

Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man



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(In Volume II of "World's Great Men of Color", author R. A. Rogers gives a graphic account of one of the most dazzling Court figures of 18th Century Royalty, Chevalier de St. Georges. In a series of three articles, the chroniclers of VOICE'S Hidden History feature bring you the noted anthropologist and historian's account of the exploits of this "lion" of French and English Courts and his role in the French Revolution.)

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"The adventures of Chevalier de St. Georges were so astonishing, his talents so superlatively brilliant, that an account of his life reads like an incredibly romantic novel, with a perfect hero.

"He was the most dazzling and fascinating figure at the most splendid court of Europe; as a violinist, pianist, poet, musical composer and actor, he was phenomenal; as a swordsman he so far eclipsed the best of his time that in his prime none could match him; as a marksman none could pull a trigger with such unerring aim; as a soldier and commander he performed prodigious feats on the field of battle; as a dancer, swimmer, horseman, and skater, he was the most graceful in a land supreme for its grace and elegance; in the matter of dress, he was the model of his day, setting the fashions in England and France; a king of France, a future king of England, and royal princes sought his company, and to crown all he possessed a spirit of rare generosity, kindness and rectitude.

"Chevalier de St. Georges was born in Guadeloupe, West Indies, on Christmas Day, 1745. His mother was a black woman of extraordinary beauty, named Naomi; his father was the rich Marquis Jean de Boulogne, governor of the island, later King's Counsellor, Grand Chancellor of France, and High Treasurer of the Order of the Holy Spirit.

"AT THE AGE of thirteen, St. Georges went to France. According to one report, he was a runaway; according to another, his father, proud of his offspring's precocity, took him there to study. The latter version is probably true, for the best tutors in Paris were engaged for him. His mornings were devoted to the study of music, literature, science and similar subjects; afternoons were spent in fencing, marksmanship, riding and physical exercises, in all of which the West Indian lad excelled his fellows.

"At fifteen he had defeated the best amateur swordsmen in Paris and at seventeen there was no professional in that city to equal him. His prowess in other branches of sports was also remarkable. When only twenty-one, he defeated Faldoni, the renowned fencing champion of Italy.

"Without a rival out-of-doors, he became also the star of drawing rooms, fetes, and spectacles. He played the violin, improvised verses, and in the favorite pastime of the period, conversation, he was one of the most sparkling. His witticisms were keen but clean, lest he offend the sensibilities of those ladies who might become embarrassed. He was never coarse or vulgar.

"At twenty he was appointed esquire to the duchess of Orleans, wife of the brother of Louis XVI; and became the confidant of the duke, himself and of his son, the duke de Chartres. Then he entered into the whirl of the brilliant life of the Court of Versailles, where his physical

You Know Keynotes to CIW HAS TO GO BARING

Did you know that, like you, the Las Vegas Sun publisher is on vacation? Well, he is and various prominent Nevadans have been presenting their evaluation of the political situation in Mr. Greenspun's "Where I Stand" column.

TODAY (Tuesday), the guest columnist, described as "owner, editor, publisher, copy boy and ad salesman for the Mineral County Independent in Hawthorne" is Jack McCloskey who itemed that Greenspun "or someone should tell "Doc" West that the Ku Klux Klan type of sniping at Baring in the VOICE is winning Baring nothing but votes".

I don't know what your reaction is to the Mineral County Independent's mono staff's 'warning' is, but my own feeling is that if his observation holds any water, at all, it is a sad commentary on the Nevada electorate.

Don't ask me to explain what was meant by "Ku Klux Klan type of sniping"--it just escapes my understanding, even though I must confess to having publicly disclosed a burning anathema for Nevada's "unrepresentative" in Washington. I have, however, a strong suspicion (one which I fervently hope is unfounded) that what was meant was that Negro opposition to Baring was winning the Nevada Congressman support.

I HAVE NEVER been more sincere in my life when I say I pray that this is not the case, either in McCloskey's fancy or in fact. Even if I were not a Negro, as an American I would be greatly disturbed over reports of a renewed "white backlash" in the wake of the incidences of racial violence throughout the nation.

Evidence of the "white backlash" is indi-

charm, his talents, and his taste in dress made him the most striking figure in all that scintillating throng.

