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Glimpses of Negro Americans

Church of Christ

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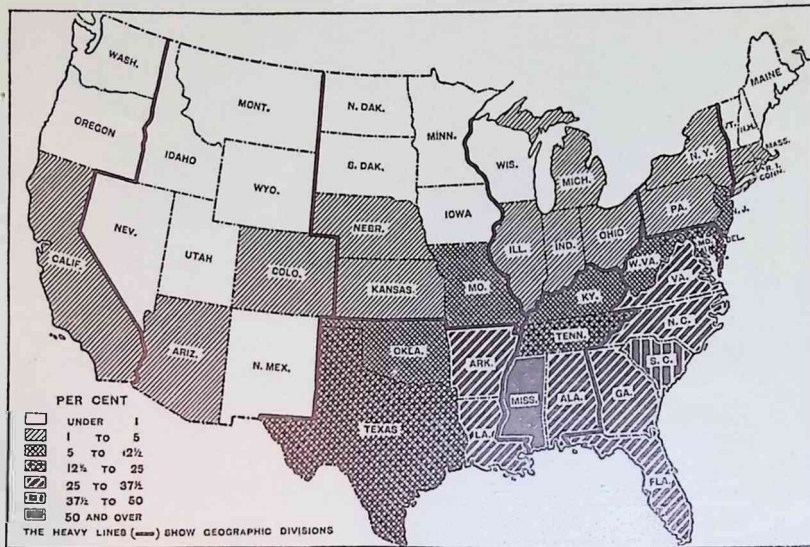
Glimpses of Negro Americans
(Church of Christ)

Stapled. pale green wraps with black titles and frame. This booklet has very light wear but has a number stamped on the front, top right, a star, top left, over a faded name. It has very light age-toning. Overall, the booklet is solid VG to VG+. This was one of a series of booklets issued by the Church of Christ in the 1930's. While the booklet is not dated, it comes from sometime in the 1930's. Rather uncommon -- WorldCat finds only ten copies in libraries.

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GLIMPSES
OF
NEGRO AMERICANS




Negro Population Map of the United States

U. S. Census, 1930

Glimpses of Negro Americans

WHERE ARE THEY?

NE-TENTH of all the people in the United States, twelve million men, women and little children, belong to the Negro race. A glance at the map shows that they are not distributed evenly throughout the country but are largely in the southern states. In Maine, North Dakota and South Dakota, for instance, the Negro population is only one-tenth of one per cent of the total; in Mississippi it is 50.2 per cent. Of the 3,100 counties in the United States 245 have no Negroes, but in 191 counties the proportion is more than 50 per cent.

In general, three-quarters of the Negro population lives in the South, one-fifth in the North and only one-hundredth in the far West. Of the seven cities with over 100,000 Negroes, however, four are definitely northern—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit; two are border cities—Baltimore and Washington, D. C., and only one, New Orleans, is distinctly southern. This points up two important trends in Negro population, the movement to the North and the shift from country to city life.

The ravages of the boll weevil and the need for industrial workers during the World War speeded up this migration which has slowly but surely increased ever since. In the South the majority of Negroes are still farmers, in the North they live and work mainly in and near the large cities. There are many other interesting statistics about the Negro population, so many that the Bureau of the Census has prepared a special volume of over 800 pages to record them.

WHO ARE THEY?

Negroes have been a contributing part of American life since its earliest days. They cleared the forests and tilled the fields. The prosperity of the agricultural South and of the New England cotton industry was built on their labor. Back in the days of slavery Negroes were skilled artisans, cooks and nurses, and even in some professions.

Today more than eighty per cent of the Negro population still belongs to the laboring class—farmers, ditch diggers, porters, hotel and restaurant workers, cooks, laundresses. These are familiar figures. What of the others?

