

Q: WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE HERITAGE QUESTION, WEREN'T WE WHEN WE KNOCKED OFF?

A: Of course, when it comes to this matter of heritage, there's also another point of view on it which perhaps should be straightened out and that is this -- there have been many times persons who talked of sending negroes back to Africa --

Q: EMANCIPATION -- THE RESETTLING AND COLONIZATION --

A: Right. And more recently, in a slightly different way, the Black Muslims for separation or give us some part of the land, which isn't exactly back to Africa but it seems they come under the same general Garvey movement. I feel, as an individual, very little kinship with Africa as a continent. This is my home -- America. The only land I know. I feel a kinship to other black persons in America that's slightly different than the brotherhood I hope I feel for all persons generally. But I don't think I would ever want to go back to Africa. I don't agree with the African students who say -- this is not your home. Just for the record I want to quote my feelings on this. I'm not a black muslim, I don't think, but I feel a very keen sense of <sup>others</sup> ~~their wonders~~ with anybody black.

Q: THAT'S THE MUSLIMS SENSE OF <sup>mean</sup> ~~WONDERS~~ YOU MEAN --

A: I don't know if it's the same sense as they treat it --

Q: Oh - YOU USE THAT WORD --

A: Yes, I feel the sense every time I see an African, there's something in me that stretches out. I'm sort of like down there you see -- that if I could stand on the shores of Ghana, Algeria or any place over there, I'd feel somehow

that here are my roots, in spite of the fact that I've been in America all my life and my people are here and I want to know something about them. I want to know why my kids in church have another certain beat to music and can understand it from the time they are of small age until they reach maturity. I feel that deeply, it's a part of my heritage and I wish I could translate it into words -- into time -- and everything else I try to touch. I feel that very keenly and I'd like to know about it. And I want to say some pride, some going even further than this, just like the Muslims are doing too. They go back to the continent of Africa and they talk about black Solomon and this and that, trying to give you a sense that because they are black, they're not wrong and that they're not evil and that you have to be ashamed. That even like the Irishman may think about his homeland, and though he may become American and maybe though thoroughly American, maybe he'll still have a keen sense of pride in Scotland, or somewhere else or in some Scotch .

I want to know something like this, if I can -- as difficult as it may be, I'm trying to impart to my kids. The heritage I feel, as an American, that's something else I think we need to feel. As an American negro, even, our contribution I don't think is quite as deep as I'm trying to feel -- need to feel that Africa. I may not be too clear --

Q: You made it very clear to me --

A: (other man) I understand what you feel and I, of course, definitely don't feel it. I don't feel it at all. I think

*Paul Simon* Dunbar's poetry and ~~by~~ Frederick Douglas and the things he went through, I ~~don't~~ feel kinship with the



negro slave, but it doesn't go back to Africa for me.

Q: LET ME ASK ANOTHER QUESTION HERE -- THE NOTION OF COLOR, AS COLOR. NOW THIS IS NOT A QUESTION OF THE NEGRO, AFRICAN, BUT OF THE COLOR, AS COLOR, AS OPPOSED TO WHITE MAN, YOU SEE. NOW DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF A MYSTIQUE - THAT'S THE ONLY WORD I CAN FIND IN THE WAY OF A NEUTRAL WORD - FOR ALL COLORED RACES, SAY INDIAN AND ESKIMO AND CHINESE, AS DIFFERENTIATED FROM WHITE MAN?

A: I don't feel that yet. A lot of our leaders, for example, say so much of a percentage of the world's people are colored. I can't quite go for this. I can't figure like you toward the Chinese as I do toward a man who I know is a black man or toward the Indian. I don't quite feel that or for instance toward the Jew, who though he is colored, is trying to identify himself to somewhere in your life that I should identify him with. I'll identify with his suffering with anything, with anything, I don't care what color he is. As far as this general color thing, I haven't quite got that. And this is just me. But when people

I say, so what? So it's --

Q: THAT'S THE BLACK MUSLIMS. AS LEAST AS FAR AS I UNDERSTAND IT THE MYSTIQUE IS ALL COLOR, ALL COLOR AS OPPOSED TO WHITE MAN - ISN'T THAT THE LINE THEY DRAW?

