

No Easy Walk (*The Dramatic Journey of African-Americans*) by Harry Louis Williams II, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1988 (42 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Prologue

1. Entombed in a Slave Ship.

Once I clenched my teeth in the odorous bowels of a slave ship bound for a place I did not know. I found myself trembling in airless darkness amidst the sounds of moaning and crying from my fellow captives. I was entombed in a space smaller than a coffin.

The wooden floorboards ripped the flesh from my naked back as the ship bucked and rolled with each wave of the open sea. There were neither windows nor adequate waste facilities down below. The stench was horrific. After a few weeks, all cries for mercy died in my heart and throat. [Page 6]

2. Life in Harlem.

I would think to myself There are Third World countries where people live longer on average than in Harlem, how they speaking on that at Deliverance? And these drugs! If somebody came here as a tourist, they'd think drugs was legal in this neighborhood. What are they doing about it? I been to the Board of Education meeting begging these people to do something about these broken-down schools we sending our kids too. How come that preacher from Deliverance never goes to the meetings? [Page 10]

3. Real Religion.

I kept thinking about God and justice and love. You can't split no man in half and just save his soul for heaven while the rest of him lives in hell on earth! I mean, there's two worlds in New York, one poor and one nice, one black and one white. They tell me those Old Testament prophets like Amos and Isaiah used to kick up dust 'bout that sort of thing. If you call yourself delivering somebody then you got to talk about racism and you got to talk to it wherever you find it. Real religion is going to save all the person, not just the soul. [Page 10]

Part One: West Africa in Antiquity

4. African Savages.

For centuries books-then movies-have portrayed the African as a savage who swung from trees in the jungle. Tarzan was introduced as a correct representation of the

African people-moronic creatures who practically walked on their knuckles. Was it true? Were these the people that the early European traders found when they arrived on the West African coast in the fifteenth century? [Pages 12-13]

Chapter 1: The Ancient Patriarch

5. A Race Forgotten.

In AD 1787 French explorer Count Volney visited Egypt. He was amazed at what he found. He said this:

To think that a race of black men who today are our slaves and the object of our contempt is the same one to whom we owe our arts, sciences and even the use of our speech.... [T]here is a people now forgotten who discovered, while others were yet barbarians, the element of arts and sciences. A race of men now rejected from society for their sable skin and wooly hair whose civil and religious systems still govern the universe.⁸ [Page16]

⁸Richard Poe, *Black Spark, White Fire* (New York: Prima, 1997), pp. 25-26

6. The Black Race at the Time of Moses.

Four hundred years later, in the exodus from Egypt, Moses led a crowd that consisted of more than 400,000 people. Where did they come? The Bible calls them a "mixed multitude" (Ex 12:37-38). Many of those who fled the bitterness of Egyptian slavery with Moses might have been Cushites. Moses himself married a black woman (Num 12:1). Aaron, his brother, had a son named Phineas, which is translated "Negro," or "the black."¹¹ Later, Eli, the high priest of Israel and Samuel's mentor, had a son by the same name.¹²

¹¹Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod*, p.152

¹²Ibid.

7. Ebed-Melek, a Black Hebrew.

Ebed-Melek was a high official in King Zedekiah of Israel's palace. Jeremiah was a prophet of God in trouble. His stark, angry prophecies about Israel's impending judgment found no welcome in the king's court. Jeremiah was sentenced and thrown into a huge pit. Ebed-Melek was moved to action upon hearing of his plight. He enlisted a contingent of the royal guard and pulled the prophet out of the pit. In return, Jeremiah promised that his life would be spared after Israel fell. Ebed-Melek was a black Hebrew.³³ [Page 21]

8. Ancestry of Jesus.

In *Black Biblical Presence*, Walter McCray writes concerning the ethnicity of several women listed in Jesus' genealogy. He mentions Tamar the daughter-in-law of Judah, a Canaanite woman, as one of his ancestors. Rahab, the prostitute who aided the two Hebrew spies, Caleb and Joshua, gave birth to a son named Boaz. Both she and her son were related to Jesus. McCray's book also lists Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, as a possible African ancestor of Jesus.³⁴

