

EDITORIAL / OPINION

The Legacy of the Hidden American History

by Dr. Jamil Cherovee

At Florida International University, I was asked to speak before a group of Third World and Black students in Journalist. Very few students had read The Black Free Views American Imperialism, by George P. Marks, III.

Republican Doctrine, One who steals a ham is a thief. One who steals a fortune is a financier. One who assists in stealing the Philippines is a patriot. From the Chicago Board Ax, Oct. 27, 1900, charges "Philippines" in the above quote to "Vietnam" and it could easily be a verse in any Left publication today. The verse appropriately sums up a decade of Black sentiment. From the 1890's through the turn-of-the-century, Blacks were the most consistent and vocal of those opposed to American economic-military expansion in the Third World. This little known sidelight forms another part of the legacy of hidden American history.

Fortunately, the progressive writings and speeches of Black spokesmen on this question have been compiled in the work, The Black Press Views American Imperialism 1898-1900, by George P. Marks, III. Part of the New York Times collection on the "American Negro: His History and Literature," the book opens investigation into the long neglected area of Black involvement in the historic radical movement. Other works on the Black press include: The Negro Press in the United States; The Negro Newspaper; The Negro Press Re-Examined; Fifth Years of Progress in Negro Journalism; Who's Who in the American Negro Press and The Negro Press, Past, Present and Future. All of these works have chosen to ignore the early press material on Black activism. I'm inclined to believe, the articles and editorials in Mark's work are particularly significant as a gauge of the thinking of the Black Intellectuals in that period. Most of the newspapers had incomplete volumes of editions making the task for the anthologist more difficult. In 1900, the Black press was in its embryonic stage of development and hadn't yet become established institution in the Black community.

Nearly all the papers faced problems of low budgets, shortage of trained personnel, and distribution. Often the papers went under in a relatively short period of time and were not preserved. The period, 1898-1900. Marks treats, was critical for the emergence of America as a world force. The new corporate industrialists demand for new markets, raw materials, and cheap labor supplies, pushed them into the scramble for territories.

Before the end of the 19th Century, Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico fell into the circle of American economic domination. To push expansion, the national leaders first had to convince a basically reluctant and isolationist American public to accept militarism as a priority.

This was no easy task. Many senators and congressmen initially voiced strong reservations about America's new direction. The National Anti-Imperialist League political figures in the country. Socialists and numerous key labor leaders lined up against imperialism. However, as expansion increased the liberal opposition melted away. The Black population though was another matter.

The Black press believed that the war being fought in Cuba and the Philippines was a racist war aimed at the subjugation of other non-caucasoids. Keenly conscious of racism at home, Blacks didn't fail to note the similarities between the way caucasoids described the Filipinos ("degenerate," "uncivilized," "lazy," etc.) and themselves.

Blacks reasoned that as long as the government didn't provide civil rights and equal protection in America then they shouldn't be asked to serve

in the military. Lewis Douglass, son of the abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass, in an article in the Cleveland Gazette, Dec. 23, 1899, argued: "The administration holds that this is a caucasoid man's government and that dark races have no rights which caucasoid men are bound to respect. It is a sorry, though true, fact that wherever this government controls injustice to dark races prevails. The people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Manila know it as well as do the wronged Indian and outraged Black man in the United States."

Other Blacks were not as polite, and labeled those Blacks who chose to enlist as "race-traitors." The Reporter, Feb. 1, 1900, bluntly stated: "Any Negro soldier that will cross the ocean to help subjugate the Filipinos is a fool or a villain, more fool, however, than villain, we trust. May every one of them get ball-strung is our sincere prayer."

When war loomed as possibility in China during the so-called Boxer rebellion in 1898, Bishop Turner in a letter to the New York Age, July 27, 1900, vowed to do everything in his power to prevent Blacks from enlisting: "This is not war, and the Black man that puts a gun upon his shoulder to go and fight China should find the bottom of the ocean before he gets there." I'm inclined to believe, the knowledge of racism was not the only element that fueled Black anti-war sentiment. The growing labor movement with its large Socialist constituency had a major impact on Black thought. Black workers tended to support labor against the employers despite the attempt to use Blacks as scabs and strike-breakers.

