

NOAH W. GRIFFIN

A convention in black hands

BLACK PEOPLE put on the Democratic Convention. It may not have been apparent to the casual observer, but it's provably true.

While high-profile party chair Ron Brown received most of the public kudos, consider the supporting players: Alexis Herman, deputy party chair of The Democratic National Committee and convention executive officer; Mario Cooper, convention manager; Maxine Griffith, convention hall planning director; and Tina Flournoy, legal counsel to the convention and the standing political committees — all are black.

Each played a role every bit as critical as Brown's in producing what many consider the smoothest-running Democratic convention in modern history — both on and off the floor.

Quietly and competently behind the scenes over the past two years, these individuals worked in concert with their peers to pull off what is a Herculean task: to select a city, convert a public facility into a suitable convention site, and credential, house and pamper 5,000 delegates and 15,000 members of the working press.

Long before the first gavel is banged, the Democratic Site Selection Committee travels the country to look at various cities wishing to be considered for the convention. This year it was narrowed to four, three of which had black mayors: Cleveland, New Orleans, New



Chairman Ron Brown

York and Houston.

To say that party chair Brown was not influential in the ultimate selection of his hometown, New York City, as the convention site is like saying the fact that President Bush calls Texas his home played no role in the Republicans choosing Houston for their site.

Brown has known New York City Mayor David Dinkins all his life. His father and the mayor were good friends. Further, it should not go unnoted that at the time New York City was chosen, there was still a possibility that New York Gov. Mario Cuomo would be the party's nominee. If Cuomo had

been selected, New York would have been the irresistible site homecoming dream come true.

The choice of the Big Apple not without its detractors. City's reputation has taken a beating over the past few years. Crowding and poor race relations seemed to overshadow the positives that normally would recommend an exciting place "Gotham City."

Yet it all worked. It was as if the black folks who worked the convention and those in city's administration had something to prove to themselves, party and the nation: "We can do it. We can overcome the bad and pull it off."

WELL, THEY did it in grand style. While tending the convention, Brown talked with Bill Lynch, New York City deputy mayor who is also black. Lynch told him how clean the streets were, how polite the police were, and that the cabbies even went forth an extra effort to be helpful. "Why don't you tell the story?" said.

Well, here it is.

Black leadership is always questioned, whether it's heading a political party or a city. But I tell you, in running this convention, those named and unnamed black professionals in positions of authority did a first-rate job.

I just wanted to make sure — paraphrasing the words of Martin Luther King Jr. — when we "look at the record," we give credit where credit is due.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP
OF THE
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY
1989-1992

Historical-Philosophical-Reflections

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PREAMBLE

"If the lions do not write their own history, the hunters will be glorified." — African Proverb

African American leadership has a long and proud history in the politics of the United States of America. The recent distinguished, successful and model leadership given to the National Democratic Party by Chairman Ronald H. Brown, Deputy Chair Alexis M. Herman and the predominantly African American Executive Staff between 1988 and 1992 was only the most recent manifestation of the long, difficult and fundamental leadership African Americans have provided and continue to provide to this nation whether or not in titular leadership roles.

The first major African American leader to influence the direction of the whole nation by direct address to the character of the responsibility of the presidency, presidential politics and presidential leadership— and to influence profoundly the behavior of Presidents, political parties and movements — was Mr. Frederick Douglass whose life spanned the nineteenth century from 1817 to 1895. There had been prior African American personages and organizations directing their attention to self-help, petitioning for abolition of slavery, abolishment of racial discrimination, citizenship rights, justice under law and protection from violence and insult against their persons. The Prince Hall Masons, founded July 3, 1775 and later named for their Revolutionary War hero and founder, was among the earliest. The African Free Society (1787) and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1794) body were formed to protest northern racial segregation and discrimination specifically in the St. George Methodist Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. That urban discrimination typified the total society throughout the North.

The Church Convention Movement of the 1830 decade initiated also by then AME Bishop Richard Allan, was the first broad-based African American political organization to address not only the issue of slavery, but the "next stage" issue of civil rights and civility responsibility and to demand the recognition that they deserved human respect from the American government and society. Political partisan politics had begun in 1801 through the efforts of Thomas Jefferson and over the opposition of the Federalists who viewed popular direct democratic participation as in conflict with their conception of representative government. That early, Mr. Benjamin Banneker, a free Negro whom President Jefferson called upon to provide employ mathematical knowledge and survey expertise to the

design and layout of the nation's capital, addressed to Mr. Jefferson the irony of the very existence of the slavery institution. He called Mr. Jefferson's attention to the denial of full citizenship rights to free Negroes, slaves, and indentured servants in the context of organizing political parties for participation of "the people" in politics.

Mr. Frederick Douglass made himself a prominent part and philosophical leader within the partisan political process by becoming a member, participating as a delegate and campaigning within the structure of the then liberal and anti-slavery Republican Party. He rose from an escaped slave to serve as Minister to Haiti and Recorder of Deeds of the District of Columbia. Over the course of the past century the major political parties have changed philosophical positions, but the African American quest has remained wholly consistent. Hence, the preponderance of African Americans now are affiliated with the Democratic National Party and providing significant leadership to the nation in that affiliation.

Mr. Douglass' appeal always was to "equality and civility" in consciousness of his own personal childhood and early adult life in slavery. He both clarified the past quest and struggles and defined the future goal. He viewed equality of opportunity and freedom from bondage and oppression to be the inherent right of all human persons — male and female — and of every condition of birth. He saw the United States Constitution as the compass of history, pointing always in that direction of the higher law and higher relationships of person to person and governments to humankind. His primary target of address was to national leadership and particularly to presidential leadership of the nation.

It is for that reason that this brief thought-piece is directed to his life, his principles and his impact upon the nation throughout the nineteenth century. Those same principles still are guiding the present conscience of African American leadership. Specifically, it is his philosophy of government, constitutions and humankind which are the foundation for the civil rights movement of the twentieth century. That philosophy provides the true and proper context for the understanding of the progressive emergence of African American political leadership to national political leadership, even to encompass the leadership of the Democratic National Party, the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic National Convention between 1988 and 1992.

That leadership and those principles returned the Democratic Party, its presidential candidate and its convention platform successfully to the leadership of the nation. Inspired by the success of the Party under that leadership, the President of the United States,

William Jefferson Clinton, in his January 20, 1993 Inaugural Address placed his Administration under a commitment to change not only the economic and political conditions of the past decade, but to change the character of the government to reflect the richness in the diversity and promise of the whole American people. In his Cabinet and sub-Cabinet appointments, he early demonstrated the depth of his conviction to do just that. A century before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's 1963 "Dream" which galvanized the nation in a moment of supreme harmony, that was Mr. Frederick Douglass' 1862 "Dream" in direct and personal address to President Abraham Lincoln regarding the relationship of the issue of slavery to the crisis of the Civil War.

Having personally followed closely the Democratic National Conventions and the presidential candidates of both major political parties as well as third party candidates since 1932; and having been a small part of and watched the human rights, anti-lynching, anti-violence and civility-centered African American protests and petitions to both parties begin to take definitive form and shape within the dynamics of the National Democratic Party Conventions; in my own inveterate optimism, the present outcomes always were foreseeable.

Therein lies also the explanation particularly of the massive shift of African American political leaders from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party between 1936 and 1948. There was fundamental disillusionment with the Presidency of Mr. Herbert Hoover, and African Americans were buoyed by the appearance of hope in the "New Deal" theme of the first term of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (See: Donald J. Lisio, *Hoover Blacks and Lily Whites*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.) Even as they approached the National Democratic Party of that time, they found themselves excluded from participation in Democratic primaries, disfranchised by state poll taxes and grandfather clauses and otherwise barred from full participation even in Democratic national politics. (See: Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell To The Party Of Lincoln: Black Politics In The Age Of FDR*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.)

It took strong lobbying efforts and coalition building among African Americans and liberal Democrats to get the Anti-Poll Tax legislation enacted, the grandfather clauses removed and the Democratic Party itself reformed. In the year 1948, there was a hard Convention floor battle by the African American group of delegates seeking seating as the Mississippi Loyalist Democrats against the Governor of Mississippi and the Governor of South Carolina who were threatening to walk out and form a Third Party organization. That

party in fact came about as the Dixiecrat Party headed by Governor Fielding Wright of South Carolina.

Quite typically of researchers and writers, with few exceptions, a 1117 page book compiled by David Mc Cullough, Truman, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992, is excellent in every usual respect, except that it did not mention the 1948 Convention role of the African American Mississippi Democratic Loyalists. It specifically mentioned (p. 622) the coinage of the term "Dixiecrat" associated with that Convention, but did not give the complete context in which that term came about. It did record that President Truman had established the first Civil Rights Commission and addressed to the Congress in his message to the Union on January 7, 1948 the need for the enactment of a Civil Rights Bill. (See pp.: 586-590). On February 2, 1948, he sent to the Congress a specific Civil Rights message, the clearest and strongest ever delivered by a President, in consequence of the findings of the Commission titled *To Secure These Rights*.

In that election, President Truman badly trailed Governor Thomas Dewey in every popular poll that was taken, and the news media was absolutely embarrassed, because they already had published and distributed headlines, "Dewey Wins By A Landslide." They woke up to find that the Negro vote had gone to President Truman, and they had never considered that factor in their polling.

It was in that Convention also that the liberal Congressman from Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey came to national prominence as the articulate and eloquent proponent of the seating of the Mississippi Loyalist delegation. He then himself progressed through election to the United States Senate and to the office of Vice President of the United States in the Administration of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Oddly, in the year of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the most massive social welfare and education legislation that the nation had seen this century, the same Mississippi Loyalist Delegation was refused its claim to seating in the 1964 Democratic Convention at Atlantic City. A newly formed white Mississippi delegation was seated. As the compass of history determined, some of the leadership of that same African American Loyalist delegation since 1948 was seated as seniority membership of the Mississippi delegation in the 1988 Convention in Atlanta, and Mr. Ed Cole served as the Chairman of the Delegation. The Chairman and the other Mississippi Loyalist delegates just kept coming back.

The nationhood-saving surprise election of former Vice President Harry S. Truman who ascended to the Presidency upon the death of President Roosevelt in 1945, was destined to set the nation on a new course and to enstate the African Americans permanently in the

Democratic National Party. Other minorities and women were brought fully into the Party framework in the wake of the success-in-defeat of that African American delegation in 1948. That dramatic outcome of the 1948 presidential election, in fact, made the Democratic Party truly the majority political party. President Truman will find his place in future history as the architect of the most fundamental change in the character of politics and government leadership of the twentieth century.

His Administration was marked by notable and fundamental innovations with respect to human rights, civil rights, education, health, immigration law and post-world War II international policy, including the Marshall Plan. It was his 1946 Executive Order, not the earlier Executive Order 8802 of President Roosevelt which actually integrated all branches of the Armed Services. It was his 1939 Amendment to the Civil Air Patrol Act which directed the establishment of Civil Air Patrol training on the campuses of historically African American colleges which led to the formation of 332nd Fighter Group, the now acclaimed Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. It was he who in 1952 established the Commission on Immigration to counter the McCarran Act, just as he had done in 1946 in the establishment of both the Civil Rights Commission and the Commission on Higher Education. In truth, all that became the Great Society programs of the 1960 decade had been put in law or in principle by the leadership of President Harry S. Truman.

During his administration, the League of Nations was transformed into the United Nations and, in response to a team of African American leaders, he sent, in addition to the Permanent Delegates, an observer-lobby delegation to the founding meeting of the United Nations with a Declaration on Human Rights they had crafted. That proposal was incorporated into the United Nations Charter which became "The United Nations Charter and Declaration of Human Rights." That delegation consisted of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, who initiated the request to the President through the National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People (NAACP), Dr. Rayford Logan of Howard University, NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White, National Council of Negro Women founder and President, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and Mr. Roy Wilkins who would succeed Mr. Walter White as NAACP Executive Secretary. The initial document was conceived at Howard University, and President Truman accepted the suggestion and appointed Mrs. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt as Chairman of the delegation.

In the most recent years of the now National Democratic Party, the 1984 Presidential Campaign of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson,

the founder of the Rainbow Coalition, and the focus upon the diversity of the whole American population within the framework of his Democratic primary campaigns became a landmark catalyst for what followed. It was undergirded by the eloquence of his speech, the principles enunciated as his campaign progressed and his bold humanitarian actions of securing the release of an American Air Force pilot, Lieutenant Robert L. Goodman, from Syria and the release of forty-eight political prisoners from Cuba. Those made a most fundamental actual breakthrough at the presidential candidate level of leadership within the Democratic party, in a way that it had not been possible for Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm to do just a few years earlier.

His candidacy was repeated in 1988 where his eloquence and his formidable victories in the Super Tuesday primaries followed by the State of Michigan primary victory and the accumulation of over one thousand delegates changed the whole character and focus of the convention. Even more than the elected Democratic Party presidential candidate, his presence and his phrasings dominated the delegate and media attention at the convention. They were taken up and used freely also by almost every other speaker. As American redemptiveness always surfaces, both the Mississippi delegation and the South Carolina delegations with the former Dixiecrats now turned Republican, voted unanimously for the candidacy of the Reverend Mr. Jackson on the convention floor. That symbolic action by those two particular states permanently changed the character of the convention and of the Party.

In the wake came the election of Attorney Ronald H. Brown to the chairmanship of the Democratic National Party. Attorney Brown had been the Reverend Mr. Jackson's Convention Chairman. He selected Ms. Alexis M. Herman, the Reverend M. Jackson's Deputy Convention Chairman as his Chief of Staff of the National Democratic Committee, later Deputy Chairman of the Party and Chief Operating Officer of the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Of special note for all of future history, eight of the top ten Officers of the 1992 Democratic National Convention, including the Convention Manager Attorney Mario Cooper, were African Americans as was the host Mayor of the City of New York. All of them, including Chairman Brown, were born in the South and were matured in their leadership character by the stress period of desegregation.

