

# Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man  
as told by



John P. & C. Buck West

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NAT TURNER

Leader of America's Greatest Slave Revolt  
(1800-1831)

"NAT TURNER was the leader of a revolt that put more terror into the hearts of the oppressors of the black man than any other event since American slavery had begun. And he started out with only seven followers, six less than John Brown in his immortal raid on Harper's Ferry. He succeeded in so alarming the slaveholders that it was necessary for the United States to call out a portion of its navy to their rescue.

"Nat was born a slave on the plantation of John Travis of Southampton County, Virginia. He was an unmixed Negro with strongly marked African features, short and powerfully built, and according to Anglo-Saxon standards, unattractive. But from his piercing black eyes, there shone genius and an undaunted soul--what Byron calls, 'the eternal spirit of the chainless mind.'

"A born lover of freedom, as surely as were Robert Bruce, Oliver Cromwell, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Simon Bolivar and Garibaldi, he was experiencing what none of these patriots had, namely, the lash of the slave-whip. But even that could not tame him. What right, he demanded of himself, with ever-increasing bitterness and vigor, had white men to treat him like an ox simply because he was black when an indomitable soul within told him he was as good as they.

"REVOLT HAD been born in his soul. He thought of his father, who brought as a slave to America, had escaped and had somehow made his way back to Africa. He tried to escape, too, but was caught and brutally flogged.

"This experience maddened him all the more against his master and all white people. But it made him more sensitive to the sufferings of his fellow-slaves. Deeply religious, he told himself that God had caused him to fail because he had tried to escape alone. Hereafter, he resolved that when he left the next time, he would be taking the other slaves with him. Thereafter he spent his waking moments planning how to do this.

"His conduct, up to the time of his escape, had been exemplary. He was never known to drink, swear or steal. Very intelligent, he had learnt to read with so much ease that he later said he did not know when he started to do so. Once when as a little child a book with pictures was given him to stop him from crying, he began spelling out the names of the objects. He was also skilled at making pottery and knew how to make gunpowder.

"A BORN mystic, his Sunday School teachings made him even more so. His feet trod the earth but his spirit roamed in regions beyond earthly confines. As Mohamet, the camel-driver 'heard' the spirit bidding him go forth to preach the doctrine of the One God; as Constantine the Great 'saw' a sign in the sky bidding him conquer for Christendom; as Joan of Arc 'heard' voices in the forest bidding her arise and drive the English from France just as surely Nat Turner 'heard' voices as he walked behind the plough bidding him arise and free his people. 'Such is your luck,' said the voices, 'such you are called to see. Let it come rough or smooth. You must surely bear it.'

"He saw 'visions' as did St. John in the

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# EDITORIAL

## Only Totality Is Realistic

### YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHERS

Equal Accommodations, Equal Voting Opportunities, Equal Education, Equal Job Opportunities and Equal Housing Opportunities are all equally important components of Civil Rights. Civil Rights could no more exist without one of these components than a living body could exist without a heart, without lungs, without kidneys or without any, one of its other vital organs or components.

Realistic Civil Rights will never exist without Realistic Equal Housing Opportunities. Nor can a Civil Rights worker be realistic if he directs his efforts at only four of the five vital organs of Civil Rights, and labels efforts to wage war against the other "unrealistic". No one of the five vital components is anymore or any less important than the others, because each is dependent upon each of the others for the body (Civil Rights) to have life.

WHEN A Negro accepts the notion that he can have Civil Rights in four of the five areas, he labors under a false concept. He actually does not have equal Civil Rights and therefore does not have realistic Civil Rights which must be automatically extended to every law abiding citizen.

When any citizen, because of his color, or religion, is denied an equal chance to purchase any home within his means, he is being deprived of his Civil Rights just as much as when he is denied a job because he is Black, or because

Revelation forecasting his own, living mission. In the sky he saw black hosts and white ones battling and shutting out the light of the sun. The thunder rolled, blood flowed like a river, and then came shouts of victory. The blacks had won because they had God and the Right on their side.