A: I don't see how their roots spread out. They got quite a tree there. I don't know. I just don't know, that's all. But I share the problems of people, though, when they're suffering because of their color - whether it's Chinese or Japanese - when it's because of their color, I begin to

feel then just a little pinch of it. The Puerto Ricans, for instance, are a good example. Some of them look just like the American negro or the African negro in countenance but their complexions are foreign. But they don't identify with us in feeling and I don't quite identify with them, not just because of the language barrier I think, but because of something maybe that I can't touch.

Q: IT'S A VERY DIFFERENT CULTURE, ISN'T IT, THEIR -

A: I think their culture must be a lot different.

*John 7*  
Because my argument, when it comes to culture, always is that the negro's culture is the American culture, that there's nothing in negro behavior or attitude to opinions of the  
of Africa.

This may be so.

This is the --

Jim and I think half the people go above the water -- or beyond the water. The beat of drums, and the feeling of these  
One fellow from Africa said the difference between the African and American negro is that the American negro is just a black-skinned white man. I think eventually they will overcome this mental impression. I think we owe a lot to Africa while this recent struggle begins with us and I think Africa will owe a lot to us if we make progress.

Q: WELL, CLEARLY, THE WHOLE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN AFRICA IN THE LAST FEW YEARS HAD GREAT REPERCUSSIONS HERE AND AMERICA HAS A BIGGER FIGHT THAN AFRICA AND I THINK TOO, THAT CLEARLY THAT WILL BE GOING ON --

*John*  
A: We got ashamed a little bit that they were making such strides



while we were sitting in Chevrolets and Cadillacs and satisfied. I named the two cars in the yard.

Well, of course, what I feel very keenly about -- while the emergence of the African nations has been inspiring, that perhaps the main thrust of our efforts has been, in recent years, of America's suggesting to the world that here is a democracy at work and yet it hasn't shown itself as relates to the negro -- and I think this has been pertinently more important than the emerging African nations to our struggle, the power of Russia, the vast rapidity of our communications. I think these things have meant much more to our struggle than the emergence of the African nations. Of course, as I said before, this is one thing close to another.

Q: PERHAPS BOTH ARE TRUE, TOO. IN THAT PARTICULAR CASE -- THEY COULD BOTH BE CONTRIBUTING, COULDN'T THEY?

A: I think you're right too, Jim.

Q: THIS MOMENT, I SHALL SAY THE CRISIS OCCURRED IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, OF COURSE IT'S BEEN A LONG PROCESS WAY, WAY BACK. IT WASN'T A CLEAN START IN '54 -- LONG BEFORE THAT AS WE KNOW, BUT IT'S BEEN A WHOLE NEW TEMPO AND A WHOLE NEW TEMPER TO THE NEGRO'S RISE AND HIS ENTERING INTO THE AMERICAN LIFE, THE LAST TEN YEARS OR SO. NOW WOULD THIS HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IN '35, SAY TWENTY OR THIRTY YEARS AGO? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE IN 1935 and IN ONE SENSE AN ALMOST IDEAL CIRCUMSTANCE FOR IT TO ARISE, BUT WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

A: The time has to be right. An idea, as it says here, it's ready to be born. There are many factors. I heard Reverend Fred

*J. T. Butts*

Shervelsworth, of Birmingham, Alabama say once when in Memphis a couple of years ago that we, the negroes, have been tired of a lot of things for a long time but we are just now getting around to telling you about it. Something he mentioned to a white friend of his. The negro has been sick and tired of segregation for a long time, disgusted with the signs with the inferiority status, the whole bit. But serving in World War II did make a difference and then as I said this communication -- this matter of communications has really made a difference and these things combined, made this the right time for it. Some people ask me -- why 1963? I say, well this isn't just because this was a hundred years after emancipation, but there are so many other things are right and I don't think it could have happened twenty or thirty years ago, unless we had all these other factors and the negro was ready.

