

A. Philip Randolph

(1889-1979)

When he died in a modest Harlem flat at age 90, Asa Philip Randolph, the "father of the civil rights movement," had never owned a car or a piece of property, but he had negotiated civil rights issues with five U.S. presidents, organized the largest African-American labor union in U.S. history, and organized Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous March on Washington.

Randolph was born in Crescent City, Fla., but grew up in Jacksonville, where his father was a minister of a small AME church. He graduated in 1907 as class valedictorian from the Cookman Institute, the first high school in Florida for African-Americans. In 1911 he left Jacksonville for New York City, where he would live and work for the rest of his life.

In New York, he attended City College's evening school and, as a founding member of the Independent Political Council, became interested in politics and joined the Socialist party as an organizer, public speaker and political activist.

In 1914 he married Lucille Green, a Howard University graduate and former teacher who owned her own beauty salon in Harlem. It would be through her business and her devotion that Randolph would make it through hard times later in his career. They had no children, but enjoyed a 49-year loving relationship as spouses and friends until her death in 1963. It was through Lucille that he met Chandler Owen, a Virginia Union graduate who became his political ally and co-editor and publisher of the *Messenger*, a radical magazine the two founded in 1917.

With financial assistance from Lucille's business, they founded the *Messenger* in November 1917 as a radical socialist magazine that spoke out against segregation, low wages and U.S. imperialism abroad. It also supported unionization of workers, Socialist Party candidates running for office, and a radical economic restructuring of U.S. society.

In 1918, Randolph and Owen were arrested in Cleveland by Justice Department officials for advocating draft resistance during World War I and selling copies of their

magazine. They were jailed, but soon released when a judge decided that they were dupes of the socialists and didn't really know what they were distributing. Believing that they, as African-Americans, could not have written and published the magazine themselves, the judge scolded them and let them go. Weeks later, the U.S. Post Office took the magazine's second-class mailing privileges, making it more expensive to mail copies to its subscribers. The ban would last for three years.

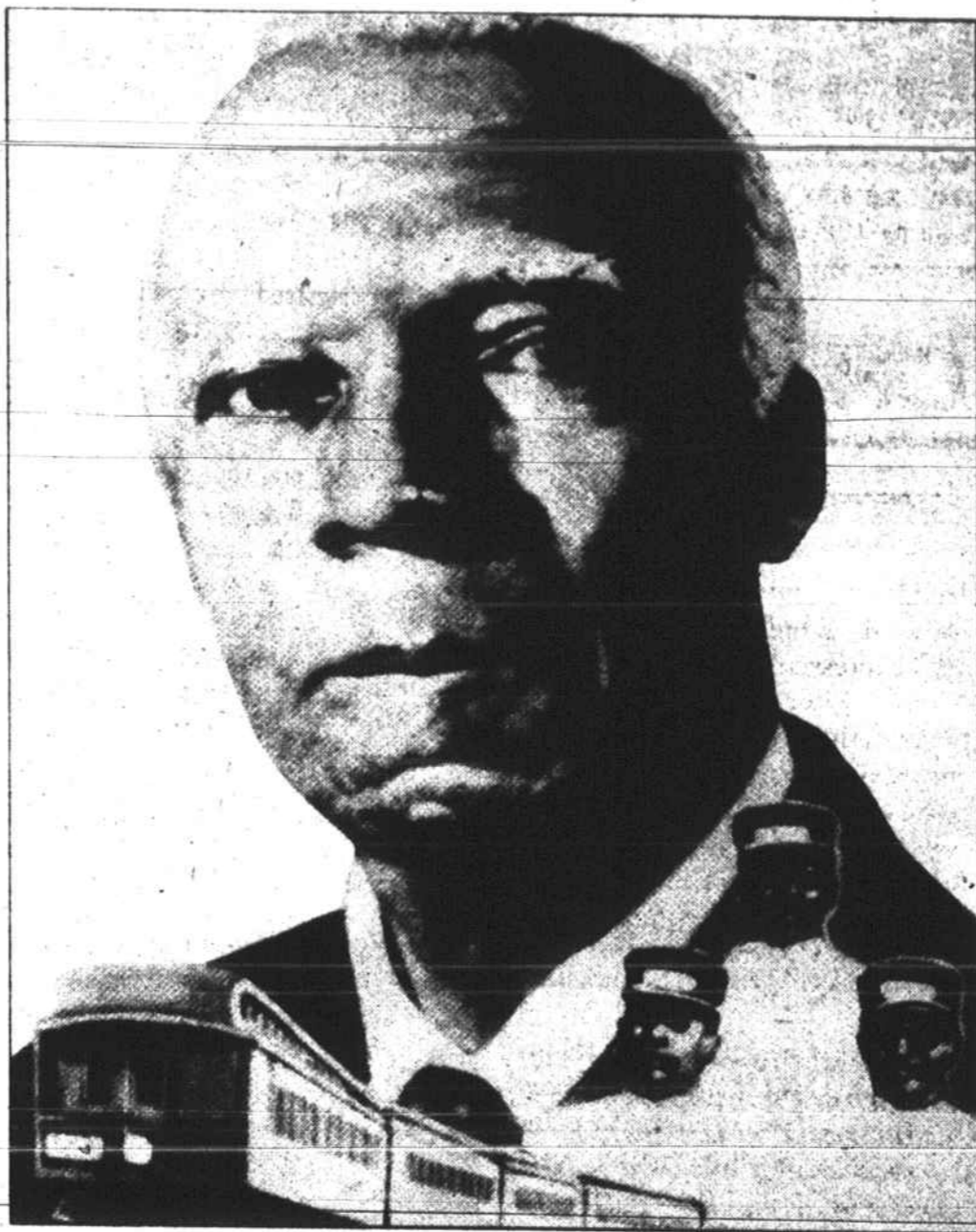
As the magazine received wider readership, it published political commentary, theater reviews, and the poetry of the young writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Randolph was called by a New York newspaper the "most dangerous Negro in America." And by 1919, the government had labeled his magazine "the most able and dangerous of all the Negro publications."

