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Who Are the Thirteen Most Gifted Negroes In The United States?

The Author Compiles the Most Interesting and Thought Provocative List of Gifted Individuals of the Year.

By EUGENE GORDON

The proportion of gifted colored men and women to the whole Aframerican population persists, I believe, in about the same ratio as the gifted whites to the whole Caucasian population. Simply holding that theory, however, does not help one very much to pick out the most gifted from a colored population of from 15 to 20 millions.

Before selections can be made the Aframerican population will have to be divided into classes or categories. That task having been accomplished the selector will have to designate in each category or class, the person or persons who he thinks are the most gifted. These lists will have to be reduced further through eliminating this one for this deficiency and that one for that. Such a process is necessary, for the reason that there is no way to compare dissimilars. We cannot compare a poet with an



HENRY A. HUNT
Educator

engineer, because as poet and engineer they have no parallelisms — unless the engineer chooses also to write poetry. In that case they are compared as poets, and not as engineer and poet.

From the point of view of class division, let us see into how many categories all Aframerica can be brought. Of course there will be sub-classes, and sub-sub-classes, if we carry the division to its logical, detailed end. I think that if we list all Aframerica under the heads of Business, Professions, Art, Science, Education, Politics, and Miscellaneous we shall take in everybody. If we list Writers under Art, thus creating the first sub-class, we shall of necessity have to create sub-sub-classes, under the heads of Novelists, Poets, Newspapermen, Essayists, Historians, Playwrights, Publicists, and so on.

In writing this paper I have kept that rule in mind; nevertheless, I have avoided sub-classes as far as practicable. Comprehending my scheme, the reader will realize that I believe the critic does Sambo Slew-foot no good when he announces, ex cathedra, that Samuel is the greatest Negro artist in America. Unless he answers the question, "Greatest Negro artist in which class?" the critic leaves one with the impression

that one has been listening to nonsense.

I reserve the privilege of omitting from this paper any category which does not, in my opinion, contain persons whose performance is no better than mediocre. In making such omissions, however, it is likely that I may overlook someone who deserves consideration. In that case I ask to be forgiven my fallibility, please, even if my fallibility cannot be forgotten.

My selections are of necessity arbitrary, for I have no means of determining the excess of one man's talent over another's in a given field except by exercising my opinion. For I cannot weigh this surgeon's skill against that one's, taking into consideration the number of times this one's operations have been successful and that one's unsuccessful. I cannot do so for the reason that I have no data on which to construct such a graph. And if I had the data I should lack something equally important: the knowledge whether the success of the one designated as more talented was caused by chance, good fortune, or some other fortuitous circumstance. Therefore, I say, my selections are arbitrary. Nevertheless, I shall give a reason for each selection. In brief, this paper might properly be titled "My Opinion of Who are the Thirteen Most Gifted Aframericans."

II
I think I can justly base my judgment in each category, and in each case in that category, on these four principles: (1) Originality of the idea; (2) Value of the idea to society; (3) Initiative in advancing the idea; (4) Degree of success attained.

Let us first consider Business. These men and women seem to stand out above the rest: 1. M. O. Bousfield, insurance company head; 2. Clarence B. Curley, business adviser; 3. Thamon Hayes, proprietor music store; 4. Albon L. Holsey, organizer of Negro business; 5. James A. Jackson, "business specialist," U.S. Department of Commerce; 6. Annie M. T. Malone, manufacturer; 7. Bennie Moten, proprietor music store; 8. Anthony Overton, manufacturer and banker; 9. Harry H. Pace, insurance company head; 10. S. W. Rutherford, insurance company official; 11. Charles C. Spaulding, head insurance company and banker; 12. Watt Terry, real estate "operator"; 13. Maggie L. Walker, head of business concern operating as fraternal organization and president of bank; 14. Sadie Warren, manager of a newspaper; 15. R. R. Wright, Sr., head of bank.

In the category of Professions the following persons seem to me to be the most conspicuous: 1. Raymond Pace Alexander, lawyer; 2. Sadie T. M. Alexander, lawyer; 3. S. Joe Brown, lawyer; 4. Harry J. Capehart, lawyer; 5. Austin M. Curtis, physician and surgeon; 6. Ulysses G. Daley, physician and surgeon; 7. Roscoe C. Oles, physician and surgeon; 8.

Charles H. Houston, lawyer; 9. William H. Lewis, lawyer; 10. Julian D. Rainey, lawyer; 11. Conrad U. Vincent, physician; 12. Louis T. Wright, physician and surgeon.

The following rank highest under art: 1. William Stanley Braithwaite, poet and anthologist; 2. Henry T. Burleigh, composer and singer; 3. Melville Charlton, organist; 4. Charles W. Chestnutt, novelist; 5. Countee Cullen, poet; 6. Nathaniel Dett, composer; 7. Aaron Douglas, painter and illustrator; 8. W. E. B. DuBois, novelist; 9. Arthur Huff Fauset, short story writer; 10. Jessie Fauset, novelist and poet.

11. Rudolph Fisher, short story



LANGSTON HUGHES
Poet and Author

writer and novelist; 12. George Garner, singer; 13. William C. Handy, musician and composer; 14. Helen Hagen, pianist; 15. Hazel Harrison, pianist; 16. Richard B. Harrison, actor; 17. Roland Hayes, singer; 18. Langston Hughes, poet and novelist; 19. Eva Jessye, composer and arrange-



ROLAND HAYES
Singer

er; 20. Hall Johnson, composer and arranger;

21. James Weldon Johnson, poet and composer; 22. Clarence E. Muse, actor; 23. John F. Matheus, short story writer; 24. Edward H. Margelison, composer; 25. Abbie Mitchell, singer; 26. Willis Richardson, playwright; 27. Justin Sandridge, pianist; 28. Augustus Savage, sculptor;

Eugene Gordon, Radical Essayist, Makes a Most Sensational and Challenging Selection of Talented Afro-Americans.