Q: COULD YOU HAVE FOUND THE NEGRO LEADERSHIP FOR IT THIRTY YEARS AGO?

A: I think so.

Q: COULD YOU FIND THAT -- WHAT I'M GETTING AT -- THIS IS A QUESTION NOT A STATEMENT -- AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF NEGROES NOW WHO HAVE HAD GOOD EDUCATIONS COMPARED TO THE NUMBER IN '33.

A: I think Billy Mays would have been our Martin Luther King.

Q: WOULD HE? REALLY?

A: Really. I'm almost certain of it.

Q NOW THE NUMBER, YOU SEE, JUST THE NUMBER OF ARTICULATE AND CULTIVATED, YOU SEE --

A: I don't think it is. I don't think it's a factor. Take for instance a country like Africa, which still doesn't have too

*John*



people, we might say, who would fit into this class of being educated, etc. These few can lead the masses and I think that the other factors that you mentioned, Jim, gave impetus to the present-day leaders to lead the masses. I'm not too sure but after all, this is still how I feel. Basically, a movement of -- this fellow calls it a revolt -- whatever you want to call it, in which the number of educated and well-trained leaders have been the key factors. There could have been a handful but the other things were conspired and the people will follow. You put a mass movement in front of them - the mover of the mass, it's not been a movement of the                      so much.

Q: I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF, WHICH IN MY ESTIMATION HAS BEEN CERTAINLY A SHIFT IN THE CENTER OF GRAVITY OF THE THING - ANYWAY YOU SEE, BEING URBAN LEAGUE AND ALL THIS                      TIME WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATING QUITE A LONG TIME AND LAYING ALL THE GROUNDWORK PRESUMABLY, ALL THE VAST LEGAL HISTORY THAT'S GOING INTO THIS NOW - TO THE NAACP. BUT WHERE WOULD YOU HAVE FOUND -- YOU SAID SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II MADE A DIFFERENCE. WELL THAT IN ITSELF IS AN EDUCATION - A CHANGE - INTEREST IN OTHER WORLDS, ANOTHER AGE OF REFERENCE. IT'S NOT ONLY TO SAY THE COLLEGE BUT EVEN THE AMERICAN INFANTRY WAS TRUE TOO. DO YOU THINK A CERTAIN CHANGE OF REFERENCE HAS RISEN AND WHILE THE -- I JUST DON'T SEE THE -- I'M SPEAKING FOR MYSELF NOW - NOT AS A QUESTION -- I DON'T SEE WHERE YOU'D HAVE FOUND THIS NUMBER OF YOUNG STUDENT-AGE NEGROES THIRTY YEARS AGO TO HAVE DONE WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS - THAT IS PROVIDING THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP AND THEIR OWN SENSE OF ORGANIZATION.

I JUST DON'T SEE WHERE YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND THEM THIRTY YEARS AGO. THIS IS A WHOLE NEW GENERATION, YOU SEE, OF -- IT'S GROWN UP -- OF EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, CULTIVATION, SENSE OF ORGANIZATION -- ALL THESE THINGS --

A: A reporter asked a child in Birmingham -- why are you in this demonstration -- do you really know what you're doing? and the child said - I don't understand all of it, but a hundred years of segregation is enough. I understand that. Well, let's say here's a little child, and all negro children are faced with this problem, - the negro was willing and the people who are going forward in this -- we have our leaders -- but are not, as has been suggested here, the trained leaders. Dr. King says the Phd's and the D students got together. I think Billy Mays would have been our King, and I think Walter Wise would have been our Wilhelm and I think we'd have gone forward.

Yes, sir -- Charlie Houston would have topped Herbert any day in the week.

