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"WINNING FREEDOM AND EXACTING JUSTICE": A. PHILIP RANDOLPH'S USE OF PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL LANGUAGE

Abstract: This essay explores Randolph's biographies, writings, and speeches in order to illustrate some of the proverbs and proverbial language that A. Philip Randolph used throughout the Labor and Civil Rights eras. There is no doubt that proverbs and proverbial sayings had a profound influence on Randolph's life and rhetoric. He used them frequently and effectively in a number of different ways including: during court proceedings, in his many speeches and writings, and in his *Messenger* magazine which he published with Chandler Owen from 1917 to 1928. Randolph used proverbs from the Bible, important political figures, and also famous literary figures. He also created some proverbs himself. Examining these different areas illustrates that Randolph was fully aware of the political influence that proverbs often have and he sought to utilize this authority whenever necessary.

Keywords: African American, Bible, A. Philip Randolph, civil rights, folklore, human rights, labor, paremiology, proverbs, politics, segregation, the March on Washington Movement (MOWM)

A. Philip Randolph (April 15, 1889 – May 16, 1979), considered by many to be the father of the modern Civil Rights era, is one of the most important and dynamic political figures in America for a number of reasons. Randolph was the driving force behind the biggest watershed moment in American civil rights history. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place on August 28th, 1963. At 74 years of age, Randolph and his March on Washington (MOWM) committee would lead over 250,000 thousand peaceful protesters to the steps of the Lincoln memorial in what would be the largest display of non-violent direct action ever recorded. For many, this event represents the pinnacle of Randolph's political influence, and it is the event that would propel Martin Luther King, Jr. to international prominence. From a historical perspective, the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs

and Freedom became known as a figurative passing of the torch, from Randolph to King, or from the old guard to the new, but in addition to the march, Randolph should be remembered for a lot of different reasons. First of all, Randolph is one of the first black leaders of the early twentieth century to demand economic, social, and political freedom for African Americans, at a time when most of black America was divided on such issues. The Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey debates had reached their height during the mid-twentieth century and many felt that blacks should focus on either economic gains, which Washington advocated for, social and political advancement, which was supported largely by DuBois with his "talented tenth" ideology, or complete separatism, which Garvey promoted with the "back to Africa" movement. Randolph instead insisted on total equality for all people and regarded the philosophies of his contemporaries as being separatist and also undemocratic.

Secondly, Randolph's success in implementing non-violent direct action during the mid and late twentieth century, as a sustainable form of protest, helped to make peaceful mass demonstrations common place in American society.[1] Lastly, Randolph initiated the African American labor movement. While the Socialist party was a valuable political platform for Randolph during his early years because they claimed to advocate for the rights of all workers, they were not very affective in achieving better wages and working conditions for blacks. Randolph was concerned specifically with African American worker's rights, and after fighting for over a decade he was able to establish the nation's first predominantly black labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, (BSCP) on August 25th, 1925. This huge accomplishment would serve as a natural segue from the Labor Movement to the Civil Rights era. The first labor union of its kind, this milestone achievement helped to pave the way for a succession of monumental events that would soon follow. For instance, the establishment of a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), which sought to end wage discrimination and prejudice in hiring practices, and the eventual desegregation of all areas of American society. Over the years, a number of presidents would issue executive orders that would help to alleviate the problems of racism, segregation, and unfair wages largely paid to African Americans and poor whites. Yet, the most important detail about this era in

history is that the many changes in legislation that took place during the twentieth century, including President Roosevelt's 1941 executive order that ended racial prejudice in American defense industries and President Truman's 1948 executive order to abolish segregation in the military, would more than likely have simply amounted to nothing more than empty promises if Randolph did not apply constant political pressure to acting Commanders-in-chiefs and their governing bodies. Randolph, "talked personally with every President since Calvin Coolidge. To all he had pleaded for justice for black people. Sometimes he met with failure, sometimes with success. But every President for… forty years knew that sooner or later, Phil Randolph would be on his doorstep asking him to take political risks on behalf of black citizens" (Davis 1972: 149-50).

Randolph had a number of personal traits that made him an effective political leader. He was largely a self-taught and independent thinker. He was always smart, graduating at the top of his class from the Cookman Institute (now Bethune-Cookman College) and serving as the valedictorian of his class in 1907. When he moved to Harlem in 1911, he took advantage of the many free courses offered at the City College of New York. He valued knowledge greatly throughout his entire life. Randolph also possessed the unwavering values of honesty, integrity, and fearlessness. These important values would be exemplified repeatedly throughout his lifetime through his use of proverbs and proverbial language. I argue here, that it is, in fact, Randolph's proverbial proficiency which helped to allow his strong values to be transformed into affective political weapons. Although Randolph did not use proverbs frequently, when he did employ them, it was done to move people emotionally, and also for the purpose of persuasion; either to persuade political adversaries or to persuade political constituents.

In using proverbs politically, Randolph is drawing from a well-established tradition of proverb use by successful black leaders. This tradition is documented by folklorist, and paremiologist, Wolfgang Mieder. Mieder has written about the proverb use of Frederick Douglass, *"No Struggle, No Progress": Frederick Douglass and His Proverbial Rhetoric for Civil Rights* (2001), President Barack Obama, *"Yes We Can": Barack Obama's Proverbial Rhetoric* (2009), the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

"Making a Way Out of No Way": Martin Luther King's Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric (2010), and Congressman John Lewis (Ga.), *"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize": Congressman John Lewis's Proverbial Odyssey for Civil Rights"*(2014). These texts are important for a number of reasons. To start with, they depict the significance of proverbs and proverbial language in the national effort to end discrimination and racial prejudice. Next, they prove that proverbs are as equally important today as they were centuries ago. Additionally, Mieder's texts prove that proverbs are effective due to the fact that all of the aforementioned leaders lived to see many of their social and political goals realized. Consequently, the success of leaders like King, Obama, and Lewis will be encouraging to future generations of leaders as they examine their predecessor's language for knowledge and insight in order to continue to improve living conditions in America (see Mieder 2005 and 2019). Thus, proverbs have and always will play important roles in uniting multitudes of people in America for the cause of social justice, and it is important to realize where Randolph falls on this continuum.