In *What Color Was Jesus?* William Moseley writes, "If there was assimilation of black peoples among the Israelites, and there was; and if Jesus was an Israelite, and He was; then Jesus might have very well inherited genes from Ethiopian ancestors, which would have made him black."³⁵

Jesus' ancestry would not have designated him a full-blooded African. However, most African-American people have some mixture of heritage within their genealogies. For the largest part of the African-American's sojourn in the United States, the slightest trace of the African blood has classified one as a black person. Today, African-Americans whose complexions are so light that they are sometimes mistaken for Caucasians are considered black in America. When slavery reigned in American life, even a single distant black ancestor condemned one to a life of slavery. When Jim Crow laws segregated African-Americans, a single drop of black blood relegated a United States citizen to the back of the bus.

If Jesus had lived in America when slavery was practiced, his African blood would have condemned him to cotton field slavery. If he had lived during the height of legalized segregation, his skin color might have denied him access to many Christian churches. If Jesus Christ walked the earth today in human form, he might yet be segregated into the killing fields of a North American ghetto.

The early church was a racially integrated institution. Many different groups were represented on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the saints in the upper room (Acts 2:5-11). The church at Antioch had at least two African members in leadership: Simeon, who was also called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1).

The first Gentile convert to Christianity was black. The Holy Spirit led the evangelist Philip into the wilderness where he came across a foreign dignitary riding in the passenger seat of a chauffeur-driven chariot (Acts 8:26-40). The "Ethiopian eunuch," as history has labeled him, was reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip approached the man and helped him to draw the correlation between the words of Isaiah and the

recently resurrected Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Cushite finance minister probably rode back to the capital city of Meroe rejoicing that he had found God in the desert.

What is certain is that some of the great thinkers and apologists of the Christian faith were Africans: Names like Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine and Athanasius shaped Christian thought and reason for the ages to come. [Pages 22-23]

³⁴Walter Arthur McCray, *The Black Presence in the Bible*, vol.2: *The Table of Nations, Genesis 10:1-32* (Chicago: Black Light Light Fellowship, 1990), pp. 126-27.

³⁵William Moseley, *What Color Was Jesus?* (Chicago: African American Images, 1987), p. 7

Chapter 2 Black West Africa

9. African Forefathers.

Historian John Henrik Clarke states: "Before the breaking up of the social structure of the West African states of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and the internal strife and chaos that made the slave trade possible, the forefathers of the Africans who eventually became the slaves in the United States lived in a society where university life was fairly common and scholars were beheld with reverence."¹

¹Quoted in John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations*(New York: Carol, 1970), p.20

Part Two From African Kingdoms to American Slavery

10. Slavery in America.

The African holocaust was one of the bloodiest tragedies ever visited upon humanity. The slave trade could be described as the tears of orphaned children in African villages, their parents kidnapped and gone forever. The slave trade was the forgotten dead pitched from slave ships, thrown to the sharks. The slave trade was corroded smiles and back room deals. It was papal blessings-and pain and bloodshed for the enslaved.

Slavery was not a new institutional system when the people of Europe arrived in West Africa. However, they gave it a new twist. The captives who were brought to the New World were stripped of their cultures, native tongues and history. All self-identity was destroyed as the master sought to control the slave's mind as well as body.

The economy of a new nation called the United States was built on the sweaty, aching, whip-scarred backs of the African slaves. Their free labor helped build the infrastructure of the country and transform it rapidly into a world power.