Q: ALL RIGHT, LET'S GRANT THAT -- I WONDER HOW IT WOULD WORK OUT --

A: Let me make a quick note on this because I've been hitting this handle for a year anyway. I think another contributing factor and I think our country made a mistake to our advantage, was starting this year '63 by emphasizing one hundred years. I think folks just began to realize that it was one hundred years when the emancipation took place. It was, I think, that very thought alone that was enough to trigger a revolt.



I just hope we don't have to wait too many years to keep it going. And incidentally, although nobody notices it now, five years ago, in 1958, the NAACP had offered the slogan: FULLY FREE BY '63. I heard it then and said to myself, they'll never make it. But next year I hope our slogan is: OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS NOW - even if it's only one day over.

The psychological thing to do. That after a hundred years, if you ain't made it, you'll be dead in another hundred, so as the kid said to me in Birmingham, I just don't give a damn. I may as well be dead and be free. So --  
He just didn't care --

Q: I WAS JUST COMING BACK TO THE SAME QUESTION HERE. THE EXPLANATION IS FINE NOW, EVERYTHING YOU SAY IS TRUE, I'M SURE. THE HUNDRED YEARS IS TRUE -- IT'S A GREAT SYMBOLIC FORCE THAT'S WORKED A PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLEX ON PEOPLE.

A: For instance, take that hundred years and you'll see how far you've come -- the white man, you see --

Q: BUT HERE'S ANOTHER POINT - WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS? THERE'S ANOTHER POINT -- THE MORAL OF THAT STORY TO ME IS -- OK, THAT'S FINE -- NOW THE REST OF IT.

A: I can't see much. Just the years of my life. I haven't seen too much. I think I've been waking up in the last thirty years to the balance of this story. What was bad in this whole situation.

Q: ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.

A: I haven't seen too much.

Q: WHAT I'M THINKING OF -- I'M OLDER THAN YOU ARE SEE, BY QUITE A BIT AND I REMEMBER THE ATTITUDE IN THE TWENTIES

AS A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD.

A: We didn't see that. This is the previous generation you're talking about.

Q: DURING THE THIRTIES, YOU SEE THE WHOLE AWAKENING -- YOU COULD SEE IT GOING ON DAY BY DAY.

A: I was born in '31.

Q: YOU SEE, IN '31, I HAD MY FIRST JOB.

A: You've got a retrospectus we don't have.

Q: JUST THE FACT -- IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE TO ME WHAT ACTUALLY OCCURRED, YOU SEE, IN ONE GENERATION. ~~I MEAN~~ I COULD SEE THE BEGINNINGS OF IT.

A: Do you get the impression any easier?

Q: WELL --

A: This is what people always say to me -- don't you think 25 years can solve this? I say no, not unless we keep going at the pace we're going now.

Q: I'M NOT OFFERING THIS AS AN ARGUMENT TO SOLVE THIS, I'M JUST OFFERING THIS BECAUSE OF THE FACT OF THE TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT, IN ALMOST A SECRET WAY, DURING THAT PERIOD. THE FACT IS, EVERYTHING WAS RIGHT YOU SEE, EVERYTHING WAS RIGHT AND --

*trust*  
A: I'm quoting the phrase of a friend of mine -- what I've seen in the last thirty years of this race, he says, sometimes I think the folks were satisfied with nothing, of what they call achievements. And look at -- how did they have it? Look at Joe Louis, never kicked , never trusted us for a while. Who else besides Joe Louis, Marion Anderson maybe who's still enduring on the singing in Constitution Hall -- lots of them. These things, I think -- I don't

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see the enormous amount -- I see the quarreling in the NAACP, the steps -- I mean this is all the groundwork and maybe we're building on that -- but it doesn't impress me -- the last thirty. I went to a high school where finally a teacher woke me up. A Jewish teacher woke me up one day in history class -- reading the history book and they were talking about this -- the great strides of progress -- now the negro can be found being a porter on trains and found to be cutting white folks' hair. This is a sign of the way American democracy will work. She closed the book and slammed it down and literally threw it out the window. She said, Johnson, if you believe that trash, she said, you'll <sup>for</sup> never be satisfied with nothing.