Having attended both the 1988 Convention in Atlanta and the 1992 Convention in New York, I felt impelled to write something, even if it amounted only to defining the proper context in which the historic 1988 to 1992 leadership of the Party must be understood

and interpreted by future historians and analysts. I am grateful to have had the support to begin that process, particularly after having served in the administration of President Lyndon Baines Johnson as Assistant to the United States Commissioner of Education and having seen up close the unheralded and profound advisory role played by Mr. Louis E. Martin as a senior member of the President's staff, and that of Mr. Hobart Taylor, Jr. as Associate Counsel to the President and Executive Vice Chairman of the President's Plans for Progress Committee.

Over succeeding years, in addition to twenty years of service on the Board of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, I have had the privilege of service as a member of the Board of the Public Member Association of the Foreign Service, on various Selection Boards, Appeal Boards and in special services to the Department of State, the United States Information Agency, the United States Agency for International Development and the United States Department of Labor. For six years, I served as Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the National Board of the NAACP. In those and other capacities I have been privileged to study and to experience close-up the leadership responsibility of the Executive Branch and the dynamics of national partisan politics in sufficient depth to have informed impressions of trends, issues and attitudes across the spectrum of the political parties and the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the United States government.

I have engaged all of those experiences from the vantage point of early growing up in Mobile, Alabama seeing and hearing the orators and speakers like Mr. Roscoe Conklin Simmons, Dean William Pickens, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Attorney Thurgood Marshall, the Reverend Vernon Johns, and a host the predecessors of the Dr. Kings and the Reverend Jacksons framing their thoughts in the consciousness of the principles enunciated and lived by Mr. Douglass and those of his era. I would listen and be intrigued by the consistency of their appeals to higher law and principles of American nationhood without knowing always the source of their profound and articulate wisdom. I only knew that I could always expect and would hear the same fundamental themes, no matter what their varying views were of the then present realities or their differences about the prospects of change.

When I came into my first encounter with the autobiographies, the volumes of speeches and the understanding of the principles of Mr. Douglass, the lessons of all of those speakers, teachers and leaders of my early life became an indelible part of my own hopes

and aspirations for this nation. I have never veered from those principles, and I have been the better for it. It is my present hope that all Americans shall at some time in their lives acquaint themselves with the significance as well as the reality of the life and philosophy of that great man, just as they now know and benefit from the life and thought and principles of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and those associated with his life and principles.

As an active and participating Democrat for almost a half century, I am grateful to have been able to contribute these thoughts as part of a larger project in which I am engaged. I would hope that this suggestive beginning will persuade someone, surely not myself alone, to make sure that the integrity of the historicity of the recent African American leadership of the now National Democratic Party is not lost to history as is so customary or distorted from its proper context of interpretation. This effort has been to make sure that at least one lion begins to write, even though the hunters may yet have the last word.

THE PRECURSOR: MR. FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AFRICAN AMERICAN MODEL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER FOR AMERICA

Why We Should Study Mr. Frederick Douglass and Other African American Thinkers as American Political Philosophers and Leaders.

It is necessary to assert, here at the outset, that America now knows the answer, because that was demonstrated in the Democratic National Conventions of 1988 and 1992, and by the African American leadership of the Democratic National Committee in the intervening years. If that leadership had been a failure, the whole nation and the world would be reminded of it over and over by the mass media. Now that it was so successful, the African American historical and philosophical progression which made that leadership and its success a reality must be placed in proper context and protected from the customary American scholarly and news media habit of either obscuring, denying, diminishing or demeaning its importance to the nation — or dwelling on the "Topsy syndrome." The Topsy syndrome is the automatic assumption that every time African Americans do anything significant, that has to be the first time; because, there is no precedent — "it just grewed."

It must further be stated, without equivocation, that a former escaped slave, Mr. Frederick Douglass, articulated a philosophical direction for the nation almost a century and a half ago. He was the living model and philosophical architect of the present role of African American political leadership in the nation. He was the precursor of the whole twentieth century Civil Rights movement. His moral articulations and inclusive nationhood interpretations provided both the content and the strategies for the entire progression of African American thinkers and leaders from Mr. Booker T. Washington, Dr. William E.B. DuBois and Mrs. Ida B. Wells Barnett at the turn of the century.

The middle and later twentieth century cadre of leaders included Mr. Walter White, Mr. Roy Wilkins, Attorney Thurgood Marshall and others of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Mr. Lester Granger, Dr. Charles S. Johnson, Mr. Whitney Young of the National Urban League; Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Dr. Dorothy I. Height and the National Council of Negro Women; Dr. Aaron Henry, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hammer and others of the Mississippi Democratic Loyalists; Mr. E. D. Nixon, Mrs. Rosa Louise Parks, Mrs.

Mary Fair Burks, Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson of the Montgomery, Alabama NAACP and Montgomery Improvement Association; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., of the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; the Reverend James Farmer and the Congress On Racial Equality; Mr. John Lewis and other leaders of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee; Publisher and Presidential Adviser Mr. Louis Martin; Muslim Leader Imam Malcolm X; Congressional Black Caucus founder, Congressman Charles C. Diggs; and, continuing directly into presidential campaign politics through Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm to the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, and thence into the all-inclusiveness principle in the managerial performance of Chairman Ronald H. Brown and Deputy Chairman Alexis M. Herman and all of the others in their leadership of the National Democratic Party, the Democratic National Committee and, finally, the Democratic National Convention from 1989 through 1992.

Respect for Mr. Douglass' profound conceptions and principles and appreciation for his eloquence of speech, aphorisms and writings were in the background of that leadership as was all of those who articulated, activated, struggled for and gave their lives for the civil and human rights re-direction of our nation over the past two centuries. All of those leaders were associated in some way with the Douglass interpretation of the civil rights goals. The earliest group were Republicans, because that was their only option. From the nineteen thirties, all began to make their impacts felt directly upon the Democratic Party and, through the Democratic Party, upon the nation.

Their allegiance to those principles accounts for the massive movement of African Americans from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party from 1936 to 1948 as they embraced the courage and eloquence of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in the cause of racial justice and the programs of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal following what they deemed the betrayal of them and those principles by President Herbert Hoover.

Mr. Douglass must be understood universally by all Americans in order for the whole people properly to understand and to respect the real direction of the history and destiny of this republic — itself destined to become a nation. The fundamental contributions of those African Americans to the realization of the true meaning of American nationhood should never be underestimated. It was he who articulated the highest meaning and function of the Constitution of the United States in the political process throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, just as contemporary African Americans

have done in the same period of the twentieth century. He addressed the political process and the role of presidential leadership as they ought to have been addressed, and he interpreted the United States as a nation more inclusively than any of the Founding Fathers, even Mr. James Madison and Mr. Thomas Jefferson.

He knew the meaning of slavery and of liberty better than the Abolitionists, including Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, because he lived to transcend slavery and to define the highest meaning of responsible freedom as distinguished from either exclusive privilege or the libertarian conception of liberty. He knew the meaning of exclusion from both the society and the political system and what to do about it. He and Mrs. Sojourner Truth knew feminism better than the Suffragettes, including Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mrs. Lucretia Mott and Mrs. Susan B. Anthony. The Feminists invariably turned to Mr. Douglass and Mrs. Truth when they needed direction or leadership support. Mr. Douglass actually originated the suggestion that women organize, because women were not permitted even to be members of the male anti-slavery societies. He reminded the Garrisonites that while they were against slavery, they did not either permit women to be members of their organization or socialize with Negroes.

Mr. Douglass was the keynote speaker for the first Feminist Convention in 1845. He introduced them to Sojourner Truth and remained close to their leadership until his death in 1895. He even allowed his name to be placed on their Equal Rights Party presidential ballot as Vice President in 1868, because they needed his name recognition and leverage. He continued to campaign for General Grant and to influence the Republican presidential campaign. Mrs. Sojourner Truth was the savior of the Feminist Movement a number of times, but particularly in their Angola, Indiana Convention in the year 1868.

Unfortunately, none of the women, except Mrs. Sojourner Truth herself, actually voted. They were afraid to respond to her appeal to them to come out and vote, legally or not, on election day. She alone was in that year the first American woman actually to cast a presidential ballot and to vote in Battle Creek Michigan. She had campaigned for General Ulysses S. Grant; and, when the White feminists feared to go to the polls, she reminded them and those at the polling booth that she had campaigned for General Grant and that, "Campaigning don't count, only voting count." Once again, she demonstrated to the women the only way to make their hopes count.

Both Mr. Douglass and Mrs. Truth viewed mankind as a family, not as a collection of races and classes. They envisioned nations as

national families, not as oppressive republics. Her speeches and travels and his writings and speeches were incisively analytical, often cryptic, but always defining the highest values of American democracy. They provided greater depth of understanding than did Mr. Alexis de Tocqueville, who considered the very existence of Negroes in the United States to be the most formidable threat to both democracy and union.

Mr. Douglass and Mr. de Tocqueville, nevertheless, shared one common understanding on the question of the *existence* of Negroes. Mr. Douglass perceived the entire American Colonization Society scheme and program to be an insult to free Negroes — a programmed device to depopulate the nation of free Negroes and to seize their properties. Mr. De Toqueville had to acknowledge that fact. He then wrote that America had to solve the racial problem, because it could never get rid of African Americans or wish them out of the system. (One state—Ohio, for example—did not permit free Negroes either to own property or to reside permanently in the whole state.) Alexis de Tocqueville, like Mr. Douglass, pointed out the absurdity of the colonization scheme when he observed:

In twelve years the Colonization Society has transported two thousand five hundred Negroes to Africa [Providence Island in Liberia]; in the same space of time about seven hundred thousand blacks were born in the United States....The Negro race will never leave these shores of the American continent... (insert mine)

To Mr. Douglass, Negroes were the answer to democracy, not the problem; for no problem or threat to democracy would exist if Negroes enjoyed equal respect and their fundamental rights to existence and freedom had not been violated in the United States. They will never enjoy equal respect until they are properly credited for their fundamental contribution to the existence and progress of this nation. To him, the very existence of slavery constituted a denial of that birthright, and racism and racial discrimination perpetuates the denial of that respect.

That simple observation should be instructive to present politicians, political philosophers, constitutional lawyers and social theorists. Moreover, Mr. Douglass' philosophy of God, nation, justice and man had a quality of universality that also could serve to challenge the commonplace dominance of Platonism in American academic and political teaching and the divisive "we-they" mentality which permeates the American political and social systems. It is a peculiar paradox that we place in highest priority for instruction a

philosophical model, Plato's *Republic*, which disdains democracy and places it next to tyranny as the worst form of government.

Mr. Frederick Douglass will be placed appropriately in national political analysis only when Americans finally realize that their own highest nationhood is possibly just now on the horizon. Without defensiveness and bias, our nation can now look philosophically upon herself and her own evolution as the greatest approach to democracy that the world has yet produced as a government. Indeed, the very life of Mr. Douglass recapitulates all that America was and has now the great potential to be. Nowhere have I seen his unique interpretations of that highest vision of America either bettered or successfully refuted.

The eloquence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the political pragmatism of Mr. Booker T. Washington and the scholarship and activism of Dr. W.E.B. DuBois all were in direct and conscious lineage from Mr. Douglass. The whole nation and a substantial part of the whole world saw the profound political significance of that philosophy to the leadership of this nation as it was demonstrated harmoniously in both the 1988 and 1992 Democratic National Conventions.

The hope of African Americans, then, is that some day — perhaps through the National Democratic Party — this nation shall begin to think as intellectually, respectfully and comfortably in Mr. Douglass' philosophical world-view as we now commonly discourse on Platonism, Jeffersonianism or the Madison version of the Bill of Rights. That would be appropriate, especially for the Democratic Party, but also to demonstrate to the Republican Party the wisdom of its own nineteenth century Democratic Republican Party principles of inclusiveness. That nineteenth century Republican liberalism was in contrast to the later Democratic Party beginnings of legislated exclusivity which persisted into the nineteen forties. The change of major national parties' postures, not a change in African American principles, explains why Mr. Douglass' name and the political part of his National service were associated with the Republican Party of his day. That Party in this day comes close to being the mirror of the Democrats of an earlier day.

It would be even better if every Democrat just knew Mr. Douglass' mind, his philosophy of nationhood and the role of political leadership as he viewed it. Those principles produced his own greatness and the succession of later greats as African American leaders. He was a prodder and adviser of eight presidents, including President Abraham Lincoln, and was an elected Rochester Republican as a political convention delegate in 1866. At that convention, he

was joined also by the first woman national political convention delegate, Mrs. Anna Dickinson, an old friend of Douglass. Mr. Douglass was greeted enthusiastically by large crowds on the streets as he entered the hall and by the delegates inside as he came down the isle. Both he and Mrs. Dickinson spoke to the convention. He was elected over the strong objection of the heretofore staunch Liberal Republican Congressman Thaddeus B. Stevens.

The very look and bearing of Douglass are an irresistible logic against the oppression of his race.

James Russell Lowell

By a principle essential to Christianity, a person is essentially differenced from a THING; so that the idea of a HUMAN BEING necessarily excludes the idea of PROPERTY IN THAT BEING.

Samuel Coleridge

I have held all of my life and shall hold to the day of my death that the fundamental and everlasting objection to slavery is not that it sinks a Negro to the condition of a brute, but that it sinks a *man* to that condition. I base no man's right upon his color and plead no man's right because of his color. My interest in any man is objectively in his manhood and subjectively in my own manhood... My sympathies are not limited by my relation to any race. I can take no part in oppressing and persecuting any variety of the human family. Whether in Russia, Germany or California, my sympathy is with the oppressed, be he Chinaman or Hebrew.

Frederick

Douglass

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and ciphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors orators and teachers; that while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises, common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding the sheep and cattle on the hillside, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God and looking hopefully for the life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it.

Frederick

Douglass

But one thing I know and that is there is no middle ground for us. We must either have all the rights of American citizens or we must be exterminated. We will never again be reduced to slaves; nor can we cease to trouble the American people while any right enjoyed by others is denied or withheld from us.

Frederick Douglass

Those passages are keys to the essential meaning of the life and philosophy of Mr. Frederick Douglass. The most fundamental fact about his life, person and character is their unrelenting focus on the meaning of *America*, the meaning of *freedom*, and the meaning of *justice* as inseparable from the meaning of equal respect in the political system. Equal rights under law and equal justice in the actions and decisions of the courts encompass his meaning of "...one law of equal justice for all."