In late 1918, Randolph worked with Jamaican Marcus Garvey in the International League of Darker Peoples, which was to present a list of demands on behalf of Third World peoples at the Versailles conference after World War I. Randolph had befriended Garvey in 1916 and had introduced him to activist contacts in Harlem. He was to represent Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in France at the peace conference, but was denied a passport by the State Department. Later, Randolph would break with Garvey, criticize him vehemently in his magazine and call for his deportation to Jamaica.

Randolph also criticized DuBois as an "Old Crowd Negro" whose moderate political views were not radical enough for the times.

In 1925, Randolph's career took another significant turn when he was approached by Ashley L. Totten to speak to a group of African-American railroad porters who were thinking about starting their own union.

Many of the porters attended or graduated from college, but worked three to four hundred hours a month for less than \$70. They got little sleep, paid for their own uniforms, meals, shoe polish and brushes, and had to pay for souvenir articles for



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passengers. If they complained, they were fired. Passengers called all porters "George" after George Pullman, the railroad entrepreneur, who, presumably, owned them.

After his speech to the railroad porters, Randolph was asked to take leadership of the union. They wanted a leader who was not a porter and who could work independently without fear of losing his job. He refused initially, but later took the office and changed the *Messenger* into the official voice of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). Randolph published a weekly union newspaper, *Black Worker*, that was published from 1929 to 1968, when, with the decline of the railroad travel industry, the union was abolished.

Randolph represented the BSCP in its 12-year fight for recognition and negotiation, ignoring threats, and refusing bribes and other attempts to get him to sell out during the Great Depression. He remained its only president for 43 years. The union is the first African-American union to gain a negotiated contract from one of this country's wealthiest and most pow-

erful companies.

In his 60-year career as a labor leader, Randolph led four delegations and was a member of a fifth that held face-to-face negotiations with five U.S. presidents on the issue of civil rights for African-Americans. He refused several opportunities to run for public office by both Republicans and Democrats and served as vice president of the AFL-CIO.

Randolph organized the first planned March On Washington movement in 1941 that was called off at the last minute when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an order that abolished employment discrimination in government and the defense industries.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

1 9 9 2

THURSDAY, FEB. 27

Your local public television station will present "Black Men: Uncertain Futures," as part of its BHM celebration. This program examines why high school dropout, unemployment, and crime rates are so high among young men in minority communities and what impact these statistics have on black communities and society at large. Check local listings for appropriate time.

FRIDAY, FEB. 28

The Cone Ballroom in Elliot University Center (EUC), UNCG campus, is the sight for the Neo-Black Society NightOwl which will be at 8 p.m.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) will present "African-American Artists: The Color of Art," at the Elliott University Center (EUC) Gallery, open daily from Feb. 1 - 29.

The Real McCoy: African-American invention and innovation, 1619-1930, will be appearing at the Greensboro Historical Museum from Jan. 18 to March 1. "The Real McCoy" is divided into six sections: "African Ingenuity in Colonial America," "Free Black Inventors, 1776-1865," "Black Inventors in the Antebellum South," "Reconstruction and Recognition: Black Inventors, 1865-1894," and "The Black Exposition Movement" and "Urbanization and Modernization in the 20th Century." More than 40 inventors are featured.



National Public Radio (NPR) celebrates Black History Month with a four-part series "Duke Ellington: In His Own Words," which airs on NPR's acclaimed documentary program, Horizons. Check local public radio stations for broadcast times.

