

OUR RACE IN THE SOUTH

Views of a White Writer After an Extensive Tour Through the South

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Article XI—General Summary

ABDUL BAHÁ, the Persian sage, after spending 40 years in a Turkish prison, said: "There is no prison save that of self." If the Negro I find in the South could only believe that and stop struggling against the chains of limitations that bind him, using this energy towards his upliftment educationally, religiously and socially!

The Negro has had to adapt himself to a harsh environment in the South, that is true, and has had to develop a defense mechanism, through which he actually gains certain gratuities, considerations and benefits. This is no doubt the meaning of the southerner, who asserts that the "nigger is better off in the South." To the southerner, however, the Negro is either the eternal clown or a potential menace; or, on rare occasions he might even be a virtuous character a la Uncle Tom.

The sooner the southern Negro learns that favors and condescension—temporary as they are—allotted him as "a good southern nigger" come not from the heart of the erstwhile southern gentlemen, the sooner will his emancipation, yes, of his whole Race, be completed. The southern white man does not understand the Negro, all stories to the contrary. He does not understand that the docile, subservient Negro is merely flattering him into believing in a white superiority, and this to the detriment of the whole race.

REAL EDUCATION BIG NEED OF RACE IN SOUTH

THERE is a feeling of antagonism felt in the South for the northern Negro, which has been explained to me as mostly political. I believe it goes deeper than mere politics. I believe the northern Negro sees that the place in the sun that the southern Negro has made for himself is neither warm nor fertile, and in truth reflects on the whole Race. He knows that as long as the southern Negro continues in his servile practices, neither can aspire to any dignity and self-respect without great hardships. Mere flattery will never raise the standards of the white men who expect a show of superiority to them by "good niggers." When the southern Negro no longer pays tribute to the eminence of whites and insists on his Race, one and all, being met on the ground of man to man, just then will be the dawn of a glorious day for them.

Education is, of course, the crying need of the Negro in the South. The first thing he should be taught, I believe, is a pride in his Race. So many things are warped and alienated against Negro history that with Arthur A. Schomburg, secretary of the Negro Society for Historical Research, I think racial patriotism should be fired by the study of Negro books. He says: "The white institutions have their chair of history; it is the history of their people and whenever the Negro is mentioned in the textbooks, it dwindles down to a footnote. The white scholar's mind and heart is fired because in the temple of learning he is told how on the 5th of March, 1770, the Americans were able to beat the English; but to find Crispus Attacks it is necessary to go deep into special books."

WHY BOAST OF WHITE BLOOD—UNRECOGNIZED

IN THE South Negroes frequently boasted to me of their white blood, coming from some of the best strains in the old South. Why should this be so? He is not an individual battling ceaselessly and untiringly. He is able to trace his ancestry back to an aristocracy. Tracing his lineage back as he can, why should he

boast of the white blood of a vanished aristocracy with no present significance?

Negro and white must understand each other's better nature, and my experience is that such is increasingly the case. I have this to say to all Negroes: The white people need your co-operation and friendliness quite as much as you need theirs, although some may not be aware of it. The other cheek is always the most effective weapon, you know.

The white people cannot do everything for your Race. I admit they have done much to hinder you from helping yourselves. You must shake off the bonds of paternalism; your streets must be paved; your houses lighted with electricity and furnished with sanitary connections. Your house must be clean, pictures must go up on your walls. Again I say the white people cannot do everything for you; some of you are unjust in expecting it. Even enlightened society lacks the energy to keep the inside of a man's house in artistic, or even decent condition if his mentality and spirit are not equal to sustaining such.

A recent issue of the St. Louis Globe Democrat pictures the peace races might attain in the following:

"It is pleasant to visualize these peoples (black and white) as a future sisterhood, knit together by other ties than speech, each resenting and resisting all invasions of its independence and individuality, but each profiting from the problems solved by others the more successfully, and all working for certain ideals of admitted world scope in betterment."

Rome wasn't made in a day; neither will conditions of the Negro be bettered in a day. The people everywhere are growing broader minded and, if you will do your share of the work, there will be helping white hands stretched out to pull you up.