



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1976

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JOHN WESLEY DOBBS

[[image – black & white photograph of John Wesley Dobbs]]

Black men first came to the New World with the Early Explorers. Black seamen were with Columbus in 1492; Balboa 1513-1515; Cortez 1318-1521; Desoto in 1540; and with Menendez at Saint Augustine, Fla., when in 1565 he built the first city in America.

John Baptiste Point DuSable, a black fur trapper from the West Indies, built the first house where the city of Chicago now stands.

[[image – black & white photograph of Two fez-wearing Shriners wearing formal black tie and tails]]

In 1537 Estivineco (Big Steve) a black Spaniard, led 600 men across the Texas frontier and opened up the Great South West Region of our Country now known as Arizona and New Mexico. Big Steve, 6 ft. 3 in. tall, a black Spanish Doctor, was the leader of this expedition sent out by Cortez from Mexico.

From 1492 to 1619, a period of 127 years, black men came to the New World with the Early explorers, and as free men. Chattel Slavery was forced upon black men and women beginning at Jamestown, Va., in 1619. This diabolical system lasted until January 1, 1863, for a period of 244 years. These terrible circumstances and conditions were almost inhuman and unbearable. Negro men and women worked and suffered for 244 years, without a pay day. Nevertheless by the help of Almighty God, their descendents have still survived. Today they are calling for their Civil, Economic and Political Rights.

THE DOWN-PAYMENT

Crispus Attucks made the Down-Payment for us at Boston on March 5, 1770. Peter Salem made another payment at Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775, when he turned the tide of battle by killing the British Commanding officer, Major Pitcairn. Since then the Negro has paid with sweat, blood and tears, all the way from Bunker Hill to Korea--and has not produced a single traitor to the Flag!


OUR LABOR

The sweat from the brows of our ancestors fell in Rice fields, cotton plantations, railroad cuts, in the forests, and along the Mountain Sides. Negro labor became famous by the way in which it helped to build America. The work-song about John Henry symbolizes the Joe Lewis of Labor dying with his hammer in his hand.

OUR WAR RECORD


Approximately five thousand Negroes saw service in the Continental Army under General George Washington. In 1812 black men were with the Marines, and in the Navy. They were with Perry on Lake Erie. They helped Gen. Andrew Jackson save the day at New Orleans, Jan. 8, 1815. During the Civil War (1861-1865), 178,975 Negroes were enrolled

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Approximately five thousand Negroes saw service in the Continental Army under General George Washington. In 1812 black men were with the Marines, and in the Navy. They were with Perry on Lake Erie. They helped Gen. Andrew Jackson save the day at New Orleans, Jan. 8, 1815. During the Civil War (1861-1865), 178,975 Negroes were enrolled in the Union Army. 36,847 Negro soldiers lost their lives in this struggle, winning their own freedom and preserving the Union of States. The 24th and 55th Massachusetts from Maine were the first Negro Units to be numbered into the Union Army, Col. Robert Gould Shaw led the 54th. He was killed in action in South Carolina. Don't know Boston will see me his monument in front of the State House June 16 broken by August 9, Candace, one of America's outstanding sculptors.

After the Civil War, and during the Spanish-American War, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and 24th and 25th Infantry were organized as Negro Military units to be officered by white men. These black soldiers gave a good account of themselves, at all times. In Cuba, Black Jack Pershing was a Captain in the 10th Cavalry at San Juan Hill. Theodore Roosevelt who was with the Famous Rough Riders, said Pershing was the bravest man he had ever seen under his eye. After reaching the White House, as President, Roosevelt presented Pershing, by an executive order, from the rank of Captain to that of Brigadier-General.

In World War I,--494,240 Negroes served in the U.S. Army. Of this number, 1,333 were Commissioned Officers.

In World War II (Dec. 7, 1941 thru Aug. 31, 1945) approximately 950,000 Negro personnel served in the U.S. Army and Air Force. Of this number 5,000 were officers. Today, we have a West Point graduate, Major-General R. G. Davis, Jr., Commander of an American Air Force Squadron based somewhere in Europe.

Then you see the American Negro has truly paid the price. That is exactly why the 15th, 16th, and 17th Amendments were placed in the U.S. Constitution. They deserve to be there and deserve to be obeyed. American Negroes are fighting for, Amending, and strengthening today, for the full and complete endorsement of these Amendments. They have been in the Constitution for 90 years, no longer. Our Negro College students, often assisted by White father students, are walking picket lines, and staging "sit-in" demonstrations for these rights. Again, A Moral Issue is at Stake. These college students will not be willing to wait simply because, like their fathers did, for in these many years, but they are protesting to High Heaven, and in God's name, for Justice--Right Now--if not sooner.

They know that the World runs on PROMISE. They know that the Protestant church was built on Promise and Sacrifice. They know that Paul and Silas had to dramatize a jail-house demonstration before they could worship God at Philippi.

Then, my friends, will the American Negro continue to PROTEST against old man Jim Crow, and Racial Segregation, until they are down from every American Public place, North, South, East and West. For as the Part says:--

"The World Runs on Promise--and, to sin by Silence.

"When we should Protest,--Make Covenants out of men?"

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in the Union Army. 36,847 Negro Soldiers lost their lives in this struggle, winning their own freedom and preserving the Union of States. The 54th and 55th Massachusetts State Militia were the first Negro Units to be mustered into the Union Army. Col. Robert Gould Shaw left Harvard College to lead the 54th. He was killed in action in South Carolina. Don't leave Boston until you see his monument in front of the State House done in bronze by August St. Gaudens, one of America's outstanding sculptors.

After the Civil War, and during the Spanish-American War, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and 24th and 25th Infantry were organized as Negro Military units to be officered by white men. These black soldiers gave a good account of themselves, at all times. In Cuba, Black Jack Pershing was a Captain in the 10th Cavalry at San Juan Hill. Theodore Roosevelt who was with the Famous Rough Riders, said Pershing was the bravest man he had ever seen under fire. After reaching the White House, as President, Roosevelt promoted Pershing, by an executive order, from the rank of Captain to that of Brigadier-General.

In World War I--404,348 Negroes served in the U.S. Army. Of the number, 1,353 were Commissioned Officers.

In World War II (Dec. 1, 1941 thru Aug. 31, 1945) approximately 920,000 Negro personnel served in the U.S. Army and Air Force. Of this number 8,600 were officers. Today, we have a West Point graduate, Major-General B.O. Davis, Jr., Commander of an American Air Force Squadron based somewhere in Europe.

Thus you see the American Negro has truly paid the price. That is exactly why the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were placed in the U.S. Constitution. They deserve to be there and deserve to be obeyed. American Negroes are fighting for, demanding, and dramatizing today, for the full and complete enforcement of these Amendments. They have been in the Constitution for 90 years, or longer. Our Negro College students, often assisted by White fellow students, are walking picket lines, and staging "sit-in" demonstrations for these rights. Again, A Moral Issue is at Stake! These college students will not be willing to wait supinely serene, like their fathers did, for lo these many years; but they are Protesting to High Heaven, and in God's name, for Justice--Right Now--If not sooner.

They know that the World rises on PROTEST. They know that the Protestant church was built on Protest and Sacrifice. They know that Paul and Silas had to dramatize a jail-house demonstration before they could worship God at Phillipi.

Thus, my friends, will the American Negro continue to PROTEST against old man Jim Crow, and Racial Segregation, until they are driven from every American Public place, North, South, East and West. For as the Poet says:

"The World Rises on Protest--and, to sin by Silence,

When we should Protest,--Makes Cowards out of men!"

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