In celebration of Black History Month, National Public Radio (NPR) listeners will have a rare opportunity to hear historic, almost lost, jazz compositions by Duke Ellington, Chick Webb, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, and others. "Jazz" will feature concert performances by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. "Jazz" will be broadcast the entire month of February by NPR member stations nationwide. Call your local public radio station for broadcast times.

Time Warner Inc. launches Songs of My People project

On Feb. 12, Time Warner Inc. officially launched the multimedia *Songs of My People* project, an historic photography book and film event about African-American contributions to American culture.

The project is comprised of a book and an international exhibition which opened to the public on Feb. 15 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and will travel nationally under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). In addition, *Songs of My People* will be an HBO Special, co-produced by Quincy Jones Entertainment, Blackside, Inc. and Home Box Office, Time Warner's pay-TV subsidiary.

During the summer and fall of 1990, over 50 of the nation's leading African-American photojournalists were assigned to capture the diversity of the black experience across the nation on film. They photographed those who had achieved success beyond their dreams and others who struggle from day to day. *Songs of My People* is a loving, sensitive, critical and hopeful "self-portrait" of the African-American community through its own eyes. *Songs of My People* celebrates this community and its impact on the American experience, and illustrates the diversity of African-American heritage in music, art, spirituality, fashion, politics, sports, entertainment, community and family life.

The book *Songs of My People* was published by Little, Brown and Company on Feb. 12. The book and exhibition were conceived by Eric Easer, D. Michael Cheers and Dudley M. Brooks, who formed New African Visions, Inc., a not-for-profit organization committed to providing a balanced view of the African-American community

through the visual arts.

The exhibition is in honor of J. Richard Munro, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Time Warner Inc. A long-time proponent of affirmative action for women and minorities, Munro has been a leader in the struggle for literacy and educational equality. "No CEO in America has shown more concern for equal opportunity and social justice than Dick Munro," said Nick Nicholas. "And none is more deserving of an honor such as this."



Cover photograph from the book *Songs of My People*.

A SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT THE REAL McCOY

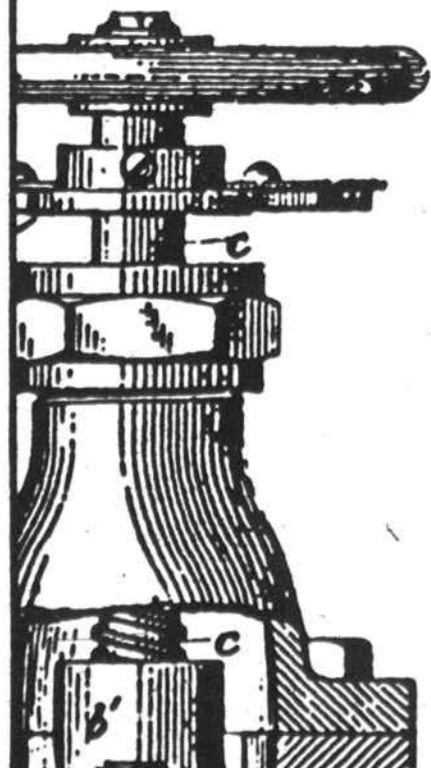
African-American Invention and Innovation, 1619-1930

Greensboro Historical Museum
130 Summit Ave

Jan 18 - Mar 1

Mon - Sat 10 - 5
Tue 10 - 8
Sun 2 - 5

Free Admission
For more information, call 919/373-2043



Shedding Light on the Dark Continent.

Nefertari, Nubian Queen of Egypt. 1292-1225 B.C.

Tye - The Nubian Queen of Egypt (ca. 1415-1340 B.C.)

Hannibal - Ruler of Carthage (247-183 B.C.)

Mansa Kankan Musa - King of Mali (1312-1377)

Thutmose III - Pharaoh of Egypt. 1504-1450 B.C.

Cleopatra VII - Queen of Egypt (69-30 B.C.)

Akhenaton - Pharaoh of Egypt (1378-1358 B.C.)

Maheda - The Queen of Sheba (960 B.C.)

Ashika Muhammad Touré - King of Songhay (1469-1529)

Tsharon - King of Nubia (710-684 B.C.)

Osai Tutu - King of Asante (1680-1717)

Samory Toure - The Black Napoleon of the Sudan (1830-1900)

Behanzin Hossu Bowelle - The King Shark (1841-1906)

Nzingha - Amazon Queen of Matamba, West Africa (1582-1663)

Queen Amina of Zaria

Shamba Bolongongo - African King of Peace (1800-1820)

Menelek II - King of Ethiopia (1867-1913)

Hatshepsut - The Queen of Far Antiquity (1500 B.C.)

Afonso I - King of the Kongo (1506-1540)

Shaka - King of the Zulus (1818-1828)

Khama - The Good King of Bechuanaland (1819-1923)

Moshoeshe - King of Basutoland (1815-1868)

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