His life spanned all of the crisis filled years of the nineteenth century from 1817 to 1895. His speeches writings and actions were addressed to all of the issues of American society and government that persist to this day. His life and wisdom repeatedly addressed the Presidents and the nation to the baffling contradictions between the existence of God, the ideal of democracy and the cruel behavior of man and government. What does it mean "...one nation under God"? What does it mean..."All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights"? What does it mean "...to establish justice"? What does it mean "...with liberty and justice for all"? What does it mean "To participate in the political process"? He never stopped asking, and he never stopped providing answers.

He was the nineteenth century Socrates—the gadfly—of America; only he was given his *hemlock* (slavery) early in life and he stoically survived to escape even that. Douglassisms and his theory of inclusive respect for humanity — now called diversity — plus his conception of *one* law of equal justice, fairly interpreted and uniformly administered, effectively defines his ideal and dream of American democracy. Slavery, invidious prejudice and racial/gender discrimination inherently contradict that ideal. Attitudes toward those also distinguish those who perceive America as a progressively

evolving democracy and those who see America as a representative, but corporate republic.

In the fullest independence of his own self-developed logic and arguments, he ultimately abstracted the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence from the thoughts, motives and intentions even of the Founding Fathers. It was to him different even from the management and operation of the American government. It had to be separated from the contradictions he found in American society and law and from the fact of the existence of slavery. He was among the first to use the phrase "strict construction" and he provided a fundamentally different context for the use of that phrase than we now find in current rhetoric.

He did that to establish a common ground upon which to provide a meaning for "justice." He used it to demonstrate a meaning of the Constitution itself, not as intended either by the then United States government or by the courts. He saw the Constitution as the compass of history which must be used to correct both the government and the courts towards justice. The abolition of slavery and its vestiges, to him, was absolutely necessary for that correction to begin, so that the nation itself may survive in union based on brotherhood and civility with one law of equal justice for all. Mr. Douglass knew, understood and repeatedly emphasized that the only possible, the *a priori*, condition for the establishment of justice in the United States is to establish a foundation of complete and equal legal and political opportunity for all persons to grow, develop and thrive responsibly, regardless of their conditions of life or circumstances of birth.

That peership must be reflected in one law. He repeatedly observed that, instead, there was one law for the privileged, one law for the free but underprivileged and poor, and still another law for the slave and the indentured. He felt — correctly so — that even the liberals and the abolitionists were faulty in that understanding of their role. He knew well what was and is the present tension as between the civil libertarians' claims to the uncircumscribed scope of protections under the First Amendment and the civil rightists claims about the necessary scope of protections and restraints which must prevail under the Fourteenth Amendment. Mr. Douglass knew also that even among White women feminists, as he encountered with Mrs. Susan B. Anthony, there was the same problem of the traditional habit which he called "the attitude of superiority and injustice."

Further, Mr. Douglass knew that in order to know what injustice is, one also must know what justice is. He had a clear conception that justice in a democracy must be distributed to all in equal measure. It

must be grounded in a condition of mutual belonging, kinship and respect. That clarity gained for him both respect and enmity among the rhetorical Abolitionists, including Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, who never really understood Mr. Douglass. Mr. Garrison stated repeatedly that he was for the abolition of slavery, but *not* for the equality of Negroes.

Therefore, following the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments which he opposed, Mr. Garrison called a meeting to disband the Anti-slavery Society saying that its work had been done. Even Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Mrs. Susan B. Anthony, who needed Mr. Douglass' support, could not understand his insight into the political relationship between the pursuit of suffrage for White women and the universalization of the franchise for all women and men as provided in the language of the Fifteenth Amendment. Mrs. Anthony opposed the Fifteenth Amendment and aligned herself with an out and out racist, George Francis Train, instead of insisting that the language of the Amendment itself be understood to be inclusive of women. Hence, it was not until fifty years later in 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment was passed specifically to provide voting rights for women.

Many African Americans have found their own greatest insights and highest inspirations in reading Mr. Douglass. However, he himself credits his wisdom to the Reverend Mr. Samuel Ringold Ward, Dr. James McCune Smith and other great Negro minds of that century not yet brought into the proper purview of American political and legal leaders and theorists.

The life and the words of Mr. Douglass are inseparable as a lesson in the meaning of oppression, struggle, conflict, paradox and hypocrisy. His own personal and intellectual triumph was over all of those iniquities, inhumanities and injustices of nineteenth century America. He lived all parts of that past America as few, very few, persons of any heritage born in this land did in fact live — from the brutish depths of slave existence to the height of national and international leadership, recognition, respect and acclaim.

He was a leader without peer and a catalyst for change undaunted by adversities. Almost one hundred years after his death, that lesson is finally being carried over into this century. He lived the America that was, and we live the America that still vestigially evidences that America is not yet fully willing to overcome what that America was.

We, the American nation and government, now know the meaning of equal justice as a social and national goal — although American leadership still is reluctant to practice the reality. That was, until a ray of hope was provided the nation by the Democratic

National Committee between 1988 and 1992. Now we look to President William Jefferson Clinton to be the President Harry Truman, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the Lyndon Baines Johnson, the Hubert H. Humphrey of mid-century Democratic Party presidency, not the General Ulysses Grant, the Rutherford B. Hayes, the Herbert Hoover, the Ronald Reagan or the George H. Bush of past African American experience with the Republican Party.

The personal lives of both President William Jefferson Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore, and their inaugural commitments to make the government of the United States look like the people of the United States, again provide assurance that there is a President who they knows that higher meaning of America. Both are early demonstrating that faith can be vested comfortably in the integrity of their leadership and understanding of inclusiveness and the richness of diversity heretofore denied or underutilized. The President, on the occasion of his inauguration, exhibited to the nation the breadth of talent and commitment to excellence that extends across the entire spectrum of the American population. He immediately demonstrated his strong commitment to change which it was fully known would be strongly resisted within the vestigial structure of the government and the economy inherited from the Republican decade of the eighties. He has the moral commitment and is showing the courage even at this earliest stage of his presidency that both the nation and the national government will mirror the inclusiveness of the people and will let the best of all people's talents to show through.

Under even more strident conditions and not from the power base of elected office, Mr. Douglass changed and redirected the nation, including President Lincoln, in the same way from the self-destructive compromises with the perpetuation of the slavery system to the promise of eventually fulfilling her own Declaration of Independence. He did it with more intellectually grounded and logically consistent determination and moral rectitude than any other American of his time — and his influence spanned the entire nation and parts of Europe. He changed what then was America and left for all posterity a prolific personally written and spoken testament to all of its complexities. But more, he left a formula to complete the transformation which could serve to inspire the present Democratic National Party and elevate the stature of the Presidency of Mr. William Jefferson Clinton immeasurably:

It is America that you have to civilize... and
compel to accept and practically apply to all men,
without distinction of color or race, the glorious

principles and precepts laid down in her immortal Declaration of Independence.

To build up a nation here sacred in freedom as an example to the world, every man equal in the law and equally exercising all rights, political and civil... is the surest way to civilize humanity.

America must be a nation in which the Creator endowed equality and the family of all mankind will become the first principle and living reality of nationhood. In that thought, Mr. Douglass shared the central Kantian moral imperative to "Act so that in your own person, as well as in the person of every other, you are treating mankind as an end withal, never merely as a means." His life embodied that maxim as the American ideal of nationhood with justice. After revealing, exposing and testing the contradictions in American society, he made that his own yardstick.

He pitted his high conception of America and mankind against those most blatant and ruthless realities of slavery, on the one side and the moral duplicity bordering on hypocrisy by those who professed to oppose slavery, on the other side. The prejudice, alienation and discrimination against free Negroes in the North differed more by degree than in kind from the violations of regard for humanity in the South. To him, slavery and racial prejudice were two sides of the same fact of an American tragedy which must be resolved.

In his person, then, agitation was elevated to a highly refined art and sophistication grounded in a coherent logic which time and again withstood both physical and intellectual attacks by adversaries. He even remained consistent with himself through protracted periods of scorn and hostility from his earliest close associates in the Abolitionist and Feminist movements. He understood and articulated their own positions with better logic than they themselves, and he argued with a clarity and incisiveness which confounded their unconscious assumption that they should be his, not he their, intellectual leader — which he repeatedly demonstrated himself to be.

Mr. Douglass' unique gift was a capacity always to transcend the immediacy of any situation or condition, whether it involved him or others, and to place that situation in a larger and different perspective. He often used simple parables, homilies and profound logic to convert the rhetorical situation into a moral lesson. He kept in perspective at all times his unique insight into the existential common bond of all mankind affronted by oppressive social systems and economic manipulations fostered and tolerated by governments. He spoke, wrote, traveled, agitated, negotiated and demonstrated to

orchestrate what, by contrast, ought to be the true and just relationships among humankind and the true America.

Few fully appreciated that Mr. Douglass also understood the distinction between a republic and a nation. Plato designed a republic, not a nation. To Mr. Douglass, America must be a nation, not merely a republic, for its Constitution to be finally realized. In a nation, the universality of the human family must be accepted as the first and fundamental precept; and, the kinship and belonging of "We, the people," must be understood to be totally inclusive. Both are totally contradicted by systems of slavery, peonage, racial segregation, religious bigotry, group intolerance, gender, ethnic and nationality discrimination and civil brutishness — all of which are countenanced in a republic. South Africa is a republic finally addressing itself to nationhood. Nazi Germany was a republic which never did. Nationhood is nobler than and not synonymous with statehood.

On those distinctions, Mr. Douglass vested his differences with colleagues and adversaries alike. He first accepted the Garrisonians' rhetorical position that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document, that the Federal government and the presidents were and had been pro-slavery and that abolitionists should eschew the Constitution and have nothing to do with politics. Mr. Garrison had emotionally proclaimed the Constitution, "A Covenant With Death, and an Agreement With Hell." Mr. Douglass early discerned a serious problem with that formulation. He questioned both the logic and the tactical political merit of blindly proclaiming that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document. He rejected the argument that if the Federal government is pro-slavery and the succession of presidents is pro-slavery; then, those who are anti-slavery should have nothing to do with the government or with politics.

He and all African Americans in leadership determined upon a different course, which required that both the language and the function of the Constitution be completely abstracted from the arenas of the social, legal, political and human conditions then prevailing in the republic. He did that with skillful reasoning and a forceful logic to establish a higher recognition that the Constitution had to be approached as the symbol of "higher law of principle and direction" and interpreted as to be the high corrective upon the government and the society. It is not a mere sanctioner of the government's support and tolerance of slavery, discrimination, violence and bigotry.

Beyond the Constitution, he asked America and Europe: What is life that the greater parts of mankind are selected out to be

demeaned and oppressed? What is freedom that it should be so denied to the majority of persons upon the earth? What is government that it so tolerates the oppressor and scorns the oppressed? What is human nature, whether in master or slave, that makes it submissive to slavery and such brutish evil? What is proper in the relationship of person and person? How strong is the common bond among humankind, if it can be so twisted into class and caste schism and antipathy? Why does not the bond of morality or the grace of God serve to mitigate the cruelties of man to man? Is there a common and reciprocal moral law to bind the actions of man and government to a common principle of mutual respect for man and God? He visioned that through the Declaration of Independence and the Northwest Ordinance one could frame the Constitution in the proper context of its role as the "compass of history." He advanced the thesis that, if the compass is pointing in the right direction and the ship is being steered in the wrong direction, then address the correction of the course to the pilot (the government), do not ignore or destroy the compass.

He thus answered all of those questions while still pondering, to the day of his death, why and how God and religion could have been marshaled to the support and rationalization of so evil a system as slavery and racism. He argued that man alone—not God—must bear the burden of guilt for the existence of slavery, for the inhumanities to man and for all forms and systems of oppression. By the same token, the government alone—not the Constitution—must bear the responsibility for reform and bear the guilt for the intransigence which has led to such human degradation. Because government unfortunately must be forced, rather than persuaded to change, there must be provocation, agitation and demonstration.

The necessity to provoke change he expressed in a simple aphorism: Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!

Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of progress of human liberty shows that all concessions made to her august claims, have been borne of earnest struggle... If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without the thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle... Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

The end or goal of America's fulfillment is to be found, he stated, in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence before the anti-slavery passage of that draft was excised by the Continental Congress. That excised passage and Article 6 of the Northwest Territorial Ordinance, would have eliminated domestic slavery at the time of the formation of the nation. Instead, Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution placed a date before which Congress could *not* prohibit the international slave trade. The excised section of the Declaration indicting King George III of Britain, read:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce; and that this assemblage of horrors might want no face of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us and to purchase that liberty of which He deprived them...

Thomas Jefferson, 1776

The companion Article of the Northwest Ordinance, also written, in part, by Mr. Jefferson in 1787, the same year of the Constitution, reads:

There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted. *Provided, always,* that any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or servitude is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitives may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.

Mr. Douglass saw the first sentence as the key to change, the proviso would then be moot. The proviso was, nevertheless, an iteration included in the Constitution and enacted in 1850 as the Fugitive Slave Act.

That was his legacy to African American leadership of the twentieth century in full consciousness of their continuing

fundamental role as change agents to guide the destiny of the nation. In addition to his own independently acquired knowledge of most of the European political theorists and philosophers, Mr. Douglass was immersed at all times in communication by letter, in debate, in discussion and in meetings and planning sessions with other African American leaders and thinkers, with underground railroad conductors, with convention organizers (the Church Convention Movement of 1831-37) and constitution planners (as in the Chatham Conventions of 1858 and 1859), and with persons and organizations both in the United States and in Europe from whom he constantly learned and invariably taught and influenced.

He was involved continuously not only with White men and women across the spectrum of American leadership, including presidents and legislators; but with the Black Convention movement and with profound Black thinkers, activists, intellectuals and preachers such as the Reverend Mr. Absalom Jones, Bishop Richard Allen, the Reverend Mr. Samuel Ringold Ward, Mr. Charles L. Reason, Mrs. Harriett Tubman, Mrs. Sojourner Truth, Dr. James McCune Smith, the Reverend Mr. Henry Highland Garnet, the Reverend Mr. Charles Lenox Remond, the Reverend Mr. J. W. C. Pennington, the Reverend Mr. Josiah Henson, Mr. William Wells Brown, Dr. Martin Delaney, Mr. George Washington Williams, the Reverend Mr. Alexander Crummell, Mr. T. Thomas Fortune, Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, the Reverend Mr. Francis Grimke, Mrs. Charlotte Forten Grimke and a host of others, over the course of his life.

