

BLACK HISTORY MONTH, PART IV

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

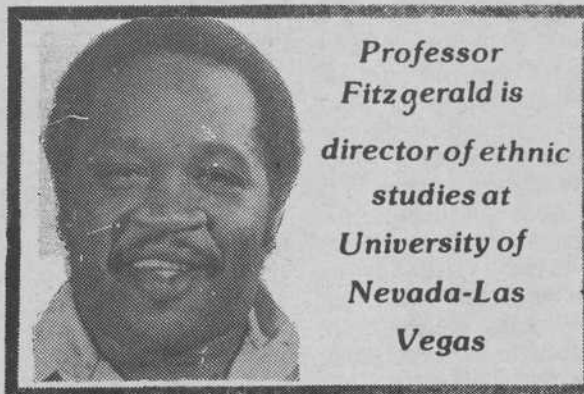
Well, here we are. February is ending and so is Black History Month. Both, by Wednesday's end will have had their twenty-eight days of racial awareness and acknowledgement of life and, like cicadas, will go underground and await resurrection again next year.

When Dr. Carter G. Woodson initiated Black History celebrations in 1921, it was his hope that it would serve as a stop-gap. He felt it was necessary because Americans - black and non-black - were provided few opportunities of learning of the contributions black people had made to the development of this country. He did not expect that it would remain necessary to maintain the observation. His hope was that one day, the textbooks of the schools of America would present, as part of the history of America, the history of Black Americans. Once that would occur, it would be no longer necessary to set aside a segregated amount of time for contemplating and learning of that subject matter.

Many among us are quick to say that things are changing. They are. However, they're changing at a snail's pace and grudgingly. This is so because we, who are customarily so sensible, have decided in this instance not to be. We have the "cart before the horse." We are seeking changes in attitudes and behavior without first

educating the masses. We expect the different races to be aware of and appreciate the contributions of others without their knowing what those contributions are. I'm tempted to say: "How silly" but it is much more than that. It is stupid and malicious.

Among the truisms which we've all heard and will continue to hear are: "It won't change overnight," or "The next generation will make it better." We've heard that for many nights and many generations and what do we have? Well, we have black students holed up in a building at the University of Massachusetts protesting racism on that campus. All heck is breaking out at the University of Michigan protesting racism on that campus. Rebel flags are flying at the University of Alabama and other Southern schools and blacks are protesting "Dixie" being sung at half-time and pep rallies at such places as the University of Mississippi. The "sheets" are driving native Idahoans out of their own state and they are protesting. The airwaves of Salt Lake are being infiltrated with racist patter and students at BYU and in Salt Lake City are protesting. You can get to Howard Beach from here but you might not get out alive and the residents say there is no racial problem there. Donald Rochan left the LAPD and joined the FBI and when



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

assigned to the Omaha office, came to work one day only to find the faces of apes pasted on a photo of his children. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Texas, who was instrumental in putting together a repeal of the Fuel Use Act, was not invited to the White House to its signing because he was associated only with civil rights legislation. Ross Barnett, governor of Mississippi during the 1960s died in 1987 and some described him as a "great" American. Mecham, black Vietnam Vets, Oscar nominations, Forsythe County, and we still do not know, as a nation, whether Jimmy "the Greek" was on the mark because we do not know that history. Mark Ross of Huntington Beach is beaten into a coma after his arrest on traffic warrants.

We're not doing much better on the home front. Flashcards--NLV Police, Chaz, Black Faculty, black reporters with major local

newspapers, letters to the editor on black matters, being seated near the toilets in restaurants and coming under close scrutiny when entering convenience stores.

We learn, as a whole, about black people from the movies and the television. "The Jeffersons," "Good Times," "Amen," and others are our classrooms. Sure, I know about "The Cosby Show." One decent show is not enough to undo all of the damage. As long as we rely on the movies and television to educate us about blacks and other minorities, we will continue to make our usual mistakes. Anyone who thinks such an education is sufficient, trying to watch General Hospital for education is sufficient, try watching General Hospital for three years and then see if there's a license to practice medicine waiting for you. OK. You can intern with Ben Casey, Marcus Welby or Dr. Kildare.

