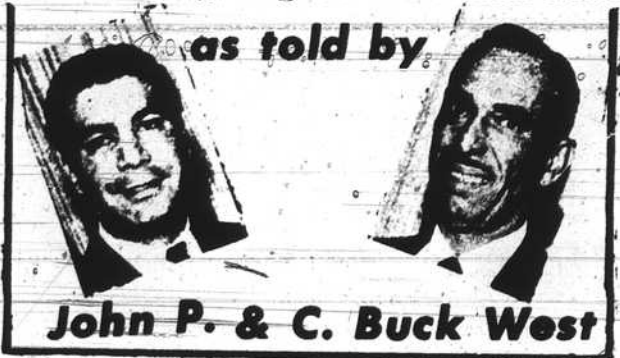


Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man



as told by John P. & C. Buck West

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FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Ex-Slave Who Rose to Be a Mighty Champion of Freedom (1817-1895)

(Last of a four-part series on the great abolitionist as annotated by the late historian-anthropologist, J. A. Rogers in Vol. II of the author's "World's Great Men of Color")

"OF MANY interesting stories about him, the following deserves mention. After the Civil War, he visited Talbot County, the scene of his early privations, and saw among others, his heartless former master, Thomas Auld, now penniless and dying of paralysis. Douglass greeted him with touching sympathy, and when Auld addressed him as "Marshal" Douglass, Douglass replied: 'Not Marshal Douglass--just Frederick.' This splendid gesture was construed as subservience by Douglass' enemies among the colored people, many of whom never forgave him for marrying his white secretary after the death of his first wife, a colored woman. Auld's death was mentioned in newspapers in America and England because he had once owned Douglass."

"ALTHOUGH HE was received as a privileged character almost everywhere in the North this did not prevent his being snubbed by some whites--and some Negroes, too. Once, two colored dining-car waiters refused to serve him because of color. He says of this, 'In their eyes I saw Fred Douglass, suddenly, and possibly undeservedly, lifted above them. The fact that I was colored and they were also colored, had so long made us equal that the contradiction now presented was too much. After all, I have no blame for Sam and Garrett. They were trained in the school of servility to believe that only white men were entitled to be waited upon by colored men."

"WHILE THE rank and file of our people quote with much vehemence, the doctrine of human equality, they are among the first to deny it and denounce it in practice."

"In spite of his advanced age, the Grand Old Man plunged with characteristic vigor into the fight for suffrage for all American women. But the end was at hand. On February 20, 1895, the seventy-eight-year old orator addressed a woman's suffrage convention, returning home in the best of spirits and apparently, the best of health. Leaving the dinner table, he paused in the hall-way to relate an incident that occurred at the meeting. He was telling it in his usual animated way, when suddenly he dropped to his knees, his hands clasped.

"Mrs. Douglass thought he was only re-enacting part of the scene. But he sank lower and lower, and, stumbling gently to the floor, breathed his last.

"THE PRESS of the civilized world burst out in resounding praise of him. Memorial services were held over the nation. The city of Rochester voted to suspend business during his burial. Later a monument was erected to him there. It cost \$10,000. Theodore Roosevelt was the orator at the unveiling.

"The Chicago Western Newspaper Union said of him, 'Physically, mentally, and morally, Mr. Douglass was a grand specimen of manhood, and

(TRIMBLE, from page 1)

mended applicant was not his choice, and that, furthermore, he questioned the validity of the procedure of the Committee in that Mr. Morgan had been hired, had conducted interviews with applicants for the subordinate position of Training Coordinator; had, in fact, also hired someone for the post of Coordinator; all without the mandatory approval and ratification of the O.I. Board.

AT THIS POINT, Chairman Trimble gave everyone present a lesson in how arbitrary one could really be. He threw the book away on parliamentary procedure; he ignored raised hands requesting the floor (from both his board members and visitors in the audience); he refused to permit Mrs. Lubertha Johnson, Executive Director of Operation Independence, to read a letter from a board member who had been called to San Francisco, but who had wanted his views heard on the subject, and he exercised a Chairman's right to acknowledge only whom he wanted to acknowledge to speak, and that was him.