Mr. Douglass left a legacy of speeches, books, editorials and letters comparable to the best and most prolific American writers and thinkers. The Douglass legacy provides an accurate and eloquent recall of history and events, an incisive grasp of the distinction between rhetoric and truth and a meticulous regard for grammar, word-choice and style in both writing and speech. It transmitted a fundamental knowledge of history, religion and philosophy frequently challenged, but seldom matched, by his peers. He not infrequently understood and explained the logical basis of those who held differences with his views better than those who propounded those differences.

Therefore, Mr. Douglass positioned himself, both in writing and in speech, to be an accurate source of factual reference and a formidable challenge in philosophical debate. He versed himself most thoroughly in all of the basic American documents and in the nuances and paradoxes among them. For example, he was careful to note that while the Declaration of Independence and the Northwest Ordinance specifically mentioned and addressed slavery, the

Constitution, written in the same year and place as the Northwest Ordinance (1787), not once used the word "slavery." He wrote his most definitive and controversial polemic on that subject in his newspaper, *The North Star*, on March 16, 1849 and in an editorial defending Senator William H. Seward and analyzing the meaning of the "Oath to Support the Constitution" in *The North Star* of April 15, 1850.

He engaged in a series of debates in which he broke completely with the Garrisonians on the principle that the Constitution either had to be interpreted to be on the side of the abolition of slavery or that it had to be overthrown. He saw no possibility of the latter as the Garrisonians fantasized that it should be. Instead, he found it necessary to give a special and unique meaning and priority to the Preamble to the Constitution as it related to the following passages, which he knew thoroughly:

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within the Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. (Article I, Section 2, Item 3. U. S. Constitution)

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person. (Article I, Section 9, Item 1. U. S. Constitution)

No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due. (Article IV, Section 2, Item 3. U. S. Constitution.)

Mr. Douglass made his most definitive interpretation in a speech delivered in Glasgow, Scotland, on March 26, 1860, titled "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?" He had to go beyond the Articles themselves to a holistic reading of the Preamble, the Declaration's first version and the Northwest Ordinance to establish a meaning completely separated from the

intent, will or purpose of the Framers, or the intent or actions of the government.

He remembered also his editorial defense of Senator William Henry Seward, who argued against the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law by insisting that there is a Higher Law of God which transcends the legalistic reading of the Constitution. Mr. Douglass addressed himself to the Constitution as a "strict constructionist," averring that the language and only the language, of the document—and it as a whole—must be in reference and not the customary, but extraneous, effort to understand what the *men* who framed it meant or did not mean or what the government intended to do with respect to slavery.

In this lesson in the skill of using logic to turn adversity to advantage, Mr. Douglass was at his masterful best. He knew that the Constitution itself was his only defense in the quest for the abolition of slavery. He knew that the pro-slavery contradiction which he himself had earlier addressed was real in the Constitution. He knew, also, that the 1857 Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision was now the prevailing doctrine. He, therefore, opened his argument with the following offense, using the strategy of pitting appearance against reality:

Things are often confounded and treated as the same, for no better reason than that they resemble each other, even while they are in their nature and character totally distinct and even directly opposed to each other. This jumbling up of things is a sort of dust throwing which is often indulged in by small men who argue for victory rather than for the truth. Thus, for instance, the American Government and the American Constitution are spoken of in a manner which would naturally lead the hearer to believe that the one is identical with the other; when the truth is, they are as distinct in character as is a ship and a compass. The one may point right and the other steer wrong. A chart is one thing, the course of the vessel is another. The Constitution may be right, the Government wrong. If the Government has been governed by mean, sordid and wicked passions, it does not follow that the Constitution is mean, sordid and wicked.

Having so detached the Constitution from the men and motives of government, he constructed an array of arguments to place the three disputed articles, sections and items into a radically different context than was the customary interpretation of constitutional law. For example, with respect to the "three fifths of all others" clause, he argued that the slave holding states were disadvantaged rather than advantaged by it. A non-slave holding state could count its Negroes

as whole persons while slave states had forced themselves to reduce their count by a factor of two fifths, he argued.

The governments, not the Constitution, he argued, made racial application of the clause. He applied the same logic to the other two items and demonstrated that the Constitution did not classify persons by race or condition and that such imputations the Supreme Court and Justice Tawney made *obiter dictum* were unwarranted in its strict interpretation of the Constitution. Mr. Douglass went on to develop a completely new logic of approach which pressed the Articles in question into consistency with the Preamble by ascribing to "We the people" the same meaning as the related passage of the Declaration of Independence. He maintained that they had been tactically, as well as logically, divorced by the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, not by the Constitution. That familiar passage reads:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

Mr. Douglass was careful to re-establish the identity of meaning and to obviate the differences by inference between the Declaration and the Preamble to the Constitution. He used the same logic that he had criticized in others. He juxtaposed the Preamble and the Declaration, but he did it successfully. The Preamble:

WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, *establish Justice*, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. [emphasis added]

Throughout the speech, he carefully stressed the phrase "establish justice," and argued the distinction between "just powers" and unjust uses of power. He also declared unequivocally that securing and maintaining union is the highest imperative in the language of the Constitution. That union rests not in the support of slavery, peonage, segregation and racism; but in the creation of the conditions of justice and tranquility in unity and harmony, both of which are violated by the very existence of slavery and racism.

Therefore, it is as unwise to attack the Constitution instead of the Government as it is to attack the compass instead of the pilot who

steers the ship. He held that the Garrisonians were in error when they refused to participate in the political process and they were wrong in attacking the Constitution while providing no compass to guide the future. He concluded that "As a corollary, it became his duty to use political action as well as moral power for the overthrow of slavery." That argument had impelled Douglass for more than fifteen years.

The fact is that Mr. Douglass had a better grasp of the Constitution than his contemporaries and his former mentors. Even to this day, the argument developed in that 1860 speech in Scotland has not been either bettered or successfully refuted in the light of American history. With respect to slavery itself, the words of the Preamble to the Constitution have neither been amended nor abolished, and the institution of slavery has as a matter of historical necessity been destroyed. As Douglass envisioned, it was done under the Constitution, and the Constitution still stands.

In a speech to the Church of the Puritans in New York City, in the midst of the War in 1863, he made clear that President Lincoln's effort to address the imperative of union and to divorce it from slavery, was as absurd as the Garrisonians offering no better solution to slavery than disunion and overthrow of the Constitution. His topic was "The Present and the Future of the Negro Race in America":

I weigh my words and I Mean all I say, when I contend, as I do contend, that this is the only solid and final solution of the problem before us. It is demanded not less by the terrible exigencies of the nation, than by the Negro himself for the Negro and the nation are to rise and fall, be killed or cured, saved or lost together. Save the Negro and you save the nation, destroy the Negro and you destroy the nation and to save both you must have but one great law of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for all Americans without respect to color.

By contrast, President Lincoln had said, in an open letter to New York *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, who had criticized Lincoln for not freeing the slaves:

My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union and *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps save the Union.

He added, in closing:

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men everywhere could be free.

This suggests that even President Lincoln, in his official view of his constitutional oath, either did not perceive or did not acknowledge, a relationship between the Constitution, Mr. Douglass' interpretation of the Constitution and the abolition of slavery. He himself had earlier professed to be so shocked by the cruelty of slavery that he should "...hit it and hit it hard" if he were ever in the position to do so. Now, in the most powerful office in the nation — he was equivocating. As Mr. Douglass had done with the Garrisonians and later was to do with the Suffragettes, he took serious issue with Mr. Lincoln not only on the question of emancipation, but on the equally urgent question of the racial discrimination by the Union Army against Negro soldiers by offering them only half the pay of Whites.

The riots in the northern cities against the enlistment of Negroes in the Union Army; the failure of the Federal government to protect Black military prisoners captured by Confederates; the failure of the Federal government to do anything about the Negro soldiers who were killed rather than held prisoner; and, the countermanding by President Lincoln of the emancipation and enlistment of Negro slaves into the Union Army by Generals David Hunter, Benjamin F. Butler and John C. Fremont — all were addressed to Mr. Lincoln by Mr. Douglass as equally serious matters of national concern.

More critical to the future of the nation than any other fact, said Mr. Douglass to Mr. Lincoln, was the President's recognition that the existence of slavery itself, not the Negro, was the cause of the disunion and the war. Emancipation and full peership participation by Negroes on the side of Union were the only final solutions to the survival of the nation. Lincoln himself reluctantly was impelled finally to the same conclusion. But even he never acceded on the question of the equality of Negroes.

Mr. Douglass early recognized that the most fundamental and perplexing problem and the source of greatest paradox and hypocrisy, went beyond the question of slavery to the matter of the equal humanity of all human persons. That question plagued him in his relationship to White male abolitionists and White female feminists alike. But none so clearly personified the ironic dimensions of the problem as did President Abraham Lincoln himself, both in his advancing political career and in the presidency. On October 16,

1854, in a speech at Peoria, Illinois, as he was debating U. S. Senator Stephen A. Douglas and opposing the extension of slavery into the Nebraska territory, he morally denounced slavery and upheld the manhood of the Negro; but he added:

What next? Free them and make them politically and socially our equal? My own feelings will not admit of this and if mine would, we will know that those of this great mass of whites would not. Whether this feeling accords with justice and sound judgement is not the sole question, if indeed it is any part of it. A universal feeling, whether well or ill founded, cannot be safely disregarded. We cannot make them equal.

Four years later, again in debate with Senator Douglas on September 18, 1858 in Columbus, Ohio, Mr. Lincoln was even more strident and specific on the question. He said:

I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races--that I am not now nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.

The depth of racism could not have been stated more clearly, representatively or comprehensively than it was by Mr. Lincoln; and he remained consistent in that position. Further, he strongly advocated colonization of free Negroes. He incurred the wrath of Mr. Frederick Douglass when he ill-advisedly presented that position to a meeting of Negro leaders, that included Mr. Douglass, in 1862 while he was President. He was at the time pressing Congress to appropriate an additional \$100,000 to colonize free Negroes in Africa and the Caribbean.

Mr. Douglass, in fierce anger, charged that Mr. Lincoln was arrogating "...his pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes and his canting hypocrisy." Moreover, within a year, Mr. Douglass demonstrated to Mr. Lincoln and to the Union Army that both needed the Negro and that the nation would not survive as one nation unless the Negro were to share in the burden of war and be

recognized for his full merit as a support and asset to the Union and to national unity. Mr. Douglass always felt that the Emancipation Proclamation had its positive national effect in spite of, not because of, Mr. Lincoln's presidency. He recruited, argued, organized and convinced more than 100,000 Negroes to fight for the Union cause. He argued that they had to free themselves, not depend on a Proclamation. While doing so, he demanded equal pay and demanded that the Federal government recognize that the war could not be a war for union and fail to address real emancipation and the right to equality earned by Negroes. Those were the indispensables without which neither the Union nor a Confederacy could survive.

After the War, in the period of Reconstruction and for the rest of his long life, Mr. Douglass struggled with the questions of equal peership in society, equality in law and equal justice in litigation. Those to him were all indissolubly linked to justice and further linked thereby to the questions of racially operated education, unionization and segregation. White racial violence, religious segregation and law distortion all were commonplace. He discerned that the slave master had *feared*, not just disdained, the educated slave. In his own freedom he adjudged education, a skill and wealth to be the highest priorities for both the free Negro and the slave. His own theory about the relationship between vocational education and liberal education became a precursor to the language of the Land Grant Act of 1862 and established a special relationship between him, Harriet Beecher Stowe (the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) and the Reverend Josiah Henson on whose life she modeled the novel.

Mr. Douglass had earlier expounded his theory of education when at the behest of Mrs. Stowe he was asked for a suggestion as to how she could best use royalties from her book to benefit the colored people. He replied that the best service could be rendered through the creation of an institution of learning. The institution should stress both vocational and liberal learning with the earliest stress upon the former, as initially "We needed more to learn how to make a good living than to learn Latin and Greek." He reasoned:

... the want of money is the root of all evil to colored people. They were shut out from all lucrative employments and compelled to be merely barbers, waiters, coachmen and the like at wages so low that they could lay up little or nothing. Their poverty kept them ignorant and their ignorance kept them degraded... *poverty, ignorance, and degradation* are the combined evils... of the free colored people of the United States.

We must build as well as live in houses; we must make as well as use furniture; we must construct bridges as well as pass over them, before we can properly live or be respected by our fellow men. We need mechanics as well as ministers. . . We are unknown at any of the great exhibitions of the industry of our fellow-citizens and being unknown, we are unconsidered.

The most telling, the most killing refutation of slavery is the presentation of an industrious, enterprising, thrifty and intelligent free black population. Such a population I believe would rise in the northern states, under the fostering care of such a college as supposed.

Finally:

...Negroes would never be respected until they respect themselves and... they would never respect themselves until they had the means to live respectably.

His deepest thought and dream was that education would bring security and wealth to Negroes, and that wealth would leverage them into leadership. He knew that would require a very special adjustment not only of them, but of society. We have now seen the fruits of that prophesy. The African American leadership of the Democratic National Committee brought also educational qualifications, political experience and wisdom. They gave to Party management principled leadership which harmonized instead of divided. They produced a the Convention which even the normally reticent New York Times characterized as the finest, best managed, most unified and most inclusive political convention in the history of the United States. Its success was the nation's success. Under African American imprimatur, we found that spectacular Convention and the nation committing themselves to the long needed changes toward the direction of history and a higher sense of belonging one toward another.

Executive Summary

The attached document is part of a larger effort which I have undertaken to invite serious thought about the fundamental role African Americans have played in rescuing this nation from disintegration into serious wrong directions, particularly in reference to human life and rights concerns. There has been a long progressive struggle by African Americans to have their value to this nation appreciated and their full equality in citizenship respected. Their contributions to the political process historically had to take place from the outside, addressing the presidential leaders of the nation or the leadership of the major political parties as outsiders. Their petitions and protests have had to take the form of moral activism seeking civility in their pursuit of full citizenship recognition. Their leaders were forced to go the route of protest for recognition within the political system and major parties. Except during the Reconstruction Period following the Civil War and the Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution in which there were elected local, state and national office holders, their participation was as political appointees. Finally now they are in leadership as office holders, organized caucuses, presidential candidates and leaders of one of the major political parties — the Democratic National Party.

