

WEST INDIANS SUPERIOR IN MANY RESPECTS

Says Well Known Historian Natives Can Learn Much From Them

BY CARTER G. WOODSON

It is timely that, at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in New York City from the 8 to the 12 of November, some consideration will be given to the unusually large contribution made by the natives of the West Indies to the development of the race in the United States. Because of prejudice, with which almost any foreigner would naturally meet, we have been accustomed to refer to these citizens with epithets which are more indicative of the ignorance of those who utter them than an evaluation of the worth of people who in several respects are far in advance of the native Negroes of the United States.

We too often forget that in the course of the triangular slave trade the majority of the enslaved Africans were first brought to the West Indies where cheap labor was very much in demand to produce sugar and that a large number of the first slaves brought to the United States came from the West Indies, which served as a sort of way station from Africa to America. Having enjoyed in the West Indies some of the same privileges that were allowed the Negroes of the cotton plantations, the natives who continued to come from those islands to the United States brought a higher culture which tended to elevate their less fortunate fellowmen in the settlements along the Atlantic. Refugees from the Haitian Revolution, started by Desalines and Toussaint Louverture, settled in this country in and near the ports along the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico and stimulate the struggle for freedom. The most outstanding of these West Indian immigrants was Denmark Vesey, who worked out the best conceived plan for a servile insurrection started during enslavement of the race.

In recent years we have profited by the contribution of the West Indians in various ways. Few of us think of the fact that Bishop J. B. Smalls and Bishop C. C. Alleyne of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and Bishop W. B. Derrick and Bishop John Hurst of the African Methodist Episcopal Church were born in the West Indies; and also the fearless fighter, R. C. O. Benjamin, the noted lawyer, D. Augusta Straker, the beloved educator, W. H. Croxman; and the distinguished scholar, E. W. Blyden. Without achievements of such gentlemen, those who rehearse progress of the Negro race in America would have less to talk about.

The reasons for these differences are simple. In the first place, the native West Indian is almost two generations farther removed from slavery than the native Negro of the United States. Being in a country where the blacks outnumber the whites, moreover, the Negroes on those islands have figured more conspicuously in the social, economic, and political life than members of this race have been able to do in the United States. The whites in the West Indies constitute the governing class in the sense that they have the last word in exercising final authority in practically all spheres even in matters of religion; but inasmuch as conditions compel them to use Negroes in all capacities, there are practically no functions in the life of the people which the West Indian Negroes are not permitted to exercise.

The American, whether white or black, then, in visiting the West Indies today, is surprised to find the conditions obtaining there in contradistinction to the situation in our own country. We hardly know what to think when we see a Negro engineer or conductor on a train, a Negro manager in charge of an international corporation, or contractor, contractor with Negro mechanics and artisans working at trades from which they are excluded by unions in the United States. For this very reason the West Indian Negro, as a rule, is more of a dynamic force in a community than the native born Negro of the United States.

In his home in the West Indies, although he did not receive such high wages as employers pay for the same sort of work in this country, he could nevertheless, into most any occupation for which he had prepared

himself, and he has developed, there with the thought that for him all things are possible. The Negro in the United States, however, discriminated against here, turned away there, and told not to go yonder, has developed a sort of inferiority complex, and instead of thinking of great things which he can do he spends too much time brooding over the things which he is told he must not do, when if he had sufficient courage he might do those very things.

The West Indian Negro, moreover, has developed with a keener appreciation of cooperation than we find in the native Negroes, who are apparently so close to slavery that they have not yet got rid of the distrust and the ill will for one another which the slaveholding class instilled into the minds of the bondmen to keep them from uniting and starting servile insurrections. The West Indian Negroes, as one has well said in post-classic language, hang together whereas the native Negroes of the United States prefer to be hanged separately.

Wherever you find a native of the West Indies you will probably be able to interest him in doing something for another native of one of these islands. Wherever you find a native Negro of the United States you will find it easy to interest him in doing something to oppose another Negro of his country. Wherever you find a native of the West Indies starting some sort of enterprise you are more that apt to see his average fellow countrymen coming to his support, giving him every chance to do the thing as it should be. When you meet a native Negro of the United States, who has been informed of an enterprise started by one of his group, however, he is liable to begin immediately to find fault with the undertaking, to criticize the founder, and to do whatever he can to prevent the carrying out of the plans.