A few Blacks saw Henry George's single tax theories as a possible alternative to capitalist exploitation. Many more talked about labor and consumer co-operatives; still others considered communal land development projects in the South and West. A small but active sector posed Socialism as the best solution to imperialism and war. Charles G. Baylor, a Black Socialist Labor Party organizer, in an analysis of the American occupation of Cuba in the Richmond Planet, July 30, 1898, noted: "The central and important fact in this whole matter is that the revolution in Cuba was, from the beginning, an Afro-Cuban Socialist up-rising against Spanish tyranny, capitalistic greed, and priestly rule ... this was not to be tolerated by the Carnegies, Pullmans, Rockefeller of Amerika any more than by the confederate so-called Christian caucasoid aristocracy of the South. In the next months edition of the Richmond Planet, Boylar urged Blacks to join either the SLP if possible or a labor union to secure economic emancipation."

Much the same thinking went into Black condemnation of the gold standard which was then being debated in corporate circles. An editorial in the Chicago Broad Ax, July 21, 1900, reflected this: "The Negro is not an investor of capital. Those who insist that gold shall be the money of the land give no employment to the Negro, though employing thousands of laborers." I believe, the Black opposition to monopoly capital was also incorporated into the platform of the National Afro-American party outlined in Howard's American Magazine, June, 1900: "We are opposed to all monopolies and trusts, and favor the ownership and control of the public highways by the general government, such as railroads, telegraph and telephone."

I'm inclined to believe, the parallels suggested in the book with today's radical movement are certainly immediate and important. The final value of the Black Press Views American Imperialism must lay in the first hand glimpse it gives into the real roots of Black radicalism.

To Be Equal

Economic State of Black America

Each year the National Urban League releases a book-length report on The State of Black America. It features articles by outstanding scholars who examine the situation of African-Americans in key areas of life.

The current report includes, among many such valuable contributions, a revealing portrait of the Black economy by Dr. David H. Swinton, Dean of the School of Business at Jackson State University.

Dr. Swinton marshals an impressive array of data proving not only that African-Americans did not share in the recent economic comeback, but that the black-white gap is disastrously large.

For example, Dr. Swinton shows that the per capita income for Blacks was only \$575 for every \$1,000 for white--and the gap has grown over the past decade.

What that means to the Black economy can easily be seen -- if Blacks had incomes comparable to whites, African-Americans would have an additional \$162 billion in purchasing power.

Dr. Swinton also documents the different aspects inequality takes within the African-American and white communities. Both saw a shrinkage in the middle income brackets.

But among whites, it was accounted for by middle income families moving up into the high income category. Among Blacks, the drop in the middle income group was divided almost equally between those moving up and those moving down into the lower income category.

Dr. Swinton calculates that the income gap means that "about 1.5 million more Black families had incomes less than \$10,000 than would have had such low incomes if parity existed, while about 1.7 million fewer Black families had incomes over \$35,000."

He finds that the increase in Black poverty accelerated in the past decade and that at every level, African-American families earn less than comparable white families. That goes for families with several earners, for female-headed households and for other disparities.

So the conventional argument that Black income is lower because more Black families are female-headed is blown out of the water. Dr. Swinton calculates that "differences in family headship could account for no more than 11 percent of the racial disparity in income."

He finds that if Blacks has the same poverty rates as whites, there would be 6.6 million fewer African-American poor people including almost 3 million fewer poor children.

Control

by Linda D. Wattley

I first experienced the reality that I did not have total control over many events in my life one evening just as the sun was going down.

I had just experienced the sudden death of my husband, I was lacking the understanding of why this tragedy had taken place.

While driving down a tree-lined street at about 25 m.p.h., a cute little fuzzy brown and white rabbit hopped under my car from the passenger's side. The decision to stop, speed up or slow down all raced through my mind. I did a little bit of them all then I felt a lump. The rabbit was instantly killed.

At first, I thought about the rabbit's mother and family. They would never see him again. Tears slowly rolled out of my eyes.

But then my spirit within brought it to my attention that I had absolutely no control. Not only did I not have control, the rabbit had none either.

The only obvious control available to me was what I was going to do next. Either I would mourn the death of the rabbit or rejoice in the revelation.

All of our experiences are ordered by the god of our being. However, we are granted certain authority over our life. This specific authority usually becomes obvious after the experi-

ence or event has taken place. We either ascend or descend in our souls and consciousness from each encounter.

