

America is my home

By Rev. Thomas McPhatter
SPECIAL TO THE POST

I felt it was important at this time that I get one thing straight, that is for me, and what others may think of, or about me. Or what they may plan for me, or against me. Know that I am America (not that I am just an American, but that I am America!) I was made in America, by America, and for America. Who else on this side of God's green earth can truthfully and honestly make such a claim? Not the "native American," as he or she is called. They were here before there was an America. Nor any of the other citizens whose ancestors migrated to this turf we call America, my home. I am America.

Hear me out, disagree if you like, but here I take my stand. After being brought through the Middle Passage, many of my ancestors became ill or seasick and were fed to sharks. Then, there were others unwilling to submit to the cruelty and the inhumanity of the slave master, and jumped from the slave ships committing suicide if the chance was available. Rather than go down into the holes of slave ships with the filth, maggots, rats, disease and death, and there remain in the dark damp bottom for days and weeks, and sometimes months, before being auctioned off on the block as property to the highest bidder.

Black men had no women or wives or families. Babies had no mothers if they were old enough to be weaned, separated from their mothers and sold to the highest bidder. The young ones who were able to work brought the highest price. Why? Because it would be easier to make them over into submissive clones of labor, to change them, or to brainwash them and transform their very beings.

To meet the demands of building this country, there was a need for a special type of "animal," as America thought my ancestors to be. So they were treated like animals who were made the beasts of burden, the drawers of water, tillers of the earth, hewers of wood, the manservants and maid-servants, without question or qualm and without any compensation or consideration. Always ready to serve, to love, to give, and to protect at the master's will, to go where they were sent, and to do what they were told or forced to do. This meant that all of the feelings, institutions and means of communication, once owned, were ripped from them, leaving



them empty, open, defenseless and alone.

The slaves, my ancestors, the Americans, were not allowed to have families, nor to speak in their native tongue. If it were attempted, they were unmercifully beaten or hung. The religious practices they had known were abolished. They were emptied of everything they had known, except a silent faith in a higher being who caused the sun to rise in the morning and to set in the evening. Who gave them a moon, and stars at night to wish on in some dark, quiet place. That's where the word "soul," in our tradition, comes from. That feeling transmitted between each other, without speech or touch that is born out of gladness for one more day,

that allows us to communicate with the celestial, that is always at work, the one with whom we communicate mostly at night, as the moon, the stars, and the rhythm of silence, and sweet disruptions by nocturnal creatures that move about with us.

And here we find ourselves new creatures, in a strange and new world. Physically no different from he who is our master to whom I must look for my existence, because he has me chained.

Having gone through a new type of spiritual middle passage, I feel a new revelation and it is this. I am not an African American. I am an American of

African descent, so were my ancestors. I was born in America. I have lived in America all my life. I will die and be buried in America, as were my forebears. This is my country, my land, my home I have done what many others have never done for this my home. My labor built America, and, with others, I have labored and fought in wars to keep her free. All of this is pursuant to my being made in America, by America, for America.

I reject the title of "Lift Every Voice and Sing." "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was the Negro National Anthem when we didn't count, when the white man allowed you to remain here in America as a minority, and not as a citizen who counts for something. I also reject the title

of Black History or African American History. We are Americans, and any and all of our achievements are American history. We must take our rightful place along with all others who claim to have paid the price to be included in American history, a course that all high school students are required to study for a designated number of semesters or years. It is time that we stop shooting ourselves in the foot.

Read the stanzas of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Negro National Hymn. I am a North Carolinian and have been hearing it for 70 years, and singing it with vigor for more than 65 years. Each time I hear it, the hairs on my shoulders rise up and I am filled with tears of determination and courage. However, as a patriot and citizen soldier, the "Star Spangled Banner" is our rightful call to courage, dedication and patriotism. It is our National Anthem. But just as expressive and meaningful as me is the song, America."

When you learn the Negro National Hymn, you will see how both speak of the same nation, same land and expanse, the same plan, service, labor, dedication and commitment. Yes, I am America, this is my country. It is not what I want it to be, or feel it can become, but believe that I will continue to go over to MCRD and hear colors (the national anthem) played at 8 a.m. as often as my strength allows, so help me God.

I'm not a flag-waver, but I care for my country, and will remain loyal to her, as should all Americans. So here I am today, as an offspring of my ancestors who were "made" in America, by America, for America. And this desecration has never ended in this country. I am America.

Charlotte native the Rev. THOMAS H. McPHATTER is a retired Navy chaplain and Presbyterian minister. He now lives in San Diego, Calif.

