

A New Negro Has Arisen In America

By DR. MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

Editor's note: This is the text of an address delivered by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, director of Negro Affairs, National Youth Administration, president of Bethune-Cookman College, during the mass meeting of the March-On-Washington Movement, Tuesday, June 16, in Madison Square Garden.

YOUR chins are out, your eyes are clear! I see determination written on the faces of everyone of you.

Your militancy and resoluteness

are among America's most valuable assets in a day like this. We must not let America ignore the powerful service that can be rendered her by these attributes you possess.



Mrs. Bethune

America needs today, as never before, your fighting hearts, your courage, your refusal to surrender or retreat in the face of discouraging odds.

You who are here tonight are a new experience to America. Throughout the history of your life in this county — over three-hundred years — you have been regarded as the patient, submissive minority — your first two and a half centuries were spent in enforced slavery. You had no rights, the supreme court held—you were chattels like any horse, or plow or iron pot.

You were not permitted to use a voice and so had to express your hopes and dreams for freedom, your bravery and courage, through individual rebellion, occasional mass uprisings and more often through the spirituals, the sorrow songs that gave the first mass expression to our deep longing to live some

day as free citizens in a democracy.

CAME THE EMANCIPATION

Then came your emancipation — to save the union which could not exist half slave and half free. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution legally abolished slavery. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments took you out of the status of chattels and made you citizens, made the Bill of Rights yours. Still, you were patient — experiencing discriminations, injustices, segregation, and denials of equal opportunities.

Here and there a clarion voice rose above the rumblings against injustice, a Frederick Douglass, a Harriet Tubman, a Walter White, a Phillip Randolph, and nameless and numerous unsung heroes. But, the pall of a slave experience still hung over the masses of our people. They had the right to speak out but dared not speak out.

But, today — a new Negro has arisen in America. He is here in Madison Square Garden tonight. He is you!

You are neither young nor old—You're just new! You have awakened as has the world. You are seeking full freedom, justice, respect, and opportunity.

MILITANT IN SPIRIT

You are militant in spirit. You are unwilling to accept less than the Constitution guarantees to you as citizens of the world's greatest democracy.

You are no longer begging—you are insisting, because you realize that America, the only country you know and the country you love, cannot be preserved nine-tenths free and one-tenth oppressed. You realize your insistence is necessary to save America from itself, to make America the ideal democracy that it professes itself to the world to be. Not only are our enemies capitalizing on America's mighty failures to do so, but our allies and friends in China and India, Africa and South America, are weighing America's sincerity on her own

"home" scales.

Thank God you have these qualities of militancy and insistence. And thank God you have a leadership to cultivate and to guide these qualities that are rising from the masses.

INTELLIGENTLY ARTICULATE

You know how important it is that this surging spirit be kept within the bounds of law and order. You know how necessary it is that your militancy be non-violent. But you must at the same time keep it persistent, keep it courageous, make it intelligently articulate.

Only by so doing can we win victory for democracy at home and for democracy throughout the world. Our insistence upon the practice of democratic ideals here does not in any measure detract from our loyalty to our country, nor from our militancy in our stand for the democratization of the world. Friends of freedom are aware of our purpose—they know our insistence is an effort to rid America of shame.

We have grown tired of turning the other cheek. Both our cheeks are now so blistered they are too sensitive for further blows. But regardless of our trials and tribulations at home, we must not for a moment lose sight of the fact that we must give our all-out unreserved effort to winning this war. Unless this war is won on the battlefields abroad, there can be no victory in our struggles here at home.

I want all America to understand — and I believe I voice the sentiment of everyone of you here—that we will never strike our flag. On the contrary, we will eternally protect it with all that we have in courage, in faith, in endurance.

At the same time, we want our flag to protect us—at home in our right to produce and to live, abroad in our willingness to sacrifice and to die.