According to Mieder, proverbs may be defined as "…concise traditional statements of apparent truths with currency among the folk. More elaborately stated, proverbs are short, generally known sentences of the folk that contain wisdom, truths, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and that are handed down from generation to generation" (Mieder 2004: 4). Additionally, from a stylistic perspective, there are a number of poetic devices such as: alliteration, parallelism, hyperbole, paradox, personification, and metaphor which may serve as internal and external markers. (Mieder 2004) Mieder's definition emphasizes the fact that the transmission of important ideas and values are a very significant function of proverbs. In this sense they may also be viewed as "well-established ideology" configured to a "certain form" (Fabian 1990: 29). Understanding the significant amount of moral authority that people place in proverbs helps political figures such as Randolph to employ them strategically. He often used a number of different kinds of proverbs, and surprisingly enough, the proverbs that Randolph used are not shown to have African origins. According to folklorist and paremiologist Anand Prahlad, "Based on the printed collections, we can safely say that very few proverbs in currency among African-

Americans are of African origin. A primary reason for this is that proverb texts exist as preformed linguistic units, making the retention of items difficult in an extreme situation such as slavery, where language groups were stripped of their native tongues and given new ones to replace them" (1996: 28). This explains why among all of the many different sources for proverbs that Randolph uses, none of them seem to be African.

As opposed to a chronological organization, this essay is organized according to the different sources for proverbs that Randolph employed. The first major source of proverbs for Randolph is the Bible. Biblical proverbs appear most frequently in Randolph's writings. The second source of proverbs to be discussed here are the sayings that Randolph employs that come from important political figures. The third source for proverbs that are addressed are the proverbs that Randolph uses that may be attributed to famous literary figures. In mapping out a discussion of Randolph's proverb use it is important to note that Randolph used all of the proverbs recorded here with one purpose in mind, to advance the causes of social justice, and it is in this sense that they may also be viewed as political weapons. According to Mieder, proverbs frequently materialize through economic circumstances, and in his fight for social, political, and economic freedom for African Americans, Randolph was able to coin a number of memorable sayings of his own (1993: 35), so lastly, there will be discussion of some of the proverbs that Randolph created himself.

Randolph's biblical adages comprise the majority of the extensive repertoire of sayings that he would use frequently. Many of these sayings were more than likely acquired as a young child in Florida. Randolph was Born in Crescent city Florida on April 15th, 1889, to James and Elizabeth Randolph, who were both a part of the very first generation of newly emancipated slaves. Throughout his early years, James, Sr., an African Methodist Episcopal minister, would instill in Randolph a love for learning. Randolph and his older brother James, Jr., read daily with their parent's encouragement. The Reverend James Randolph spent a lot of time searching the shelves of old bookstores in order to find texts that he felt his sons should read. He wanted his sons to be familiar with the history of the AME church as well as about every black leader in America including: "Hannibal, Crispus Attucks, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Frederick Douglass, and

Richard Allen…" (Taylor 2006: 11). They would also often spend countless hours reading the Bible, arguing about the meaning of Scripture, and also, against their parent's wishes, debating the existence of God. In addition to reading literature, they would also spend time listening to their father's sermons and the sermons of other southern black ministers which were, no doubt, filled with proverbial folk wisdom. Although Randolph would be an atheist in adulthood, southern African Methodist Episcopal values would be ingrained in him for the rest of his life.

The values that Randolph acquired in the AME church and the values that his parents instilled in him were always on full display because of his proverb proficiency. Proverbs never dominated Randolph's oratory, but he did use them at times in very strategic and calculated ways such as to emphasize important points, or to end his speeches or letters. Many of the proverbs that Randolph employed were from the Bible. The Bible is filled with well-known proverbs that can easily be used to contextualize the plight of black people in America, which is more than likely one reason they suited Randolph's purposes so well. Furthermore, Randolph knew from personal experience as a preacher's son, that biblical proverbs generally resonate with large audiences.

During his commencement address at Morgan State College in 1959. Randolph works hard to communicate some of his values to the graduating student body and he also uses important and well-known proverbs from biblical Scripture in the process. Throughout the speech he urges students to read often, to register to vote, and to also invest in black communities. Randolph ends his commencement address by employing a biblical proverb. He says, "The night, however dark, is never endless. The star of the break of dawn is not far. The hour of decision and action is now. In the words of the Psalmist, "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my strength" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 256). The first statement is an allusion to the proverb, "The darkest hour is that before the dawn" first recorded in the biblical writings of English author, Thomas Fuller in 1650 (*A Pisgah- Sight of Palestine*) (Wilson 1970: 168). It is also used on at least a few occasions by Martin Luther King, Jr. (Mieder 2010: 348) The second part of Randolph's closing statement, "I will lift mine eyes…" (KJV Psalms 121) is also biblical. The complete idea in this passage is best captured in reading the first two lines of Psalm 121

together which reads, "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help, My help cometh from the LORD which made heaven and earth" (KJV Psalms 121). The first line having become proverbial through frequent usage, is used by Randolph on a number of different occasions to instill a sense of faith in his audiences and to encourage them to stay strong in the face of adversity. It takes hearing only a very small portion of the first line of this very powerful passage to remind Randolph's audience that in difficult times, help will only come from God. Furthermore, Randolph wants his audience to realize that the fight for justice will be long and difficult, and that they will be able to continue the fight by keeping faith.