Letters to the Editor

Abu-Jamal's brains didn't merit death row

To some Mumia Abu Jamal is a cop killer; but to me he's an intellectual whose political beliefs have placed him on death row. You must remember that we live in an oppressive and racist society. You should know it because many papers chose to print mostly anti-Mumia views. For that reason, they should be called Mumia Bashers' papers, not a people paper. I was in both court rooms 253 and 653 last summer when Mumia and his lawyers were seeking a new trial. The rigidity with which judge Albert Sabo treated the case convinced me that Mumia was framed.

I learned earlier on that this system has a legacy of lynching any black man for the murder of a caucasian; I also learned that it has a legacy of assassinating and deporting those whose views differ from the system's point of views. Freedom of speech, in my view, applies to those who think only the way the system expects them to think.

If Mumia played brain dead like most of you in the mainstream and the black press, he probably wouldn't be where he's at today.

Jesus Christ once cried over Jerusalem because Jews were killing prophets that were sent to advise them to turn away from their evil ways. Biblical historians report that Jerusalem was later destroyed by invading armies.

This nation that has murdered millions of native Indians who owned this land and exploited, tortured and killed millions of my African ancestors and drowned thousands of Haitians coming to these shores as a result of their nation being destabilized by this and other imperialist powers will have to give account to the Almighty for crimes committed against humanity.

— Ernst Ford
Philadelphia

AIDS information is much-needed

The writer is pastor at Present Day Ministries.

Thank you for the informative page dedicated to HIV/AIDS in the Feb. 1 issue. I commend you and your staff for being on the cutting edge of this issue and highlighting real people in such a sensitive way. We need more issues like this. I hope this is a sign of articles to come in 1996.

AIDS is the silent stalker in our community. I salute you for taking the lead to keep us informed. Even though AIDS is 100 percent deadly, it is also 100 percent preventable. Keep up the good work. You have taken news reporting to a new level in my opinion.

— Guendolyn Curry

Businesses responsible for criminal goods

The writer is president of the Belmont Business Watch.

It is our responsibility to prevent the influx of goods which promote crime in our communities, such as needles, pipes, scales, roach clips and methanol. We need to hold the manufacturers and wholesale distributors who knowingly sell products and conceal the fact that these products cannot legally be retailed in the state of North Carolina.

We will have meetings to discuss methods on holding the manufacturers and wholesalers responsible. The first was Feb. 8. Two additional meetings will be listed at a later date. All meetings will be held at the Belmont Center at 700 Parkwood Ave.

— Roger Stewart
Charlotte

Chicago's Goodman Theater and Marcus Garvey's lasting legacy

By Conrad Worrill
SPECIAL TO THE POST

It was announced in the Chicago press in late December of 1995 that the play "Black Star Line" would open at the Goodman Theater in Chicago on Jan. 22.

Immediately, upon reading the articles that appeared in the Chicago press announcing the opening of this play, I thought what was a white theater company doing producing a play about one of the greatest Pan African/nationalist leaders in the history of African people in the Western Hemisphere.

How ironic that one of the great advocates of race first and self-reliance for African people throughout the world now be showcased on the stage of a white theater company and financed through white philanthropy and other white financial sources.

My curiosity concerning this play became quite intense. Fortunately, I was able to obtain a copy of the play and

read it with great scrutiny. It was revealed to me that the author of the play was an African American playwright, Charles Smith, who was supported by the Goodman Theater for five years in working on this project.

Having completed reading the play, I now had a clue as to why a major white theater company would support African playwright writing a play about Marcus Mosiah Garvey.

Since African people were captured and introduced into the Western Hemisphere as property and commodities, the forces of white supremacy have developed a formula for their continued white domination and control of our history. That is, find a talented African person who is well trained and collaborate with them by paying them to write plays, books, movies, songs and poems that do not in any way enhance the contributions of African people to the world. In fact, this formula enhances white supremacy and white domination.

Such is the case of "Black Star Line" by Charles Smith. I managed to get complimentary tickets on two occasions to see the play. I even attempted to discuss my objections about the play before seeing the play with Goodman Theater officials who informed me they support the writer's individual right to write a fictionalized version of Garvey and the Garvey movement.

And that is precisely what the play is. A fictionalized version of a profound period in the history of African people to find a self determining, ideological, programmatic and organized response to our conditions as a people.