"AT TIMES he 'saw' Christ stretched on the cross the whole breadth of the skies. On the leaves of corn were drops of blood--Christ's blood, shed for all men, white and black alike. In the woods and on the leaves, 'appeared' letters and numbers and the figures of men. He fasted, prayed, read his Bible and withdrew from his fellow-slaves. His hallucinations increased.

"On May 12, 1828, the 'Holy Spirit' appeared to him and told him that the yoke of Jesus had fallen on him and that he must be prepared to fight against the serpent. When the time came, he would see a sign in the sky; until then, there should be a seal on his lips.

"Three years later in February 1831, the sign came. There was an eclipse of the sun. The sky was darkened just as his vision and the Bible had 'predicted.' From Heaven, he 'heard a voice' saying, 'Arise and slay the enemies of God with their own weapons.' He was so affected that for days, he trembled as if with ague.

"He had been telling himself for years that he needed disciples and now he felt their need more than ever. All that time he had been observing his fellow-slaves closely and felt that at least four of them could be trusted. Now that 'the seal' had been removed from his lips, he told all to the four.

"These recommended three others, making a total of seven. At noon, Sunday, August 31, 1831, the seven, Henry, Hercules, Nelson, Sam, Will, Jack and Nat, went off for a barbecue in the woods, taking a pig, a bag of potatoes and a jug of cider. Nat could play the guitar, and as he passed his master's mansion, he strummed a spiritual while the others sang. Such carefree mortals, Master Travis felt, certainly were not up to mischief.

"THE CONSPIRATORS spent all day in the woods, laying their plans and taking a solemn oath that they would gain liberty or die. They planned to attack the whites in Southampton County, capture it as Washington had done during the Revolution, and retreat to Dismal Swamp. There they would establish headquarters and

he is a Jew.

Equality in Job Opportunities is not realistic unless there has been equality in training or education. The latter (Education) cannot be equal when children of a disadvantaged heritage must attend schools where all, or nearly all, of their classmates are equally disadvantaged in their heritage.

All recognized authorities in the field of education agree that a child educated under such conditions does not measure up to the child of equal age, or years of schooling who has had the opportunity of association with youngsters of more advantaged backgrounds. In short, the experts say that children educated in the ghetto cannot compete for better jobs with those taught outside the ghetto. Herein lies the evil of de facto segregated schools.

DE FACTO schools will always exist as long as there are ghettos within the cities. Ghettos can only be eradicated by open housing policies within the cities.

If Equal Opportunity in Housing does not exist, then Equal Education cannot exist, and consequently Equal Job Opportunities cannot be realistic.

There can be no Civil Rights until equal rights are automatic in each of the five vital areas of Rights. These vital organs include Open Housing.

assemble their forces for a bigger blow.

"They would strike that night. Cromwell, Washington, Garibaldi, Bolivar, started out with an army of trained soldiers, equipped with good weapons. Nat Turner and his valiant band of six, had only farm implements as their arms.

"They returned at midnight. The master and his family were sound asleep. Planting a ladder against a window, Nat mounted it, sneaked into the mansion, and opened the front door for the others. Taking all the weapons they could find, they tiptoed up to the master's bedroom.

"Now for the reckoning with the man who had been so cruel to them.

"Creeping into the room, Nat struck Travis on the head with a hatchet. The blow glanced off, and Travis leaped to his feet, blood gushing from the wound. When he shouted for help, Will brained him.

"Mrs. Travis came running in--she met the same fate. When Nat and his men left the house, the other four members of the family, including the baby, were no more.

"Nat told himself that it was a wicked thing he had done. But he silenced his conscience by recalling how the white people had stolen his people from Africa and how they had mistreated them ever since. He knew also that if the whites got the upper hand, they were going to wreak awful vengeance on guilty and innocent alike.

"Mounted on Travis' horses, the seven galloped off to the next plantation where they killed everyone. Nat was no longer a plain slave. He was now General Cargill.

(To be concluded)

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