In "African Methodism and the Negro in the Western World" (1962), a speech made in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of the Bermuda African Methodist Episcopal Conference, Randolph celebrates the history of the AME church. During the speech he also emphasizes the significance of the church's role in American and African American history and he praises the AME founder, ex-slave, Richard Allen, characterizing him as a revolutionary thinker along the same lines as European, protestant reformist, Martin Luther. (Kersten and Lucander 2014). Randolph says:

> And in reaffirming his deep concern about the people, Jesus said: "I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I sent them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far." And he blessed a few loaves of bread and fishes and fed them. This strange witness of the will of God startled his followers, when he observed: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." He shocked the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, as well as his own disciples, when he declared: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 148-49)

The biblical proverb, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," (KJV

Mark 10:25) is used here to stress the important values of: leadership, selflessness, compassion, devotion, and generosity. In the biblical passage recited by Randolph, Jesus places the needs of his followers above his own needs and employs the proverb to further emphasize to his followers the importance of self-sacrifice. His followers have suffered to travel with him and Jesus ultimately rewards his disciples for their devotion. He also wants to emphasize the importance of helping others while denouncing earthly materialism. These are all values that have been fundamental to the AME church since its inception. Randolph lived his life according to these same principles which is why, in his later years, those that were still around him largely viewed him as a Christ-like figure. Many knew that his dream of black liberation started in his youth during Reconstruction. According to historian, Cynthia Taylor, "As a young man, he dreamed about 'carrying on some program for the abolition of racial discrimination' because his generation had an obligation to engage in pursuits that would benefit all people regardless of color. 'I got this from my father,' Randolph observed, 'that you must not be concerned about yourself alone in this world'" (2006:8). Randolph is trying to convince his audience to stay true to themselves and to not place value on material items. He is also imparting on them, one of his greatest strengths as a political leader, selflessness. It is well documented in history texts that Randolph would not sell out, and he could not be bought. Randolph would often shun material wealth for the cause of gaining economic and political freedom for African Americans. For instance, Randolph always refused to be over-paid as the leader of any organization that he was a part of including the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), preferring instead to pay his staff and to use excess funds to maintain daily operations. When political rivals sent him a check for an exorbitant amount money in order to try to convince him to abandon the cause, Randolph returned the check with a simple message attached, "Negro principle, not for sale" (Santino 1983: 407). During the height of economic depression, when Randolph and most of his BSCP affiliates were literally struggling to survive, Randolph would refuse a high ranking position from then New York City mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia even though the position came with an annual salary of seven thousand per year, a considerable amount of money during the Depression era. Based on these

events from Randolph's life, one can easily see that Randolph always shunned worldly riches in order to advance the movement.

According to Mieder, proverbs of all kinds, even biblical ones, when employed politically, may be used with positive or negative intentions. As Mieder asserts in *The Politics of Proverbs: From Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes*, "As can be imagined, proverbs as a powerful verbal tool in the hands of politicians become a two-edged sword, employed both as a positive and negative device to influence, if not manipulate, citizens" (1997: 4). Randolph primarily used proverbs in positive ways, but there does exist at least one instance, in which biblical proverbs are used to characterize political opponents negatively. "A New Crowd - A New Negro" (1919) was first published in Randolph's *Messenger* magazine. Randolph edited the *Messenger* with Chandler Owen from 1917 to 1928. The magazine was used to denounce prejudice, racial violence, and to promote Socialism as an answer to global capitalism and racial oppression. Inspired by the Russian Revolution and similar political uprisings that opposed traditional European hierarchies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Randolph felt that these movements were a clear sign of a global paradigm shift in political thought. (Kersten and Lucander: 2014) In "A New Crowd - A New Negro" Randolph argues that the ineptitude of the Republican party to address lynching and increasing racial violence in America has become apparent enough for blacks to finally abandon them for the Socialist party. In doing so, he characterizes this new generation of politics as representing both a "New Crowd" and a "New Negro" while blacks who still place their faith in the Republican party represent the "Old Crowd" of black leadership. In addition to representing black Republicans, it becomes evident, in part, through Randolph's use of biblical proverbs that the "Old Crowd" also represents the black church and their failure to engage in social and political issues. Randolph says:

> In the church the old crowd still preaches that "the meek will inherit the earth," "if the enemy strikes you on one side of the face, turn the other," and "you may take all this world but give me Jesus." "Dry Bones," "The Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace" and "Jonah in the Belly of the Whale," constitute the subjects of the Old

> Crowd, for black men and women who are overworked and under-paid, lynched, Jim Crowed and disfranchised—a people who are yet languishing in the dungeons of ignorance and superstition. Such then is the Old Crowd. And this is not strange to the student of history, economics, and sociology. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 123)

The proverbs, "The meek will inherit the earth" (KJV Psalm 37:11; KJV Mathew 5:5) and "If the enemy strikes you on one side of the face, turn the other cheek," (KJV Mathew 5:39),[2] are both used negatively in this instance by Randolph to represent issues with the black church that he felt would eventually be detrimental to all African Americans; namely the black church's complacency with pulpit politics and blind faith in the Republican party, and their ineffectiveness in addressing racial violence. As Randolph asserts, the New Crowd "…would not send notes after a Negro is lynched" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 124).

The "A New Crowd - A New Negro" issue was published immediately following the "red summer" of 1919 when at least 25 bloody race riots erupted across several states and nearly fourty cities. Nearly three hundred African Americans were murdered and at least five whites were killed. According to Taylor "…Randolph and Owen judged the Negro Church's apolitical, antiracial position as a contributing factor in the riots" (2006: 49). Randolph and Owen knew that racial prejudice was the primary cause of the riots, and according to them breeding grounds for race hatred were "American institutions like social clubs and groups, schools, newspapers, and the Christian Church, … [and] as part of the Christian Church, the Negro church was just as guilty" (Taylor 2006: 49).

In addition to publishing the article, Randolph and Owen printed a political cartoon alongside it using the proverb from Mathew 5:39 as a caption.[3] "Above the caption 'Following the Advice of the Old Crowd Negro' are three figures: Booker T. Washington saying, 'Be modest and unassuming;' W.E.B. Dubois saying, 'Close ranks. Let us forget our grievances;' and a third figure in clerical collar and garb saying, 'When they smite thee on one cheek –Turn the other.'" A second cartoon above the caption 'The New Crowd Negro Making America Safe for Himself' depicts a young Negro driving an armored car while shooting at

soldiers, saying, 'Since the government won't stop mob violence, I'll take a hand'" (Taylor 2006: 49). Although they are political cartoons, Randolph seriously believes that the black church should play a much larger role in putting an end to lynchings and mob violence. As a young child Randolph would witness his father, Reverend James Randolph Sr., prevent the lynching of a black man who was accused of molesting a white woman. After hearing that a lynch mob was on its way to the county jail, Randolph's father tucked a handgun underneath his jacket and gathered as many church members as he could to go and meet the angry mob. His wife, Elizabeth, with young Asa and James, Jr., would keep watch at home on the front porch with a shotgun resting comfortably across her lap. Randolph, Sr. successfully averted the mob and no one was hurt or injured, but the notion that the church should play an active role in preventing lynching stayed with Randolph all of his life, and he fought to instill this notion in others. At no point would Randolph ever advocate "turning the other cheek." (Anderson 1972: 42; Taylor 2006: 7)