The play reduces Marcus Garvey, his organization and the movement he led to a person who was unable to speak without notes; a person who was unable to negotiate his personal life and hits his wife; a person concerned and obsessed with African people using skin lightening, a person who allowed petty thievery to take place in his organization, the Universal Negro

Improvement Association, which is depicted in the play as why the Black Star Line shipping project was not successful.

And finally, the play depicts Garvey as someone who met with KKK leaders without giving any background as to why. And a person who always had his hand out to the black elite in terms of efforts to raise money. We all know that Chicago banker Jesse Binga was not in New York in 1914 donating money to the Garvey movement. And we are not privy to records showing that Madam C.J. Walker participated in helping to organize the Black Star Line in New York to donate money to the Garvey Movement.

To say the least, "Black Star Line" is horribly researched. And even though the Goodman Theater stands on its support of Charles Smith, it is clear to me that on both instances I saw the play, the audience left thinking that this was the real history of Garvey and the Garvey move-

ment. What a tragedy!

Garvey, interestingly enough, among his many talents wrote poetry and plays and understood that African people should control our own culture through the arts. As Tony Martin reveals in his definitive book, "Race First," on Garvey - that Garvey wrote the play "The Coronation of the African King" [and] it was performed at his Edelweiss Park Headquarters in Jamaica in 1930.

One scene showed the French premier and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George conferring over UNIA penetration into Africa.

The more than 6 million UNIA members throughout the African world under the leadership of the Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey presented one of the greatest threats to the system of white supremacy in the 20th century. That is why they worked so hard with some black people to help destroy Garvey and his movement. The play does not illustrate this point.

For Garvey, the black man

and woman were universally oppressed on racial grounds. No matter how much people try to shy away from this issue, the fact is this is still true today.

If we are ever to become a liberated people, this idea must be deeply rooted in the day-to-day organizing and mobilizing of our people.

Garvey understood that the foundation of our liberation was economic independence based on racial solidarity that is tied to political, cultural, social, and spiritual independence.

Garvey would never write a play about our history and sell it to a white theater company. We must elevate our own plays on Garvey and produce them in our own African controlled and financed theaters. If not, then - what you see is what you get.

Continued white domination and control of our history.

CONRAD WORRILL is national chairman of the National Black United Front in Chicago.

How the Republican Congress can silence its critics

By Milton Bins
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Let me add my voice to those who have urged the congressional leadership to stand firm on balancing the budget by 2002.

On behalf of my grandchildren and all of America's children and grandchildren, I want to commend the historic 104th Congress for placing the federal government on a glide path to fiscal sanity which will lead to lower taxes, lower interest rates, more jobs and freedom from bureaucratic red tape.

The brickbats and partisan pounding notwithstanding, the nation owes a debt of grat-

itude to Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) and House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) for keeping their promise to the American people to balance the budget, using the Congressional Budget Office's real numbers.

It would be pollyannaish not to make note of the political points scored by Democrats in their reckless and demagogic charges that efforts to slow the rate of growth in social programs are in fact "cut-backs." In truth, Democratic charges have stuck because of their fear campaign and a growing public perception that the budget is being balanced on the backs of the working poor, the middle class, children, welfare mothers and senior citizens. Contributing

to this perception is the failure to tackle corporate welfare, which consumes a far larger share of the federal budget than social welfare cash programs. While the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 vetoed by President Clinton eliminated \$18 billion in tax loopholes for special interests over a seven-year period, the CBO has scored business subsidies at \$100 billion a year, including \$70 billion in tax breaks.

If the Republican revolution is to continue, it must be perceived as fair, with opportunity and compassion to the neediest among us. Congress must begin to reform corporate welfare - the party's Achilles' heel - with the

same purposefulness with which it is overhauling social welfare programs. A good start would be to go back to the future: back to the party of Lincoln. We can do this by passing the information age equivalent of the Morrill Act signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862.

At a time when the very survival of the union was at risk, the party of Lincoln demonstrated leadership and bold vision. It took action to ensure the availability of a skilled work force prepared for the new opportunities of the then-emerging industrial revolution. The act granted a public resource - land - to the states to establish institutions of higher education (it was

amended in 1890 to provide educational opportunities for black Americans).

With one fell swoop, the Republican Congress can silence its critics, assert its trusteeship over public resources, reduce the federal budget deficit, and provide educational and training opportunities for all Americans by authorizing the Federal Communications Commission to auction the

digital broadcast spectrum to the highest bidder and earmarking some of the proceeds for educational technology block grants to the states to accelerate connecting the nation's public schools and libraries to the information superhighway.

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What's on your mind?

Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail - charpost@cli.mindspring.com

All correspondence must include a daytime telephone number for verification.