

COORS HONORS "TUSKEGEE AIRMEN" DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



In celebration of Black History Month, Coors Brewing Company has launched a major promotion recognizing the achievements of the famed Tuskegee Airmen, the nation's first all-Black squadron.

The promotion tagged, "Courage in Flight: The Tuskegee Airmen of WWII," was developed by Coors Commu-

nity Relations department in conjunction with Coors Light Brand and offers consumers a free commemorative poster depicting the legendary airmen along with a tear-off to receive Coors' award-winning Black Heritage Calendar.

Coors has distributed the promotional displays nationally throughout select military instal-

lations and African-American retail accounts.

"We knew when we were planning this project that the Tuskegee Airmen would be a great tribute for Black History Month but the airmen theme is especially relevant now since many African American men and women are defending our country as part of Operation Desert Storm," said Sharon Taylor, Coors' field manager, Northeast

Region.

The Tuskegee Airmen is made up of three all-Black squadrons formed in 1941 at Tuskegee Air Field in Alabama.

RANDOLPH-RUSTIN LEGACY

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of those people who experience discrimination and oppression, of those affected by social change. Randolph and Rustin also expanded the tradition use of mass action in the civil rights movement (in marches, demonstrations, and boycotts) to encompass other arenas, specifically political action and union organizing.

The 1963 March for Jobs and Freedom is remembered as the platform where Dr. King gave his famous "I Have A Dream" speech; too easily forgotten or unemphasized, however, is the March's targeting of "Jobs" as well as "Freedom." On a practical as well as philosophical level, it was Randolph's role as a labor leader that gave him the mass base to launch such campaigns, protests, and demonstrations. It is conceivable that the great civil rights victories of the 1950's and 1960's would never have been attained, or would at least have been substantially delayed, had Randolph not organized a union of black workers (in the 1920's and 1930's) to operate as an organizational and logistical base from which to launch the civil rights movement.

Randolph's and Rustin's emphasis on trade unions as a positive force for social change

The 332d, as they were known, flew over 15,000 missions, destroyed 261 enemy aircraft and, in all, flew their escort missions, never lost a single bomber to

enemy fighters.

They were led by Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. who later became the first Black general in the Air Force.

is rooted, however, not only in their own personal experience, but also in their perspective on the political and social problems facing black Americans. Because the vast majority of blacks are workers, they pointed out that many problems facing blacks (such as healthcare, unemployment, education, and other social needs) also face other workers. They also asserted that a coalition of broad social forces (including blacks, trade unions, and liberals) would have better chances of success than any "go-it-alone strategy" that was sure to be hampered by blacks making up only some 11% of the population.

While Randolph and Rustin noted the labor movement's traditional advocacy for social change, civil rights, and anti-poverty programs, they did not enter into this coalition as blindly supportive, but rather worked hard to continue to integrate trade unions along racially equal lines. It is thus a testimony to Randolph's and Rustin's leadership that their lifetimes began with American unions having less than 4% black members (in the late 1800's and early 1900's), and ended with unions having over 15% black membership and with over 22% of all black workers enjoying union representa-

tion (in the late 1970's and 1980's).

The contribution of Randolph and Rustin to America and America's black citizens is honored today in the broad acceptance of the importance of democratic mass action and coalition building. Unfortunately, for all of us, however, their contributions are too often accepted in parts rather than as a whole. Some activists today will march without advocating more fundamental economic reforms: for example, protesting against racism, but without advocating more fundamental economic reforms: for example, protesting against racism, but without advocating or addressing specific causes or programs to alleviate racial tension and social injustice. Some activists march without including the direct participation of workers or advancing the vitally important coalition of blacks with trade unions.

Our challenge today as supporters of economic justice and racial equality, as supporters of the black-labor alliance for "Jobs and Freedom," is to make our own contributions to the legacy of Randolph and Rustin, and to keep alive their guiding principles in our continuing efforts to build racial equality and economic justice.

IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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Miss Gwendolyn Walker is a published poet, a writer for the Las Vegas Sentinel Voice and an aspiring artist.

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