Randolph would publish another article the same year entitled "The Failure of the Negro Church" (1919) in which he would criticize the black church for rejecting labor unionization and also for placing too much emphasis on increasing its own profits. In the article Randolph asserts that, "Collections occupy three-fourths of the time of most services. Sermons are selected with a view to impressing the members with the importance of the injunction that it 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 125). Randolph exemplifies his criticism of the church with the popular biblical proverb, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (KJV Acts 20:35). While this proverb is generally viewed as containing a positive message, it is used in this instance negatively, in order to illustrate ways that the wealthy black church, as an institution, is effectively stifling the social, political, and economic progress of African Americans. Many felt that Randolph's frequent attacks on the black church signaled his conversion to atheism which Randolph, at the time, would neither confirm nor deny in order to prevent the loss of supporters.

Regardless of Randolph's position on the existence of God, Randolph still felt that the black church offered a spiritual model for what he had hoped to achieve for African Americans in the Labor Movement, and many agree that his use of biblical proverbs

illustrate this fact. As Kersten and Lang assert, "To have the [railway] porters build a union as they had helped members of their racial group build powerful churches was the motive behind Randolph's use of religious appeal and terminology… 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free' was the heading for most of the bulletins sent out by national headquarters of the Brotherhood and [was also] used on the cover page of the Brotherhood's publication *The Black Worker*" (2015: 24-25). Overall, Randolph felt that religion would always be a major source of spiritual strength for most African Americans, and he also knew that he could easily tap into this force whenever he wanted to by citing biblical proverbs as powerful forms of political rhetoric.

In addition to biblical proverbs, Randolph also employed the well-known proverbial quotations of famous political figures such as: Karl Marx, Alexander Hamilton, Booker T. Washington, Henry Highland Garnet, and Frederick Douglass. The sayings that Randolph chose are as equally significant as the political figures that he borrowed them from. In a *Messenger* article entitled "Lynching; Capitalism Its Cause; Socialism Its Cure" (1919) Randolph, in an appeal for Socialism says, "Black and white workers unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have the world to gain" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 122). The proverb is taken from section four of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848). The original passage reads, "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." Randolph's spin on these famous lines illustrates the faith that he placed in Marx, and it also illustrates the extent to which he was familiar with Marx's writings. It is well documented that in his early years, Randolph read Marx like most children would read fairy tales. Throughout Randolph's early adulthood he remained highly engrossed in Marx and there is no doubt that Marx provided Randolph with a model for fighting for the rights of the working class in the United States.

From Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the United States, Randolph acquires the proverbial quotation "The power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will." It is written into the constitution of Massachusetts by Hamilton in 1780 and seems to encapsulate the foundational tenet of Chapter 2, Section I, article 13. The opening of this section reads:

> NEXT to permanency in office, nothing can contribute more to the independence of the judges than a fixed provision for their support. The remark made in relation to the President is equally applicable here. In the general course of human nature, A POWER OVER A MAN'S SUBSISTENCE AMOUNTS TO A POWER OVER HIS WILL. And we can never hope to see realized in practice, the complete separation of the judicial from the legislative power, in any system which leaves the former dependent on pecuniary resources on the occasional grants of the latter." (*The Avalon Project, Yale*)

This section of the constitution establishes the separation of the judicial and legislative branches of government and the proverbial quotation in this case is employed to emphasize the fact that this stark division of powers is imposed in order to prevent any degree of interdependence among the various branches of government. Randolph's use illustrates how well-versed he was in political science. He would employ this proverb on at least three notable occasions, in *The Messenger* article entitled, "The Negro in Politics" (1919), at another time when he spoke before the U.S. Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce (1934), and in an article entitled, "March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro" (1944).

In "The Negro in Politics" Randolph is basically advocating for the Socialist party as a solution to many problems that African Americans faced during Reconstruction which included: racial violence, disenfranchisement, joblessness, and industrial capitalism. Randolph feels that if African Americans continue to put their moral and financial support in either the Democratic or Republican parties, they will only continue to see the same results. Randolph says, "Negro leaders, generally, have been creatures of the Republican or Democratic parties, which hold them in leash and prevent them from initiating consideration of the appointment policy. Aptly, and truly too, has it been said that the 'power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will' or expressed more popularly 'he who pays the fiddler will call the tune' (169). Randolph often liked to stack these two proverbs together. The second folk proverb, 'he who pays the fiddler will call the tune' has been documented as early as 1895 and is much more common; not

being attributed to any single individual (Speake 2015: 244; Wilson 1970: 615). In some ways Randolph's use of "the power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will" is a direct reflection of Hamilton's reason for employing it in the constitution. Hamilton wants to emphasize the dangers of granting too much power to any single branch of government, while Randolph employs it to emphasize that African Americans are granting too much power to the Republican and Democratic parties who have been largely unsuccessful in fighting on their behalf. In other words, if African Americans continue to financially support the same political factions then they would continue to be pigeonholed.

