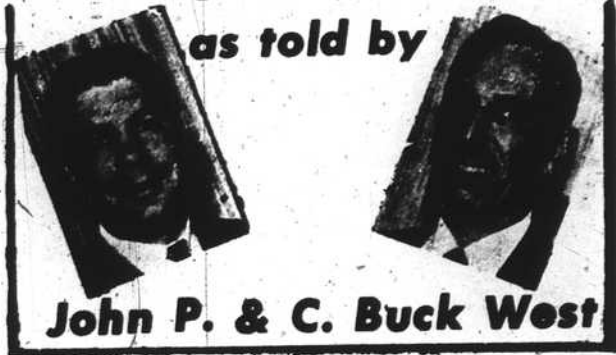


# Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man

as told by



John P. & C. Buck West

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ALEXANDER DUMAS  
The World's Greatest Romancer  
(1802-1870)

Conclusion of a two-part series on the French literary giant of Negro blood who has been described as "the greatest, the most prolific, the most jovial writer the world has ever known" as profiled by anthropologist-historian J. A. Rogers in Volume II of "World's Great Men of Color".

"A giant in size, Dumas possessed exuberance and mental power to match, a veritable Titan of letters. For more than thirty years he wrote incessantly, snatching only some four hours of sleep nightly. One of his best books, "Chevalier de Maison Rouge," was written on a wager. He made a bet that he could write it in 72 hours including time required for food and sleep. He finished it in 66. And it was written in his very beautiful hand without erasures.

"His energy seemed inexhaustible. He lived at top speed, yet neither age nor high-living seemed to affect him. At the age of sixty he would come home after a whole night of entertainment and sit down to write, while his son, and others half his age, would go to bed. He wrote with the same impetuous ardor his father had shown in battle.

"HE COULD NOT keep pace with the demand for his work. For each letter of the alphabet he wrote he received one centime, or about half a dollar for a word of ten letters, a sum equal to several times the present rate. 'Each time I stop to put on my shoe,' he said, 'it costs me \$100.' He wrote and published more than 1200 books and plays, and about four times as many articles for the newspapers. His travel articles discovered Europe and North Africa for the world.

"And while the people liked Dumas for his books, they liked him even more for himself. He radiated good humor and had people laughing wherever he went. Even when alone, writing, he would laugh uproariously with the characters he was creating, splashing as joyously in the literary element as a bird in its bath. Of his gaiety, he wrote: 'I carry it about with me wherever I go--I don't know why it is but it is so--an atmosphere of stir and life which has become proverbial.' He was the life of every party--'always crazy, always excellent.' No prominent festivity was considered complete without him.

"His friend Lamartine wrote him: 'The world has sought perpetual motion, Dumas, you have done better; you've created perpetual amazement.' His enemies, nearly all of them literally men, used his oddities to discredit him, but the masses considered him a privileged character. Whatever Dumas did they considered well done.

HE SCATTERED money about as the wind scatters the leaves of autumn. In his own words: 'Whatever my hand grasps it holds tightly except money, which flows through it like water.' He built a castle in the suburbs and called it Monte-Cristo. People whom Dumas never met would come in to spend the week-end. Once a friend asked to be introduced to a guest who was sitting near him at the table. 'Introduce him?' asked Dumas laughingly, 'why, I have never met the gentleman myself.'

"Monte Cristo, built and maintained at a

## MINISTER ASKS "WHY?"

Dear Editor:

I am aware of the opinion held by many of the old-timers of this city, that a person who has not lived in Las Vegas 5, 10, or 15 years are outsiders, having no concept of the real needs of the area and no idea of how to possibly

fabulous post, probably did more than anything else to ruin Dumas financially. When the Revolution of 1848 brought about the collapse of the theatrical business, Dumas found himself bankrupt and was forced to flee to Brussels along with other refugees.

"Dumas never worried about his color, although many of his friends, particularly the English-speaking ones, were anxious to prove that he wasn't a Negro, but a quadroon. In his own memoirs Dumas tells how, when he drew his pistol on the commandant of Soissons, where he had gone to get powder for the rebels, the commandant's wife advised her husband to yield as the Negroes were attacking the place. Dumas said that he was puzzled at this for a long time, since he was the only Negro there. Later, however, he discovered that the woman had lived in Haiti and had witnessed a massacre of the whites by the blacks.

"LUCKILY FOR THE world, Dumas was born in France and not in America, where he would have been circumscribed and might have used his genius in the struggle for elementary liberty like his notable Negro contemporary, Frederick Douglass.

"Towards the end, when Dumas' overworked brain began to weaken, he took an interest in cooking and became the most renowned chef of his time. None could equal him in preparing a hare, a chicken, a sole, or a sauce.