Slavery has been referred to as America's "original sin." Its legacy of segregation and racial mistrust shackles black-white relations today. In Part Two we will examine slavery and black humanity's life in the New World—a story of weeping, work and war.[Pages 31-32]

11. Wanted: Slave Laborers.

...the Portuguese originally came to Africa in search of gold. However, a substantial number of Africans were soon being sent to Portugal yearly to be sold. Slave traders began to arrive from other European nations. Slaves were stolen by people like the Brandenburgers and the Dutch, English and French. The opening of the New World territories created a further appetite for slave laborers. Black sinews were needed to conquer the dense foliage of a faraway wilderness call “America”. [Page 34]

12. Slavery: Profitable Enterprise.

African monarchs like the Damel of Cayor controlled large sections of the African coastlands. The Damel had a two-thousand-man infantry. Two hundred knights in armor also protected his interests. The Damel was treacherous in his dealings, often selling his own subjects into slavery. He became proficient at playing one European nation against another. ²

The Damel of Cayor was just one African ruler who found that slavery could be a profitable enterprise on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Richard Olaniyan writes, "The Europeans did not go into the interior to capture slaves but maintained forts and trading stations along the coast of West Africa where kings and chiefs came to sell or barter their own slaves and certain categories of criminals and war captives." One European trader reported in 1680, "The great wealth of the Fantineans [Fanti] makes them so proud and haughty that any European trading there must stand bare to them:" Some African kings were escorted to Europe and treated lavishly by European monarchs.³

²Richard Oaniyan, ed., *African History & Culture* (Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria: Longman 1982), p. 62

³Daniel P. Mannix and Malcom Cowley, *Black Cargoes* (New York: Viking, 1962), p. 34

13. Sir John Hawkins.

Sir John Hawkins had the dubious distinction of becoming the first slave ship captain to bring Africans to the Americas. Hawkins was a gentleman who insisted that his crew "serve God daily" and "love another." His ship, ironically called "the good ship Jesus," left the shores of his native England for Africa in October 1562. He arrived at Leone, and in a short time he had three hundred blacks in his possession. Hawkins claimed to have acquired them "partly by sword partly by other means"⁹

⁹Davidson, *African Slave Trade*, p. 67

Hawkins took part in "the Great Circuit," also known as "the triangle trade" He purchased cheap products from England with which to barter for slaves in Africa. He obtained slaves in Africa and exchanged them in the West Indies for raw materials and foodstuffs to take back to England. From time to time African monarchs would enlist Europeans as allies against foreign powers. Hawkins was approached for such help. Hawkins's "help" came neither free nor cheap. He was a mercenary. He once served the king of Sierra Leone and the Castros in a large-scale military operative. Two hundred Englishmen fought alongside the African troops. For his role in the quest, John Hawkins was awarded the proceeds from the sale of the 470 prisoners of war.¹⁰

Queen Elizabeth frowned on Hawkins's activity. She said, "It was detestable and would call down vengeance from heaven upon the undertakers." However, the flesh was weak. One look at Sir John Hawkins's ledger books turned the queen into an investor. ¹¹ [Page 37]

¹⁰Davidson, *African Slave Trade*, p. 67

¹¹Mannix and Cowley, *Black Cargoes*, p. 22

14. Slave Trade: Booming Industry.

The slave trade became a major economic industry in West Africa. The magnitude of it expanded to overwhelming proportions. Entire nations were depopulated. Thousands were exported to foreign lands. The proud black people of the Asante, Dahomey, Oyo, Fanti, Mossi and Mandinka kingdoms were just some of those who ended up in the bottom of slave ships.

The nation-states of West Africa became increasingly militarized. By 1500 the kingdom of Benin was hiring Portuguese mercenaries to bolster its armed forces. By the 1700s Birmingham, England, gunsmiths were pouring 100,000 to 150,000 guns a year into West Africa.¹³ The Europeans traded guns for slaves. Guns soon became a necessity to a sovereign nation. If a nation did not have guns, it could be enslaved by its neighbors. Basil Davidson writes:

[The Asante] were seldom or never willing to sell their own people: hence they had to conquer foreign states, since other African nations, in the same game, controlled the trade routes to the coast. This in turn needed more firearms; and more firearms called for more slaves. Thus, Asante grew into one of the strongest slaving nations of Africa.... Questions of power and wealth apart, slavery had become the price of Asante survival.¹⁴