The scenario is slightly different, but the message is the same when Randolph speaks before the U.S. Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce in 1934. Randolph is advocating for A bill to amend the 1934 Railway Labor Act, because the bill would greatly help the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) chances of gaining union recognition and collective bargaining rights. Randolph must convince the committee that if the bill is not passed, then the Railway Labor Act will be in danger of being severely weakened. In an authentic display of true diplomacy, Randolph would employ the two proverbs at the most opportune moment. Randolph says, "If you eliminate that phase of the bill, permitting the companies to pay the representatives of the company unions, then you really destroy the power of the bill, because if the companies are able to pay the representatives of the company union, then they will be able to intimidate the employees and practically prevent them from joining legitimate and bona-fide unions. So, that I think is basic, because the power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will, and usually the man who pays the fiddler calls the tunes, so the Pullman Company by paying these representatives of the company union, they make them do just what they want done" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 62-63). According to Anthropologist, Ruth Finnegan, in some African societies proverbs are often used for the purpose of deliberation. She says, "In court and elsewhere there are also frequent occasions for using a proverb to smooth over a disagreement or bring a dispute to a close. According to the Yoruba proverb, 'A counsellor who understands proverbs soon sets matters right,'[4] and a difficult law case is often ended by the public citation of an apt proverb which

performs much the same generalizing function as citing legal precedents in other societies" (Finnegan 1970: 28).[5] The proverbs that Randolph employs are not African in origin, but this information is evidence that there is a universal element to the way that they function. Finnegan also explains that proverbs may also help one to maintain composure during times of social conflict. She says, "Though proverbs can occur in very many different kinds of contexts, they seem to be particularly important in situations where there is both conflict and, at the same time, some obligation that this conflict should not take on too open and personal a form" (1970:30). It is well documented that Randolph never used profanity or "lost his cool" during intense battles in courtrooms or during White House visits. Therefore, one may assert that proverbs may have helped Randolph to maintain his poise.

A Decade later Randolph would use the same two proverbs again in "March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro" (1944). According to historians Andrew E. Kersten and David Lucander this represents Randolph's clearest articulation of the aims of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) because Randolph's philosophy is so thoroughly explained and his political goals are so intricately mapped out. In this article he argues for a number of things including: unity among the black race, black unionization, equal employment, the wide-spread use of non-violent direct action, mass social pressure in the form of marches, and a non-partisan Negro political block. In a subsection entitled *Political* Randolph articulates what he sees as a need for a black non-partisan political bloc. Randolph says:

> It is common knowledge that Negroes as Democrats do not amount to much. They can get but little done for Negroes. Similarly, Negroes as Republicans are not very strong and their voice is seldom heeded. Negroes as Socialists or Communist are helpless, but when Negro Republicans, and Democrats step forward in a united front expressed in a powerful non-partisan political bloc, they will be heard and heeded by political boss or mayor, governor, president, Senate or House Committees. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 219)

Randolph is still arguing for increased African American involvement in politics, only now he is abandoning the notion of

partisanship all together. As Randolph continues, he reiterates his point by employing the two proverbs, and they are as equally applicable. The concluding paragraph of this section reads:

> Therefore, upwards of 15 millions of Negroes need not forever play the role of political mendicants. They have power if they will mobilize by registering in mass for non-partisan political action. Such a political bloc should be financed by Negroes entirely. It is still true that the power over man's subsistence is the power of his will, and he who pays the fiddler calls the tune. Therefore, such a non-partisan political bloc should not accept any money from Republican, Democratic, Socialist or Communist Party. It should be entirely free. It cannot be free if it is subsidized by any politicians. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 219-20)

Randolph envisions a black voting body that is united and fully able to advocate for the needs of the African American community. Randolph employs the two proverbs to emphasize the notion that this black political bloc would need to maintain its economic freedom in order to continue to be effective. "The power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will" rang true for Hamilton in the late 18th century and it is remarkable that it would still be equally relevant for Randolph nearly two centuries later.

Earlier in his career, Randolph would use a proverb that was coined by former slave and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. Douglass's successful struggle for freedom would be used as a theme in a 1926 *Bulletins* leaflet for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). *Bulletins* were one-page publications that were created to supplement the *Messenger* because they were much less expensive to produce (Hawkins 2015: 105-06). This particular *Bulletins* edition features a sculpture entitled *The Chrysalis* which depicts a kneeling black minstrel performer, hat in hand, begging for change. Emerging from the minstrel is a respectable, dignified, looking black man wearing a suit. One caption reads: "Douglass fought for the abolition of chattel slavery and today we fight for economic freedom. The time has passed when a grown-up black man should beg a grown up white man for anything" (Hawkins 2015: 105). Another feature of this leaflet is a short letter written to BSCP members from Randolph which reads, "Ye Brotherhood men, hold high your banner of solidarity.

Remember that a quitter never wins and a winner never quits. Remember that he who would be free must himself first strike the blow. Let us stand firm and be unafraid. Pay your dues and assessment. The Mediation Board will call us soon. If we fight and faint not, we shall reap our just reward in due season" (Kersten and Lang 2015: 105). Frederick Douglass and the abolitionist cause serve as the theme, while the adage embodies the primary message. The proverb "He who would be free must himself strike the first blow" is generally credited to Douglass (see Mieder 2001: 229-231 for his use), even though he was certainly not the first to use it. In fact, he was not even the first abolitionist to use it. Henry Highland Garnet employs this proverb in his "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" (1843). Garnet's address would first appear as a preface to the second edition of abolitionist David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1830). In the address Garnet says, "It is an old and true saying, that 'if hereditary bondmen would be free, they must themselves strike the blow.'" More than likely, as an ode to his abolitionist predecessor, Douglass would employ the same proverb in a famous speech that he would deliver on the streets of Rochester, New York on March 2nd, 1863 entitled, "Men of Color, to Arms." In the speech Douglass says, "Words are now useful only as they stimulate to blows. The office of speech now is only to point out when, where, and how to strike to the best advantage…'Now or never.' Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. 'Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.'" In using Douglass as a theme and employing the same proverb, Randolph is able to effectively communicate to porters that the fight for union representation would be a herculean battle, but certainly no more difficult than the struggle for emancipation. Randolph is also emphasizing the fact that it is a battle that they must initiate and fight themselves.

There are also other proverbs included in this leaflet as well. For instance, "A quitter never wins and a winner never quits" (Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro 2012: 277) as well as a number of truncated proverbs. For instance, "Fight and faint not" and "We shall reap our just reward" which are both biblical references to verses that appear in the book of Galatians. The actual Bible verse reads "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (KJV Galatians (6:9). It may also be a

truncated version of the proverb "For whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (KJV Galatians 6:7). When Randolph employs proverbs even in truncated forms, he does so very strategically and they are always meaningful.