Lord Bryce, ambassador and well known English historian, said that no other racial group had made such rapid progress in a similar period as did American Negroes in the 30 years following their emancipation. Their gifts to America have been many and varied. In addition to the "spirituals," Negro musical compositions range from popular songs to a full orchestral symphony. The Negro gift of song has thrilled multitudes on the concert and opera stage and over the radio. Their rhythm and dance have had a wide influence. Whereas a few years ago Negro dramatic talent was confined to the minstrel show or the part of a buffoon, today their skill is recognized throughout America and Europe on the legitimate stage and in the motion picture.



Courtesy Laurence Rivers Co., Inc.

"De Land" of "The Green Pastures" and some of his flock

Smaller and less well known is the Negro's contribution in painting and plastic art. That it is no mean achievement, however, is borne out by numerous exhibits of painting and sculpture by Negro artists which have attracted wide attention. Three Harmon Foundation exhibits sent out by the Federal Council of Churches visited 50 cities in 27 states and the District of Columbia and were seen by over 350,000 people.

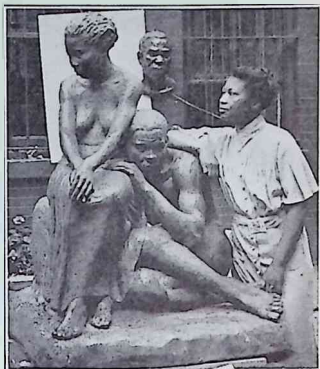
Since the days when Phyllis Wheatley wrote verses for George Washington, Negro writers have added fine examples of poetry and prose to the literature of the nation.

The Negro doctor in Chicago who performed the first successful operation on the human heart has been followed by many other distinguished physicians. The inventive genius of the race is shown by more than 1,500 patents issued to them by the Patent Office; a Negro scientist discovered hundreds of uses for the peanut and sweet potato.

The coveted Phi Beta Kappa key was first conferred upon a colored college graduate in 1874. Today this and other high scholastic honors have been won by scores of Negro students. More than a hundred names of Negroes are listed in "Who's Who In America." Negro athletes have brought fame to their universities and have won honors in Olympic contests.

Negro women are achieving distinction in many professional fields. Nearly five hundred of them are teachers in the non-segregated school system of New York City. Scores perform similar service in Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. Many are successful lawyers, doctors and trained nurses. Social work gives opportunity to increasing numbers. Negro women, who have always been obliged to work outside of their own homes in much larger proportion than white women, have helped to pioneer the advance of all women in modern life.

These distinctions won in the face of poverty and prejudice have laid a solid foundation on which American Negroes are destined to build a future of substantial achievement.



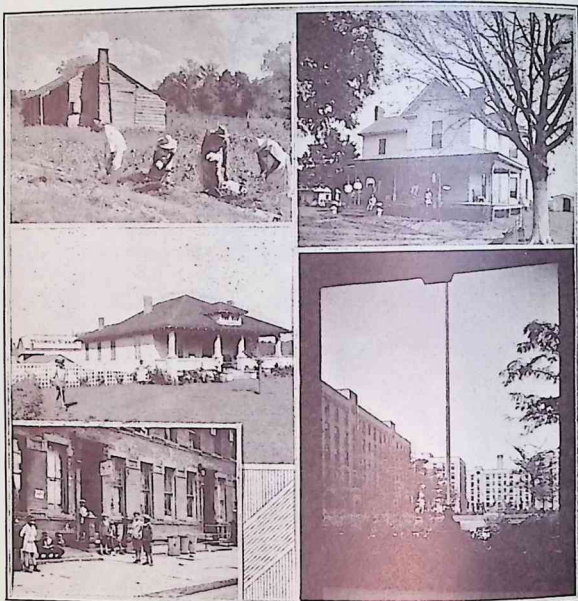
Courtesy Art Service Project, W.P.A.

A Negro Artist

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

In apartments with hall boys and elevators; in private houses with spacious grounds; in city slums where disease and crime run rampant; in tumble-down shacks on tenant farms; in forlorn cottages on the outskirts of towns and cities—in every kind of housing that America has to offer Negroes are to be found.

