



# BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.  
Human Rights Activist

## LIBERATED WOMAN

A remarkable story came to my attention not long ago of a woman of courage, optimism and ingenuity. What happened with her should inspire both a new estimate of women's liberation and a new appreciation for womanhood at its best.

The woman and her husband were faced with a complicated series of difficult problems, each of which was sufficient to test the metal of any man or woman. Both the husband and the wife were deeply troubled. Their circumstances—like many in the life of all of us—were such that agency help seemed impossible and the confidence and resources of close friends could not be turned to easily.

The woman felt within herself that her best part was that of affording, as best she could, a sense of calm in the face of what appeared to be a rising storm. She knew that if panic broke loose, far too much could be lost.

The most surprising thing about the story was that the woman thought—and still thinks—of herself as an ardent women's liberationist. Yet she could retain a sense that there was a uniqueness to her role within her household.

Like so many questioning people today who are looking for old certainties in vain, the woman in this instance had not found in the forms of religious life about her the kind of old-fashioned authenticity or the specific appearance of validity which could command her deep respect. Yet in the circum-

stance before her she recalled the words of a hymn which spoke to her immediate plight.

She tells of how she thought of the words: "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Then the next words caused her to stop suddenly in her tracks: "He plants His footsteps in the sea." She felt that she needed to go no further.

The upshot was that she said to herself: "We must place our feet where we are, stand still and we shall find the appropriate answer right before our eyes."

This is precisely what she did. She discussed with her husband just how there were resources at hand which neither of them had seen before. Some more working, in a thoroughly challenging way, together was chiefly what was needed. The results would be not only that the problems would be solved but also that new possibilities would confront them.

When I heard this beautiful story, several other classic examples of similar circumstances came to mind. I was reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne's wife who, when he was at his seeming worst extremity, said to him that he now had opportunity as never before to use his best talents as a writer. *The House of Seven Gables* and other works then quickly projected this unsuccessful clerk into one of the world's immortal writers.

Another story came to mind of Russell Connell's

*Acres of Diamonds*, a copy of which I was given when I entered Temple University in Philadelphia a good many years ago. This classic story—the proceeds of which helped to build Temple University—is a challenging reminder that all of us have far more going for us than we might readily imagine.

The story of the liberated woman who worked with her husband to "plant their footsteps in the sea and ride upon a storm" suggests several pointedly significant things. It says something about women's liberation, about life in general and about the seeming hopelessness with which so many in our world, including those in America's central cities, find themselves today.

For the would-be liberated woman, there is a reminder that freedom is found perhaps best in self-disciplined loyalty. The young black women, who decry what some of the most aggressive liberationists are saying, emphasize that there must be new forms and a new spirit to male and female cooperation. While women are no longer to be coopted as they have in the past—and still to a great extent are—, true women's liberation must be found in a kind of mutuality which affords dignity within the framework of society as it can be dealt with today.

Concerning life in general, in the example of the creativeness of this wonderful woman who found a way out of a seemingly impossible plight, there is the solemn and yet obvious reminder

that nothing which absolutely needs to be done is in fact impossible. There are, for all of us, resources at hand to do every essential thing in life which must and should be done.

For the continually hopeless in our society, there must be the recognition that what Alexis de Tocqueville suggested held the key to the survival and growth of early American life. "In unity there is strength." When the senior citizens come together, even presidents of the United States must listen. When blacks occasionally have come together, amazing things—which once seemed could never happen—have come to pass. The need is for the kind of continued unity which will make the once hopeless woman a permanent basis into what de Tocqueville spoke of as "a power seen from afar."

In one beautiful woman's story, then, there may be many lessons for us all. To me the outstanding feature was that a liberated woman found one of her finest hours in doing in the best way she knew how what she felt that she as a woman could uniquely do.

All of us are different: men and women, black and white, European and Asian, Gentile and Jew. When we can respect our uniqueness, as well as the things we have in common, we may find ourselves becoming a truly pluralistic people in which all of us will live richer, closer and also far more liberated and hope-filled lives.

# Tribute To Minority Business



(L TO R) Norman Hodges, Chairman of The National Association of Black Manufacturers; Congressman Parren Mitchell (D. MD), Keynote Speaker; Eugene Baker, President of NABM; Robert Douglas, Vice-Chairman of NABM; (seating) Congressman Joseph Addabbo (D. NY), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Minority Enterprise and General Oversight.

The National Association of Black Manufacturers, Inc. and over 1,000 minority businesspeople paid tribute to The President, Congress and other parties responsible for the passage of the Omnibus Minority Enterprise Bill (H.R. 11318). The Bill recently signed by President Carter, will improve the Small Business Administration's 8(A) program and increase the amount of federal contracts allocated to minority businesses by approximately \$14 billion.

Norman Hodges, Chairman of NABM, addressed the crowd by applauding their great turn out in the interest of minority business enterprise. Hodges continued, "You (referring to the audience) are minority business and minority business is good for America. We have a great challenge ahead of us and what we do now, will be more important than at any other time for the development of minority business."

The Honorable Parren Mitchell (D. MD), told the inspired gathering that the SBA is receiving the heat about its activities because the programs are there to assist black and there appears to be a premise that black Americans are to be "sacrificed on the altar of political economics." Mitchell shouted, "We are no longer a priority in the nation. Carter is not doing anything for the people that put him into office."

## Rustin Honored



Bayard Rustin, veteran civil rights leader and president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, was presented with the Stephen Wise Award of the American Jewish Congress at a dinner in New York recently for "illustrious leadership in the cause of racial justice, world peace and human understanding." He is shown here with (from left to right) U.S. Secretary of Commerce Juanita M. Kreps, another Stephen Wise laureate, Felix Rohatyn, outgoing chairman of New York's Municipal Assistance Corporation, and Rowan M. Squadron, president of the American Jewish Congress. At the dinner, Mr. Rustin spoke movingly of the plight of the "boat people," and called on Blacks and Jews to assist them.

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



Dr. Walter Cooper, right discusses the Charles T. Lunsford Distinguished Service Award with Dr. Lunsford and Gwendolyn Young. The Rochester Urban League honored Dr. Cooper as first recipient of its new citation for humanitarian service.

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**LEGISLATIVE ALERT**

**CONGRESSMAN JOHN CONYERS SPEAKS ON "CRIME AND FULL EMPLOYMENT"**

There is a relationship between Federal Prison Admissions and average U.S. unemployment. As unemployment rises, so does crime as measured by the number of individuals entering prisons.

One way to combat crime is through full employment.

**35 FOR 40: 35-HOUR WORK-WEEK FOR 40 HOURS PAY**

As part of my continuing effort to promote full employment I am presently drafting legislation that would change the work-week from 40 to 35 hours, while protecting income standards of hourly workers. The legis-

lation would also provide a double-time penalty for hours worked over 35 to make it cheaper for employers to hire new workers. Compulsory overtime—forcing hourly workers to work overtime without their consent—would be eliminated. The 35-hour week, which would cover government workers and workers in trade and industry, would be phased in over several years.

The trends in employment and production indicate that we face the choice in the years ahead of fewer workers or fewer hours. Technology is making it possible for fewer and fewer workers to produce more and more goods and services.