In "The March on Washington Movement and the War" (1943), Randolph is warning all involved in the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) that non-violent direct action would not be an easy tactic to implement, especially in the face of extreme violence, but fear of retaliation would jeopardize the entire cause. In the process of communicating this message, Randolph alludes to an important passage from Garnet's "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" (1843). Randolph says, "a people who have fear in their hearts are doomed to be slaves" (Taylor 2006: 163). Exactly, one hundred years before Randolph, Garnet would use somewhat similar language in speaking about the abysmal emotional and psychological state of the newly arrived Africans to the new world. Garnet says, "But, they came with broken hearts, from their beloved native land, and were doomed to unrequited toil, and deep degradation." For Garnet, his address is a call to awaken the spirits of African Americans who remain in bondage in the South. Unlike the newly arrived Africans, Garnet wants them to forget their troubles and unite for the purpose of freeing themselves. Perhaps Randolph's variation of the passage is a centennial celebration of Garnet's famous address which was delivered exactly one hundred years prior. After all, it was near this time that Randolph would send King and other civil rights leaders to be trained in non-violent direct action by the Highlander Folk School which was built and dedicated to Garnet in 1932.

In 1964, Randolph would receive a humanitarian award presented to him by the Israel labor organization Histadrut whose name translates as "General Federation of Laborers of the Land of Israel." According to Kersten and Lucander, "As a trade unionist and believer in independence for the colonial world, Randolph looked to Israel as an example in nation building…Randolph saw great value in Israeli collective farming practices and the potential of consumer co-ops to empower the working class" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 342). In Randolph's acceptance speech he would employ a proverb that was popularized by Booker T. Washington who used it in his "Atlanta Compromise" (1895). "Cast down your

bucket where you are" may not have been a proverb at the time, but after gaining international fame, for most, it only takes this brief sentence to convey Washington's entire message. When Washington says "Cast down your bucket were you are," it is a way of describing in metaphorical terms, to an all-white audience, the need for African-Americans to abandon their fight for social and political freedom and to focus instead on improving their own economic circumstances by concentrating on the agricultural and industrial trades. This was the overarching goal of Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Similarly, Randolph would employ the proverb because he recognizes in Histadrut, a global struggle for democracy, independence, freedom, and the universal struggle to overcome the colonial condition. For Randolph, Washingtonian philosophy represents a very important and necessary first step towards independence. Of this struggle Randolph says, "For the Afro-Asian students to watch the operation of the cooperative farms or consumer co-ops, or trade unions at work in factories and shops, to look at the projects for irrigation and the experiments in scientific agriculture, and to discuss how the same techniques may be used back home in Nigeria or Kenya or Ceylon, in fact, in practically all of the Afro-Asian countries where freedom is new and fragile and the problems are big, is a valuable lesson in self-help. Association by African and Asian leaders with the purpose and spirit, as well as the pragmatic life of Histadrut, is a basic lesson in creative experience. The heart of the lesson is the wisdom of one's 'letting his bucket down where he is'" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 344). The proverb in this case more than likely resonated well with every audience member that had knowledge of Washington and what he was able to accomplish at Tuskegee.

Randolph also uses proverbs from famous literary figures. This is not surprising considering how widely read Randolph was. As a youth he would read a great deal of American and English literature including: "Charles Dickens, John Keats, Jane Austen, Charles Darwin, and William Shakespeare" (Kersten 2007: 3). One quote from English poet John Donne that Randolph employs comes from Randolph's magazine the *Black Worker* which was used by Randolph to keep porters notified of all BSCP activities and to alert them to any Pullman Company litigation that he felt they should be aware of (Taylor 2006). In an article entitled "Brotherhood and Our Struggle Today" (1929), Randolph says,

"no man can live unto himself alone. Workers must organize, fight and hang together or they will hang separately" (Taylor 2006: 114-15). The first part of this statement is a variation of a passage that was originally written by Donne in his *Devotion Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) in a subsection entitled "Meditation XVII." The original statement reads, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (Donne 574-75). The very same line of this section also contains another famous phrase that has also become a well-known proverb, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee" (Donne 574-74). One could easily make the inference that Donne's musings of life and death were on Randolph's mind when he employed the proverb. In fact, when Randolph combines the two statements, Donne's "No man is an island," and his own statement "hang together or hang separately," in a philosophical sense, Randolph's message begins to mirror Donne's. While Donne is explaining every man's responsibility to contribute to humanity, Randolph is explaining the role that every porter must play in contributing to black labor unionization. Likewise, in the fight for unionization the proverbial death of one porter could very well mean the literal death of the entire union.[6]

Randolph also found proverbial wisdom in Shakespearean lore. In fact, he was well versed in it. When Randolph first moved to Harlem in 1911, he founded a Shakespearean society called Ye Friends of Shakespeare. According to historian, Cornelius L. Bynum, "This acting troupe, which included Randolph's future wife [Lucille Green], performed scenes from *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, the *Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet* in Harlem churches and community centers. These productions helped to draw Randolph into the social life of the community, but they also informed his evolving worldview" (2010: 58-59). A proverb that Randolph says helped to shape his life and worldview comes from *Hamlet*, "above all to thine own self be true then canst be false to no man" (Bynum 2010: 59). It is a proverb that Randolph would perform countless times in front of audiences and is derived from a few lines in Act I, scene III when Lord Polonius says to Laertes, "This above all: to thine ownself be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." Thinking about his life retrospectively years later in an interview Randolph says that "throughout his life and career he

strove to abide by Polonius's admonition" (Bynum 2010: 59). Randolph's desire to stay true to himself was always made evident by his actions. From his early years of adulthood Randolph was devoted to ending racial and economic disparity for African Americans even if it meant creating financial losses for himself. Randolph "lost his porter job at Consolidated Gas Company for trying to organize a union, then he got fired from a waiter position for doing the same thing. Randolph was content to tread water, promoting the cause while living hand to mouth" (Welky 2014: 20).