There was a period similar to this one a century ago which history records, if at all, as the Reconstruction Period. Principally in the south, African Americans were elected to state legislatures, to executive branches and to both houses of the United States Congress. That period came to a sudden halt when, as a result of presidential compromises of the integrity of presidential office and of southern pressure, both houses of the Congress declared themselves to be membership organizations and used that device to deny seating in the Senate and House of Representatives to elected African Americans. Moreover, southern states began to pass legislation specifically designed to deny African Americans the vote and participation in political parties. The Democratic Party specifically, was the party which those states controlled.

African Americans, however, had been politically active since the beginning of this nation and the organization of the Prince Hall Masons by Revolutionary War hero, Prince Hall. The African Free Society was organized in 1787 by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized by 1794 by Richard Allen. Those were two other Revolutionary War heroes, in the period immediately following the Revolutionary War who organized in protest to the northern urban segregation and the

conditions of incivility to free African Americans. They were the first Civil Rights and self-help organizations among African Americans.

The leaders of those organizations were the initiators also of the Convention Movements pressing for civil and citizenship rights and for the abolition of slavery in the decade of the eighteen thirties and again in the decade of the eighteen fifties. They grew stronger in their impact during the post-Civil War years of the eighteen sixties. They were powerful lobbyists during and after the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution and the 1866 through 1875 Civil Rights Acts.

From the 1870's through the turn of the twentieth century, a large number of African Americans were elected to southern state legislatures, to the United States House of Representatives and to the United States Senate as Republicans and from southern states. That progress was suddenly reversed when the Congress itself began refusing to seat state-elected African Americans. All of that did not begin to change again until the nineteen forties, but that change has continued to this day. It appears now that the expectation of continued progress is on a more solid foundation than in the past century; but there is no certainty, especially with the composition of the present United States Supreme Court. Not only African Americans, but the nation itself needs to be protected from the devices which produced the past periods of reversals of such progress.

In this segment, I try to show that the 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson and the 1989 to 1992 leadership of the Democratic National Party were neither isolated occurrences nor of merely temporary significance. They were part of an identifiable progression which is more than a century and a half old in American political history. Therefore, the focus here is not so much upon persons, except Mr. Frederick Douglass, as upon the historical progression itself. I have identified Mr. Douglass as one progenitor figure in that process, because it was he who defined the high principles to be pursued by African Americans and by the nation. He demonstrated in his person and articulated in his speeches and writings the broad strategies which were necessary for African Americans if the proper goals of nationhood are to be achieved. Moreover, he lived both extremes of American life from slavery to high government office and service.

In that progression, we have seen a consistency of high ideals inherent in African American political and constitutional thought and consciousness. There also is a traditional African American political strategy which has tried always to advance that constitutional

THE 1988 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION — A
TEMPORARY JACKSON — DEMOCRATIC PARTY
RECONCILIATION IN A KINGIAN SPIRIT AND THE 1992
DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION — A TRIUMPHANT
DEMOCRATIC PARTY UNITY IN DIVERSITY UNDER AFRICAN
AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

"Until Lions write their own history, history will always glorify the hunter" —
African Proverb

If we are to bargain for a role in making the decisions rather than letting those decisions make us, we need to get to work; quit moaning and start moving at every level to make it to the top of the heap...that is the Presidency.—The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 22, 1971.

The new task of the liberation movement, therefore, is not merely to increase the Negro registration and vote; equally imperative is the development of a strong voice that is heard in the smoke-filled rooms where party debating and bargaining proceed. A black face that is mute in party councils is not political representation; the ability to be independent, assertive and respected when the final decisions are made is indispensable for authentic expression of power.—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967, p. 148.

Any assessment of whether the rhetoric or platform promises of any political convention will be carried over into subsequent political reality must be made with genuine reservation in view of all past American history. Such caution also had to be applied to the optimistic conclusions which were drawn immediately after the 1988 National Democratic Party Convention, because the post-convention outcome showed no significant change from past history. Yet, it must be recorded that the 1988 Democratic convention was in fact and in deed a climactic point in the years of struggle by African Americans to secure equality and respect for all Americans in the American political system.

Historically, African Americans always have spoken and acted on behalf of all deprived and denied Americans; and, in the past fifty years, they have forged radical changes in the Democratic Party and in the nation. Unlike all previous conventions of both major political parties, that particular Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia showed the first genuine signs of a possible new beginning of political wisdom and total inclusiveness by the Democratic National Party.

What has to be understood at the outset is that racism, sexism, ethnic divisiveness and the suppression and isolation of Native Americans have been deeply ingrained aspects of the American economic and political system from the founding of this republic.

While they have been the greatest impediments to true nationhood, our republic in this century has made magnificent progress toward that ideal.

The economic system, in particular, structures and exercises the most powerful and determining influence upon politics, government, business, social stratification, family structure, personal relations, education, organized religious and philanthropic behavior and international policy. It is so totally pervasive upon the operation of government and upon the lives of all persons in the social system that it both controls the behavior of the political system and conditions the expectations by the society of how the political system should operate. That means also that it determines what types of leaders should govern. That is why more than religion or any other factor, the matter of race, sex and the manipulation of attitudes associated with those two factors have been the most pervasive determinants of political outcomes over the past two centuries. In consequence, they also have been the most powerfully controlling factors adversely affecting the personal lives and opportunities for for the true majority of Americans to have and to enjoy real opportunity for participation in the American political and economic system or in the dream of all Americans for personal development and contribution to the "domestic tranquility" and "happiness of mankind" that was the Constitutional promise. Historically, the systematic denial of educational and economic opportunity to minorities and women in past centuries has resulted in the imposition of distorted conceptions of themselves and their capabilities as well as the perceptions of others and of political reality.

The impact upon the personal lives and group behaviors of those adversely affected by the economic and political system often has been indelible and permanent. The system becomes completely interiorized, and the person cannot distinguish the myths of the system from reality and truth about themselves. Therefore, it had to be the operation of the economic system which had to be changed for the better if the politics were to be changed. That is why the boycott was the most powerful weapon of the non-violent strategy of the Civil Rights movement. The use of the economic withdrawal strategy was a factor from the beginning of African American protest with the organization of the African Free Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1787 in protest to church segregation at St. Georges Methodist Church. That boycott occurred even as the Constitutional Convention was being held a few blocks away to frame the document upon which this republic was founded.

philosophy and to pursue the actions and petitions which have been necessary for them to undertake first from without; but increasingly over the past half century, from within the Democratic National Party which is the most representative of the two major political parties.

Their determination, organization, demonstrations, protests and moral appeals to "higher law" have been a major redemptive factor in the whole history and development of this nation. Their constant and insistent appeals to the universality of humankind have transformed and reformed the political system of this nation over very stubborn and recalcitrant resistance within both the political and the economic institutions of the nation. Their quest initially was focused within the early anti-slavery parties and organizations and the political developments which became the Republican Party of the nineteenth century. That was the only political framework within which African American leaders were permitted to participate.

Until the advent of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations from 1932 until 1952, African Americans were barred by state laws and devious devices from both voting in Democratic Party primaries and participation in Party membership. They were Republicans by default. That changed primarily as a result of the work of the African American Civil Rights organizations, principally the NAACP, and a conference called in Birmingham, Alabama by Mrs. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt and Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune in 1938 to organize what became the Southern Interracial Council.

All of that is in the background of the four year leadership of Chairman Ronald H. Brown, Deputy Chairman Alexis M. Herman and the talented, committed, and broadly diverse management staff of the Democratic National Committee and Convention between 1988 and 1992. They have again demonstrated the fallacy of all of the racist mythology. They have again taught a fundamental lesson about the capability of African Americans to provide leadership to this nation.

The motivation to write this, then, has been very simple. Just as the period of the Reconstruction was brought to a sudden halt at the turn of this twentieth century and the vast contributions of those African Americans to the growth of the American political system were blotted out of history, I believe that African Americans, women and all minorities should be made conscious of the present inclination and subtle devices among both conservative and liberal politicians to repeat that history. One of the devices is the determined opposition to compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, just as occurred in the case of the 1875 Civil Right Act which was nullified by the United States Supreme Court in 1883. Another device

is taking the form of challenges to the Congressional Districts which now are sending African Americans to the United States Congress. Still others are directed at the personal character of those persons of African American leadership themselves which, if history repeats, we may well expect to heighten in the future.

Among the academics, historians and researchers, one of those devices has been to ignore in official records the recognition of the contributions of African Americans. A second device has been to denigrate the performances of African Americans in every possible way. A third device has been to develop disinformation campaigns to demean, to disgrace or to discredit the very African Americans who have, indeed, redeemed and revived this nation. That should not be permitted to repeat at the end of this century.

Finally, whenever the nation itself has taken serious wrong turns, African Americans have had to serve as reminders, redirectors and catalysts toward return to the higher route to true nationhood. They have been the national conscience, and the only source of consistent reference to respect for the unity within the diversity of humankind that must be recognized if the Constitution of the United States is to be fully realized. Whenever that redirection has been successfully undertaken, the African American leaders responsible for the achievement are invariably subjected to character attack, are diminished or are ignored rather than respected and appreciated. Notably, Mr. Frederick Douglass is the only figure of the nineteenth century, including the feminists who are there represented, who is not represented in the rotunda of the nation's capitol.

That is the situation which occasions this effort to place a proper context of reference for some future historian to frame around the present achievements of the African Americans who provided the leadership of the Democratic National Party successfully back into the Presidency. They restored the Party itself to the control of both the Executive and the Legislative branches of the government, and they quickened the address to reform of the government and the society. Superbly, they demonstrated how an orderly and civil political convention can be orchestrated, managed and enjoyed. That was a magnificent accomplishment after over a decade of wrong directions by previous Administrations. It also may have forestalled a more serious political reversal by the end of this century, if the people of this nation had extended the Reagan and Bush years.

The reminder by African Americans of the critical need for change for the better and toward the reality of inclusiveness and belonging that are the true hallmarks of nationhood has recurred in the form of petitions and protests to presidents, to state and local political bodies and to the conscience of the nation through its mass media. Economic withdrawals and legal challenges have been the most effective moral and procedural strategies, because the routes to partisan political participation and lobbying were over and over again barred by both federal inaction and by state legislation. Political parties, the Southern Democratic Party in particular, barred African Americans and, to almost as great extent, women from participating in the Democratic Primaries in spite of both the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments to the Constitution. Those legal barriers were gradually removed only after stringent protests and litigation only over the course of the past half century. The threat to return to some of the earlier practices became most recently apparent in the attitudes toward the Civil Rights laws and Supreme Court appointments by the Reagan-Bush Administrations. They clearly were efforts to re-define the role and decisions of the United States Supreme Court. (The preceding Administration of the only Democratic Party elected President since 1968, President James Earl Carter, had no opportunity to make a Supreme Court appointment.) Confirming the significance of the Reagan appointments, in 1990, the Supreme Court's attitude toward civil rights and equitable participation of all citizens in the economic system was quickly spelled out in five successive decisions, beginning with *Crosson v Richmond*. It signalled that the need will continue to be present among the American people to take a more serious look at the consequences of the operation of the partisan political system and of the political parties themselves. African Americans took that serious look as early as 1984 with the entry of the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson upon the major partisan presidential electoral system as a genuine, credible and potent Democratic presidential primary candidate.

Heretofore, except on the fringes as was the candidacy of then Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm in 1980, the modus of African American politics had to take the form of moral eloquence and protest pressure upon the major political parties and their conventions, for delegate participation and for inclusion of civil and humane commitments in the party platforms. They were not positioned to put forth actual candidates for party leadership or presidential contention as candidates. What the Reverend Jackson's presidential campaign did, as did Mr. Jackie Robinson in the sport of baseball, was to change the total conduct of the major political

institutions for some time to come, and hopefully for all time. That change took place in the Democratic National Party as indeed it had been in process since 1936, and particularly since the 1948 Democratic National Convention.

The 1984 results became early apparent just four years later. Even the fact that the candidacy of the Reverend Mr. Jackson was in fact a catalyst did not come about either as an accident or out of the context of the recent past African American civil rights protest history. All of that history must be understood in the context of the whole of American history. It is marked and shaped by the struggle of African Americans to demonstrate the fundamental distinction which neither President Abraham Lincoln nor the Garrisonian Abolitionists nor the subsequent Republican and Democratic parties were willing to understand and to accept between the abolition of slavery and the full equality of African Americans and all other deprived Americans in law, in the economic and educational systems and in the Constitutionally mandated citizenship status of all Americans, regardless of color or gender or prior condition of servitude.

The full and equal status of African Americans, women, Native Americans and the poor and deprived among White Americans in law and justice and factually making opportunity real to participate fairly and responsibly in the political and economic systems on a basis of parity in this century has been the primary goal of African Americans since the 1883 Civil Rights case decision and the 1896 Plessy v Ferguson decision of the United States Supreme Court nullified the 1875 Civil Rights Act in the wake of the 1876 Hayes-Tilden presidential election compromise of principle.

The possibility for a new and inclusive political climate and national attitude clearly was presaged in the 1988 Democratic Party primaries and demonstrated in the National Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. The real lesson of that Convention was that any firmly entrenched economic system, and any political structure which reflects and protects that system, is very difficult to change; but both can be changed democratically for the better if a direct effort is made to change the top leadership. It can be done, but only by repeated and persistent use of intelligent effort, sacrifice, organization, persuasive power, and voter power. The Reverend Mr. Jackson provided the strong leadership catalyst by demonstrating the capacity to undertake a total systems approach to effectuating such change at the very top. That demonstration carried over from the 1984 convention mixture of leadership frustration and protest in San Francisco to the inspiring 1988 convention. Unfortunately, that

fundamental change was not understood or embraced by the 1988 Democratic Party presidential candidate even in that second opportunity to demonstrate fidelity to the fundamental tenets of equality and nationhood. There was serious national disappointment in the conduct of the presidential campaign after the 1988 Convention was over.