Are their living conditions then just like those of other Americans? In answering this question we come up against one of the most serious problems which faces the Negro today; that of forced segregation. In the vast majority of places Negroes cannot choose their homes as do other Americans on the basis of income and interest; they must live in certain areas, almost always the poorest and most run down parts of the community. Often a stranger can recognize the



*Courtesy H. Armstrong Roberts, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture,
N. Y. Urban League, Rosenwald Garden Apartments
Every Kind of Housing*

Negro section of a town, even with no people about. Lights are few, or perhaps lacking; streets are unpaved and sidewalks in bad shape; ashes and garbage are collected infrequently; houses are unpainted and in forlorn condition; schools are distinctly poorer than in other sections.

Part of this condition may be because Negroes are poor; but decent public facilities—lights, streets, garbage collections, schools—are the right of all citizens, paid for alike, directly or indirectly, by taxes.

If a Negro tries to move from such a section into a better part of town he is apt to meet opposition of no uncertain kind. In spite of several decisions by the Supreme Court of the United States, declaring that forced residential segregation is unconstitutional, fiery crosses may be burned in front of his house, mobs may destroy the place, he may even be murdered. On the other hand there are frequent cases where Negroes have moved into new areas and by their general conduct and improvement of property have overcome hostility and lived in happy relationship with their white neighbors. Negroes say they do not seek such neighborhoods merely to live near white people, but because only then can they get better public conveniences. Home ownership among Negroes has made rapid strides and today more than three-quarters of a million colored people own their homes.

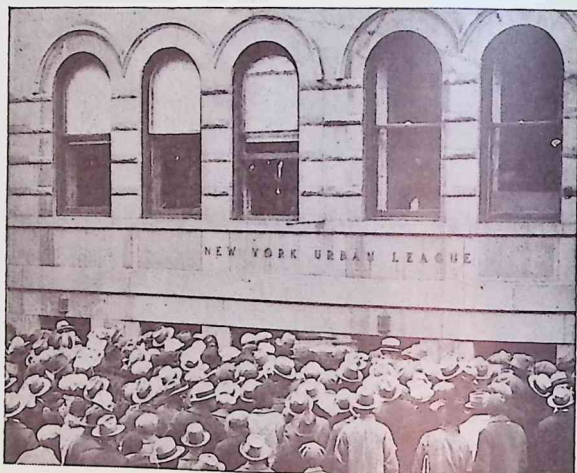
Some practical interest in better housing for Negroes has arisen in recent years. In several cities large housing projects with philanthropic backing have been undertaken; more than 20 federal housing plans have been started recently in as many cities. A number of successful cooperative apartment houses have been in operation for some time. All of these projects together, however, help only a few thousand Negroes while scores of thousands must remain in city and country slums. As with other low income groups, better housing for Negroes requires effective legislation and widespread commercial building. Until the Negro's economic condition improves and the restrictions of forced segregation are removed, housing remains as one of the great unsolved problems.

HOW DO THEY SUPPORT THEMSELVES?

Self support is an ironic question for Negroes at a time when they have been on relief rolls in twice as large proportion as those of other groups. What is the explanation?

Let us first look at the farm situation. More than a third of the Negro workers, or about 2 million in 1930, were in some form of agricultural work. Less than 200,000, however, own their farms. Over 79 out of every 100 Negro farm operators are tenants or croppers, who work the land and give the landlord part of the crop as rent. These tenants and croppers live mostly in the cotton belt of the South and have depended entirely on that crop. The collapse of the cotton market in recent years has wrought havoc in this section of the country and the man lowest down has been hit the hardest. Government plans to help cotton growers put money in the landlords' pockets, but little of it reached the cropper.

After years of semi-starvation a desperate attempt to improve their position has resulted in the formation of a tenant farmers' union in



Courtesy N. Y. Urban League

Waiting for a Job



Courtesy 137th Street Y.W.C.A.

Learning Household Skills

which, for the first time, white and Negro farmers are together. In the meantime the government is seeking to work out plans to make farm land available to tenant farmers in the South on a long term purchase basis. In some communities of the South, even in some parts of the cotton belt, Negro farmers have been able to make a satisfactory living.

