

Commentary on the Torah portion "*Shelach*"
--- Numbers 13:1 - 15:41 ---

from Virginia Avniel Spatz for Tzedek Chicago

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Text from video, for accessibility.

"See what kind of country it is.

Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak, few or many?

Is the country in which they dwell good or bad? ...

...Are the towns they live in open or fortified?

Is the soil rich or poor? Is it wooded or not?

And take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land." -- Num 13:18-20

Some images from "200," a 3-minute film commissioned by US Information Agency (USIA) for the US Bicentennial.

USIA was the propaganda arm of the US government, 1953-1999 (then merged into State Dept).

Film by Vince Collins is available through US National Archives.

Too much strobing to show directly, so I'm just sharing stills -- with one short exception...

@LongStrangeTrip710 on YouTube posted the USIA film set to "US Blues" from the Grateful Dead's 1974 Mars Hotel.

She added her own animation and other elements to the 2011 post.

Interesting for those not bothered by strobing.

"Age of Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In" from The Fifth Dimension, 1969

[Not sure context for the video, found on Vimeo]

First recording by Gil Scott-Heron (1948-2011).of "Whitey on the Moon" is from live show in 1970.

[trimmed at the point where he says "ten years from now I'll be paying still..." -- didn't notice until later that the next recording is pretty close to ten years later!]

The second version shared is from DVD recorded at DC's Wax Museum in 1982.

Still shows Gil Scott-Heron at the Wax Museum.

[Citation for sound recording of three short clips:]

Roberta Flack, 1973 "River"

Rare Essence, 2019 "Don't Mute DC"

Brent Peterson, 2018 "Clean Rivers"

-- all three are/were DC-based -- this was intro music for my now retired talk program for We Act Radio in Historic Anacostia, DC

DC's Black population has decreased by over 80,000 (net) since the year 2000.

Nearly 80% Black in "Chocolate City" days of the 1970s.

Now <45% Black – what some call "Chocolate Chip City"

"Chocolate City" lyrics shared [video doesn't share whole song]

Uh, what's happening CC?

They still call it the White House

But that's a temporary condition, too

Can you dig it, CC?

To each his reach

And if I don't cop, it ain't mine to have

But I'll be reachin' for ya

Cause I love ya, CC

Right on

There's a lot of chocolate cities, around

We've got Newark, we've got Gary

Somebody told me we got L.A

And we're working on Atlanta

But you're the capital, CC

[Refrain]

Gainin' on ya. Get down

Gainin' on ya. Movin' in and on ya

Gainin' on ya. Can't you feel my breath, heh

Gainin' on ya. All up around your neck, heh heh

[Hey, CC

They say you're jivin' game, it can't be changed

But on the positive side

You're my piece of the rock

And I love you, CC

Can you dig it?]

Hey, uh, we didn't get our forty acres and a mule
But we did get you, CC, heh, yeah
Gainin' on ya
Movin' in and around ya
God bless CC and its vanilla suburbs

[Refrain]

Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya
What's happening, blood?
Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya

[Verse 3]

[Yeah

What's happening, black?
Brother black, blood even
Yeah-ahh, just funnin'
Gettin' down]
Ah, blood to blood
Ah, players to ladies
The last percentage count was eighty
You don't need the bullet when you got the ballot
Are you up for the downstroke, CC?
Chocolate City
Are you with me out there?

And when they come to march on ya
Tell 'em to make sure they got their James Brown pass
And don't be surprised if [Ali](#) is in the White House
Reverend Ike, Secretary of the Treasure
Richard Pryor, Minister of Education
Stevie Wonder, Secretary of fine arts
And Miss Aretha Franklin, the First Lady
Are you out there, CC?
A chocolate city is no dream
It's my piece of the rock and I dig you, CC
God bless Chocolate City and it's (gainin' on ya!) vanilla suburbs
Can y'all get to that?

[last refrain is on recording but lyrics not listed:

Gainin' on ya. Easin' in
Gainin' on ya! In yo' stuff
Gainin' on ya. Huh, can't get enough
Gainin' on ya. Gainin' on ya
Be mo' funk, be mo' funk. Gainin' on ya
Can we funk you too?
Gainin' on ya
Right on, Chocolate City

American Tune, Paul Simon, 1973
performed with Rhiannon Giddens at 2022 Grammy tribute to Simon

[Skipped lyrics in brackets]

[Many's the time I've been mistaken
and many times confused
Yes, and I've often felt forsaken
And certainly misused
Oh, but I'm all right, I'm all right
I'm just weary to my bones
Still, you don't expect to be bright and bon vivant
so far away from home
So far away from home]

I don't know a soul who's not been battered
I don't have a friend who feels at ease
I don't know a dream that's not been shattered
Or driven to its knees
Oh, but it's all right, it's all right
For we've lived so well so long
Still, when I think of the road we're traveling on
I wonder what's gone wrong
I can't help it, I wonder what's gone wrong

[And I dreamed I was dying
I dreamed that my soul rose unexpectedly
And looking back down at me, smiled reassuringly
And I dreamed I was flying
And high up above, my eyes could clearly see
The Statue of Liberty sailing away to sea
And I dreamed I was flying]

We didn't come here on the Mayflower
We came on a ship in a blood red moon
[1973 lyrics said "For we come on the ship they call the Mayflower / We come on the ship that sailed
the moon"]
We come in the age's most uncertain hour(s)
And sing an American tune
But it's all right, it's all right, all right
You can't be forever blessed
Still, tomorrow's going to be another working day
And I'm trying to get some rest
That's all I'm trying to get some rest

Final frame: "And they returned from spying out the land..." -- Num 13:25