American and world history over the past two centuries have demonstrated how nearly impossible it is to produce fundamental political change democratically. How perilous has been the role of change maker, new direction inspirer, or even the whistle-blower about present problems in the operation of the system. That history also has demonstrated that constructive and beneficial change is not impossible to accomplish when there is a total systems approach to changing a wrong direction. That change must occur at the top to redirect an otherwise good system into a right and just direction. In the case of the United States of America, we have a good system which from time to time has taken a bad direction at the top. From 1968 through 1988, America has taken several seriously wrong directions in its domestic civil rights legislation, in its economic operations and in its international policies as a result of presidential politics.

The decade of the 1980's was an exacerbated case in point. Our government and society suffered serious economic and political corruption, unprecedented budget and trade deficits and military adventurism — all at the expense of deteriorating racial and civil conditions and the increased exposure to violence for too many Americans. Yet, we must continue to support the confidence that American political history is on the side of ultimate justice and on the side of the people who see clearly the right and just future course. That is what the Reverend Mr. Jesse L. Jackson's campaign and his personal eloquence demonstrated on behalf of African Americans and all minorities and women throughout his engagement in presidential politics in 1984, and that is what gave such poignancy and effectiveness to his 1988 convention theme and slogan, "Keep Hope Alive."

In sharp and promising contrast to the 1984 Democratic Party National Convention in San Francisco, California, and to all previous conventions of both major political parties; historic and fundamental changes in the Democratic National Conventions clearly were demonstrated to the nation and to the world in Atlanta, Georgia in 1988. The 1984 Democratic Convention had been dominated by an obstinate refusal by the Mondale forces to compromise on either platform issues or convention procedures. That stubbornness

bordered on hypocrisy, particularly for a respected former Senator and Vice President who bore the mantle of identification as a protegee of the late Senator and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. That was shocking to the faith in liberal politicians and disappointment in candidate Mondale. In the convention itself, it caused serious rifts particularly within the African American and Hispanic American delegations and vocal resentment by Native Americans.

In spite of the eloquent and conciliatory speeches of both Governor Mario Cuomo of New York and the Reverend Mr. Jackson, the end product of the 1984 convention was that the unyielding adamancy on the part of the Mondale group produced an equally unyielding reaction among supporters of Senator Gary Hart and deep frustration among the supporters of the Reverend Mr. Jackson. Even after the deeply emotional, conciliatory and spiritually elevating address by Mr. Jackson, there was a bitter demonstration before the end of the convention among some of his supporters to vent their frustrations. Hispanic Americans and Native Americans also voiced their resentments and serious reservations about both Mr. Mondale and Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro. That is where the 1984 election was lost.

In 1988, it would have been appropriate to change the designation to of the convention to "National Democratic Party Convention", because true democratic nationhood characterize the convention in Atlanta. It was truly "national" in representation and in convention action. Some, like this writer, felt the depth of the transformation that was taking place and anticipated that the change would yet prove to be truly historic no matter which party finally won the 1988 presidential election. In contrast to the 1988 Republican Party Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, the Democratic Party Convention was "National" in its delegate composition, convention theme, platform speeches, candidate appeals. platform promises and presidential candidate election for the first time in the history of the United States for either major political party. Speaker after speaker used total American family symbolism and embraced the inclusiveness themes initiated by the Reverend Mr. Jackson. They emulated his style, his words and his eloquence of speech. The convention as a whole reflected also the spirit and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The convention had begun in a mood of serious concern on the part of many delegates about fairness to the Reverend Mr. Jackson and to the issues he represented in their behalf. At issue was the fact that Governor Dukakis had made his vice presidential selection

without doing the courtesy of informing Mr. Jackson at a time when pre-convention polls showed that the delegates had placed Mr. Jackson highest in their preference for that office candidate. There was a cloud of suspicion that the San Francisco experience might just be repeated. But the matter ended on a high note of reconciliation at least for the convention moment.

There was a profound sense of promise of national redemption and overtures to the possible resumption of humane concern for all Americans and for all of humanity. Even the use of bilingual communication in the acceptance speech by Governor Michael Dukakis, the presidential nominee and the assurance to the audience of the bilingualism demonstrated by the vice presidential nominee, Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., were an unprecedented overture to both unity and cultural diversity by either major political party.

By contrast, the 1988 Republican Party Convention in New Orleans consisted of eighty eight percent European descended White delegates, overwhelmingly male. Only three percent of the delegates were African Americans, only three percent total Hispanic origin, only one percent Asian origin and only five percent of all other ethnic backgrounds. The Republican Convention was dominated by carefully staged and orchestrated myth-making about President Reagan, secondary attention to the already decided candidate, Vice President George Bush, and a strict lock-step conservative ideology and rhetoric. That ideology even dictated the choice of a vice presidential candidate which surprised most of the delegates.

Most fundamentally, we saw in the National Democratic Convention for the first time the previously nebulous concept of Black political power transformed into a broad Rainbow Coalition reality of organized, articulate, unified political negotiations from the top combined with insistence upon respect and peership for its leader. That insistence was backed by the strength of one thousand two hundred delegates and seven million popular votes of the American people. Moreover, the Reverend Mr. Jackson demonstrated as he had done many times before in corporate, labor union and international negotiations that he is a superb master of such negotiation. This time he also transformed the former smoke-filled room into open public view and involvement at the highest and most complex levels of that art.

He had long ago mastered the use of Dr. King's "Six Principles of Negotiation," and he took them to new heights both before and during the convention. That skill itself was responsible for the masterful breakthrough in his direct negotiation with Governor Dukakis. That achievement diffused a possibly damaging breakdown

of communications on both sides which would have split the convention asunder. It is to the credit of Governor Dukakis as well as to the Reverend Mr. Jackson that the outcome was so mutually successful. It elevated the image of respect for each of them and elevated the convention to the higher ground sought by Mr. Jackson.

From the beginning to the end, the atmosphere, tone and proceedings of the entire convention were profoundly influenced, powerfully moved and eloquently shaped by the person and presence of the Reverend Mr. Jackson, the presidential candidate of African descent who came through the presidential primary campaigns to be placed in nomination for President of the United States. He was the only known African American presidential candidate actually to be voted upon in either major political party convention in the history of the United States. He also was among the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., disciple of that historic event. He came into the convention using the theme "Keep Hope Alive" which carried over prophetically into the 1992 convention.

The convention site was within a few blocks proximity to the Memorial Burial Site of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center For Nonviolent Social Change. In that week, both the Convention and the Center were dedicated to his memory, life and philosophy. The Ebenezer Baptist Church adjacent to the Center is where the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded by Dr. King and where three generations of Dr. King's family served as ministers. This is where the Movement led by Dr. King had its most productive political impact after Montgomery. It did much to transform this nation and particularly the Democratic National Party through its prodding and sacrificial influence upon Presidents John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson. That organization, presently under the wise and forceful leadership of the Reverend Joseph Lowery and Mrs. Evelyn Lowery, and with the actively involved cooperation of Mrs. Coretta Scott King, still is engaged in the pursuit of equal justice, civility and keeping the King dream alive.

Both Governor Michael Dukakis and Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., who respectively became the presidential and vice presidential nominees of the convention, together with their wives, visited the Center and Memorial Site. There they and Democratic National Party Chairman Paul Kirk paid official homage to Dr. King and made public statements of commitment to civil rights, to human rights, to equal justice for all Americans and to world peace from a platform prepared for them at the Center site on Sweet Auburn Avenue. They

took away with them another reminder gleaned from the words of Dr. King which they radiated in the convention. It is that:

All men are interdependent. Every nation is an heir of a vast treasury of ideas and labor to which both the living and the dead of all nations have contributed. Whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally in the red. We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women. When we arise in the morning, we go into the bathroom where we reach for a sponge which is provided for us by a Pacific islander. We reach for soap that is created for us by a European. Then at the table we drink coffee which is provided for us by a South American, or tea by a Chinese, or cocoa by a West African. Before we leave for our jobs we are already beholden to more than half of the world. *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr., p. 18.*

Every major speaker in the convention also paid respect to the philosophy and spirit of Dr. King and acknowledged Dr. King's and the Reverend Mr. Jackson's contributions to the higher order of inclusiveness, love and respect that is due all persons in the family of this nation and of humankind. They acknowledged the political wisdom of the essential philosophy of "agape" as Dr. King advocated and lived it. That, more than anything else, is what was most appreciated by the delegates as the candidates carried that spirit into the final outcome of the convention.

The initial and justifiable distrust immediately prior to the convention had been based mainly in the expectation that there would be another disappointing racial experience as in past history. That anticipation was aggravated by serious concerns about the pre-convention appearance of unfairness to the Reverend Mr. Jackson and his constituency. Even as the convention opened, that anxiety had not been completely relieved. There was justifiable disbelief by some that reconciliation really was taking place during the convention. Nevertheless, the convention ended with a harmonious feeling that the candidates and the delegates had openly and forthrightly addressed every human condition, respected the total inclusiveness of all of the American people, addressed all conditions of the people and enfolded their outreach into a symbolism and substance that gave meaning to the oneness of the total American family. There was in that a final unifying coalescing and a reach for the higher ground, which produced a clear image of a unity based upon mutual belonging and respect.

That meaning of the term "unity" was different from the meaning of the same term as used in all past conventions and from all past presidential and governmental uses of it going all the way back to the use of the phrase "my interest is in unifying the nation" by President Abraham Lincoln when he made a conscious distinction

between his secondary attitude about the emancipating the slaves and what he saw as the primary imperative to achieve the unity of the nation by signing the Emancipation Proclamation. The meaning was best summed up by Mr. Jackson himself when he wove a parable of the very different origins of the Dukakis family and of his own family in the United States. It concluded with a dramatic emphasis upon their present peer status. He said that Governor Dukakis' ancestors may have come on an immigrant ship while his ancestors came on a slave ship; "...but today both of us are in the *same boat* together." Every delegate and every listening American could grasp that meaning of unity and understand the difference.

In what may have been the most unheralded and prophetic symbolic evidence of the significant change wrought by Mr. Jackson in the 1988 National Democratic Convention, the State of Mississippi became the first state to announce its official state delegation vote in favor of an African American for President of the United States when it cast its vote for the Reverend Mr. Jesse Louis Jackson. That vote of reconciliation invoked the memory of the students of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress on Racial Equality who in daily peril of violence and death carried out the Mississippi Voter Registration Project of 1964. For some of us who could remember, there was a flash of redemption for the killing of Emmett Till, the martyrdom of NAACP leader Medger Evers and of the SNCC students and local grass roots workers Herbert Lee, Louis Allen, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and others whose names and records already are lost to history.

It certainly was a magnificent political vindication of the sacrifices, beatings, life threats, loss of jobs and homes and the indomitable courage and determination of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Mrs. Annie Devine, Mrs. Annie Raskins, Mrs. Victoria Gray, Dr. Aaron Henry and all of the others who founded and carried to the 1964 Democratic National Convention the Freedom Democratic Party of Mississippi. Especially redemptive was the fact that the Chairman who spoke for the 1988 Mississippi Delegation as its leader was Mr. Ed Cole. He was one of the sixty seven member Freedom Democratic Party delegation, then also called the Mississippi Democratic Loyalist Delegation, who were unseated and not permitted to participate in the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The 1964 loyalist Mississippi delegation was replaced by White delegates.

The other state officially to announce its vote for the Reverend Mr. Jackson was South Carolina, the state of his birth. South Carolina also was the first state legally to adopt the system of slavery for life

already in use by Britain in Barbados, and its Governor, Fielding Wright, took leadership in the organization of the Dixiecrat wing of the Democratic Party in the 1940's. In Atlanta, Senator Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina was in the very forefront of the delegation and an ardent, vocal, waving and cheerleading supporter of Mr. Jackson throughout the election process. *What could say more to the nation and to the world!*

If the Mississippi and the South Carolina delegations that we saw in that convention had been followed through by the nation and by other states, even in spirit, after the convention; then it really would have given great hope for the future of our nation, even if Mr. Jackson still had not become the final choice of the convention. Even so, across the delegations, the states of New Hampshire and West Virginia were the only states to cast no delegate votes for Mr. Jackson.

That redemptiveness took place in Atlanta, Georgia, in the South and in a way that could not have been so symbolic anywhere else in the United States, particularly the Northeast. Only in the South, or possibly in the Midwest to which most poor African American and poor White Southern migrants went, could there be such complete and empathetic appreciation of the full meaning of the change which had been wrought by Mr. Jackson in 1984 and its impact upon the Democratic Party on the 1988 Democratic Primary road which led to the Convention in Atlanta. Mr. Jackson was the "Jaackie Robinson" of American presidential politics, just as Mr. Robinson had been of Major League athletics.

The City of Atlanta, therefore, was the most appropriate historic place and symbol for the reconciliation and redemption which took place. It is noteworthy also that under the leadership of two successive African American mayors, the Honorable Maynard Dobbs Jackson, and the Honorable Andrew Jackson Young, the leadership of the City of Atlanta not only enjoys highest respect, but it has become a premier international trade relations city of the nation. Those two mayors have been responsible for more than ten billion dollars in new business investment in Atlanta, and they have ushered in the most broadly racially integrated structure of political and business leadership in the history of the nation.

The city, like the convention, was dominated by the memory and spirit of Dr. King. In the convention, that spirit was personified by the presence of Mrs. Coretta Scott King and the King family, by Mrs. Rosa Parks of Montgomery Bus Boycott memory, and by the ubiquitous presence of disciples of Dr. King. The Honorable Mayor of Atlanta, who is a former U.S. Congressman of Georgia and United

Nations Ambassador for the United States, the Reverend Andrew Jackson Young and his family were official hosts to the convention. Another King disciple was the Honorable John Lewis, the (Atlanta) Georgia Fifth Congressional District United States Congressional host and convention delegate, accompanied by Mrs. Lewis. On the outside, keeping the demonstration potential alive in case things went wrong on the inside was still another King disciple and present Georgia State Representative, the Honorable Hosea Williams.

