for the Mormons, their missionaries still teach that Negroes can't go to heaven because of "race." I ran across these Mormon missionaries in Germany in 1927 and a Minnesota white woman recently wrote me about their teachings in her state. In 1903 when burial services were being held in a Baptist church in Salt Lake City for Eugene Burns, a Negro, the grandson of Abel Burns, faithful servant of Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, Patriarch Miner, president of one of the quorums of the Seventies of the Mormon Church "walked up to the pulpit and to the consternation of the mourners began a highly sensational discourse "to prove that Burns, as a Negro, "could not reach the state of exaltation necessary to entrance into heaven" and that "his soul was doomed before birth." The only Negro who had ever entered heaven, Miner declared, was Burns' grandfather and that was because of the latter's fidelity to the "Prophet." (New York Sun, Nov. 15, 1903).

Up to the time of these "racial" experiences I had been identifying myself with the characters in the books I read. For instance, in my great favorite, Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, I saw Brutus, Caesar, Cassius and the rest, not as "white" men but as individuals either to be emulated or shunned. In "Paul and Virginia" (See HIDDEN HISTORY, page 4)

After 300 years of second-class U.S. citizenship, the American Negro, who slowly but definitely is coming into his own, is challenged to ask a vital question! "Will my child be prejudiced?"

ONE OF THE most mysterious myths about racial prejudice is that it is "inborn." A young Negro school teacher, in one of my evening courses in sociology, affirmed!

Prejudice is in the blood. Some people have it and some don't." This conviction leads to another: "Some people will always be prejudiced, just as some people will always be black. That's the way life is."

But that's not the way life is. There is no evidence at all that prejudice is inborn. It is definitely not inherited through the genes. Quite the opposite, prejudice is learned--no child is born with prejudice. Small children, it has been shown again and again, show no race prejudice until they observe it in their parents or other intimates.

The family is the center of learning for the growing child. The child's range of experience is very narrow; his contacts are limited to his immediate surroundings. He learns from his parents, close relatives, his playmates. This is his environment, his culture, his world. From these surroundings he learns fact and fiction, he soaks up attitudes and viewpoints as a flower soaks up sunlight.

Since his parents are the most important people in his environment, their attitudes will be his attitudes.

TO BE SURE, parents do not ordinarily teach their children in explicit and direct ways. But in implicit and informal ways parents are transmitting attitudes and values to their children all day long. By the terms they use, the jokes they tell, the news stories they force upon, the gossip they exchange, the position they take.

In this sense, children are at the mercy of their parents. They are helpless victims. They can become prejudiced without even knowing it. Their attitudes can be warped, perspectives twisted before they even know they have attitudes and perspectives.

It is generally agreed, I believe, that the glorious social revolution is the most important internal occurrence of our society. Our nation's future will depend, to a large extent, on its outcome.

If meaningful results are to come from it, we must break into the vicious cycle of reverse-prejudice.

Somehow, we must determine to halt the process by which children are made racially prejudiced before they reach the age of reason. Only parents can do that.

FOR THE NEGRO, who has been for three centuries a victim of psychotic prejudice, it is ridiculous to seek retribution through prejudice. What can it benefit a people to solve their problem, if they lose their souls?

My plea is that we solve our problem and keep our souls by destroying prejudice in our own homes. "The strongest counter influence to prejudice," write Professors Raab and Selznick, "is probably the prejudice-free family even

(See EDITORIAL, page 3)

LAS VEGAS Voice

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER (Published every Thursday) DEDICATED to the INTERESTS and ASPIRATIONS for a BETTER LIFE of the NEGRO CITIZENS of the STATE of NEVADA

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958 West Owens Ave. (Golden West Shopping Center) Las Vegas, Nevada
Telephone: 642-5308

ADVERTISING RATES FURNISHED UPON REQUEST

Price per copy - 15¢ * One year - \$6 * Two years - \$10
(Application for 2nd Class Mailing Permit pending at Las Vegas, Nevada)