

Who are the Thirteen Most Gifted Negroes in the United States?

By EUGENE GORDON

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bar. But I see them all simply as a body of men who exist for the benefit of nobody but themselves.

Our system of government is a particularly generous host to parasitic growths, the legal profession being not the least of them. We are, I think, victims of a system which glorifies legislation and exalts the interpreter of legislation, all to the disadvantage of the masses who, knowing no law, constantly find themselves in its toils and perpetually yield their blood to the leeches who fatten upon them. So the lawyers are passed



Florence Lee,
a Broadway star

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by while we scrutinize the medical men.

Some of these physicians and surgeons have done splendid work: Austin M. Curtis, for instance; and Ulysses G. Dailey. But there is no doubt I think, about who is the most gifted, the most progressive, the most useful of them all. I designate Dr. Louis T. Wright, originator of the intradermatol method of vaccination against smallpox; formerly captain in the medical corps, A.E.F.; member of the general staff of the Department of Health, New York City; sometime physician in charge of the female medical out-patient department of the Harlem Hospital; assistant surgeon in the male out-patient department, in the same hospital; contributor of learned articles to medical journals; police surgeon.

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There is little originality among the artists. New ideas are so scarce that when one does appear it stands out like a birch in a forest of evergreens. William Stanley Braithwaite brought an original idea to poetry more than twenty years ago when he introduced his anthology of magazine verse into the pages of the Boston Transcript.

To that extent Mr. Braithwaite meets the test. But his idea, although of value to many second-, third-, and lesser-rate poets (who are themselves of little value to anybody), was not of great moment to society. It is true that he contributed a great deal to Boston culture in the early days of the present century, but the percentage of Bostonians who benefited was so small that the good he did was negligible. We regretfully pass him by.

So also do we pass by Chestnut, Burleigh, Dett, DuBois, the "Lawd" Harrison, Henry O. Tanner, and the rest of them, except Aaron Douglas, Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and George S. Schuyler.

I am convinced that every one of the forty artists I mentioned is exceptionally talented in his class. I believe that many of them, especially among the younger persons, are going to be heard from persistently and loudly before long: Rudolph Fisher, Arthur Huff Fauset, Gertrude Schalk and Dorothy West. But they all seem to lack some of the elements which have distinguished the four men I have named.

Langston Hughes, with his "blues" poetry, not only gave art a new idea but he allied himself definitely and unashamedly with the masses of workers, the men and women who needed just such an interpreter. He has not permitted himself to be turned aside from his purpose, and he has shown that even a poet may be successful.

Aaron Douglas started in the school founded by Winold Reiss, but he has surpassed his teacher and has developed a technique that is freshly original. He too has shown his kinship with the common people; any of his drawings will testify to that fact. He has been in great demand recently in various parts of the country and wherever he has left his work he has been followed by expressions of awed praise. He is unique among American painters.

Roland Hayes was the pioneer among successful Aframerican concert singers. He was successful because, recognizing that he had great talent, he used his intelligence in putting his talent to work. He was not content to be simply a renowned Negro singer. Thus he is today a renowned American singer. It would be more nearly correct to call him a renowned international singer.

A similar statement may be made

with respect to Paul Robeson, but it will need amplification. For Robeson is greater than Hayes, being more



ERNEST E. JUST
Biologist

versatile yet being, at the same time, a mature artist in each of his roles.

George S. Schuyler with his first novel stepped to the head of all Aframerican novelists of this generation, so far as originality of idea was

concerned. He is apparently the most gifted of any that has appeared within the past half-dozen years.

Solomon C. Fuller, the noted neurologist and psychiatrist; William C. Hinton, whose discoveries have revolutionized some phases of the medical profession; William C. Haynes, the chemist who is head of the Union Pacific Railroad laboratory at Omaha, Nebraska, and whose specialty is food storage during transportation; Harry Keeland, who spent some years in the E. R. Squibbs and Sons research laboratory, heading a group delving into colloids, who has contributed articles on chemistry to learned journals, and who is now doing research for the Hazen-Brown Company, of Brockton — these men are high in the ranks of American scientists.

However, because their work is somewhat less important for the moment than the bio-chemical researches and discoveries of Ernest E. Just, the valuable work in radioactivity of Dr. Elmer S. Imes, and the amazing discoveries of George W. Carver in the field of agriculture. I shall have to pass up Messrs. Haynes, Hinton, Fuller, and Keeland, and name Carver, Imes, and Just. These men are undoubtedly among the most gifted scientists in America. Their worlds know neither racial nor national boundaries.

In the field of Education I choose Henry A. Hunt as the person who

has made the most original and most valuable contribution in recent years.

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