After, finally, relinquishing the floor to Assembly-elect Woodrow Wilson who pleaded for reason and second thoughts on the matter, he did permit others to be heard. However, at no time, did he countenance any suggestion that he or the committee might have been incorrect in the procedure or in violation of the Board's own by-laws, and in fact, of the rules and guidelines of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

HE CHOSE, instead, to "rationalize" the general disapproval expressed as "reversed prejudice". Because there were expressions from the floor that more effort should be exerted in recruitment with the hope that qualified Negro applicants could be found, he accused everyone, at large, of closing the door on employment of whites.

I, personally, find his attitude alarming, even dangerous to the community. Moreover, I am appalled at his oft expressed disdain and contempt of members of his race. Even worse, is the implied (no, out and out) threat, that if he doesn't have his way, he's going to break up the whole ball game. At least, we are warned.

The Operation Independence Board did not accept the recommendation of the Screening Committee, and applications for the positions of Director and Training Coordinator will be accepted until January 2. See page 4 of the VOICE for full details.

any race might be proud to claim him as a representative.... As an orator and a thinker, he ranked with the best in the land; though born a slave and excluded from the advantages of education, he had a command of the English language that was marvelous in its perfection. Sneered at, hissed, mobbed, stoned, and assaulted, he stemmed the tide and came off conqueror. When it was dangerous, even for white men to speak the truth on the question of slavery, he did not equivocate or palliate evil with soft words. He lifted his voice like a trumpet and told the people of their transgressions.

"The Narragansett Times said: 'As for scholarship, he was the peer of the ablest. He had evidently been a reader of the best English literature; he never lacked for a good, apt and elegant illustration; his mind was well-stored and a grand dignity presided over the man. This dignity gave him character with the world.

"Slave, fugitive, crusader, champion, achiever of truest success, wielder of vast usefulness, commander of the world's respect, yet with all of his honors, humble, gentle, as are all the truly great.

"IN HIS immense ascent from the lowest depths where the masses were reached not even by the faintest gleam of hope to the heights of meritorious and even majestic triumph, in his noble aspiration and upward mountings, his final complete and serene success, the life of this man affords one of the most satisfying illustrations of high human realization that appears in the history of the whole world."

Theodore Tilton said, 'I knew the noblest giants of my day and he was of them, strong amid the strong.'

... he was no soft-tongued apologist; He spoke straight forward, fearlessly, uncovered.

The sunlight of his truth dispelled the mist. And set in bold relief each dark-hued cloud.

To sin and crime he gave their proper hue

And hurled at evil what was evil's due."

THIS WEEK IN NEGRO HISTORY

AN "NPI" FEATURE

- Dec. 22, 1826 Bishop J. A. Handy, of the AME church, born in Maryland.
- Dec. 23, 1815 Henry H. Garnett, Negro abolitionist, born.
- Dec. 23, 1867 Mme. C.J. Walker, business woman, beauty culturist, inventor and philanthropist, was born in Delta, La. She died in 1919.
- Dec. 24, 1881 The Rev. H.H. Garnett, who preached a sermon before the U.S. House of Representatives, died.
- Dec. 24, 1881 Benjamin "Pap" Singleton led the great exodus of 5,000 Negroes from South Carolina to Arkansas.
- Dec. 25, 1835 Bishop B. T. Tanner, AME church, was born in Pittsburgh.
- Dec. 26, 1906 Alpha Phi Alpha, the first Negro Greek-letter social fraternity, was founded at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Dec. 26, 1907 Bandleader Cab Calloway was born in New York.
- Dec. 26, 1908 Jack Johnson, boxer, knocked out Tommy Burns at Sydney, Australia, before police stopped the fight.
- Dec. 27, 1862 The first African Methodist Episcopal Zion church was established at New Bern, N.C.
- Dec. 27, 1963 Earl B. Gilliam, first Negro to be a municipal court jurist in a Negro, Calif.
- Dec. 28, 1816 American Colonization Society organized.
- Dec. 28, 1870 S. H. Archer, teacher and later president, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Ga., born in Petersburg, Va.
- Dec. 28, 1960 Rafer Johnson becomes Olympic decathlon champion.

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