

*George White was one of the last African-American men to serve in the United States House of Representative until the 1960's and the only black representative in the House during his tenure there. White, a Republican, represented eastern North Carolina. He is most famous for criticizing the 1900 constitutional education amendment by saying "I can no longer live in North Carolina and be a man." Not long after North Carolina voters passed the amendment, White left North Carolina and established a town, Whitesboro, in southern New Jersey.*

*From the Congressional Record—House 55<sup>th</sup> Congress, Session 3, pp. 1124-26. These are segments from George White's speech to the House African-Americans' lack of representation in politics. He gave this speech on January 26, 1899.*

Mr. Chairman, I supported very cheerfully all measures tending to bring about the recent war [Spanish-American War of 1898] for liberating a very much oppressed and outraged people. I supported with equal cheer all appropriations that were necessary for the successful prosecution of that war to a final termination. I thought it was necessary then: I think now that it was a necessity. It has been the province of the people of the United States at all times to extend a helping hand to the oppressed, to the outraged – I mean, of course, without the borders of the United States.

Being a member of this great Republic and one of the Representatives on this floor, I gave my support in voice and in every way that I could to all measures tending to the liberation of these poor people in Cuba. I now favor the acquisition of all the territory that is within our grasp as a result of that war. [Applause]

To say that we will not accept, to say that we will not take these acquisitions, and to say that we will not extend to the people thereof the civilization of our country, the Christian manhood and womanhood we enjoy, is to do them a wrong and to take steps backward. I therefore favor the annexation of the Philippine Islands, and I also favor the bill now pending before this House for the extension of our standing Army commensurate with our new conditions...

...But it is another problem, possibly more vexing than the one we have now under consideration. I know that you will pardon me if I do not address myself to the question before us when you recollect that I am the only representative on this floor of 10,000,000 people, from a racial standpoint. They have no one else to speak for them, from a race point of view, except myself. I shall therefore address the remainder of my remarks to another phase of the situation in this country – to another great problem that confronts us, and one which I trust ere long we shall have the manhood to stand up in our places and meet like American citizens, not like sectional cowards. I refer to the race problem. I have sat here in my place and heard discussions pro and con: I have heard my race referred to in terms anything else than dignified and complimentary. I have heard them referred to as savages, as aliens, as brutes, as vile and vicious and worthless, and I have heard but little or nothing said with reference to their better qualities, their better manhood, their developed American citizenship. It is therefore in reply to those seemingly unguarded expressions that I wish to speak...

...Our ration of representation is poor. We are taunted with being uppish: we are told to be still; to keep quiet. How long must we keep quiet? We have kept quiet while numerically and justly we are entitled to 51 members of this House; and I am the only one left. We kept quiet when numerically we are entitled to a member of the Supreme Court. We have never had a member and probably never will; but we have kept quiet. We have kept quiet while numerically and justly, according to our population as compared with all the other races of the world, so far as the United States are concerned, we should have the recognition of a place in the President's Cabinet; but we have not had it. Still we have kept quiet, and are making no noise about it.

We are entitled to 13 United States Senators, according to justice and according to our numerical strength, but we have not one, and possibly never will get another; and yet we keep quiet. We have kept quiet while hundreds and thousands of our race have been strung up by the neck unjustly by mobs of murderers. If a man commits a crime he will never find an apologist in me because his face is black. He ought to be punished, but he ought to be punished according to the law as administered in a court of justice. But we keep quiet; do not say it, do not talk about it. How long must we keep quiet, constantly sitting down and seeing our rights one by one taken away from us? As slaves it was to be expected; as slaves we were docile and easily managed; but as citizens we want and we have a right to expect all that the law guarantees to us...

...Recognize your citizen at home, recognize those at your door, give them the encouragement, give them the rights that they are justly entitled to, and then take hold of the people of Cuba and help establish a stable and fixed government there that wisdom predicated, which justice may dictate. Take hold of the Philippine Islands, take hold of the Hawaiian Islands, there let the Christian civilization go out and magnify and make happy those poor, half-civilized people; and then the black men, the white man – yes, all the riff-raff of the earth that are coming to our shores – will rejoice with you in that we have done God's service and done that which will elevate us in the eyes of the world.  
[Prolonged applause].