What do you have control over? You have control over your perception. But, if there is no knowledge fed into your mind prior to the experience, you are very limited in your authority and ability to respond with the highest quality for spiritual growth. Knowledge is the one thing that determines how we will conduct ourselves in our everyday lives. There is not understanding without accumulated knowledge.

You have no control without knowledge. You must feed your mind just as you feed your body. Because it will utilize every drop of knowledge you feed it and grow weary when there is no replacement.

Spiritual awareness is a result of knowledge. Through spirituality, there is power and where there is power and spirituality, there is control even when you do not have direct control over the process that promoted the experience.

The god of your being welcomes you as one with its all-knowingness. Once this unity is established, control means absolutely nothing because you know you are the life flow that can never be destroyed.



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Perspectives

How To 'Use' Black History

Part II.



by McKinley Burt, Historian

As it was [pointed out in his column last week, one of the most important uses of history is the reinforcement of identity. "Not only am I somebody, but I ways was somebody" ... somebody very important to the development of world civilization. Let us look at another technique and a more recent phrase "African-American."

Most reader are familiar with the inventors portrayed in my book, Black Inventors of America. Given technology like the railway telegraph, the automatic air brake and the third rail by Granville Woods...the refrigerated truck and box car by Frederick McKinley Jones, many teachers and counselors around the country have used these materials to inspire and to motivate their pupils. In some cities educators have sponsored student clubs named in honor of the contributors to the technology of America and the World. This is far superior and quite competitive, the involvement of the talent and energies of African-American youths than the gang activities of Crips and Bloods!

Let us take several role model that have not appeared in this column. David Crosthwait, the world's foremost heating and air conditioning engineer, was granted 114 U.S. and foreign patents on this type of machinery between 1923 and 1976. This African-American graduate of Purdue University led the field in design, installation, testing and servicing of power plants, heating and ventilation systems. An authority on heat transfer, Crosthwait developed the systems and controls for heating and cooling major buildings and skyscrapers throughout the world, including the Rockefeller Center in New York Center.

Have you ever thought about what ingenuity and technical competence it must require to develop a power plant and plumbing system for the delivery of heat and hot water up to the 105th floor of a skyscraper and then maintain equal volume and temperature levels over a 24 hour cycle of variable usage? Or have you ever considered the mechanics for handling sewage disposal requirements in huge structures containing thousands of offices and laboratories?

This African-American genius first came to my attention in 1972 during my leafing through a trade magazine of the air conditioning industry. Everyone in the business section of the library heard me exclaim when I saw an African-American man's picture featured in a

lead article. We were able to obtain his address and telephone number from the journal and wrote him enclosing a copy of Black Inventors of America. Crosthwait responded very promptly. That is the kind of man he was. He provided many details of his life and accomplishments. He also stated how difficult he found it to deliver his role model theme to African-American youths because of what he called "the inertia of educators and social agency people who don't seem to understand the value of African-American technical accomplishments in the areas of either careers or motivation in general."

One of his most important revelations was when he told me that Norman Rillieux, the inventor of the sugar refiner was a far greater contributor to the world's technology in thermodynamics than the quote from the U.S. Department of Agriculture evinced in my book, to wit: "Rillieux's invention is the greatest in the history of American Chemical Engineering." N described how this "triple stage evaporation" process (patent #4879, 1846) completely changed the basic concepts of thermodynamics and physics. They formed the basis for the great German Chemical Industry. Norm Rillieux was educated in Europe and there he wrote important technical and economic papers on steam applications before returning to Louisiana to change the sugar refining industry forever.

So great was the involuntary servitude tradition of the South in need for the genius of this African-American in order for that industry to be competitive with Europe in sugar production that the gave Rillieux the status of a free man. But true to that tradition of separatism, built a home for him on each plantation where he supervised the installation of his systems which was apart from both the quarters of the workers and those of the owner. They became known as the Rillieux Houses throughout the Delta.

Once more we may speak about the genius of David Crosthwait. Throughout America and the world, his authoritative writings, manuals, standards and building codes dominate the fields of heating and air conditioning. We are reminded of Howard Latimer, the inventor of the light filament in Thomas Edison's laboratories, whose work in the area of street lighting remains standard throughout the world. Mr. Latimer died in 1976. How much more do we need educators and parents to motivate and direct our youth?

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