Domestic and personal service is the second largest category of Negro work. More than a million and a half Negroes were so classed in 1930. Many of these are women; the proportion of Negro women houseworkers being three times that of white women. Labor conditions in housework are as hard to control as they are in farming. The government has recognized this by excluding all farmers and houseworkers from the old age annuity and unemployment insurance parts of the Social Security Act of 1935. This automatically shuts out the largest proportion of Negro workers from these benefits. Negro women have tried hard in recent years to get away from housework where they

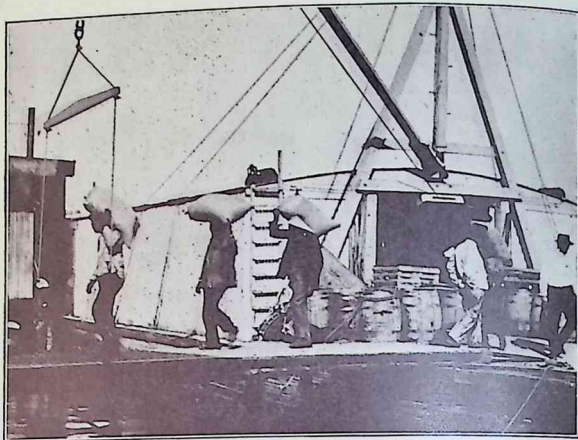


Photo by George E. Haynes

Working on the River

have been notoriously underpaid and overworked. In spite of these efforts more than 62 per cent of Negro women workers are still in this class of work. In many areas wages are as low as \$2.00 to \$4.00 a week. Studies in various cities show that Negroes are almost always paid less than whites for the same work.

Next to domestic service, industry ordinarily employs the largest number of Negroes. This is a field, however, which opened mainly during the World War when there was a great labor shortage. Negroes in industry, moreover, are mostly unskilled laborers. As soon as depression struck a blow at manufacturing, it was heavily felt by the Negro group. As the last to be hired they were first to be fired. As jobs grew scarcer, the poorer ones became desirable to white people. In many places whites took the places of Negroes as street cleaners, laborers, hotel workers, in the steel and automobile industry. In spite of this the Negro has not altogether lost his foothold in industry and as business improves he is very slowly being re-employed.

All Negroes are not in these poorly paid classes of work. Some Negroes may be found in practically every occupation. In the professions, teaching and preaching gave the earliest opportunities: today Negro doctors, nurses, lawyers, social workers, actors, musicians,

librarians, scientists and many other professional workers are recognized leaders in their professions. Negroes are gaining numbers in skilled occupations in spite of the fact that most labor unions have refused to accept them into membership. While still the poorest group in the country Negroes are no small financial asset to the nation.

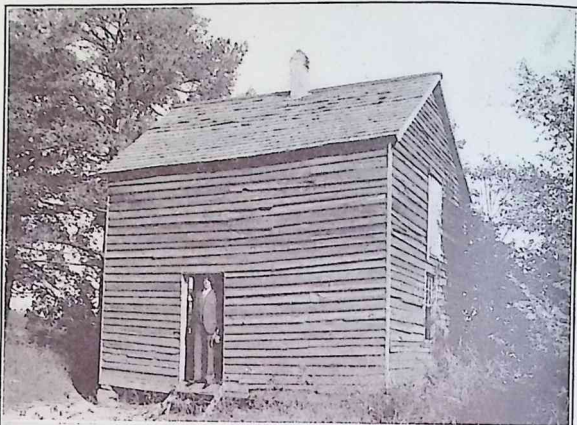


Photo by James L. Allen

A Doctor at Work

WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR EDUCATION?