Randolph also uses a number of common sayings or proverbs that were already in circulation, but not necessarily attached to any important figure. When people are already familiar with certain proverbs, they often require no build up, and little or no explanation. For instance, in *The Messenger* in an article entitled "The Issues -The Negro and the Parties" (1924), Randolph employed a variation of the well-known proverb "Last hired, first fired" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro 2012: 121).[7] In the article Randolph is urging new black voters in Harlem to support the Progressive Party as opposed to Democrats or Republicans. He says, "The [Robert] La Follette Progressives are committed to a plan of social legislation which is calculated to meet the problems of unemployment. Negroes will benefit from any policy which will bring a solution of unemployment, for they are the first fired and the last hired" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 176). The order here is reversed, but the message remains the same.

Randolph would employ the proverb again in a testimony given before the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare in 1963. In this testimony Randolph argues for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). Randolph says, "It was with the beginning of the defense industry, when 'No Help Wanted' signs changed to 'Help Wanted—White' that the indignant organization of Negroes to gain a fairer share in the nation's reviving economy spurted. It took the combination of a wartime manpower shortage and the threat of a march on Washington to secure Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941, and the establishment of the Presidents Committee on Fair Employment Practices. But as soon as the national war emergency was over—and Democracy safe—the old, national pattern of 'last hired, first fired' crept back" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 104). Randolph established the National

Council for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) in 1943 and would continue to work to make the FEPC permanent for over two decades. Due to Randolph's continued efforts the FEPC would finally become permanent with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, only under a different name. It would now be known as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Thus, Randolph did see his plan come to fruition. Nearly six decades after being established from blueprints that Randolph helped to create, the EEOC is still actively working to make the "last hired, first fired" sentiment a thing of the past.[8]

Another common proverb that Randolph expresses is "familiarity breeds contempt" (Speake 2015: 105). Randolph employs the proverb in The *Messenger* in an article entitled "Segregation in the Public Schools" (1924). In this essay, Randolph is advocating for the desegregation of the public-school system, and the proverb helps him to explain the psychology behind segregation. Randolph says,

> The plain people are permitted only periodically, on some august or state occasion, to view the person of the King. It is ever shrouded in the halo of mystery, thereby investing the ruler with the power, authority and aspect of the supernatural. In democracies and republics, too, those who own for a living struggle to be worshipped and obeyed as little uncrowned kings by those who work for a living. In order to be so regarded, they avoid contact with the despised common herd. True is the old adage: familiarity breeds contempt. It is a fact of common knowledge to all students of the history of the slave regime that the slave owners prevented, upon pain and severe punishment, the association of free Negroes with Negro slaves. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 130).

In the very same essay Randolph employs another well-known proverb, "Show me the company you keep and I will tell you who you are" (Mieder, Kingsbury, and harder 1992: 109). He usess the proverb to describe some of the drawbacks of maintaining segregated schools. The passage reads:

> Assuming, for the sake of argument, that there are persons in society better than they, criminals undoubtedly could

> improve themselves through contact with the so-called "best people." Imitation in society, according to [Gabriel] Tarde, is one of the greatest forces for modern progress. Certainly the association of criminals with their betters could not make them worse. The old saying "show me the company you keep and I will tell you who you are," carries with it the idea that if one associates with criminals, he is a criminal; if he associates with respectable people, he is respectable. It goes further, and implies that if one is respectable and associates with bad people, he will become bad. But the reverse should also be true, viz.: that if the "no-good" associate with the good, they will become good. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 131)

All in all, Randolph uses the proverb "familiarity breeds contempt" to elucidate the psychology behind segregation while he uses the proverb "show me the company you keep and I will tell you who you are" in order to explain an important reason why this kind of psychology and practice should be impermissible in the United States.

In 1944 Randolph was asked to run for Congress for the Twenty-Second Congressional District of New York which included Harlem. Randolph's previous two attempts at public office had failed, so he declined this invitation and chose to endorse his friend Adam Clayton Powell Jr. instead. (Kersten and Lucander 2014) In a speech entitled "Why I did Not Elect to Run for Congress," he would explain his decision, citing his distaste for politics and his desire to continue the fight for social and political equality as primary reasons. Randolph uses a well-known proverb to capture some of these sentiments. He says, "I want to remain free and independent to pursue the course I think best in doing my humble bit in the interest of winning freedom, justice and democracy for the Negro people in America and the world. (…) In politics, as in other things, there is no such thing as one getting something for nothing. The pay-off may involve compromises of various types that may strike at the basic convictions and ideals and principles that one has held dear all of his life" (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 189-90). Randolph's variant of the proverb, "You don't get something for nothing" (Speake 2015: 190) effectively

emphasizes the fact that a third political run would impose a number of trade-offs that Randolph was simply not willing to make.

In 1969, in an interview for *Ebony* magazine, speaking with journalist Phyl Garland, Randolph uses the common proverbial expression "to stand upon one's shoulders." This expression has been used by a number of black political leaders over the years to describe the process by which political gains are achieved. Randolph feels that all of the advances made by the leaders that lived before him paved the way for himself and others like him to continue the struggle for equality. In what would be one of Randolph's last recorded interviews he says:

> "We are creatures of history," he declares to his audience of one, "for every historical epoch has its roots in a preceding epoch. The black militants of today are standing upon the shoulders of the 'new Negro radicals' of my day—the '20s,'30s and '40s. We stood upon the shoulders of the civil rights fighters of the Reconstruction era and they stood upon the shoulders of the black abolitionist. These are the interconnections of history and they play their role in the course of development." (Garland 1969: 31)

Even though Randolph is not talking about the history of proverbs or proverbial expressions, the proverbial expression that Randolph uses certainly tells an interesting story. Other civil rights leaders have also used the proverbial expression "to stand upon one's shoulders," one of the most notable and earliest being Frederick Douglass. In one instance, Douglass employs a variation to describe what he sees as the sole task of a democracy, which is to be led by the people. Douglass says, "keep no man from the ballot box or jury box or the cartridge box, because of his color—exclude no woman from the ballot box because of her sex. Let the government of the country rest securely down upon the shoulders of the whole nation; let there be no shoulder that does not bear up its proportion of the burdens of the government" (Mieder 2001: 91). In addition to Douglass, Congressman Lewis (Ga.) (Mieder 2014: 387) and President Obama also used the expression from time to time. Obama proclaims that he "stands on the shoulders of giants" in reference to Lincoln, Douglass and other influential political leaders that fought for social justice (Mieder 2009: 116).

