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 **Excerpt from Booker T. Washington’s *The Future of the American Negro***

Without experience, without preparation, and in most cases without ordinary intelligence, he was encouraged to leave the field and shop and enter politics. That under such circumstances he should have made mistakes is very natural. I do not believe that the Negro was so much at fault for entering so largely into politics, and for the mistakes that were made in too many cases, as were the unscrupulous white leaders who got the Negro's confidence and controlled his vote to further their own ends, regardless, in many cases, of the permanent welfare of the Negro. I have always considered it unfortunate that the Southern white man did not make more of an effort during the period of reconstruction to get the confidence and sympathy of the Negro, and thus have been able to keep him in close touch and sympathy in politics. It was also unfortunate that the Negro was so completely alienated from the Southern white man in all political matters. I think it would have been better for all concerned if, immediately after the close of the war, an educational and property qualification for the exercise of the franchise had been prescribed that would have applied fairly and squarely to both races, and, also, if, in educating the Negro, greater stress had been put upon training him along the lines of industry for which his services were in the greatest demand in the South. In a word, too much stress was placed upon the mere matter of voting and holding political office rather than upon the preparation for the highest citizenship. In saying what I have, I do not mean to convey the impression that the whole period of reconstruction was barren of fruitful results. While it is not a very encouraging chapter in the history of our country, I believe that this period did serve to point out many weak points in our effort to elevate the Negro, and that we are now taking advantage of the mistakes that were made. The period of reconstruction served at least to show the world that with proper preparation and with a sufficient foundation the Negro possesses the elements out of which men of the highest character and usefulness can be developed. I might name several characters who were brought before the world by reason of the reconstruction period. I give one as an example of others: Hon. Blanche K. Bruce, who had been a slave, but who held many honourable positions in the State of Mississippi, including an election to the United States Senate, where he served a full term; later he was twice appointed Register of the United States Treasury. In all these positions Mr. Bruce gave the greatest satisfaction, and not a single whisper of dishonesty or incompetency has ever been heard against him. During the period of his public life he was brought into active and daily contact with Northern and Southern white people, all of whom speak of him in the highest measure of respect and confidence.

**Document 2 – Class Copy**

**Marcus Garvey, "The Principles of The Universal Negro Improvement Association"**

*In this speech given in New York City on November 25, 1922, Marcus Garvey explains the objectives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the organization he believed would lead the worldwide movement toward black liberation.*

What do I mean by constitutional rights in America? If the black man is to reach the height of his ambition in this country if the black man is to get all of his constitutional rights in America then the black man should have the same chance in the nation as any other man to become president of the nation, or a street cleaner in New York. If black man in the British Empire is to have all his constitutional rights it means that the Negro in the British Empire should have at least the same right to become premier of Great Britain as he has to become street cleaner in the city of London. Are they prepared to give us such political equality? You and I can live in the United States of America for 100 more years, and our generations may live for 200 years or for 5000 more years, and so long as there is a black and white population, when the majority is on the side of white race, you and I will never get political justice or get political equality in this country. Then why should a black man with rising ambition, after preparing himself in every possible way to give expression to that highest ambition, allow himself to be kept down by racial prejudice within a country? If I am as educated as the next man, if I am as prepared as the next man, if I have passed through the best schools and colleges and universities as the other fellow, why should I not have a fair chance to compete with the other fellow for the biggest position in the nation? I have feelings, I have blood, I have senses like the other fellow; I have ambition, I have hope. Why should he, because of some racial prejudice, keep me down and why should I concede to him the right to rise above me and to establish himself as my permanent master? That is where the U. N. I. A. differs from other organizations. I refuse to stultify my ambition, and every true Negro refuses to stultify his ambition to suit any one, and therefore the U. N. I. A. decides if America is not big enough for two presidents, if England is not big enough for two kings, then we are not going to quarrel over the matter; we will leave one president in America, we will leave one King in England, we will leave one president in France and we will have one president in Africa. Hence, the Universal Negro Improvement Association does not seek to interfere with the social and political systems of France, but by the arrangement of things today the U. N. I. A. refuses to recognize any political or social system in Africa except that which we are about to establish for ourselves.

**Document 3 – Class Copy**

**W.E.B. Du Bois “Why I Won’t Vote”**

*On October 20, 1956, W. E. B. Du Bois delivers this eloquent indictment of US politics while explaining to Nation readers why he won't vote in the upcoming Presidential election. Du Bois condemns both Democrats and Republicans for their indifferent positions on the influence of corporate wealth, racial inequality, arms proliferation and unaffordable health care.*

Since I was twenty-one in 1889, I have in theory followed the voting plan strongly advocated by Sidney Lens in The Nation of August 4, i.e., voting for a third party even when its chances were hopeless, if the main parties were unsatisfactory; or, in absence of a third choice, voting for the lesser of two evils. My action, however, had to be limited by the candidates' attitude toward Negroes. Of my adult life, I have spent twenty-three years living and teaching in the South, where my voting choice was not asked. I was disfranchised by law or administration. In the North I lived in all thirty-two years, covering eight Presidential elections. In 1912 I wanted to support Theodore Roosevelt, but his Bull Moose convention dodged the Negro problem and I tried to help elect Wilson as a liberal Southerner. Under Wilson came the worst attempt at Jim Crow legislation and discrimination in civil service that we had experienced since the Civil War. In 1916 I took Hughes as the lesser of two evils. He promised Negroes nothing and kept his word. In 1920, I supported Harding because of his promise to liberate Haiti. In 1924, I voted for La Follette, although I knew he could not be elected. In 1928, Negroes faced absolute dilemma. Neither Hoover nor Smith wanted the Negro vote and both publicly insulted us. I voted for Norman Thomas and the Socialists, although the Socialists had attempted to Jim Crow Negro members in the South. In 1932 I voted for Franklin Roosevelt, since Hoover was unthinkable and Roosevelt's attitude toward workers most realistic. I was again in the South from 1934 until 1944. Technically I could vote, but the election in which I could vote was a farce. The real election was the White Primary.

**Document 4 – Class Copy**

**Retired "for age" in 1944, I returned to the North and found a party to my liking. In 1948, I voted the Progressive ticket for Henry Wallace and in 1952 for Vincent Hallinan.**

In 1956, I shall not go to the polls. I have not registered. I believe that democracy has so far disappeared in the United States that no "two evils" exist. There is but one evil party with two names, and it will be elected despite all I can do or say. There is no third party. On the Presidential ballot in a few states (seventeen in 1952), a "Socialist" Party will appear. Few will hear its appeal because it will have almost no opportunity to take part in the campaign and explain its platform. If a voter organizes or advocates a real third-party movement, he may be accused of seeking to overthrow this government by "force and violence." Anything he advocates by way of significant reform will be called "Communist" and will of necessity be Communist in the sense that it must advocate such things as government ownership of the means of production; government in business; the limitation of private profit; social medicine, government housing and federal aid to education; the total abolition of race bias; and the welfare state. These things are on every Communist program; these things are the aim of socialism. Any American who advocates them today, no matter how sincerely, stands in danger of losing his job, surrendering his social status and perhaps landing in jail. The witnesses against him may be liars or insane or criminals. These witnesses need give no proof for their charges and may not even be known or appear in person. They may be in the pay of the United States Government. A.D.A.'s and "Liberals" are not third parties; they seek to act as tails to kites. But since the kites are self-propelled and radar-controlled, tails are quite superfluous and rather silly.