The "little red school house" of an older generation is no longer acceptable to present day standards of education. To the Negro children of many southern areas, however, even the "little red school house" or any school with desks, windows, blackboards, a stove and any paint at all would seem palatial. On the other hand there are a number of

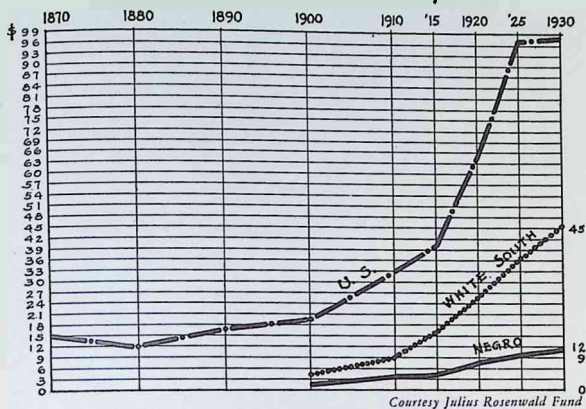


Courtesy American Missionary Association

Good and Bad in Rural Schools for Negroes

AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL

from U. S. Office of Education and State Departments



Negro schools and colleges in the South which offer fine educational opportunities.

These extremes and every variety between them are the outward measure of Negro education. In general it indicates a pretty low standard for the more than two million colored school children of the South—an average expenditure of only one-fourth as much as is spent on white children in the same area.

Throughout the South and to some extent in northern states Negroes are obliged to attend separate schools, which are poorer in every way than those for whites. In some sections there are no available school facilities whatever. In others there would be none except for the mission boards of the churches, which have led the way in Negro education. In recent years an important influence in improving Negro schools has been the Rosenwald Fund. By offering to pay a certain proportion of the cost, the Fund was responsible for the erection of more than 5,000 new school buildings and set an example for better schools which has been widely felt.

Poor as they may be, the Negro schools have been the means of reducing Negro illiteracy from 81 per cent in 1870 to 16 per cent in 1930. Foreign born whites in 1930 were 9.9 per cent illiterate and the proportion for the whites as a whole was 3.4 per cent. Approximately



Commencement Day at a Negro University

Courtesy Atlanta University

25,000 Negro students are in college and more than 2,000 receive degrees each year.

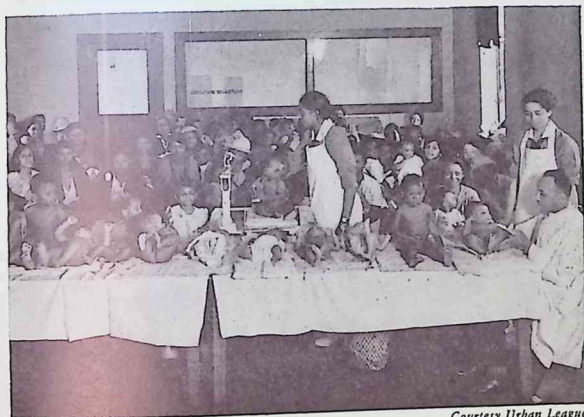
The decade of the nineteen twenties saw rapid improvement in southern Negro education. Whereas in 1920 there were few high schools of any kind for Negroes, in 1932 there were more than 200 which were accredited by the states in which they were located.

It is estimated that in addition to the sums spent from public funds, religious and philanthropic organizations have contributed about \$85,000,000 for Negro education since 1865. During the same period Negroes themselves have contributed over \$50,000,000 for the same purpose.

WHAT ABOUT THEIR HEALTH?

In 1930 the Negro death rate for each thousand of the population was 18 as compared with 9.9 for the white population—nearly twice as large. This high rate does not mean, however, that Negroes are a weak and dying race. Fifty years ago the Negro death rate was 35 to 40 per thousand. Today it stands about where the white death rate was 25 years ago.

Two things contribute especially to Negro mortality: they suffer from diseases which come with poverty and, to a large extent, they



Courtesy Urban League

A Better Baby Clinic

are shut off from health facilities which are open to white people. Infant mortality and tuberculosis, which take a high toll of Negro lives are the result of bad housing, low wages, poor food and lack of medical and hospital care.

