

From Slavery to the White House...

“I am what time, circumstance, history have made of me, certainly, but I am also, much more than that. So are we all.” (*James Baldwin*)

From Slavery to the White House...

What a journey it has been. You cannot talk about the **journey** without remembering the past of shackled slaves brought here in 1619 on a Dutch ship.

You cannot talk about the journey without remembering *Governor George Wallace, the police and riot dogs, water hose, KKK, bombings, lynchings, and assassinations.*

You cannot talk about the journey without remembering **Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Kennedy administration, Lyndon B. Johnson, Barbara Jordan, Thurgood Marshall, Ron Brown, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks,** and many others.

I stand before you on the shoulders of those who were freed by their journey or who fought for freedom that resulted in **civil rights, desegregation and the acceptance and recognition** that African Americans are equal to *all* other races.

Now the *journey* has taken African Americans from **slavery to the White house.** Not as a **butler** to escort you in. Not as a **cook** to prepare the meals for invited

dignitaries. Not as a **chauffeur** to drive guests/visitors to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The journey has not been easy. Today I see the faces of: Emmitt Till, our first African American Woman elected to the State Legislature, Marcia P. Coggs, former County Board Supervisors Bernice K. Rose and Terrence Pitts--Father Jim Groppi, Lorraine Carter, James Cameron, Mattiebelle Woods, Kara Muhammad, Jeanetta Robinson and my mother, Bettie Whitnell and so many others, for they, too, were on this journey from *Slavery to the White House*.

The journey is not over-- just talk to the local branch NAACP President Jerry Ann Hamilton, County Board Chairman Lee Holloway, Common Council President Willie Hines, Vel Phillips, Congresswoman Gwen Moore, or even ordinary people, doing

extraordinary things to make a difference for the journey to continue.

However, all of us in this room and around the world witnessed the historical journey of an African American man as he and his family entered the White House through the **front door** as the President and first family of these United States- January 20, 2009.

I believe this journey was achieved because we came together as one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all. **“YES WE CAN!” “YES WE DID!”**

REMEMBER..

*“A people **without** knowledge of their history, is like a tree without roots.”* Marcus Garvey