¹³Davidson, *The African Slave Trade*, p. 242

¹⁴Ibid, p. 251

15. African Holocaust.

Some estimate that Africa lost between fifty and a hundred million Africans to the European-American slave trade. Maulana Karenga said, "The holocaust caused the loss of youth and skilled personnel, thus affecting the scientific, technological and cultural progress of Africa."¹⁵ [Page 38]

¹⁵Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1993), p. 119

16. Slavery Spread Abroad.

Africans began to appear in a wide range of diverse places. Peru, Brazil, Cuba, Barbados, Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico and other Western-hemisphere countries used slave labor to build their economies. The Dutch, the English, the Spanish and the French imported huge slave armies to work their sugar and tobacco plantations. [Pages 38-39]

Chapter 4 Slavery in the United States of America

17. Washington's 300 Slaves.

In the shadow of President George Washington's noble Mount Vernon estate sat rows of ramshackle wooden shacks. Beyond, black men and women, the children of West Africa, labored in his fields as the blazing noonday sun beat down. The smell of manure burned in their nostrils as they scattered it among the crops. A fourteen-year-old girl guided a donkey with a plow.¹

George Washington's regard for the more than three hundred slaves who called him "master" was debatable. He was not above ordering a good beating for a disobedient slave.² However, he usually did not waste his time. He knew what frightened his captives into submission: The slaves feared a one way trip to West Indies as much as many people fear hell. The climate, the numerous diseases and the severe treatment

killed slaves even faster than the rigors of President Washington's plantation. The threat became a reality for one of Washington's slaves named Tom. The father of American liberty traded him to the West Indies for some dinner table dainties.³ [Page 40]

¹John R. Aldren, *George Washington: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1984), p. 212

²Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington & Slavery* (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 74

³Nathaniel Weyland and William Marian, *American Statesmen on Slavery & the Negro* (New Rochell, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1971), p.30

18. Patrick Henry.

For all of his talk of liberty, Henry was one of the largest slaveholders in the country. Eventually someone asked him how he could justify fighting for American freedom while denying freedom to his slaves. Patrick Henry answered, "I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them."⁶ [Page 41]

⁶David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 196

19. Three-fifths of a Human.

Eight of the first twelve presidents of the United States were slaveholders. Their view of the African remains etched in the Constitution until this day. Article I, Section 2 of the document states that a slave should be counted as three-fifths a human being. [Page 41]

20. No Reading Allowed.

Blacks recalled how one slave owner named James Lucas "hung the best slave he had."⁸ He caught him teaching other slaves to spell. An ex-slave named Henry Nix recalled what happened when his uncle was caught trying to read a stolen book. He said, "Manse Jasper had the white doctor take off my Uncle's fo' finger right down to the [first joint]."⁹ Master Jasper did this as a warning to the others. Amputation of a finger was a common punishment for the crime of reading. [Page 43]

⁹Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *When I Can Read My Title Clear* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p. 28

Chapter 5 Plantation Life

21. The Cruelty of Slavery.

The auction block was a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The destinies of thousands of African-Americans were decided there. It was the cornerstone of the institution of slavery.

Slaves might be shackled together in a long line called a "coffle" and marched over long distances. The hardships were beyond description. And the end of the line was the slave market.

In September 1834, English geographer George Featherstonaugh happened across a group of well-dressed white men who had camped out in the woods. The men laughed and joked, puffing on cigars in the cool of the morning. They were the drivers of a slave migrant party. Bought at auction, three hundred men, women and children were being taken to their new owner's mills to work. The twigs and hard ground had been their mattress; now they would walk all day. The whites rode in horse-drawn carriages and wagons.

