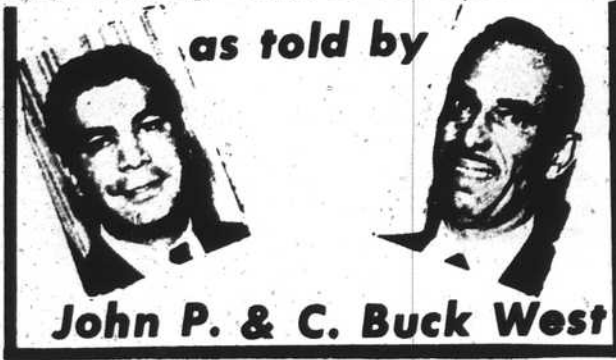


Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man

as told by



John P. & C. Buck West

SPONSORED BY



JACK JOHNSON

World Heavyweight Champion and Demolisher of "The White Hope" (1878-1946)

(Last in a three-part series as chronicled in Vol. II of J. A. Rogers' "World's Great Men of Color.")

"WITH THE FALL of the last of the 'White Hopes,' Johnson became more unpopular than ever. If white race pride had been indignant before, now it was infuriated. At Ogden, Utah, a gang of white toughs mobbed Johnson's private car. The hatred against Johnson was vented in attacks on Negroes over the nation. Riots broke out in New York, Washington, Chicago and elsewhere. Scores of blacks and whites were killed, and thousands injured. The repercussion was felt in Africa and in every part of the world where ill-feeling existed between white and colored.

"These disorders were followed by a long, bitter, wordy battle over the fight films. Censorship laws were passed by several states barring fight films and jim-crow laws were tightened in the Southern states.

"Johnson returned to Chicago 'bringing home the bacon'--\$120,000--as he had promised his aged mother. The Negroes and a few white friends gave him a rousing welcome. For the next few days he was the most talked-of man on the globe.

"WITH NO other worlds to conquer, Johnson opened a cafe of sybaritic splendor in Chicago--Cabaret de Champion. On its walls hung a Rembrandt he had bought in Europe, a painting of himself and his white wife by Clarkson, one of America's leading artists; original oils representing biblical and historical scenes, one of them, Cleopatra. A feature of the establishment was a great silver cuspidor inlaid with gold.

"The receipts were enormous. Whites and Negroes met there on friendly terms. But his enemies, who had planned to ruin him, fair or foul, denounced the place as a 'miscegenation joint.' At about this time, too, Johnson's white wife committed suicide, due it is said, to Johnson's neglect of her for another white girl. This scandal was played up in its smallest details by the press.

"To embarrass him further former white sweethearts of his began to re-appear. He bought them off but one of them, Belle Schreiber, daughter of a Milwaukee policeman, whom he had been taking around with him over the country, was hunted down by his enemies and induced to come and testify against him. Johnson had been paying her way across state lines and this was against the Mann Act, which had been passed to halt the white slave traffic. Johnson's affairs with her had taken place before the passage of the Mann Act but to satisfy the desire for racial vengeance by the forces of law and order, which included the mob, the law was made retroactive and Johnson was sentenced to a year and a day in prison and \$1,000 fine. The offense had been purely a technical one. It is very common in the United States for men to pay the fare of their mistresses in street-cars, busses, ferries, etc. crossing State lines. Johnson was no more guilty than anyone of the ten of thousands of these since he had not done it for gain like the white slavers.

"LATER, THIS most unjust sentence was

reversed by the appellate court but Johnson, while waiting for the decision, fled the country. He said that he was so harrassed by the shadowing of the federal agents and the way they were bothering his aged mother that bitter at his whole treatment in America he decided to leave it for good and all. He went to Canada, and from there took ship to Europe, forfeiting his \$15,000 bail. Innocent before, he had now really broken the law. He was a fugitive from 'justice.'

"When he arrived at Havre, France and saw policemen lining the pier, he thought they were there to arrest him. But it was only to keep back the crowd, eager to see him.

"Everywhere in Europe he was treated like an uncrowned king. As for his love affairs the Europeans considered them indulgences permissible to a great man. Since when was a prize-fighter expected to be a combination Lord Chesterfield and St. Anthony? What if he went around with white-women? Why that showed his good taste in choosing a woman of their 'race.' In Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Rome, the crowds stormed his automobile for handshakes and autographs. Even in prudish Britain, he was mobbed by friendly crowds. Once during a royal procession, his appearance diverted attention for a while from George V.

"HE BOXED a good deal in Europe and when war broke in 1914, he went to Buenos Aires where he received a rousing welcome and gave several exhibition matches. He next went to Cuba where a match was arranged for him with Jess Willard in Havana, and where preceding the fight, it was hinted to him, he says, 'in terms which I could not mistake, that if I permitted Willard to win, which would give him the title, much of the prejudice against me would be wiped out,' and that it would be easier 'to have the charges against me dropped.'

"Eager to see his mother again and on the chance that there would be no further prosecution of him, he agreed to lay down to Willard, (who was a third-rater), in spite of his great reluctance to give up the title. Of this fight, he says, 'I could have disposed of him (Willard) long before the final round.' The whole sordid story came out later. It is alleged that there was considerable dickering for the sum that Johnson was to receive for laying down and this was not agreed on finally until Johnson was being counted out. Near the count of ten, he saw the signal, the wave of a handkerchief that the sum demanded had been paid and he allowed the count to continue, it was said.