February 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.

February 24 - Daniel A. Payne, who became the sixth bishop of the A.M.E. Church was born on this date in 1811. He was Senior Bishop for 20 years and in 1863 he was instrumental in the purchase of Wilberforce University for the A.M.E. Church.

February 25 - Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay) won the world heavyweight boxing championship from Sonny Liston in Miami Beach, Florida in 1964.

Hiram R. Revels became the first black U.S. Senator in Mississippi's history on this date in 1870.

Jordan C. Jackson was born in Fayette County, Kentucky on this date in 1848. He was prominent in Republican politics and an alternate delegate to the National Republican Convention of 1876. He worked vigorously against enactment of the separate-coach law of Kentucky.

February 26 - In 1898, Pierre L. Carmouche volunteered to serve in the Spanish-American War. He recruited 250 men to join with him. He went to Cuba as a 1st Lieutenant in the 9th U.S. Volunteer Infantry.

February 27 - The first black Y.M.C.A. was organized in Washington, D.C. in 1853.

Charlotte E. Ray, first black woman lawyer, graduated from Howard University Law School in 1872.

February 28 - On this date in 1776, Phyllis Wheatley was invited to visit General George Washington so that he could express his appreciation for her poem written in his honor. The only collection of her work, Poems on Various Subjects, was published in London in 1773.

February 29 - Charles H. Mahoney, a Michigan attorney, who served as a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, died on this date in 1966.

PROFILE

From Page 2

students, and I was one of his teachers. I taught him Architectural Drafting-Trading Trades Technology. **LEONARD MASON** - Leonard Mason was only a few weeks old when he arrived in Las Vegas; he was born on the San Carlos Indian Reservation, Arizona February 28, 1942.

He subsequently attended the Old Westside School and then Las Vegas High School. Las Vegas High was the only High School in the city, which meant Mason grew up with many of the decision makers of today.

Mason left Las Vegas to attend Tennessee A & I State University on a scholarship he won from Southern Nevada Homebuilders Association for his original home designs. At Tennessee

he studied Architectural Engineering.

After returning to Las Vegas Mason met and began to involve himself with many prominent political power brokers while beginning his career in Engineering with Nevada Power Co.

In 1969 Mason met Mayor Oran Gragson. It was a time of crisis locally and nationally as Blacks were rioting in many of the larger cities in the country. Local Blacks burned and destroyed several businesses in an expression of their anger over their lack of basic civil rights. Mason helped Gragson set up meetings with Blacks that helped put an end to the violence here. This was the start of a friendship that has continued and grown over the last 20 years.

Gragson appointed Mason Assistant Director of Manpower Planning for the city. Gragson also sent Mason to the White House in 1971 to represent Nevada businesses.

Mason became more politically active then and worked in Gerald Ford's election campaign. Subsequently, he was nominated as a White House Fellow.

During the years that followed, Mason, a Republican, kept himself active by serving on Senator Chic Hecht's Advisory Board, the Clark County Cost and Efficiency Committee, the Clark County Republican Central Committee and its Executive Board. He was also involved as campaign manager and consultant on campaigns too numerous to mention. Mason's influence and advice has been sought when board vacancies occur and when recommendations are needed for influential

jobs throughout Las Vegas.

His service to the community continues today as he presently serves on the Clark County School District's Desegregation Committee and the City of North Las Vegas Census Task Force.

Even though Mason somehow has always maintained a balance between political activism and his business, Tracey Construction, his heart remains in politics and his community.

His wife and daughter, Tracey, understand his concern for the Westside and its people. His wife, Charlene said Mason seems compelled to drive down Jackson Avenue at least once a day when he can, remembering it when it thrived. His drive takes him past the vacant lot where the Cove Hotel stood, which he once managed, and down "D" Street where he grew up just across the street from the Westside School.

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