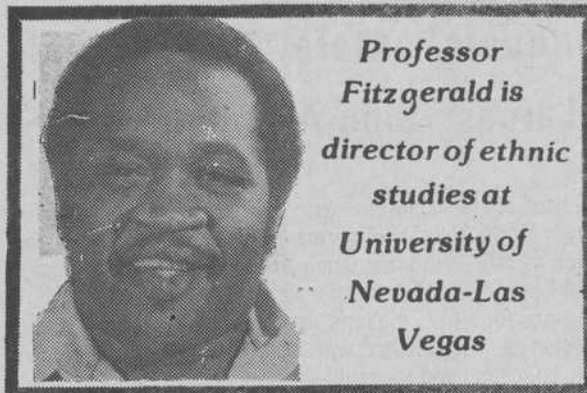


BLACK HISTORY MONTH, PART III

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald



Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethnic studies at University of Nevada-Las Vegas

Lerone Bennett has authored a text titled: *Before the Mayflower*. It is a layman's history of Blacks in America. The title is significant because the first Blacks to arrive to English North America did so the year before the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620.

While it is true they were brought here involuntarily, they were not immediately slaves. Those twenty Black men who arrived here in 1619 became indentured servants. Both groups, Black and white, eventually became free.

Slavery probably had its unofficial beginning with John Punch who, in 1640, became a lifetime indentured servant as punishment for having attempted, with two others, to run away. The latter two, both white men, were given only additional months of service on their indenture. A quarter of a century later there began to appear colonial statutes legally recognizing permanent indenture. For the next two hundred years the overwhelming majority of Africans who were brought to the American colonies and later to the United States came as lifetime indentured/slaves.

Who were these Africans, who were they before they were brought here and how did they become America's "bogeyman"? Is it possible to answer such questions in less than four-hundred words? Maybe. Where to begin? I could begin at Olduvai Gorge of East Africa--the site where the earliest remains of humans, to date, have been found but that would take far too much time and space to cover the million or so years. Perhaps we could talk about those who were involved in the great migration down the Nile to Egypt or those who made their way to the Fertile Crescent of the Near East or still others who hugged the sea coast as they reached out to the Far East and eventually to the Americas.

Those movements of people took literally thousands of years to occur. Perhaps it would be better to just stick to Africa, but even at that, we're looking at a continent three-times the size of the United States, millions more people and a place whose history is as old as

mankind. Impossible.

We could speak of the ancient kingdom of Axum/Sheba/Ethiopia and its queen who visited Solomon, but we've read of that in *Chronicles II* already. If we had the time and space we could speak of Nefetari, queen of Egypt or the boy-king, Tutankhamon, but we've seen their busts before and have been conscious of that which we saw. We could speak of Hatputset, the queen mother, who was Kushite, but the, if we did that, we would be obliged to address, to some degree, the Kingdom of Kush which invaded and conquered Egypt. We could not do that because then, there would not be ample time/space to even mention the west African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, let alone the city of Timbuctu which was not only a center of trade but also the place where there could be found a school of medicine and a school of law. I wouldn't attempt to mention anything of central or southern Africa or the Wangara gold traders, the walled cities of Zimbabwe or the bridges of the pygmies.

No, we cannot address any of those three questions in four-hundred words or less. Let's just say that the European, with his asiento in hand, did not capture a bunch of backward savages and rescue them from their heathen ways. To be sure, they were different in color and cultural characteristics. They had their own languages, diets, costuming, social orders and religions. They were not bad or wrong -- merely different. They were taken from that, subjected to cultural and psychological shock, their families split, dispossessed of their culture, subjected to a foreign culture and, then, because they did not identify with their new surrounds, quickly enough and with enthusiasm, they were termed intellectually inferior, barbarous, savage and docile by their captors and tormentors -- tormentors who profited and gloried in their debasing and brutalizing of their fellow human beings. Tormentors, who while comfortable, waited fretfully for the realization of the prophecy of the ancient historian who wrote: "All Glory Is Fleeting."

Feb. 16 - The Liberia Herald, the first newspaper printed in Africa, was first published by C.L. Force of Boston in 1826.

The linguist, William S. Scarborough was born on this date in 1852. He graduated from Oberlin College in 1875 and became a teacher of Latin, Greek and mathematics. In 1880 he authored a Greek textbook *First Lessons In Greek*, which was adopted and widely used in secondary schools and colleges.

Feb. 17 - On this date in 1916, Orrin Clayton Suthern, II was born. He became the first Black organist to perform on the CBS network. While a student at Western Reserve University, he gave a recital before the American Guild of Organists at Youngstown, Ohio. No Black organists had ever been invited to do so before.

Huey Newton, leader and founder of the Black Panther Party was born in Monroe, Louisiana in 1942.

Feb. 18 - Quakers of Germantown, Pennsylvania made first formal protest against slavery in colonial America in 1688.

Lucy Sessions died on this date in 1910 in Los Angeles. She graduated from Oberlin College in 1850 and was the first Black woman in America to earn a college degree.

Feb. 19 - On this date in 1923, the Supreme Court guaranteed due process of law to Blacks in state courts in the case of Moore vs. Dempsey.

On this date in 1971, the U.S. Navy announced that its newest destroyer would be named for Ensign Jesse L. Brown of Hattisburg, Mississippi. He was the first Black American aviator killed in the Korean War.

Feb. 20 - Sidney Poitier was born in Miami in 1924.

Nancy Wilson, who became one of America's best known jazz singers, was born in 1937.

Feb. 21 - Nina Simone, world famous composer, singer and pianist was born in 1935.

In 1965, Malcolm X, who was one of the most dynamic leaders and orators of the current human rights struggle, was assassinated.

Feb. 22 - On this date, in 1864, George Cleveland Hall was born. He was a leading Chicago surgeon and served in various capacities at Provident Hospital from 1894 - 1930. He conducted surgical clinics and helped to establish infirmaries in several southern states.

Feb. 23 - W.E.B. DuBois was born on this date in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. This scholar and writer left a legacy of pride and inspiration as evidenced by his voluminous writings. He was the first Black man to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard and he strongly advocated the necessity of developing college-trained leaders.

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