"As late as 1931, the Paris daily, L'Intransigeant, asked its readers whom they considered the greatest gourmet of modern times. Dumas was named first, and King Leopold I, of Belgium, second.

"When someone shouted at him: 'Your father was black,' Dumas flung back, 'and my grandfather was a monkey.' As the crowd roared, he added: 'Now that I have amused you all with wit of a good quality, I must bid you good-day as I have work to do.'

"IN HIS declining years, he was tenderly cared for by his son, who, also starting at the bottom of the ladder, made a fortune independently of his father. Dumas, the son, always saw to it that his father's vest pockets were filled with gold pieces as the old man had a horror of poverty towards the last.

"In 1870, at the age of sixty-eight, he died, his great fame suffering temporary eclipse in the genius of his son.

"At the unveiling of his statue in Place Malherbes, Paris, Edmond About said:

"This statue is that of a great madman, who into all his good humor and astonishing gaiety, put more true wisdom than there is to be found in the hearts of all us here. It is the likeness of a prodigal, who after squandering millions in a thousand generous ways, left without knowing it, a king's treasure!

"He was not France's; he was not Europe's; he was the world's!" said Victor Hugo.

One remark of Dumas' deserves special mention here. He said: "When I discovered that I was black, I determined to so act that men should see beneath my skin." There was once considerable color prejudice in Paris because of the horrible war between blacks and whites in Haiti.

One of Dumas' great desires was to visit the United States but he was dissuaded by his friends and especially his publishers. His books were best sellers in the United States and his publishers feared for the result if his American admirers saw him in the flesh. The Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography says, "He is understood to have abandoned on sound advice the desire he once cherished of visiting the birthplace of Washington and Franklin and the land of republican equality. Such a resolution is to be deplored as the world would have rung with indignation at insults being offered to a man of genius on account of his colour and a case of prejudiced outrage so extreme might have produced a salutary reaction." (Vol. 2, p. 116, 1863.)

correct existing inequalities. In my humble opinion Las Vegas is not unlike any other growing city with a goodly number of Negroes. Wherever you find a "Ghetto"--you'll find that the ethnic group comprising it will have the same basic needs. Namely, better housing, more jobs, better schools and a community atmosphere conducive to good moral living. Scripture clearly states that longevity as a Christian profits nothing. The important thing is to be a Christian. Therefore as a Negro, a newcomer to this community, I have the right to speak out against the social, political, and religious evils of this city.

The winds of social and political changes are blowing across the world. Old ideas and systems which are not in step with the enhancement of the dignity and the personal worth of man MUST be torn down. This requires that those who are in positions of leadership must operate within the framework of the "greatest good for the greatest number of people." This it would appear my Brethren you failed to do in the Primary Election. I inquired of residents of tenure about the lack of achievements of the candidates you so vigorously supported. I found no concrete evidence to their credit to aid the economical, social, and dignity of our people. However, there were others running for the same office as your candidates who had made definite contributions to our cause and you failed to support them.

The question arises, "Why?" Why did you man the battle station for do nothing candidates when there were candidates who were dedicated to our cause? One being a fellow Minister. The newspapers, people in the streets, as well as some of your own parishioners are saying that it was a sell out. If these assumptions are true in this day of great social change when so much depends on so few, there is no place for Negro leaders, clergymen, or otherwise who will sell their birthright for a few dollars. Dignity and integrity are the order of the day. Your conduct was an insult to our intelligent God and the Negro ministry of Las Vegas.

The winds of social change are blowing across the desert of Las Vegas. God forbid that His ambassadors desert the ship leaving His people without a strong united moral voice. The old adage is not altogether true "whatever will be will be", but rather whatever will be, will be because of what we do or don't do now.

The story recorded in Holy writ comes to mind when the multitude were fed. The disciples suggested that they be sent away to find food for themselves. Jesus questioned, "Need they depart, give ye them to eat." Will you my Brethren send them away or will you work together with the other interested groups in our city for the enhancement of the greatest good for all of our people.

It is indelibly clear to me that we have had too much lip service, selling out and not enough genuine united effort for the cause of human dignity. We as a people should not support any candidate for office until we as a group demand in return for our support more jobs, better schools and a better community in which to raise our young. Remember that all aspirants for public office are the same regardless of their party. They will not do any more for our cause than we demand of them.

Yours In Christ,

Horace Gholston, Minister  
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**LAS VEGAS**  
**Voice**

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to the INTERESTS and ASPIRATIONS for a BETTER LIFE  
of the NEGRO CITIZENS of the STATE of NEVADA

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