



George S. Schuyler: A Name Not Heard During Black History Month

Black History Month is here. Familiar names will be bandied about. Sadly, but, given the ideologically charged nature of these four weeks, all too predictably, the name of George S. Schuyler is one that you can bet you will not hear springing from anyone's lips.

The reason is simple: Schuyler, in spite of being one of the most incisive and compelling popular writers of the 20th century, wasn't just black; he was black and *conservative*.

Born in 1895 in upstate New York, Schuyler would eventually become associated with "the Harlem Renaissance." And from the 1920s through the 1960s, he wrote and edited the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the largest black newspaper publications in the country.



Besides being an ardent anti-communist, Schuyler also had little good to say about those of his contemporaries who led the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Although he had been a tireless champion of racial equality all of his life, he regarded the plans of the civil rights activists as inimical to liberty.

For instance, while it was still a bill in Congress, Schuyler argued powerfully against what would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Schuyler readily conceded that the white majority's attitude toward the black minority was "morally wrong, nonsensical, unfair, un-Christian and cruelly unjust." Still, because "it remain[ed] the majority attitude," the federal Civil Rights law would be but "another typically American attempt to use the force of law to compel the public to drastically change."

"New countries," Schuyler observed, "have a passion for novelty, and a country like America, which grew out of conquest, immigration, revolution and civil war, is prone to speed social change by law, or try to do so, on the assumption that by such legerdemain it is possible to make people better by *force*." (Emphasis in original.)

However, this belief "has been the cause of much misery and injustice throughout the ages." In reality, "it takes lots of time to change social mores, especially with regard to such hardy perennials as religion, race and nationality, to say nothing of social classes."

Although race relations weren't where Schuyler wanted for them to be at that time, he was quick to point out that they had improved markedly since slavery had ended. He was equally quick to observe that "civil rights laws, state or federal, have had little to do with" such changes. Rather, it is "custom" that "has dictated the pace of compliance" with those civil rights laws that would have otherwise



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remained “dormant in the law books.”

The “principal case” that Schuyler makes against proposed legislation pertained to “the dangerous purpose it may serve.” Such a law “is still another encroachment by the central government on the federalized structure of our society.”

Schuyler was blunt: “Armed with this law enacted to improve the lot of a tenth of the population, the way will be opened to enslave the rest of the populace.” A federal civil rights law of the sort that was passed in 1964 strikes “a blow at the very basis of American society” — i.e. “state sovereignty and individual liberty and preference.”

Schuyler insisted on being even more graphic: “We are fifty separate countries, as it were, joined together for mutual advantage, security, advancement, and protection. It was never intended that we should be bossed by a monarch, elected or born. When this happens, the United States as a free land will cease to exist.”

His position on this one issue alone is sufficient to show that Schuyler was not, and never cared to be, what some have called a “race man.” He relished his individuality, and cherished the liberty that America’s Founders advanced.

Of those race men, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and, particularly, Malcolm X, Schuyler had choice words.

He lauded King’s objectives but deplored his motives. When King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, Schuyler was outraged. He wrote that King deserved, not this prize, but “the Lenin Prize,” for “it is no mean feat for one so young to acquire sixty Communist-front citations.” Schuyler remarked that “Dr. King’s principal contribution to world peace has been to roam the country like some sable typhoid-Mary, infecting the mentally disturbed with the perversion of Christian doctrine, and grabbing lecture fees from the shallow-pated.”

Furthermore, King’s “incitement packed jails with Negroes and some whites, getting them beaten, bitten and firehosed, thereby bankrupting communities, raising bail and fines, to the vast enrichment of Southern Law and order.”

Schuyler debated Malcolm X on more than one occasion. He had little regard for Malcolm, who he referred to as “one of the high priests of Black Power.” Schuyler says of Malcolm that he “was a bold, outspoken, ignorant man of no occupation,” just one of the many “mediocrities, criminals, plotters, and poseurs” that had come to fill the ranks of this “past generation” of “black ‘leaders.’”

Upon meeting Malcolm for the first time, Schuyler admits that he “was initially astonished by his wide ignorance.” He explains that when Malcolm “launched into an excoriation of white people in the name of Islam, I called his attention to the fact that the majority of Moslems were whites.” Malcolm, he continued, was no better prepared to reply to this revelation than he was Schuyler’s assertion that Muslims were more involved in the African slave trade than were Europeans. “He was surprised to learn this,” Schuyler recalled.

Schuyler also informed Malcolm that whatever “anti-white” and “anti-Christian” nonsense he spouted, American blacks are “the healthiest” and “the wealthiest” blacks anywhere in the world. They “have the most property” and are “the best educated” and “best informed group of Negroes” on the planet. This includes, Schuyler was quick to note, all of those blacks from “the Muslim countries.”

Some years after his death, the movement to memorialize Malcolm X was well under way. Schuyler said



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that “we might as well call out the school children to celebrate the birthday of Benedict Arnold.”

Schuyler added: “It is not hard to imagine the ultimate fate of a society in which a pixilated criminal like Malcolm X is almost universally praised, and has hospitals, schools, and highways named in his memory!”

George Schuyler didn’t just expound individuality. He lived it. But because he didn’t hesitate to pummel the sacred cows of his day — and ours — his name will not be among those tossed about this Black History Month. Yet maybe this is fitting, for Schuyler himself never would’ve been remembered as a great *black* American.

Being remembered as a man — simply, a man — who was devoted to the truth would have been enough for him.



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