"BUT WHEN he made plans to return to America, he found, as he said, that 'such offers or hints of leniency as had been tendered to me were without substantial foundation' and that his chances of escaping prison were slight. Sending his wife home, he returned to London and then went to Spain where he gave boxing exhibitions and then for lack of suitable fighters took up bull-fighting and succeeded so well that he had several offers to be a professional matador. On his first bull-fight in Barcelona, he killed three bulls.

"After visiting other European countries, he went back to Mexico where he opened a cafe at Tia Juana, racing centre, just across the American border, where business prospered especially from the patronage of Americans who came in numbers to see him. But the desire to see his mother and the fact that he was an exile away from his real friends, finally decided him to return. He was given a year at hard labor at Leavenworth, where the warden of the prison turned out to be ex-Governor Dickerson of Nevada, who had made his fight with Jeffries possible. Dickerson, he said, had determined that he should have a fair chance in the fight with Jeffries and now proved to be his staunch friend and adviser. He was made physical director of the prison, had two bouts with the best fighters there, which he won, and came out at the end of eight months for his exemplary behavior.

"Retiring from the ring, Johnson opened a boxing academy, but returned in 1926 to knock out Pat Lester, a white aspirant for the heavy-weight championship. In October, 1931, at the age of fifty-three, he fought Jim Johnson, many years his junior and won the fight with a broken arm.

"JOHNSON'S FAME increased with the years. An estimate of him based on what the leading sports writers have said, credits him with the artistry of Peter Jackson, the scientific skill of Corbett, the rugged, hitting power of John L. Sullivan, the toughness of Fitzsimmons, and, when necessary, the ferocity of Jeffries.

"In 1927, 'The Ring,' a popular boxing mag-

azine, nominated him 'the greatest heavyweight boxer of all time.' He defeated all the leading heavyweights and near heavyweights of his time, black and white, as Langford, McVey, Jeannette, Monroe, Burns, Fitzsimmons, Jeffries and Ketchel.

"Tad, a veteran sporting writer said: 'Johnson's knowledge of boxing, along with his great strength and hitting power, made him almost invincible.'

"It was his easy-going manner in the ring that fooled many. He smiled and kidded in the clinches and many thought he was careless, but all the time he held his opponent safe, knew every move the other made and was at all times the boss of the job. Johnson was the greatest boxer of all times.'

"DAMON RUNYAN, another noted sports writer says: 'Johnson could take fellows larger than himself and bounce them around the ring like pins at his own peculiar pleasure, chatting jovially with the crowd as he did so. He had a knack of catching punches as an outfielder catches the ball. He reached out and grabbed most of them before they got started.'

"Georges Carpentier, French heavyweight champion, said, 'He was the shiftiest and in a defense game the cleverest, most cunning fighter I have ever seen. And he found it possible to do his fighting the while he chatted and prattled. He was conceited, but his conceit had at least some humor in it. With a weakness for the employment of words of an uncommon length, and as chief of the Malaprops, he always seemed to be most concerned in making some new and particularly vitriolic taunt.'

"Perhaps he would not be suspected, but it is nevertheless a fact, that when fighting had to be done he was the soul of good temper and playfulness, and yet there was much viciousness in him. When I sat at the ringside and watched Johnson against Moran I thought he was maddening in the casual way in which he caught a blow from Moran; I do believe that had he cared he could have prevented his opponent putting a glove on him; had it suited his purpose he could easily have ended the fight when he pleased. That it went twenty rounds was because it suited Johnson to make it last so long; he appeared to take a ghoulish pleasure in showing how severe were the limitations of Moran.' ('My Fighting Life.')

(See HISTORY, page 4)

THIS WEEK IN NEGRO HISTORY

AN "NPI" FEATURE

- April 27, 1803 Toussaint L'Ouverture, died at age 58.
- April 27, 1951 Roscoe Conklin Simmons, journalist-orator-politician, died in Chicago at age 78.
- April 28, 1839 International incident of "Amistad" mutineers. Captives freed by Supreme Court.
- April 29, 1899 Edward Kennedy (Duke) Ellington, famous composer-band-leader, was born in Washington, D.C.
- April 30, 1879 William L. Garrison, abolitionist-editor died. He founded the Liberator in 1831, which he published at Boston for 35 years.

Support Merchants
Who Support Your Press

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

CHARLES L. WEST, M.D. - Publisher & Editor
ALICE K. Y. - Associate Editor * JOHN P. WEST - General Manager
DOROTHY WEST - Treasurer * CARITA HARBERT - Office Manager

RAY FEASTER - Advertising Production * EDDY K. KIM, Society
R. V. DONALD M. CLARK - Religion * DOROTHY JOHNSON - Food Forum
HENRY MILLER & ROBERT ARRINGTON - Advertising Representatives
CLINTON WRIGHT - Photography * EARL PERKINS - Northern Nevada

EDITORIAL, ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION OFFICES
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.)