

Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man

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Today's American Negro, who is considered "impatient" by many in his quest for equality of opportunity, has every reason to hold suspect those who contend "the civil rights movement is moving too fast"; "that Negroes are demanding too much, too soon".

History is the Negro's best argument that it is "now or never". To support this statement, Hidden History offers here a speech made by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, New York on the "Fourth of July", 1852.

As the city of Rochester's most distinguished resident, the great abolitionist was requested to address that city's citizens on the occasion of the Independence Day celebration. From their viewpoint, it was a mistake. As is said in certain circles, "they heard a mouthful".

The irony of it is, and the purpose in printing that speech this week is that 115 years later on the occasion of the celebration of the Fourth of July, one need only to substitute "What to the Negro is the Fourth of July" for the title of Douglass' speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" made in 1852.

"Fellow Citizens: Pardon me, and allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I or those I represent to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits, and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?"

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions. Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish that would not give his voice to swell the halleluiahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the 'lame man leap like a hare.'

BUT SUCH is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence bequeathed by your fathers is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak today? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you, that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrevocable ruin. I can today take up the lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people.

'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yes! We wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us, required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.'

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EDITORIAL

PARTY POLITICS AND THE NEGRO VOTE (Part III)

Third Party Politics Is Foolhardy For The Negro

THE NEGRO has attached himself to the Demo Party, not so much because of love, but rather because it is the lesser of two evils.

Republicans still, by majority, have not recovered from the extreme rightism with which they were contaminated by the Goldwater influence.

Democrats on the other hand have been contaminated for decades by their Dixiecrat members.

The New Negro is disenchanted by both the Republicans shift to the far right, and the Democrats reluctance to do right by cleaning house of those who refuse to follow the guidelines of the Party Platform.

However, this disenchantment with both parties does not mean that the Negro will be enchanted by any Third Party. Political history is filled with Third Party failures, and the Negro Vote is too valuable an instrument for victory to be squandered on a born loser.

THE NEGRO does not desire any additional segregation such as a Third Party movement would inflict. The Negro is fighting to be included 'in', not included 'out' of the mainstream of political affairs. Any movement toward a Third Party would alienate the Negro from the graces of both the Demos and the G.O.P. Nothing could defeat the Civil Rights progress more decisively than the isolation which would result from a Third Party status.

The Negro must join forces with either the Democrats or the Republicans, and it must be done with as near total unity as possible. If the political force of the Negro Vote is to have impact on the political scene, it must be strong. Unity is the key to such political strength.

Should the Negro Vote be equally divided between the two major parties, the Negro would lose the advantage he now holds in partisan politics. Neither Party would make overtures to the Black Vote if it were split 50-50.

THE NEGRO Vote must always align itself with one of the two parties so that its weight is important in how the scales will tip when the votes are counted. There will never be a more exemplary demonstration of this political strategy than the 1964 Nevada Senatorial race when

Howard Cannon defeated Paul Laxalt by a mere 84 votes. Negro voters gave Senator Cannon a plurality of 3500 votes. If this vote had been split, Laxalt would have won handily, and the Negro vote would have been impotent, as well as meaningless.

In that same election year (1964), LBJ received a 4000 vote plurality over Bilgewater, the GOP candidate for president.

The 1960 Presidential Election was decided by the Negro Vote in four major metropolitan areas. The Black Vote in Philadelphia, New York City, Detroit, and Chicago tipped the scales in favor of John F. Kennedy and poured the vast electoral vote of Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, and Illinois into the Demo column to give the Presidency to the late J.F.K.

RICHARD NIXON could have been the President of the USA if the Negro vote in those four big cities had been split 50-50. As it turned out, the Black Block Vote was a blessing to the Nation. At the same time, this vote became the most sought-after segment of the electorate on the part of both parties.

1968 will be a repeat performance. The Negro vote will go for L.B.J. by a ratio of about 9 to 1, provided the Tall Texan is the Demo Candidate. There is no other candidate in either party who could attract the Negro vote in a solid block as we view the political scene at this time.

If, in some seemingly impossible situation the Demo Candidate was someone other than Johnson, the Republicans could possibly lure the Black Block Vote to their side of the ledger if Nelson Rockefeller was their candidate. The latter is very improbable because the stigma of Goldwater influence prohibits the choice of a Republican as liberal as the New York Governor.

The Negro Vote is at this time not definitely committed for 1968. Much will depend upon how the two parties romance the voters, and upon the Party Platforms adopted at the conventions, as well as upon who is selected as standard bearer by each of the parties next November. (Part 4, next issue, will explore Party Policies and Presidential Candidates.)

THIS WEEK IN NEGRO HISTORY

AN "NPI" FEATURE

- July 7, 1863 Slavery was abolished in Dutch West Indies.
- July 7, 1949 Willie (Bunk) Johnson, musician who taught Louis Armstrong to play the trumpet, died.
- July 8, 1914 Billy Eckstine, popular singer, was born in Pittsburgh.
- July 9, 1830 John D. Rockefeller, Sr. who began accumulation of vast fortune, was born. His wealth later benefited Negroes and other minority groups around the world. Through individual grants and foundations, the Rockefeller family has given more money to Negro education than all other philanthropic groups combined.
- July 9, 1957 Charles W. Jones, first Negro
- July 10, 1875 Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, women's leader and founder of Bethune-Cookman College at Daytona Beach, Fla., was born in Mayesville, S.C.
- July 11, 1905 A meeting of Negro leaders resulted in Niagra Movement for Justice.
- July 11, 1804 Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of Treasury, and believed to be a descendant of Negro ancestors, was fatally wounded in a duel with Aaron Burr.
- July 11, 1947 Richard R. Wright Sr., first president of Georgia State College (now Savannah State) died in Philadelphia.
- judge in Michigan, died in Detroit at age 55.

tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, 'may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!' To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow citizens, is 'American Slavery.' I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing here, identified with the American bondman, (See HISTORY, page 11)

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