Georgia, which had voted overwhelmingly for the Reverend Mr. Jackson in the Democratic Super Tuesday Primary, has its own fascinating historical tale of reconciliation. On the one side, Atlanta is the city which was the Confederate stronghold that General William Tecumseh Sherman burned to the ground on November 14, 1864 during the Civil War. The city proudly uses the Phoenix as its symbol of having risen from the ashes left by Sherman's Army and grown into the present international center of economic and political progress. It has risen also from a racist Democratic Party wielding total state political power and control from Atlanta, its capital, to the present harmonious convention achievement. Historically, the Georgia Democratic Party and gubernatorial leadership perpetrated some of its worst racist rhetoric, racial violence and demagoguery from the end of the Civil War to the end of the Civil Rights legislation period. Between 1871 and 1889, Mr. Henry Grady, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, was a principal mentor and architect of the southern segregation system. But Atlanta also is where between 1931 and 1960 of this century the nation saw another editor of the same newspaper, Mr. Ralph McGill, become a leading and courageous spokesman for and a personal participant in every major interracial effort and organization in the South. He truly was a visionary of the new direction which history has proven to be better for Atlanta and for the nation. He would have been pleased and proud at the outcome of the 1988 Convention in his city.

Atlanta is where, even during Mr. McGill's years, Governor Eugene Talmadge, his son Herman Talmadge and the Georgia Legislature perfected the art of racist politics and control of the Georgia elections system and process. This is where Stone Mountain became an infamous national symbol and ceremonial cross-burning site of the Ku Klux Klan. It is where Whites perpetrated violent mob rioting against Negroes in 1906 at the turn of this century, and where Whites are suspected of the worst Atlanta fire which burned to the ground the "too prosperous" Sweet Auburn Avenue in 1917. Georgia is where, until recent years, illiterate and barely literate White sheriffs and law enforcement officers regularly used vulgar and abusive verbal

assaults upon African American persons, followed by physical brutalities at the slightest excuse or provocation. Barely literate White judges and all-White juries routinely pronounced excessive sentences, including death, upon accused African Americans, most of them known to be innocent. In violation of state law, sheriffs permitted White mobs to take prisoners from jails even after both the time and place of the lynching were previously announced and known to the sheriff. Nothing was done about those.

Georgia was a leader among southern states in racial killing, in lynching and in the arrest and conviction of African American persons for the purpose of using them on road gangs and leasing them out to wealthy farmers for field work. The peonage and sharecropping systems which replaced the slavery system continued well into the twentieth century in Georgia and other Southern states, and the total race obsessed system was the subject of virulent race-baiting debates in the Georgia Legislature as it met in Atlanta. With exceptions of Governors Ellis Arnold and James Earl Carter, Georgia governors continued the advocacy of racial segregation. Their rhetoric often encouraged the practice of mob violence by Whites and virulent opposition to racial harmony. Even in recent years, a man named Lester Maddox got himself elected Governor of Georgia as late as 1967 using an axe handle as the symbol of his endorsement of violent resistance to racial integration and political progress by African Americans.

On the other side, what follows should be more broadly known about Atlantans of African heritage and descent during the same period. Atlanta elected its first African American City Councilman, Mr. William Finch, in 1870. Atlanta now is the city of the largest concentration of African American local and national political power and international economic influence in the nation. That is because Atlantans of African descent always have known and operated from the premise that racism and politics are interwoven economic systems. From the earliest development of Wheat Street which later became Sweet Auburn Avenue as the African American economic and political center, they have undergirded their educational and cultural development with religion, economic drive and politics.

They made economic self-help and business progress the politics of the survival of African American Atlanta. The power of the economic premise has been in the form of formidable partnerships and productive civic, religious and fraternal organizations. There is almost no sign of destructively competitive monopolizations as is too often the American way. Auburn Avenue was the center of African American business and culture. Regrettably, it no longer is as it was

before 1960 when middle class African American Atlantans began to disperse to all other sections of the city and recent highway development impacted upon its business and church operations. However, it still refuses to yield all of its character and memories, and may yet see a revitalization. There is both the interest and the economic capability to do so.

Today African American Atlantans represent in excess of twelve billion dollar annual economic input into the economy of the City of Atlanta. They assume a commensurate political leadership and power which is exercised in public responsibility and under severe scrutiny. Their political power derives from and is complemented by the astute economic acumen which is the basis of their community strength. It is found also in their institutions of higher learning, their community conscious businesses, and their community and politically oriented African American churches and civic organizations. Historically, Atlanta African Americans very early became a most formidable economic, religious, political and political power and influence. The center of that influence was Auburn Avenue and the presence of the institutions of higher education comprising the Atlanta University Center, including the Interdenominational Theological Center. The Atlanta University Center was a formidable educational and research institution from the time of President John Hope through the era of Dr. Benjamin E. Mays and Dr. Rufus E. Clement. The Theological Center had great vitality especially during the presidential leadership of Dr. Harry V. Richardson.

Atlanta is where Mr. Booker T. Washington delivered his famous Cotton States and International Exposition address in 1895 and the city to which Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was called to establish the Atlanta University Research Center and Annual Conferences on urban research in 1897. It is the city from which Dr. Du Bois issued his call to Negro intellectuals nationwide to form the Niagara Movement in 1905. That is the movement from which grew the National Association For The Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 following the vicious anti-Negro riot in Springfield, Illinois in 1908 and the coming together of African Americans and White Americans there in that same city to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of President Abraham Lincoln in 1909.

At the same time, there were emerging such towering figures as Mr. Alonzo Herndon, a turn of the century millionaire barber and founder of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company which originally had been founded as the Atlanta Benevolent and Protective Association by the Reverend Peter J. Bryant of the Wheat Street Baptist Church.

Mr. Herndon's son, Mr. Norris Herndon, succeeded to the responsibility of President on the death of his father. He further developed the Atlanta Life Insurance company and carefully preserved the Herndon estate. The estate is a present Atlanta model of classic architecture and furnishings designed and built by African American architects and skilled laborers. Mr. Jesse Hill has served as President since 1972, and he has expanded that great institution into a magnificent headquarters building and cultural site on Sweet Auburn Avenue. He also greatly expanded upon the Herndon legacy, greatly expanded the insurance business and has contributed significantly to cultural, artistic, civic, civil rights and national and international political services.

Atlanta is the city and Atlanta University the place from which Dr. Du Bois led a delegation of African Americans to the Founding Pan-Africa Conference in London, England in 1900 and the Niagara Movement Convention in 1905 and following years. Representing the NAACP in 1910, he went to Paris to undertake the restoration of the Pan-African Movement as his main concentration, and he contributed to the founding of the Africa National Congress in South Africa in 1912. Still associated with Atlanta University as well as the NAACP, he successfully organized the resumption of the Pan-Africa Conferences in 1918 and those continued through 1947. Atlanta is a city in which its educational administrators also have been scholars and models of social activism such as Dr. John Hope and Mrs. Lugenia Hope; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays and Mrs. Sadie Gray Mays; Dr. William E.B. Du Bois President Rufus E. Clement and Mrs. Clement and, Dr. Samuel Nabrit, (administrator, scientist, scholar, who, among other great accomplishments, was appointed to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission) and Mrs. Nabrit. There were and still are so many others.

As early as 1912 to 1915, under Mr. Benjamin Davis, the Odd Fellows self-help mutual organization grew to 60,000 members and built the block-long Odd Fellows Building and Auditorium on Auburn Avenue. It presently houses business and professional offices. In the 1920's, Mr. Walter "Chief" Aiken, a contractor, became one of the preeminent contractors in the whole nation, rebuilding and designing buildings following the 1917 fire. In the same period, Mr. Herman Perry, put together the first African American owned million dollar insurance, banking and real estate conglomerate. The W.A. Scott family was founder of the *Atlanta Daily World*, a daily newspaper, owned and still operated by the Scott family.

Mr. Jesse B. Blayton, CPA, became the first African American Certified Public Accountant in Georgia and was a founder of Mutual

Federal Savings Bank. He also founded the first African American owned radio station in Atlanta in 1949. Mr. Austin T. Walden, another businessman, was a devoted and courageous Civil Rights leader and organizer of the Negro Voters League. Messrs. Clayton R. Yates and Lorimer D. Milton bought and operated a drug store and engaged with Mr. Blayton in the establishment of other businesses, including the Citizens Trust Bank. The bank is a beautiful 12 story building. It presently is headed by businessmen Mr. Herman J. Russell and Mr. Owen Funderburg. Mr. T.M.R. Alexander, a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, became a leader in the Atlanta insurance and real estate industry in partnership with Mr. W. L. Calloway.

The late Mr. M. Carl Holman, a faculty member of Clark College of Atlanta and editor of *The Inquirer*, a weekly newspaper, was a courageous civil rights leader and a deeply respected "mentor" to all other young leaders, including the then Miss Charlayne Hunter, who now is Mrs. Charlayne Hunter Gault of the McNeil Lehrer Television Group. She integrated the University of Georgia as a student. He later became President of the National Urban Coalition. His courage was indomitable and his wisdom, service and civil rights contributions will be long remembered and respected.

It also must be recognized that the community active, intellectually grounded and talent gifted Atlanta African American women always have been in the mainstream of all of those achievements and services. Mrs. Geneva Moton Haugabrooks founded the Haugabrooks Funeral Home which continues today on Sweet Auburn Avenue. "Ma" Sutton's Restaurant was the most classy on Auburn. The Poro Beauty School and the Apex Beauty School were thriving businesses. As early as 1892, Mrs. Carrie Steele Logan founded an orphanage for African American children which has moved from Auburn Avenue, but is still operating. Miss Mattiwilda Dobbs became an internationally renowned concert artist. Atlanta women have been a great business, civic and cultural strength. Their talents have been communicated to the world in civil rights struggles and civic services, in the sciences and the classical arts, on the concert stage and in popular entertainment fields, in religious service and in the teaching profession. They have been in the mainstream of Atlanta African American business and political development, and they have been the mainstay of all of the families, the programs, the movements.

Mrs. Hope, Mrs. Mays, Mrs. Clement, Mrs. Herndon, Mrs. King, Sr., Mrs. Borders, Mrs. Dobbs and others were the grand matriarchs of Atlanta. They represented a blend of activism and culture. Mrs.

Lugenia Hope was one of the precursors of a National Negro Women's Network which included Mrs. Ida B. Wells Barnett of Memphis, Tennessee, Mrs. Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee, Alabama, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune of Daytona Beach, Florida, Miss Anna Julia Cooper and Mrs. Mary Church Terrell of Washington, D.C., and Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown of Sedalia, North Carolina. Their services to education, civil rights, community organization, anti-lynching crusades and their influence upon international issues led to the formation of the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, D.C. in 1935 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune. It became a formidable political and Civil Rights presence.

Dr. Bethune and her organization were central to the the "Black Cabinet" influence upon the Roosevelt Administration and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for which Mr. Walter White of Atlanta served as Executive Secretary . It was in the vanguard of the African American leadership alliance with which Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was so closely aligned both in domestic civil rights and interracial council building and in the framing of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights adopted at its founding in 1945. It has been in the vanguard of the entire Civil Rights leadership of the past half century from 1935 to the present. The National Council of Negro Women subsequently was expanded into international leadership by Dr. Bethune's successor, Dr. Dorothy I. Height.

Dr. Bethune and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt jointly called the 1938 Interracial Conference in Birmingham, Alabama which formed the Southern Interracial Council. (Ironically, that is the conference which also brought to national notoriety the infamous Birmingham Sheriff "Bull" Connor.) That conference, nevertheless, laid the groundwork for virtually all that followed, including integration of the University of Alabama by Miss Authurine Lucy in 1953 and the 1955 developments in Montgomery, Alabama initiated by Mrs. Mary Fair Burks and Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson of the Women's Political Council of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and Alabama State College and Mrs. Rosa Parks as NAACP Secretary and Bus Boycott catalyst. It was they who set the stage and actually initiated the bus boycott before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from Atlanta was brought to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and to the leadership of the movement as the successor of the Revernd Vernor Johns, past Pastor and President of the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP. There was a companion women led development in Charleston, South Carolina where Mrs. Septima Clark led the Charleston South Carolina Voter Education Project during the fifties.

All of those developments impacted upon the progressive transformation of the Democratic National Party as well as upon the entire legal, economic and political structure of the nation. It is from that mold that the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson emerged as a formidable presidential candidate in 1984 and whose candidacy launched the African American leadership of the Democratic National Party subsequent to the 1988 National Democratic Convention in Atlanta.

As Mr. Frederick Douglass hoped for and prescribed as the formula for success, Atlanta is a city in which African American wealth is based in education, civic consciousness, public service, political leadership, entrepreneurship and home ownership. There, security and wealth have long been based in home and business ownership, civic consciousness, educational and cultural achievement and religious values. African American culture in Atlanta has long been rich, institutionally based and fully respecting of its African heritage and African American educational and civic responsibility. The greatest African American scholars, writers, entertainers, creative artists, scientists and theologians in the United States and many African and Caribbean nations all have either served in or made appearances in Atlanta. African American achievements here have had national and international impact from the earliest beginnings.

That is why the Atlanta African American intelligentsia properly can be credited as the Cradle of the political, intellectual, moral and spiritual leadership of the entire twentieth century Civil Rights Movement, as well as the leadership of the morally based mid-century dimension of the political transformation of the nation. Indeed, it is the place which was the incubator of the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, although the organizations were founded elsewhere. It was the city from which Dr. Du Bois organized the effort later headed by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in 1945 which proposed and had successfully enacted the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. Atlanta was the city in which the first major African American National Political Convention was conceived in 1969 and was carried out in Gary, Indiana in 1972. It was a natural that it became the city of the most historic National Democratic Convention in which the first African American was nominated and voted upon for the role of Democratic Party candidate for the presidency of the United States.

All of those achievements, movements, organizations, institutions and churches were born in racial struggles, nurtured and grounded

in the philosophy of universal brotherhood and sisterhood and led by highly educated and wise African American and White men and women in an integrated culturally secure and confident Atlanta community long before the use of such terms as African American elite and agape came into currency. And, in spite of the diversity of methodology and conflicts between accommodationism and assertive activism, there always was a common sense of common condition and common ultimate goal. That common goal was seen not only for African Americans, but for all Americans and for the totality of humankind.

That final concern is yet to be fully understood by other Americans, including women, other ethnic and religious groups and the national political parties themselves that have so much benefitted from the fruits of African American advocacies, struggles and achievements in their behalf and in behalf of the nation itself. Central to the entire history of the African American address to this nation and its Constitution throughout the history of the republic has been the concept of respect for the mutuality and kinship of all humankind. They have relied upon the use and strength of non-violent and loyal protest along with persistent insistence upon political and civil respect, educational and economic opportunity and, in judicial practice, a system of true and equal justice.