Featherstonaugh watched as the black women and children warmed themselves by a fire. He recalled,

In front of them all, and prepared for the march, stood, in double files, about two hundred male slaves, manacled and chained to each other. I had never seen so revolting a sight before! Black men in fetters, torn from the lands where they were born ... and driven by white men, with liberty and equality in their mouths, to a distant and unhealthy country, to perish in the sugar mills of Louisiana, where the duration of life for a sugar-mill slave does not exceed seven years!¹ [Pages 44-45]

¹Quoted in Willie Lee Rose, *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, 1976), pp 157-58

22. Slavery Separates Families.

At the auction block, human beings were bid on like used furniture at an estate sale. Families were separated at the auction block, never to meet again on earth. Children were pried from the embraces of their hysterical mothers. Screaming and sobbing were part of the scene as husbands and wives were sold to different owners. [Page 45]

23. House Slaves Received Better Treatment.

The house slaves usually had access to better food than the other slaves. They wore the master's and mistress's cast-off clothing. They most often lived in the big house with the master. Normally they slept on the floor, but sometimes they even slept in the same

bed with their master and mistress, tending the bedroom fire during the night. The slaves were at the beckoned call of the family, to wait on them hand and foot, night and day. [Page 46]

24. Slave Living Quarters.

House slaves lived in a precarious situation. They often found it difficult to relax, having to live at tiptoe stance in the master's shadow. During holiday times, when the field slaves could relax at night, guests would be visiting the plantation-and that meant extra work for the house slaves.

Field Negroes were housed in one-room wooden shacks with dirt floors. Often these homes offered little protection from the elements. One ex slave complained, "The wind and rain will come in and the smoke will not go out." It was not unusual for several families to be crowded into one of these shabbily built huts.⁵

Austin Daniel recalled his Mississippi slave hovel:

[We] laid in bed many a night and looked through the cracks in the roof. Snow would come through there when it snowed and cover the bed covers. Before you make a fire [in] them days, you had to sweep out the snow so that it wouldn't melt up in the house and make a mess.⁶ [Pages 46-47]

⁵Quoted in James Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 234

⁶Quoted in Blassingame, *Slave Community*, p. 234

25. Slaves Escape.

Slaves ran away even from masters who considered themselves kind and benevolent. In April 1781, a British ship sailed up the Potomac and set anchor near George Washington's Mount Vernon estate. Eighteen of Washington's slaves fled from his property, choosing to take their chances with the British strangers. ¹² [Page 48]

¹²Fritz Hirshfeld, *George Washington and Slavery*, (St. Louis: University of Missouri, 1997), p. 24

Chapter 6 Roots of the Black Church

26. Christian Blacks become Slaves.

The Christian church was in West Africa for a century before the first black slave picked up a hoe in America. It is not beyond the realm of imagination to suppose that a

number of black Christians were chained to the bottoms of slave vessels and transported to the Americas. [Page 52]

27. The Negro Gallery.

Whites preached about Christian brotherhood during the Sunday morning devotional services. On many plantations the slaves accompanied their masters to church. They were relegated to the back pews in the house of the Lord-or to a balcony constructed with the darker believer in mind. It was called "the Negro Gallery." (Some whites referred to it as "nigger heaven.") This seating area was suspended high above the rear of the church. The white membership usually preferred that their chattel be neither seen nor heard.

Remarkably, the slaves' religious experience was similar in a number of diverse places. Slaves had little contact beyond a carefully defined circle of fellow bondspeople. They knew very little of life beyond the confines of the plantation or city home in which they labored. Yet a vocal, rhythm-oriented worship style emerged in most areas where blacks were allowed to worship. [Page 53]

28. Faith Stirred in Hearts of Slaves.

An old slave with chronically bloodshot eyes burst into song. "When Israel was in Egypt land." His voice failed in the lower registers, defying every recognizable key. But no one cared. The hymn resonated from the deep pain down in his soul. His coarse cotton shirt covered the age-old scars on his back. The congregation joined him. "Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go"

The preacher could not read. It was not allowed. Using a great deal of ingenuity, he constructed a sermon from a rambling collage of colorful snippets that he had managed to pirate from the plantation's sanctioned services. He was often convincing in his exegesis. The power of the singing and preaching stirred the embers of faith in the hearts of the downtrodden congregants. Perhaps it was in the stolen moments of a nighttime meeting that the answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" became clear to the slaves. [Page 54]

