

MRS. CHARLOTTA BASS

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, as Vice Presidential Candidate of the Progressive Party. Made to National Committee of Progressive Party at 37 S. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, Sunday, March 30, 1952.

I stand before you with great pride.

This is a historic moment in American political life.

Historic for myself, for my people, for all women.

For the first time in the history of this nation a political party has chosen a Negro woman for the second highest office in the land.

It is a great honor to be chosen as a pioneer. And a great responsibility. But I am strengthened by thousands on thousands of pioneers who stand by my side and look over my shoulder--those who have led the fight for freedom--those who led the fight for women's rights--those who have been in the front line fighting for peace and justice and equality everywhere. How they must rejoice in this great understanding which here joins the cause of peace and freedom.

These pioneers, the living and the dead, men and women, black and white, give me strength and a new sense of dedication.

I shall tell you how I come to stand here. I am a Negro woman. My people came before the Mayflower. I am more concerned with what is happening to my people in my country than in pouring out money to rebuild a decadent Europe for a new war. We have lived through two wars and seen their promises turn to bitter ashes. Two Negroes were the first Americans to be decorated for bravery in France in World War I, that war that was fought to make the world safe for democracy. But when it ended, we discovered we were making Africa safe for exploitation by the very European powers whose freedom and soil we had defended. And that war was barely over when a Negro soldier, returning to his home in Georgia, was lynched almost before he could take off his uniform. That war was scarcely over before my people were stoned and shot and beaten in a dozen Northern cities. The guns were hardly silenced before a reign of terror was unleashed against every minority that fought for a better life.

And then we fought another war. You know Dorie Miller, the spud peeler who came out of his galley to fight while white officers slept at Pearl Harbor. And I think of Robert Brooks, another "first Negro", and of my own nephew. We fought a war to end fascism whose germ is German race superiority and the oppression of other peoples. A Negro soldier returned from that war--he was not even allowed to take off his uniform before he was lynched for daring to exercise his constitutional right to vote in a Democratic primary.

Yes, we fought to end Hitlerism. But less than 7 years after the end of that war, I find men who lead my government paying out my money and your money to support the rebirth of Hitlerism in Germany to make it a willing partner in another war. We thought to destroy Hitlerism--but its germs took root right here. I look about me, at my own people--at all colored peoples all over the world. I see the men who lead

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GO TO NEXT PAGE