Precisely because Atlanta has that very special character and history, the fortuitous combination of Atlanta, the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson and the National Democratic Party Convention in July 1988 conveyed a very special and promising lesson to the whole nation, which was not fully comprehended. It also brought to the convention podium a not then enthusiastically received and rather dull speaker, Governor William Jefferson Clinton of Arkansas. It would not have been believed on that evening that if Democratic Party ever again won the presidency the candidate would be a transformed and dynamic, Governor Bill Clinton. He did not forget the lessons of 1988 in Atlanta, particularly the poor after convention conduct of the campaign. The interim leadership of the National Democratic Party by Chairman Ronald H. Brown and Deputy Chair Alexis M. Herman and the restoration of Reverend Jackson's theme of "Hope" by Governor Clinton of Hope, Arkansas in the Democratic primaries and by him and Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee in the weeks preceeding the 1992 Democratic National Convention in New York City were historic and bore a significance which is deserving of the highest respect that the nation can accord to it.

It should begin also to restore confidence about the future domestic and foreign policies of the United States, particularly

regarding the unprecedented level of national deficit, governmental and private corruption, economic disparity and human and civil domestic concerns of the nation, including the serious regressions in civil rights law Supreme Court decisions, in law enforcement and in the violence which developed in the nation in the decade of the nineteen eighties. Of equal concern is the impact of those years upon the less developed countries of the world, with particular attention to Southern Africa and Central America. Atlanta conveyed a very special lesson in human relations progress and in the direction which ought to be taken by both African Americans and White Americans, if the nation is to be fully reconciled to its role as the world model of democracy, high quality of life and equal opportunity and responsibility for all.

Both sides of Atlanta history mirror the United States of America as a whole in all its national strengths and weaknesses, but its lesson for the future is that Atlanta today is better for all Atlantans, White and African American, than it would be for either if it foolishly turned back the clock of history. In that specific regard, it had a lesson for Governor Dukakis' State of Massachusetts which neither he nor the state could hear, particularly Boston where African Americans were first to give their lives in the cause of the Colonial Revolution in 1775, but where the most recent violent resistance to the integration of schools occurred and where racial violence in South Boston still is anathema to African American Bostonians. Boston still is a more rigidly segregated city than Atlanta or any major southern city, including Jackson, Mississippi.

Atlanta's lesson fortunately reached New York, particularly New York City. Its long history of de facto racial and ethnic segregation has been erupting into violence throughout its history, and even today there is not a public high school in Harlem. Racist political demagoguery and White racist violence had seen no abatement even there until the election of the African American Mayor David Dinkins and the announcement by New Yorker, Ronald H. Brown announce the City of New York as the site of the 1992 Democratic National Convention. In spite of all past history, that city was transformed as it has not been in its history even of past political conventions there.

The city of Yonkers, New York, even in 1988 as the Atlanta convention was in progress, demonstrated contempt and defiance of a court order and chose city bankruptcy rather than to integrate its public housing. The strange anomaly is that while the imagery of the descendant of the Southern European immigrant and the descendant of the African slave were very impressive at the Atlanta Democratic

Convention, the nation was being reminded of the irony that the whole North and Yonkers represent.

Between 1900 and 1910, more than six million immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe came to the United States and the majority of them, illiterate and unskilled, remained in New York City. (The 1992 Convention delegates and visitors were given a tour and reception on Ellis Island the famous place of the porcessing of the millions of immigrants. The reception was hosted by the District of Columbia delegation.) They replaced and removed African American unskilled workers, particularly those immigrating from the South of the United States, and formed close-knit geographically defined community enclaves which affected the subsequent political, economic, ethnic and racial realities of that city. That displacement is largely how Harlem, formerly predominantly Jewish, was formed. It also is how Brooklyn, Queens, Bedford Styvesant and other concentrations, including Yonkers, got formed as predominantly one-group ethnic communities.

The same pattern applies to Boston and to other Eastern and Mid-western cities. Ever since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, those descendants, particularly in New York and Boston, have been among the strongest opponents of racial integration. New York and Boston organized the first anti-bussing protest organizations. One group was called the Parents Against Transportation in New York City. In Boston, the anti-bussing protest was led by then president of the Boston School Board, Mrs. Louise Day Hicks, who catapulted herself to a seat in the United States Congress on that one issue. So it was wholly appropriate that the 1992 Democratic National Convention under African American male and female leadership and management dramatized in the highest and most orderly and highly enthusiastically harmonious way the symbolism of reconciliation.

This time it carried over into the post-Convention final campaign and into the presidential election victory of President William Jefferson Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore, Jr. The subsequent Cabinet appointments and Staff appointments deliberately and consciously designed to carry our the promise to make the government truly reflect America proved to be a genuine reality, not just promissory note. The diversity of the composition of the Cabinet of President Clinton is absolutely unprecedented in the history of the Executive Branch of the United States government. Moreover, every member selected to every Cabinet and sub-cabinet post is an eminently qualified American with a proven record of distinguished prior national service. That too, is unprecedented and

dispelling of all of the absurd myths about the lesser qualifications of persons other than White males for national leadership.

This writer does not believe that either the Democratic Party presidential candidate of 1984, then Vice President Walter Mondale of Minnesota or the 1988 candidate, Governor Michael Dukakas of Massachusetts would have had the inclination or the experiential background to take the bold step to produce that diverse composition of the Cabinet of the United States. Only Southerners have that unique blend of both family and community experience and of political knowledge by acquaintance with simultaneous extremes of both integration and segregation even during the period of slavery.

The 1988 Democratic presidential nominee was serving as Governor of the State of Massachusetts, and Massachusetts also gave to the nation President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1960. The Vice Presidential nominee was serving as Senator from the State of Texas which gave to the nation, President Lyndon Baines Johnson as Vice President in 1960, as President in 1963 and re-elected him President in 1964. Before and during the convention, both candidate, Governor Dukakis and Senator Bentzen presented themselves as a team which would bring to the presidency the humane concerns for the poor and the disadvantaged and a civil rights temperament that the nation remembers from the Kennedy-Johnson years.

Except for the escalation of the Viet Nam War initiated in the previous Republican Administration of President Dwight David Eisenhower and inherited by the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, that was the era to be remembered for Civil Rights, Human Rights, equal educational opportunity, public accommodations and employment opportunity initiatives. It also will be remembered for the foreign aid and peace corps international initiatives which actually were the legacy of Democratic President Harry S. Truman. This nation was put on a better historical course and human direction than it had seen in its history, but that course was seriously reversed by the 1980 presidential election. The Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Humphrey legacy was suddenly shocked into a different political reality with the abandonment of the great liberal Democrat, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey by liberal as well as moderate and conservative Democrats which resulted in the election of President Richard M. Nixon in 1968 and the subsequent twenty year failure of the Democratic Party to elect a President except in the four year period following the Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration.

The ultimate test of the 1992 National Democratic Party Convention and all of its promises and rhetoric, then, was whether the Democratic Party actually would fulfill the promises the con-

vention projected to the American people. That is what still remains to be seen. That is the litmus test of whether reconciliation really has occurred within the Democratic party, or whether it ended when the curtain came down on the spectacular 1992 Convention finale.

On the Republican side, it cannot be overstated that the 1988 convention in New Orleans, Louisiana and the 1992 convention in Houston, Texas made just the opposite impression. It made abundantly clear its militaristic mentality and its unchanged basic racial, sex and class attitude. That collective attitude was somewhere near the earlier history of America, including both Atlanta and New York. Those Conventions were pre-1965 America translated into deceptive equalitarian semantics and communicated in Orwellian doublethink. Doggedly determined economic and racial regression in the name of equal application of the Civil Rights law and prevention of reverse discrimination, and aggressive militarism in the guise of national security, were projected to the nation as progress produced by the Reagan Administration. Even the accord of the term "Great Communicator" to President Reagan begged doublethink.

The relationship between African Americans and American partisan politics must be understood in the context of the whole of American history. From the end of the Civil War until 1936, African Americans had no alternative for political affiliation, except the Republican Party. Between 1932 and 1936, African Americans, and particularly African American political leaders, did not exercise the emerging options under the Roosevelt Administration. They were all Republicans, because they were systematically excluded from the Democratic Party and because of the association of the Republican Party with the historical image of anti-slavery and of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Ironically, Mr. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation legally freed no slaves and factually did not end slavery. Only the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution accomplished that in 1866 after states which had been loyal to the Union brought attention to their exemption from the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation. During the Civil War, he also rescinded the initiatives of his Generals Benjamin F. Butler and John C. Fremont who manumitted slaves who were willing to serve the Union cause. There also was the practical fact of the early exclusion of African Americans from participation in the Union Army.

Interestingly, after the Civil War and before the onset of the White League (the 1870's equivalent of the mid-twentieth century White Citizens Councils) and the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1876 that made Republican Rutherford B. Hayes President of the United

States even though he had over 200 thousand less popular votes, the State of Mississippi was one of the most harmonious of the American states in race relations. The State of Mississippi still is the only state to have sent two African American Senators to the United States Senate, Senators Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels, as Republicans. Strong Civil Rights Acts were passed in 1866, 1873 and 1875; but, the 1883 Supreme Court nullified the 1875 Civil Rights Act, as the Reagan Administration apparently was hoping would happen to the 1964 Civil Rights Act by his appointments between 1980 and 1988.

From 1866 until 1936, therefore, African Americans were tied to the Republican Party; but with the onset of the Hoover Administration which ended in 1932, African American Republicans became disillusioned by the way that President Herbert Hoover and the Republican Party preferred to align with the most conservative Southern Democratic oligarchs rather than to respond to the interests of African Americans and the poor Whites. A recent book was written to explicate that theme. It was titled *Hoover Blacks and Lily Whites: A Study of Southern Strategies*, by Donald J. Lisio, University of North Carolina Press, 1985. Many of us will remember the well-known Northern Republican-Southern Democratic conservative Congressional coalition that dominated the United States Congress from 1912 until it was broken by the Civil Rights Movement. That coalition has been revived, and now the former Dixiecrat Democrats, the Northern and Western Republicans and the Southern Conservative Democrats virtually all are Republicans.

From the earliest years, African American Republicans were courted by the Republican Party, but given only perfunctory functions. While some African American politicians were rewarded personally with patronage and appointments, and the Freedmen's Bureau was put into operation with good results; there were no strong commitments to the continuation of the Reconstruction, nor were any other overtures made toward improving the conditions of African Americans and Native Americans as race relations continued to deteriorate North and South after the Reconstruction period.

The onus was placed always upon the Southern Democratic Party, because it was allowed by law to conduct White-only primaries in local elections, and Southern states imposed legal barriers such as poll taxes and grandfather clauses in general elections until 1948. Southern *de jure* racist political conduct was more overt callous and news attracting; but the Northern *de facto* racism and discrimination in education, employment and housing were more insidious and more rigid. That continues to be so even today. Nevertheless, in 1936, after the first term of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt,

there was a massive shift of African American Republicans to the Democratic Party.

The change of political affiliation came not so much because of President Roosevelt himself or any policy change in the Democratic party during the Roosevelt era, but primarily because of the efforts and sincerity of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt who worked closely with Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and had the support of Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes in the development of interracial coalitions and commitments. Moreover, she was an eloquent and persuasive speaker and an indefatigable traveler. In the South, the editorial courage and active participation of Mr. Ralph McGill of Atlanta helped initiate the beginnings of the Southern Inter-racial Council and cooperated in the subsequent African American political and economic developments which produced the fundamental national and local changes. Now, particularly since 1980, African Americans have cast their lot almost ninety per cent with the Democratic Party, because the 1980 Republican Party adopted virtually the same political attitude as the pre-1932 Republican Party and pre-1948 Democratic Party.

That is unfortunate for both political parties and for the nation, because it has produced a series of presidential campaigns — including 1988 — which were more characterized by personal attacks, racism, pettiness and irrelevance than by address to the fundamental issues of the nation and of humankind. On a Sunday television program, two days before the 1988 election, a poll analyst was interviewed on the upcoming election. The commentator, seeking a comment from him, remarked: "I guess you are predicting Vice President Bush will win by a landslide." The poll analyst replied, "Yes, I predict that he will win; not by a landslide, but by a mudslide." Wednesday, the day after the election, was a chilly, foggy, gloomy day in Atlanta.

I drove by the Convention Center where the Democratic Convention had been held in July. A disconcerting thought summed up the situation. Mr. Walter Mondale and Mrs. Geraldine Ferraro have gone into well cushioned wealthy eclipse. President Reagan will soon retire to his gift ranch and ride out his teflon glory in the Hollywood celluloid style from which he was never required to depart. Governor Michael Dukakis retains his Governorship and Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr., retains his Senate seat. The system provided for that. All will be well for the super rich, the Defense establishment, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the Military Industrial complex about which even

President Eisenhower expressed foreboding. The system provided also for that.

The United States Courts will become more solidly conservative. Civil Rights progress, like the 1880's, will be stultified by the bogey-code "quotas", if not reversed. The politically and financially corrupt will be handled with extreme care of their "constitutional rights" and those imprisoned will be released as soon as it is feasible. The Iran-Contra scandal and the Defense Department scandals will be suppressed. Conservatism won in the United States, and conservatism won in Britain. Racism won in South Africa, and it is getting worse in the United States. Zionists won in Israel. Japan and Germany offer little prospect of becoming less racist and ethno-centric. Good faith Middle East peace, Persian Gulf peace, Angolan peace and Central American peace are less assured. Is that as our nation and the world will continue to be? That was 1988!

Remember that Atlanta beginning, the Reverend who brought the theme "Keep Hope Alive" and the Governor who came from Hope, Arkansas. Then remember the extravaganza-spectacular, but deeply inspiring culmination of the Democratic National Convention of 1992 in New York, and there will be in that juncture of American history a dramatic and equally inspiring story of African American Leadership of the National Democratic Party. Because of its success, leadership of the nation is now in a more humane and inclusive direction for itself and and attuned to compass of history forthe world.

It remains for theWilliam Jefferson Clinton Administration to be true to its destiny and bear out that promise.

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