This expression speaks to the significance of being knowledgeable about history. As these leaders demonstrate in using the expression, it is impossible to realize whose proverbial shoulders one is standing on, if one is not cognizant of the past.

The most well-known and celebrated of Randolph's proverbs appear in a speech entitled "A Vision of Freedom" (1969). The address would be delivered at a gala at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York in honor of him on his 80th birthday. Bayard Rustin, a close friend, and key coordinator behind the March on Washington, organized the event. Randolph's speech would be delivered in front of important business leaders, labor leaders, government officials and dozens of influential civil rights leaders including Coretta Scott King (Kersten and Lucander 2014). Throughout Randolph's speech he discusses many of his life accomplishments and urges all of the leaders in attendance to continue the struggle for equality. The proverbs that Randolph employs may not have been proverbs at the time, but a half century later, they appear in nearly every text written about his life. In the closing of the speech Randolph says:

> Salvation for the Negro masses must come from within. Freedom is never granted: it is won. Justice is never given: it is exacted. But in our struggle we must draw for strength upon something that far transcends the boundaries of race. We must draw for strength upon the capacity of human beings to act with humanity towards one another. (Kersten and Lucander 2014: 110)

Randolph was not the first civil rights leader to use the proverb "Freedom is never granted: it is won." As a proverbial quotation it was first used by Martin Luther King, Jr. in his book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967) In King's text the saying is originally worded as, "Freedom is not given, it is won" (King 1967: 19; Mieder 2010: 313). Paremiologist Wolfgang Mieder devotes an entire chapter in his text on King to this very saying. The chapter is entitled "'Freedom is not given, it is won': Martin Luther King's Proverbial Quotation" (2010: 143-145). This is a very important civil rights quote that has since become proverbial by Randolph's later use of the phrase. Likewise, Randolph's second saying, "Justice is never given: it is exacted"

is a variation of the "freedom" proverb and has more than likely not yet become proverbial.

A variation of Randolph's statement also appears in the epitaph of his first biography, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* by Jervis Anderson (1972). It reads:

> Salvation for a race, nation or class must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted. Freedom and justice must be struggled for by the oppressed of all lands and races, and the struggle must be continuous, for freedom is never a final fact, but a continuing evolving process to higher and higher levels of human, social, economic, political and religious relationships.

In both cases the proverb stays the same while the wording of the messages are slightly different. Randolph uses the sayings to articulate a universal call for activism, which speaks to the very core of his philosophy. From the very start of his career as an activist, Randolph did not only advocate for the rights of African Americans, but he believed that he was improving America for people of all races. By improving conditions for black people, he knew that the restraints imposed on society by capitalism would also slowly dissipate, and that the dehumanizing effects of industrialization would also gradually be abated. Above all, Randolph wanted the newly found empowerment of working-class African Americans to gradually permeate all facets of American culture. Randolph's statement "Freedom is never granted: it is won. Justice is never given: it is exacted" is intended to serve as a rallying call for all people to unite in the name of freedom and justice in order to make the mirages created by prejudice and divisive politics much more transparent.

In conclusion, while this essay is not a comprehensive collection of every proverb that Randolph has ever used, it does offer a glimpse at some of the proverbs, and his methodology for employing them. Overall, evidence illustrates that Randolph used them in very calculated ways. He used them strategically and politically, in order to make people listen to him and to convince others of the significance of his message. In this sense, Randolph's proverbs may be viewed as political weapons. If he felt strongly enough about any issue, he would use them. Another thing that is fascina-

ting about Randolph's proverb use is that it clearly illustrates how well read he really was and how well-versed he was in biblical Scripture, classic literature, and American and world history. He would often offer his audiences simple sayings that also contained a lot of historical significance. A huge part of the process of employing proverbs for Randolph was contextualization, meaning that he would oftentimes match proverbs to certain situations with dead-on precision. A. Philip Randolph was truly a proverb master.

Notes

[1]According to historian, Cynthia Taylor, "Randolph explained that his 'advocacy of the philosophy of nonviolence as one of the highways for fundamental social change' was inspired by the life of Jesus Christ as well as by Gandhi. But even before he had heard of Gandhi, Randolph attributed his 'belief in the moral and spiritual power of non-violence from his father who was a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church' and a man of 'high moral commitments'" (2006: 158-159).

[2] Both Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr also used the proverb, "If the enemy strikes you on one side of the face, turn the other cheek," (KJV Mathew 5:39) in a variety of ways. In some instances, King uses it to advocate for non-violent direct action (Mieder 2010: 246-247) while Douglass uses it most often to characterize what he views as the enslaved African American mind-set (Mieder 2001: 153-154).

[3] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. also discusses the significance of Randolph and Owen's political cartoons in *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow* (2019: 276).

[4] Patrick Ibekwe also cites a variation of this Yoruba proverb in *Wit and Wisdom of Africa: Proverbs from Africa and the Caribbean* (1998). It reads, "A wise person who is skilled in the use of proverbs settles disputes" (153).

[5] John Messenger "The Role of Proverbs in a Nigerian Judicial System" (1959) also cites the use of proverbs to settle disputes in Nigerian culture, asserting that they are used in a wide variety of ways including "…as a method of gaining favor in court" (64).

[6] Martin Luther King, Jr. cited the same passage from Donne's Devotion Upon Emergent Occasions (1624) profusely. Wolfgang Mieder documents Douglass's and King's use of Donne in at least ten separate speeches and sermons that King delivered between 1955 and 1968. King uses Donne's proverbs much like Randolph; to encourage his followers to join him in the struggle for civil rights. Surprisingly, King attributes the message to Donne in every single instance (Mieder 2010: 410-414; for Douglass see Mieder 2001: 410-414).

[7] Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro, The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs (2012) document the use of the proverb "last, hired, first fired" as early as 1918.

[8] One may only guess about whether or not King had Randolph's message to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare in mind when he uses the proverb, "last hired, first fired" the very same year in what would be regarded as one of King's

many landmark speeches. King says, "We've been pushed around so long; we've been the victims of lynch mobs so long; we've been the victims of economic injustice so long – still the last hired and the first fired all over this nation" (Mieder 2010: 345).

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