Q: YEAH, YEAH.

*1/2 hour?*  
A: You see, things haven't really come so far, in as far as I can tell, because this is 1963 and the land of the free and the home of the brave and the whole criteria for democracy, this whole experiment here, this is the sum of it and yet I can't stop in a motel in Delaware if I drive down there on my way to Washington.

Q: I KNOW THAT.

A: So perhaps because I'm young I'm not impressed with the achievements of the last thirty years. They don't show me anything.

Q: I KNOW THAT. I'M NOT SAYING THE GAME IS OVER. ~~I DON'T SAY ANY OF THOSE THINGS.~~ I'M SAYING THAT THE VERY RAPID ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LAST FEW YEARS PERHAPS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THIS GENERATION OR THE COOPERATION OF AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF NEGROES GETTING A NEW PERSPECTIVE

ON THE WORLD AFTER SERVING, AS I SAID, IN THE AMERICAN INFANTRY TO GO INTO HARVARD OR WHEREVER IT IS, YOU SEE. THIS WHOLE RANGE OF NEW EXPERIENCES FOR THAT GENERATION THAT GREW UP IN YOUR TIME.

A: I -- I don't know. You hardly notice changes when you are young. I think if you went into the army you took a philosophical viewpoint and took a stand on some things and would go along with some others whose minds were tuned to certain things they were feeling and reading. This is quite an experience, too. This could have happened any time. You just see the roses again to pull on. I really can't see your point. I understand it, but I can't see that as being -- I think the negro would have been ready for this revolt thirty years ago.

Q: I THINK I PURELY TERM IT AS AN ASPIRATION ON ONE HAND AS MUCH AS ON THE OTHER, TO JUSTIFY WITH THAT VERSION - YES. I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHERE ARE THE POWERS, YOU KNOW, OF THE RANGE OF VISION AND QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND THE POWER OF ORGANIZATION -- IT'S STUPENDOUS, I FEEL, ORGANIZATION.

A: No. In 1935 if we could have had Russia for a threat, if we could have had nuclear explosion as a real possibility of total destruction, if we could have had the image of the American white man being thrown out across the world as being not all that he said he was, and everything else. If we had all these facts, in spite of any other, '35 would have been the year.

Q: YOU THINK SO. WELL, THAT'S --



A: Even 1900 would have been the year. I don't think, without these facts, even if we point out a few others, I don't think we'd make any strides. These things brought out the courage in our leaders. They were here. It gave them a chance to know -- that I have support, so to speak, among my fellowmen of the same calling, of other leaders, and we're ready now to make it. And some still haven't got it.

Q: PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT --

A: And none of these well-trained leaders are leading.

Q: ALL RIGHT. JUST GRANT THAT --

A: This is a herd, that's what I'm afraid of. They will follow -- they will follow -- they'll just follow, that's all. People will follow. The masses aren't the ones I'm thinking of it's just these that started to give our leaders today, who are no greater than Billy Mays, and Sam Houston and the rest that I had the privilege of reading about just touching it a little bit.

Q: BUT I WAS IN NO WAY SAYING THAT THEY WERE GREATER OR BETTER, IT WAS JUST THAT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO -- I THINK THAT FROM THIS, THIS IS WHAT I SEEM TO OBSERVE, IS THE --

A: Unfortunately we have . In '35 our courage hadn't come from numbers -- and in fact I think there are so many people involved in it --

Q: NO, IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF COURAGE, EITHER.

A: I don't know. Numbers -- I don't know.

q; JUST IN MY OWN LIFE SPAN, WELL LET'S TAKE LITERATURE. IN 1925 WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL, THERE WERE NO NEGRO WRITERS,

YOU SEE, AND IT WAS A NOVELTY. NOW, IN THE LAST 25 or 35 YEARS, YOU HAVE A GLITTERING GALAXY OF THEM, YOU SEE.

