

miami: Jim Crow Begins Where Airport's Island Of Freedom Ends, But ...

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miami

By ROMONA LOWE

There is no place in the South like Miami. Ask anyone. There are two reasons: one, that it is a port of entry; the other that it is a resort. The first means that thousands of Latin Americans and West Indians pass through every year; the other that there is a large annual influx of northerners.

The airlines have a non-discriminatory policy that gives a cosmopolitan impression to air arrivals. Those who have been booked on through from their original point of departure are often given what would be called "white" train accommodations.

And if they happen to be light-skinned and have only an overnight stay they may find themselves in the white Y's or a white hotel. However, hotel accommodations are a ticklish point and dark-skinned Puerto-Ricans or Cubans are apt to be sent over to the Mary Elizabeth, the acknowledged stopping place for Negro travelers.

PREJUDICE BEGINS AT AIRPORT EDGE

Prejudice begins on the skirts of the airport. One cannot ride in white taxis and one must sit in the rear of the bus. There have been instances when belligerence on the part of uncompromising West Indians has caused a white taxi driver to let down the barriers.

There are curious contradictions, too, in observing unwritten segregation laws. For instance, Liberians passing through are welcomed at one of the downtown hotels. Yet a Cuban had to be placed in charge of the Haitian embassy because color bars would make it too unpleasant for a dark diplomat.

But times are changing. Stores that once would not let you ride in their elevators or try on their shoes now serve you with utmost courtesy. There is little difference in the treatment of Negroes in the downtown shopping district from that accorded them in the department stores of major Northern cities.



ELLA FITZZGERALD IS SINGING in Miami before white audiences, and they find that the color of her skin makes no difference in the quality of her music or the sparkle of her personality. But beyond Miss Fitzgerald's glittering night life circle, prosaic, workaday Miami is also learning that there is no relation between color and worth.

JEWISH MIGRATION STARTS LIBERAL TREND

A major factor in the change has been the migration to Miami of retired Jewish people who have invested capital here. In the laundries they have bought, to cite an example, they have not hesitated to hire Negro and white for the same operation and the workers have worked side by side without apparent friction. This has been true, too, in some hotels bought by northerners and employing Negro and white help. Where the CIO has organized such as in the TWH there has been an attempt to equalize job opportunities, and segregated meeting policies have been broken down.

Significant have been the two big conventions here this year that had heretofore avoided the South: the Postal Employees and the American Legion. Although delegates were not housed together the fact that they were able to sit together in their sessions was considered a big step forward for a southern city.

SOUTHERNERS TOO, BEGIN TO AWAKE

As the crackers have been forced into a minority there is less and less show of prejudice, one white visitor remarked. However, southerners themselves seem to have had an awakening. When an

interracial dance stirred the ire of righteous Legionnaires, a dyed-in-the-wool Southern engineer with no discoverable left-wing connections said he couldn't see what all the fuss was about. He had served in the South Pacific.



INTO A MIAMI BEWILDERED by its own contradictions in democracy and backwardness will soon come Lena Horne, as glamorous and charming as any woman in the swank beach hotels. She is the third top-notch performer to be booked into a Miami club in recent years.

had been with Negro soldiers and was convinced that a Negro was as good a man as he.

The dance incident revealed that there is a core here of individuals determined that racial bigotry shall go. The Progressive Party, the Young Progressives of America, the American Veterans Committee have been actively making a point of interracial activities. Less demonstrative is the Bahai, a religious group deriving its inspiration for the East and refusing to tolerate discrimination of any kind. The leader of the mixed group here is a Negro woman.

KNOCK AT DOORS OF UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

The USOVETS, former USO workers who have banded together, meet fearlessly in either the white or Negro neighborhood. At their organizational dinner at a white hotel they elected to an important office one of the Negro members present.

Over at the University of Miami Negro and white college students met together, ate together and socialized together during a state conference two months ago. And a local Negro leader has several times addressed classes there.

There are those who remember when Negroes and whites shot out their differences on Ninth Street after World War I: when a two-fisted man named Freddy cracked a cracker's skull and so opened the way for Negroes to drive cars in the town; when crosses were burned as Negroes settled over residential boundary lines, and when a young Nassau boy was dragged from his prayers



A "JINX" ON THE MONTE CARLO Supper Club was blotted out by the Ink Spots when they opened at the Miami nitery ahead of Miss Fitzgerald, just last year. Their record stand was proof that Miami had changed since the day when a Negro band was dragged from a top night spot and its members flogged.

NEGRO CURFEW AT NINE AND CITY FATHERS WERE KKK

One could not walk in the downtown section after 9 p.m. without a permit and men who became city officials marched with the Ku Klux Klan.

Negroes had early helped themselves to a spot on the beach, but they were bullied off and not until a militant young group took

the situation into their own hands a few years ago and defied the police to drag them out of the water was a beach set aside where they could bathe. Negro maids were permitted to carry their charges onto the public white beach and can do so on the exclusive hotel beaches, but the unwritten law is that they must not muddy the water by bathing in it.

Residential segregation was established with the laying out of the city. Negroes were to live in the northwest section. There was no living side by side with whites as in other southern cities. They settled at first around the railroad, but as they were pushed back and as the population expanded they moved into areas bought up by whites originally, and crosses are still being burned occasionally as this movement continues.

INDICATION, HOWEVER, THAT MIAMI HAS COME OF AGE WHERE RESIDENTIAL DIFFERENCES CROP UP IS EVIDENT IN THE COCONUT GROVE CITIZEN'S COMMITTEE FOR SLUM CLEARANCE, INC. SLUM CLEARANCE PANEL WORKS FOR GOOD HOMES

The Slum Clearance Committee is a spontaneous organization of Negroes and whites who are trying to map out a plan of adequate housing for Negroes in a little area surrounded by whites. Whites for a long time tried to secure the acreage for white housing. It was owned, however, by the colored

quate housing.

Years ago Negro bands used to entertain in the hotels until some white hoodlums forcibly carried a band to the outskirts of town and whipped its members. After that hotel managers and the later night club owners were afraid of the risk of Negro entertainers. A few weeks ago, however, a white orchestra leader who had rented what was known to the trade as a fixed spot booked the Ink Spots. Their success was fabulous and other night clubs are now vying for Negro talent.

"Things in Miami," remarked a distinguished old Negro professor who has been here for 42 years and amassed a fortune, "are so much better."



IN MIAMI TOO, THE CIO IS ON THE MARCH, like this group of Chicago Packinghouse workers. Rapid strides are being made, particularly in the "free island" of Miami's airport, and the drive is also extending to the citrus farms, and the in-

dustrial areas of the state. For the first time unskilled and semi-skilled Negroes and whites are learning the value of collective bargaining and cooperation.