Statistics on hospital facilities show that there is one hospital bed available for every 2,000 Negroes, compared with one bed for every 150 of the white population. The Negro suffering from tuberculosis has about one twenty-fifth the chance to go to a sanitarium that the white person has. What this means in actual life experiences is epitomized in the case of a highly educated internationally known and beloved dean of women of a Negro college who was critically injured in a motor accident. The well equipped hospital in the town where the accident occurred gave no care to Negroes. After hours of torture, waiting for an ambulance, she was driven miles over a rough road, only to die in the nearest hospital that would take Negro patients.

Opportunities for educating Negro doctors are few and those who do receive training have fewer chances for internship. Of 122 Negro hospitals in the official register of the American Medical Association only 14 are approved for internship. Negro doctors in cities without separate Negro hospitals rarely have a chance to attend even their own private patients in hospitals. It is almost as difficult for Negro girls to secure training and positions in the field of trained nursing.

In spite of all these difficulties the decreasing death rate testifies that Negro health is improving. This has been most marked in sections of the country where health work has been developed as is shown by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company studies of its policy holders. In the long run the effects of illness are felt by the entire community. The whole community benefits when Negroes have a fair share of the health facilities.

DO THEY GO TO CHURCH?



Courtesy N.A.A.C.P.

A Typical Negro Country Church

Religion has been the chief solace and energizing force of American Negroes since their early days in this country. The slaves quickly accepted the Christian way of life. Out of their deep religious feeling came the Negro Spirituals, which are recognized as the most important American contribution to world music.

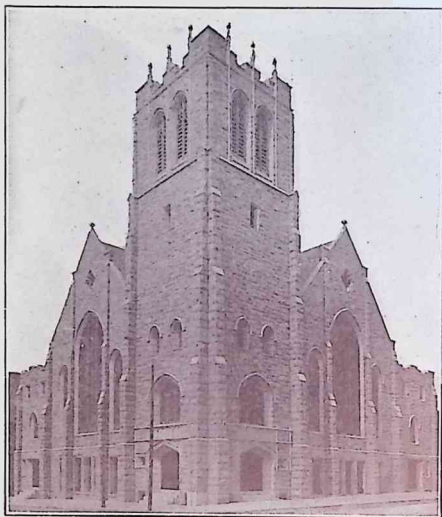
The Negro's church has furnished not only a place for the release of emotion and religious fervor; it has provided also the chief opportunity for developing leadership. It furnishes intellectual stimulus as well as religious education. It is the social center of the community and holds the loyalty and interest of the mass of Negroes. The first separate Negro church was founded in South Carolina before the Revolutionary War. Today more than 9 out of 10 Negro Protestants worship in separate Negro churches of "Negro denominations." This is not because Negroes preferred their own church organizations nor is it due to theological differences. Negroes left the parent denominations because they were unwelcome.

According to the Federal Census of Religious Bodies taken in 1926 there were 42,585 Negro churches valued at \$205,782,628, with a membership of more than five million. In the 36,000 Sunday Schools over two million pupils were enrolled. Annual budgets were estimated at \$46,000,000.

Many Negro churches in larger communities have programs comparable with the best white churches. Parish houses with modern equip-

ment furnish an opportunity for educational and social activities. On the other hand there are large numbers of weak churches loaded with debts and furnishing little of any kind of program, religious or social. Then too, there are various "cults" like that of "Father Divine," built around the personality of an individual. Many of these are strongly emotional and often hysterical in their effect.

Today the Negro church faces a critical situation. To a large extent its ministry is untrained either in college or theological seminary. Many younger Negroes are leaving the churches and turning against religion as they see it in practice. This is not only due to lack of leadership in their own group: they look at the white churches and feel that religion has failed to regenerate the racial attitude of white society.



Courtesy N.A.A.C.P.

Negro Church in a Large City

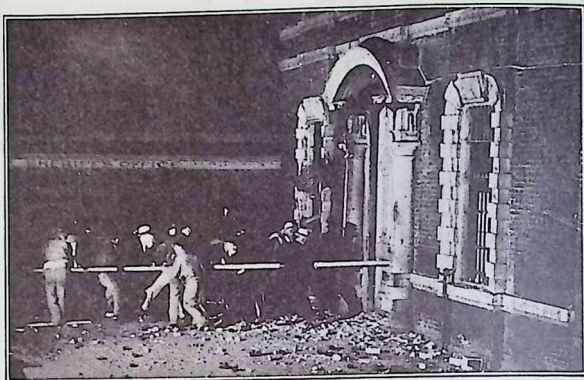
ARE THEY CITIZENS?