29. George S. Schuyler, novelist; 30. Richard Reid, portrait painter; 31. Paul Robeson, actor and singer; 32. William G. Still, composer and arranger; 33. Gertrude Schalk, short story writer; 34. Henry O. Tanner, painter; 35. Will Henry Vodery, arranger and composer; 36. Meta Warwick Fuller, sculptor; 37. Dorothy West, short story writer; 38. Clarence Cameron White, composer and violinist; 39. Hale Woodruff, painter; 40. Albert Alexander Smith, etcher and painter.

The most outstanding Aframerican scientists seem to me to be: 1. George W. Carver, agricultural chemist; 2. Solomon C. Fuller, neurologist and psychiatrist; 3. William G. Haynes, chemist; 4. William C. Hinton, clinical pathologist; 5. Elmer S. Imes, physicist; 6. Ernest E. Just, biochemist; 7. Harry Keeland, chemist.

Educators are listed as follows: 1. Charlotte Hawkins Brown; 2. Mary McLeod Bethune; 3. Nannie H. Burroughs; 4. Leslie Pinckney Hill; 5. Henry A. Hunt; 6. Gilbert H. Jones; 7. Mordecai W. Johnson; 8. Robert R. Moten; 9. James E. Shepard; all heads of educational institutions.

Aframerica's geniuses in politics may be found, I think among the following gentlemen: 1. Archibald J. Carey, political boss and member of civil service commission; 2. Robert R. Church, political boss; 3. Oscar DePriest, political boss and congressman; 4. Ferdinand Q. Morton, civil service commissioner and Tammany Hall satellite; 5. Fred R. Moore, alderman.

Under Miscellaneous we list the unclassified of Aframerica's Intellectual Aristocracy: 1. Joseph D. Bibb, newspaper editor; 2. Floyd Calvin, feature story writer and columnist; 3. W. E. B. DuBois, magazine editor and sociologist; 4. Francis J. Grimke, clergyman; 5. Wm. E. Harrison, essayist; 6. George E. Haynes, sociologist; 7. Maurice Hunter, artist's model; 8. Charles S. Johnson, sociologist and author; 9. Theophilus Lewis, dramatic critic; 10. Kelly Miller, essayist and publicist; 11. Carl J. Murphy, newspaper editor; 12. A. Clayton Powell, clergyman; 13. William Kelley, newspaper; 14. Aubrey Bowser, literary critic; 15. Robert S. Abbott, newspaper editor; 16. A. Philip Randolph, labor organizer; 17. Reverdy C. Ransom, clergyman; 18. Robert T. Varin, newspaper editor; 19. William T. Vernon, clergyman; 20. J. Finley Wilson, fraternal order head; 21. Carter G. Woodson, historian; 22. Monroe N. Work, bibliographer; 23. Plummer B. Young, newspaper; 24. William N. DeBerry, clergyman; 25. T. S. Harten, clergyman.

III
Each person, I have said, will be judged according to (1) the originality of his idea; (2) the value of his idea to society; (3) the initiative he exercises in advancing his idea; and, finally, (4) the degree of success he attains in advancing it.

Suppose we give each of these standards a value of 25 per cent. It will mean that when we have found, say, an artist whose idea is wholly original, whose original idea is essential to the welfare of society, whose initiative in advancing the idea could not be improved upon, and whose success in advancing the idea is perfect, we have found a man who rates 100 per cent.

But such a discovery is not likely. It is improbable that there is

among these persons named one original idea; that is, an idea that originated with the person. It is likewise improbable that the idea, whatever it is, is essential to the welfare of society. Certainly it is not easy to say whether a man's initiative in advancing his idea is perfect, for the reason that salesmanship depends altogether upon the salesman. The success attained is more easily measured, and it is therefore likely that more than one person may receive 25 per cent for success in advancing their ideas.

Messrs. Bousfield, Pace, Spaulding, and other gentlemen of the insurance business cannot meet my test at all under the heads of "Originality of Idea" and "Value of the Idea to Society." Neither can the bankers; nor the manufacturers of hair goods and beautifiers. There is no originality in the idea of insurance, nor has that branch of Negro business been of in-



GEO. S. SCHUYLER
Essayist and Novelist

calculable worth to the masses of Negroes. Most of the other businesses are parasitical in their nature, therefore unnecessary, except as furnishing a means of livelihood to the owners.

Men like Clarence B. Curley and James A. Jackson are valuable to such businesses as there are; however, since little of the business they purport to sustain through their expert advice is worth sustaining — its value being estimated in relation to its benefit to society — these gentlemen fall low in the scale I devised to measure them by.

It seems to me that the one man in that group who comes nearest to 25 per cent in each of the four standards is Albon L. Holsey. His idea was more or less original. It was and is of real value to society (and society is both Caucasian and Negro, in this country). He displayed admirable initiative in advancing his idea. He was successful. Mr. Holsey, then, is selected as the Most Gifted Aframerican in the Field of Business.

I cannot bring myself to see that lawyers contribute anything of value to society. Throttling my natural dislike of the tribe which feeds and grows fat on litigation, I have tried to be just to the gentlemen of the

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