29. Worship Not Allowed for Many.

This type of spiritual witness troubled the stalwarts of the slavocracy. Some realized that the Christian faith in the wrong hands could collapse the delicate social structure. If slaves ever came to believe that God loved blacks and whites equally, they would become even more difficult to keep in their place. As a result, some slaveholders did not allow their slaves to get near the teachings of the Bible. Gus Clark recalled such a

master. He said, "My Boss didn't low us to go to church, er to pray er to sing. Iffen he ketched us praying or singin' he whipped us.... He didn't care for nuthin' but farmin'"⁸

Eli Johnson's master was furious about Johnson's desire to host unsanctioned prayer services. He threatened to give Johnson five hundred lashes if he caught him with his head bowed in an illegal worship gathering. To the master's great chagrin, faith had bolstered courage and resolve within Johnson. He replied, "In the name of God, why is it, that I can't after working hard all week have a Saturday evening? I'll suffer the flesh to be dragged off my bones ... for the sake of my blessed Redeemer-"⁹ [Pages 54-55]

⁸Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 213

⁹*Ibid*, p. 307

Chapter 7 Civil War Divides the Union

30. Blacks Join Armed Forces.

Two hundred thousand blacks joined the armed forces of the Union. Black women worked as nurses in its hospitals. Black men toted the army's supplies and cooked its food. However, white soldiers did not want to fight alongside of African-American troops. Corporal Felix Branigan of the New York 74th declared, "We are a too superior race for that."⁸ [Page 69]

⁸Quoted in McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, p. 193

Part Three From Reconstruction to the New Black Leadership

31. Second-Class Citizenship.

Once black people were sold like horses or crows in the Wall Street area of New York City. They served in such diverse places as Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Slave pens were erected on the banks of the Raritan River at Perth Amboy, New Jersey. However, most Northern states abolished the institution in the decades that preceded the Civil War. When slaveholding ended in the North, a system of racial customs was put in place that relegated black people to what Malcolm X would later call "second-class citizenship." Rigid segregation governed race relations. Southerners adopted these same codes at the end of American slavery. The system of racial caste was known as Jim Crow. And Jim Crow was African-America's new enemy.

However, the black church proved to be an ally in the freedom struggle. A host of African-American leaders rose to lead black people in the fight for justice. In part three we will read of some of them. [Pages 73-74]

Chapter 8 Reconstruction

32. Black Codes.

Between 1865 and 1866, Southern states began to pass legislation called "black codes." These laws forbid slaves to vote, run for office or carry firearms. There were regulations concerning the congregation of African-Americans after dark.

These laws were inspired by a desire to recreate the pre-emancipation social arrangement between blacks and whites. In Mississippi black children whose parents were unable to provide for them were returned to the care of their former masters.⁹ [Page 78]

⁹Quoted in McPherson, *Struggle for Equality*, p206-7

33. Education for the Freed Blacks.

The newly freed African-Americans craved something that had been denied them for centuries. They longed to learn how to read. After slavery ended in the South, schools were created for the African-American populace. Many of the institutions of higher learning were financed by the Freedmen's Bureau. Northern Christian churches set up independent societies to help the freed slaves in their quest for knowledge. Missionaries from the Northern states went South to teach the newly freed blacks the mysteries of the written word. Black preachers taught God's Word and the written word. Often the Bible and the Farmer's almanac were their first textbooks. [Pages 78-79]

34. Black Churches Begin.

After the Civil War, African-American families emptied the Negro galleries and black pews of the white churches. They purchased buildings and worshiped God in the style that suited them. Whereas the white churches had almost exclusively segregated blacks from leadership positions, these new churches were black-owned and black led. The role of the African-American church began to evolve spiritually, socially and politically. The church became the center of the African-American community. It was the place where blacks could lay down the facade that had become a survival mechanism in the other world. They could laugh at their own brand of humor. Since they were barred from playhouses and pageants, the church became the place where they could wear their finest clothes. Community news was passed along at the church. Young people

met and married within its walls. Attendance and participation were very high. [Page 79]

35. Civil Rights Act Replaces Black Codes.

On June 13, 1866, the United States Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment. It overrode the infamous Black Codes. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 gave African Americans the right to the ballot box. Blacks began to register to vote in America for the first time. Juries were integrated in the South for the first time. Black politicians were voted into office. [Page 80]

