

This Column

DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OR
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Toward Self Respect

I have decided to express my sincere feelings about the Civil Rights Struggle in the United States because I feel that Malcolm X came the closest of any leader so far in detecting the true pulse of the Movement, but then veered off-course with his insistence on an International Black Revolution.

The true revolution of Negroes in this country will have to be both an American and a Black Revolution. It has to be an American Revolution because of the sincere belief of the vast majority of Negro Americans in two concepts: a democratic-republican form of government as the most respectful and safe-guarding of the rights of man, and a free enterprise system of economy as the most efficacious for the expression of man's inherent desire for self-aggrandizement and self-assertion.

If this is all I believed in, Malcolm X would rightly call me a House Negro (as opposed to a Field Negro); but I also believe that there has to be a nationalistic Black Revolution in America, of Black people regaining a sense of dignity in themselves, in their color, in their features, in their culture (which they don't have to return to Africa to find), and in their humanity. There has to be a humanization of the Negro, a realization that he can create his own destiny through the exercise of his mind, his labor and his community of expression with other Black men.

Failure of Rights Groups

The Civil Rights Groups today have failed the Negro (and I am talking *only* of the North), for they have failed to revolutionize the mentality, or the "characterological predisposition," of the Negro, which has made him feel dependent upon the White race for all aspects of his existence. They have failed in reaching the masses in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Roxbury, et al., for their philosophies are geared towards the pleading, picketing and petitioning at the doors of the White world for some modicum of acceptance, instead of going out and building their own houses.

I said that the Black Revolution has to be an American Revolution, for despite the assertions of Malcolm X, Negroes in America think of themselves as Americans, not displaced Africans, and have repeatedly rejected the 'Back to Africa' movements, from the time of Marcus Garvey. However, the Civil Rights groups have failed to make this an American Revolution. A recent Rockefeller study revealed that no more than a dozen Negroes in New York own businesses which hire more than 10 people. Why? Is it only because the White man will not take his heel off the Black man's back, as people like Baldwin assert? Is it only because racial discrimination keeps the Negro from getting a better education, job training, etc. No. It is largely because Negroes have no respect for themselves, for their fellow Negroes, so that any increment in earning power among Negroes goes toward ostentations and pseudo imitation of the values of the White world, exemplified by the number of Cadillacs and Lincoln Continentals there are in Harlem.

There is a crying need for a Negro leader, or group, who can say to the Negro: Get out of the rut of dependency, get out of the rut of trying to change the hearts and minds of the people who are prejudiced, get out and pool your resources, pool your talent, pool your training, and become full-fledged actors on the American economic scene. (On the block where I lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Broklyn, Puerto Ricans now own all but one tiny decrepit candy store. Negroes, who outnumber Puerto Ricans by at least five to one, are stagnating in mediocrity, while the Puerto Ricans are banding together and moving upward). The Black Revolution and the American Revolution will go hand in hand when the land is covered with Negro hospitals, Negro schools, Negro lawyer associations, Negro finance companies, etc.

Not for Separation

I am not calling for separation, but I also believe that integration and brotherhood as a *modus operandi* for revolution is weak and sterile. Making Field Negroes into House Negroes is not an end to the Civil Rights problem. The Field Negroes (of the ghetto) must be made to realize that the only alternative is not a House Negro (the ivy-league, middle class Negro), but a self-sufficing, proud, dignified and independent Black man. Let equality, brotherhood, acceptance, and integration come when the White world is willing to accede to them. Moreover, just as the nations of the world are respecting the African nations as nations in the world arena, so also will White persons of the United States have to respect their fellow Negro citizens, when Negroes have so asserted their present economic, human and cultural resources to make the Black society of Americans, a society to be proud of.

(The following is added in deference to friends who are afraid of the possible misconceptions of my views).

My ultimate aim is an American society of equal men. A Negro who has not first developed respect for himself, as a Negro, can never take an equal, contributing part in American society. I am not a racist, for I believe in the equality of all men, and I am not a separatist, for I believe that an American society which benefits from the contributions of all its citizens will be unequaled in the world; I am a nationalist Negro in the broadest sense of the word nationalist: a feeling for the need of a particular group of people to assert themselves, and gain expression, as a group. I am a Negro American who believes that until the slave mentality of the Negro has been replaced with a free, independent, nationalistic mentality, then any hope for an American society of equal Black and White men is self-deluding.

To summarize, I believe that the Revolution has to occur in two steps:

- 1) The attainment of a society of self-respecting Negroes, no longer a begging, dependent race, ashamed of its color and its heritage.
- 2) An American society of equal participants irrespective of race.

If you seek the first but not the second, then I would include you with, Malcolm X, the Black Muslims, and the many other black nationalist groups who rise, sputter and then die. If you seek the second, but don't recognize the need for the first, then I would include you with many present Civil Rights groups, who are sustained by tokenism, rather than the energy of the people they profess to lead.

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