The American tradition of democracy, based on the principle that all men have inalienable rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, helped to free the slaves, wrote the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments into the Constitution of the United States, granting civil and political rights to Negroes. It has been the force behind the long, slow upward civic and political struggle of Negroes in American life. To what point has that struggle brought them today?

As Voters: After the bitter days of Reconstruction the majority of southern states wrote into their laws educational and property tests which effectively limit Negro suffrage. In order that the white voters should not be affected the famous "Grandfather" and "Understanding Clauses" were enacted. The latter allows white election officials to decide whether or not Negro applicants for the vote can read and interpret clauses of the Constitution to the white official's satisfaction. The few southern Negroes who are able to qualify are often prohibited from voting by laws controlling the white Democratic primary. Where they have secured the vote Negroes have been actively interested in politics as a means of bettering their condition. In the North, many have been elected to city councils and state legislatures; two have been members of Congress in recent years; they have served with distinction as judges and in other important appointive offices in many cities.

In the Courts: After years when "the law" was weighted heavily against justice for Negroes and when even the pretense of law was flouted in frequent lynchings and violence, there is a trend toward fairer treatment in the courts. The United States Supreme Court decision that the constitutional rights of Negroes are violated when they are kept from jury service only because of race has resulted in putting them on jury rolls in many states. Other decisions of the Supreme Court reversing the lower courts have saved the lives of many Negroes who have been unfairly tried and convicted. Increasingly cases of flagrant injustice, educational discrimination, and violation of civil rights, are being won in local and state courts. Only recently the parents of a boy lynched for a crime, of which a white man was later found guilty, were awarded damages. Negro lawyers have won distinction in many of these cases.

In spite of this slow improvement, Negroes are too often condemned by the mob without trial, as in the 25 lynchings of 1935. They are punished for crimes they did not commit, as in cases on record where a white neighbor has brought a Negro to court on a trumped up charge in order to get his property or to get even on some score;



Courtesy N.A.A.C.P.

Lynchings Breaking into a Jail

or they are given long sentences for slight offenses, for which whites would go free.

In Public Services: State laws in many sections enforce separation of the races in trains, street cars, buses, schools and other public buildings. In many places where there are no such laws custom provides an equally effective separation. "Jim Crow" cars are usually older, less clean and more crowded than those for white passengers. Sections for Negroes in theatres or public buildings are usually in the poorest location. The back part of buses where Negroes are forced to sit is the most uncomfortable section. Segregated schools mean poorer buildings and equipment and lower salaries for Negro teachers. The laws may say "separate but equal accommodations"; in reality the minority always gets the worst end of things.

Civil rights laws in 16 states provide a means by which Negroes may fight for their rights. It is a long and expensive process, however.

Negroes have willingly carried their share of the responsibilities of citizenship. They have served in the defense of their country in all of its wars. A Negro was the first to give his life in the Boston Massacre of 1770, two Negro members of the American Expeditionary Force were the first American soldiers decorated for bravery during the World War. Should they not have the same rights of citizenship that are accorded to others?

WHERE DO YOU AND I COME IN?

Negro and white life in America is inextricably bound together. Although of different racial origin, 300 years on this continent have made Negroes truly native born Americans in thought, action, and outlook. The one thing that invariably distinguishes them is their color: is that forever to set them apart as unwanted members of society? Just as long as it does, so long the entire country must suffer. It is not lack of natural resources that makes the South poor. Booker Washington gave an explanation when he said, "You can't keep a man in the ditch unless you stay there with him." Robert E. Wood, president of Sears Roebuck & Company, has said "If the Negroes of the South were raised to the standard of living of the average American, the wheels of every kind of industry would begin to turn at a rate never before dreamed of even in our greatest boom days."