36. More Political Freedom.

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 gave African-Americans the right to pursue justice against whites who misused them. Some whites, angry that blacks had been given the ballot, refused to vote. Black political muscle flexed as the Republicans began to demand a public school system that would educate blacks. Juries began to be integrated in the South for the first time. [Page 80]

37. Ku Klux Klan.

Pulaski, Georgia, was a sedate little Southern town located eight miles south of Nashville, Tennessee. This unassuming hamlet unleashed one of the most fearsome terrorist organizations ever to be birthed from the bowels of the United States. The Ku Klux Klan was originally chartered as a social club in 1865. However, its name soon became synonymous with the lynching rope.

The name *Klan* struck terror into the hearts of Southern blacks. The white-robed avengers of white supremacy rode most often at night. The white they wore symbolized racial purity. Red "drops of blood" sewn on the robes symbolized a willingness to shed their own blood for the cause. However, the blood shed was rarely their own. [Page 82]

Part Four From the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Power Revolution

Chapter 10 The Civil rights Movement

38. Martin Luther King.

Any attempt to defy the legal statutes imposed by the white power structure was an offense unofficially punishable by death. Mr. E. D. Nixon, president of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, knew this when he called for a boycott of the Montgomery bus system in the wake of Rosa Parks's arrest.

The response from the African-American community was overwhelming. Buses rumbled through the streets of Montgomery's African-American districts empty; people refused to ride them. Encouraged, Nixon called for a meeting of the black leadership. Most of the local African-American ministers heeded his call. However, the meeting got off to a rocky start when several of the preachers, afraid of the reaction of the white community, requested anonymity. Nixon was livid. He said, "We've worn aprons all of our lives. It's time to take the aprons off. If we're going to be mens, now's the time to be mens."¹

A new preacher in town walked in late but just in time to hear Nixon's tirade. He declared, "Brother Nixon, I'm not a coward. I don't want anyone to call me a coward."² That afternoon the clergy formed the Montgomery Improvement Association. They called on the new preacher to lead it. His name was Martin Luther King. [Page 98]

¹Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 135

²Ibid, pp. 136-37

39. Luther Imprisoned.

Six local white clergymen publicly criticized King and deemed the movement's activities in Birmingham untimely. In the darkness of a Birmingham jail cell, King wrote them a letter. One part of the letter said,

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other Southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at her beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlay of massive religious education buildings. Over and over again I found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? ... Where were their voices of support when tired, bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"¹⁶ [Page 103]

¹⁶Quoted in James Washington, ed., *Testament of Hope*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990), pp. 284-302

Chapter 14 *Black Money The Rise of the New Black Middle Class*

40. Racial Injustice Continues.

The specter of racial injustice is as dark over the American horizon at the close of the twentieth century as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. In America race still

largely determines friends, life opportunities, employment, residency and even church membership.

Will racism ever be destroyed? Harvard University professor Cornel West does not think so. He writes, "I believe racism is a fundamental form of human evil, and I do believe that human evil [cannot be eliminated] in the human form. I think it can be changed, reformed, ameliorated, but it will always take some form."² [Page 130]

²Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Plume, 1995), pp 3-4

Chapter 15 African-American in the Inner City

41. Children Born Out of Wedlock.

Almost 70 percent of all young African-American children are born outside of Wedlock.
² [Page 140]

²“State of Black America Report,” National Urban League (1998), p. 112

Chapter 17 The Rise of the New Black Church

42. Reflections of Christ.

Rev. Smith has no easy formula for success. He simply says: "We are to be Jesus Christ to the community. And when I look at what Jesus was, He was opening the eyes of the blind. He was helping the lame to walk. He was there preaching good news to the poor. He was there holding babies in His arms blessing them. He was there telling women that they had a sense of dignity and a sense of purpose in a society that dehumanized women. He was there saying to Peter drop your nets and follow me. He was there saying to the thief on the cross today you'll be with me in paradise. Jesus said, As my Father has sent me, even so I send you." [Page 151]