A: I don't think you can beat --

Q: THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE, YOU SEE.

A: There was DuBois in '25. He sold a black book --

Q: YES, THAT'S RIGHT. I KNOW HIS WORK PRETTY WELL. I'VE READ IT FOR YEARS -- ABOUT RECONSTRUCTION AND OTHER BOOKS.

A: There was Carlan Woods. You see this has a definite in our sort of school. These men couldn't have gotten the chance -- a guy like Louis Loxax who harbors enough muscle quick to push forth and get out a best-seller -- these guys will make it, if Louis will write it -- I'm no judge of writers. Well a negro in a day can write something and he can become a writer -- I don't know how the critics judge him, etc. But they're not all James ~~Morelands~~ <sup>Bellamy</sup>, I don't think, not to my reasoning. They're not fellows who could write like Dubois could. But you can get credit easier now, because they found --

Q: THE CLIMATE'S BETTER FOR IT -- THE CLIMATE, THE WAY IT WAS MADE BETTER FOR IT, WAS BY THE FACT THAT THERE WERE MORE NEGROES WHO WERE WRITING WELL, IN THE LAST 25 YEARS THAN THERE WERE BEFORE.

A: But were they getting a chance to publish their work. Were they getting a fair chance for the public to read them.

Q: THERE'S A BETTER CHANCE NOW -- THEY'RE WRITING BETTER.

A: May I suggest this, and this may be way out, that possibly considering the viewpoint from which you have been able to see this over 40 years, that possibly, you, as well as many



many other persons had the idea that thirty years ago the negro was pretty satisfied. Many people today are amazed that the negro is so dissatisfied. Newsweek did an article that came out last week and it stated that a lot of people think the negro is quite funny. Well, the fact is that lots of times the negroes were laughing to keep from crying and a lot of people thought the negroes were pretty happy standing on the corner laughing when the white people came by and really, they were ready to revolt then.

Q: THAT'S A STEREOTYPE --

A: And it could be that in this kind of setting, one would assume that the negro is pretty satisfied with back doors, and signs, and the like --

Q: BEING SATISFIED WAS NOT THE QUESTION I WAS RAISING -- I SAID THEY WERE BEING MORE ARTICULATE IN THE LAST 35 YEARS. IT'S NOT MERELY TRUE OF THE NEGRO, BUT IT'S TRUE OF ALL AMERICA THAT THERE'S BEEN BETTER EDUCATION AVAILABLE TO MORE PEOPLE THAN THERE WAS -- WHETHER IT'S GOOD OR BAD -- THERE'S JUST MORE OF IT. THERE'S MORE RANGE OF TALENT AVAILABLE NOW.

A: Excuse me, I've got to get back to UB. 7

I appreciate writers like Hughes, Carlott, Dunbar --

Q: WELL, MAY I IMPOSE ON BOTH OF YOU AGAIN? LATER ON?

A: Certainly. I thought you were going to talk -- You were impressed. You wouldn't want to finish that would you?

I think now I'm more impressed and this is before 35 years ago. It was writers like Dunbar, Eustis, Richard Wright --

I'm just as impressed as anybody by these new fellows --  
I'm reading now. I don't know why.

q. RICHARD WRIGHT BELONGS IN THE NEW THINGS.

A: Go back to Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson and some of our  
other negro poets and writers --

Q: I'M NOT MAKING AN INTERROGATION OF -- YOU KNOW -- A QUESTION  
THAT YOU HAVE NAMED, SAY, THREE INSTEAD OF ONE -- THAT'S  
WHAT YOU SAID -- THERE'S ONLY A STATEMENT IN THIS. I  
DON'T THINK IT'S A QUESTION. THANKS A LOT.

Thank you, Jim

YOU CALL IT. I KNOW YOU'RE TIRED -- WHY DON'T WE CUT IT  
OFF NOW \*\* MAKE IT WITH BOTH OF YOU AGAIN LATER.

A: All right.