The race problems of this country reach into all sections whether or not we recognize it: they can be solved only by concerted effort on the part of both white and colored people. That fact is being increasingly recognized, and during the past quarter of a century a number of organizations dealing with different phases of race relations have come into existence. Among these are the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which works chiefly for civil rights of Negroes; the National Urban League which strives for larger economic opportunity; and the southern Commission on Interracial



Delegates at the First National Interracial Conference

Cooperation which seeks to bring together leaders of both races for conference and united effort to secure social justice and better living conditions.

The Christian belief in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is the motive power in the interracial work of religious organizations. In recent years Christian leaders throughout the world have come to realize that failure at this point is perhaps the greatest hindrance to the building of a Christian world. In this country the Christian Associations, the International Council of Religious Education, and a number of church denominations are working actively for better interracial understanding. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America through its Race Relations Department, which was established in 1920, brings the Protestant churches into cooperative action on race relations.

Under the auspices of these organizations a broad program of interracial education, fellowship and action is being carried on. Young people are especially active, and today it is hard to find a young people's church conference that does not include this subject in its program. Not content with study and pronouncements many of these groups have taken pains to show that they mean what they say. They have placed Negroes in positions of leadership. Some have refused to patronize restaurants which were not open to all members of their conference. They have worked for the passage of an anti-lynching bill. In one city they have formed a young people's interracial church.

Church women have long been leaders in the interracial movement, especially in the South where the interracial work of the churches was initiated. Through the women's organizations an effective program of study and action has been set in motion including interracial conferences, summer courses for Negro church women in the South, studies of local conditions as they affect Negroes, especially in schools and hospitals, programs on Negro achievement and many types of interracial fellowship.

In many churches the second Sunday in February is set aside for observance of Race Relations Sunday, sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches, when white and colored pastors exchange pulpits, or a community mass meeting or other form of interracial activity is held. Under church auspices interracial committees have been set up in nearly a hundred cities in which leaders of the racial groups come together to talk over local conditions and to plan ways for bettering them.

Significant and hopeful as all these movements may be, the great mass of people, white and Negro, in the churches and outside, are still

untouched by the interracial movement. The old ideas are handed on from one generation to the next; the old prejudices keep their grip on the majority. Even those individuals and groups which accept a Christian standard of relationship with other races often find themselves balked when they try to do something, and all too easily give up the struggle.

Christ's way of life in race relations is no easy path to travel: the end is not even in sight. To travel it calls for courage, skill, patience and persistence. It is a challenge and an opportunity to His followers today.

THE DEPARTMENT OF RACE RELATIONS, *established by the Federal Council in 1920, "to assert the sufficiency of Christianity as a solution of race relations in America," works in the following ways:*

Brings together representatives of 23 denominations for united thought, planning and action on race problems.

Prepares educational material and programs for church and community groups.

Promotes annual observance of Race Relations Sunday, second Sunday in February.

Fosters the crusade among Churches for a lynchless land.

Promotes projects for justice in industry and in agriculture for minority racial groups.

Assists churches and communities to establish interracial committees for promoting friendship and dealing with local problems.

Fosters interracial conferences in cities and states for consideration of facts and plans of action.

Cooperates in research studies in economic and other fields affecting racial minorities.

Acts with other agencies on welfare of Negroes in Governmental plans and activities.

What Local Groups and Churches Can Do:

- 1—Observe Race Relations Sunday—the second Sunday in February.
- 2—Promote a race relations study or discussion group.
- 3—Invite the attendance of minority racial groups to meetings dealing with common interests.
- 4—Secure in the local press space for news and editorials about inter-racial cooperation.
- 5—Assemble and circulate educational material on race relations.
- 6—Provide speakers of one race to groups of other races.
- 7—Study the program of the Federal Council's Department of Race Relations to induce your church or group to share.
- 8—Subscribe to the Department's "Interracial News Service," for a review of conditions among minority groups.

Published by

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Glimpses of Negro Americans
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