"DURING THIS TIME he wrote plays and musical compositions, some of which became the most famous of the day. 'St. George,' says Larousse, 'was a master on the violin, and a story is told of him so remarkable that it borders on the improbable; he played one evening a bit of music with his whip, a fact certified by several present. This whip became famous; the handle is ornamented with a great number of precious stones, and the nobleman declared that each stone in the dazzling collection represented a woman who loved him.' Among those who fell under his charm was the wife of his patron, Madame de Montesson, Duchess of Orleans.

"In a similar vein of praise, 'Biographe de Musiciens; says: 'None could equal him at running; in the dance he was the model of perfection; he could mount horses bareback and break the wildest of them; he skated with perfect grace and distinguished himself among the best swimmers. Trained by Leclair for the violin, he acquired on this instrument a skill equal to that of the best French violinists of his time and shone at concerts with his playing and his concertos alike.'

"To the added delight of the gay French aristocracy, he brought a band of colored musicians from the West Indies which he trained himself and which became a leading attraction at Versailles.

"In winter it was considered one of the most thrilling sights at Versailles to see St. Georges skate on the large artificial lake. Tall, lithe, and graceful, he would skim over the ice with the ease of a swallow, describing marvelous rhomboids, flowers, portraits, and sometimes 'whole lines from Racine.'

"As soon as St. Georges appeared in my circle," says Jean de Beauvoir, who knew him, 'a murmur to which all had long been accustomed, circulated through the room. They recognized him; and the expression of an unforgettable joy shone on his handsome, brown face. The women, on seeing him, had the appearance of hiding behind their fans, as if to convey a secret to one another, while the men, the most distinguished in nobility, mentality, and intelligence, came forward to shake his hand. In an instant he had become the lion of the assembly.'

"He was a master at everything, and his conduct was so perfect withal, that his enemies could find but one thing to pin their meanness on, and that was his birth and racial descent." (St. Georges' story to be continued next week)

cated in reports of whites arming themselves; in government officials warning that riots were alienating liberal whites whose aid is needed in the civil rights struggle; in civil rights organizations' complaints of a large drop in donations.

CORE, SNCC and the SCLC have reported that "white persons have considerably decreased their support of civil rights organizations out of fear and extremism". It is significant that the more conservative rights organizations have not been penalized financially. Reports are that the NAACP Legal Defense Fund has tripled its income in five years, and that the Fund for Racial Equality's contributions have increased from \$170,000 in 1965 to \$231,000 for the first 10 months of the 1966 fiscal year. The latter report, however, is a digression, and not of moment at this time.

WHAT IS of moment and should be of grave national concern is the danger inherent in an anti-Negro movement of the white majority. It is a tragic mistake to use Negro militancy or even the riots as "cause" to unmask old, but smouldering, hates and prejudices. In no sense should Negro militancy be categorized as "cause"; rather it is so clearly "effect"--the effect of grievances unmet. There is only one basic cause for our monumental problem in the United States and that is injustice. Until Americans face up to the agonizing truth that where the Negro is concerned they are wrong--have ever been wrong, there can be no resolution of the racial problem.

IN A RECENT column, Carl Rowan, former U.S. Ambassador and former head of the U.S.I.A., wrote that "it is pitiable self-deception, to assume that a 10 per cent minority can force a 90 per cent majority to grant it total equality".

"But", he added, "the tragedy is compounded when the 90 per cent majority falls victim to another myth; that the minority is totally dependent, in the long run, on the good will, even the whims, of the majority; and that the way to stop the rioting is simply to 'get tough' to 'stop coddling' the Negro, to refuse to pass any civil rights legislation".

Mr. Rowan continued "The number of Negroes in America is too small to "take" first class citizenship. But it is large enough to make life miserable for the white 90 per cent, to make the future less than a dream for Americans of any color"

I DON'T KNOW how many white Americans paid heed to Mr. Rowan's commentary--a commentary he "felt obliged" to write out of his belief that most of the people are decent and that "they deserve to be saved from themselves and the faulty judgment of human relation that so often belong to the wealthy and powerful who never in their lives have known a Negro they considered their equal", but it carried a vital message to all Americans that "Facing Racial Facts" is everybody's business.

Well back to Baring (a horrible thought, but I'd rather get back to Baring than have Baring get back to Washington)--it is inconceivable that the Nevada electorate could re-elect a man to office who has consistently voted against the interests of the majority of all segments of his constituency, isn't it?

I'd sure hate to have to buy Jack McCloskey's premise that our barbs against Baring are garnering him votes--cause 'he ain't heard nothing yet'.

LAS VEGAS
Voice

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