The West Indian, of course, cannot always easily succeed, for he may not have many of his native land in his chosen community. In this country, and he does not usually understand enough of the slave psychology of the native Negroes of the United States to deal with them as they must be to organize the group for constructive effort. Before the American Negroes should begin to themselves each one must be torn away from some white exploiter whose advice these Negroes always seek on important matters, sometimes even that upon such a matter as whether the Negro's son Henry should marry Sam's daughter Jane; and the exploiter usually gives the advice that rounds to his good. Some people have been unwise enough to call this interracial cooperation, but it is really racial extermination. The native West Indian, fortunate in having no such connection in this country, would do well to help break these ties which still hold native Negroes in serfdom and peonage.

The mind of the West Indian Negro therefore, has shown larger proportions than that of the native Negroes of this country. While the West Indian Negro is conceiving such a plan as the redemption of Africa through realistic education and international trade, the native Negroes in the United States are satisfied with menial jobs as a political compensation for the unusual honor of having one of twelve million of people, and with their number stand for a picture with President of the United States. When these discourses are thrown at the native Negroes all of their problems, so far as their mind can conceive them, are immediately solved.

It is timely, then to call for a sort of "rapprochement" between these two elements of the same race in America. The one has much ambition and few resources; the other has little ambition and many resources. The one can learn much from the other; the one can be of great assistance to the other. The one can not advance very far without the other. The two must stand together or go down together.

This close understanding, moreover, must not be a matter of concern only to those natives of the West Indies now living in the United States, but to those living on the distant islands occupation for which he had prepared

'Birth of a Nation' Harmful Picture

BY WILLIAM PICKENS

Some people, like the honest officials of AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, object to our opposition to performances of "The Birth of a Nation", on the ground that we are interfering with the freedom of organization and of speech, — and that "The Birth of a Nation" should have the same rights as other shows and theatricals.

This objection to our attitude assumes what is NOT TRUE: that we look upon "The Birth of a Nation" as an ordinary, legitimate theatre performance. We do not; we regard it as a treacherous, dangerous attack on the minority people who do not have "equal representation" in said theatres and performances.

We regard this performance as an attack on a helpless and handicapped minority, — an attack masquerading under the guise of a "show." We have so regarded it for 15 years or more.

and see no reason to change our minds. We believe in the freedom of the stage and screen, but we do not believe in mob-incitement and dangerous race-hate taking advantage of the theatre in order to claim immunity. Just as we also believe in "free speech", — but would call the police if the "free speaker" took the stump and began to yell, "Lynch him! Lynch him!" While we believe in liberty of the press, we would do our best to hail into court any editor who wrote an editorial calling upon the mob to attack us, for that is not legitimate editorial privilege; that would be a plain crime, taking advantage of editorial power.

The difference between our attitude and that of others equally honest, is that we do not regard "The Birth of a Nation" as a legitimate theatrical performance or an honest endeavor in "Art."

IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The seventeen year-old white boy who raped a six year-old colored child in Petersburg, Virginia, has neither been lynched or burned. He enjoys big freedom on a twenty-five hundred dollar bond. But his father is very indignant at the exposure of his virtuous son. The Negro parents should apologize to the young man who outraged their baby for being so thoughtless and discourteous as to talk about it.



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FOR THE SCHOOLGIRL

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KEEPING -FIT-

A Health Column

By DeNorval Unthank, M. D.

THE DEATH RATE OF THE NEGRO

The death rate among the Negro population is proportionally larger than that of the whites. This larger proportion leads to much conjecture. Many scientific circles attempt to explain the difference as an inherited environment and occupation.

Other circles attempt to account for the difference as an inherited weakness from racial admixtures.

Other circles explain the difference as a matter of racial susceptibility.

A professor of Zoology at the University of California has given the matter some serious study. He set out to prove that there are other than environmental differences to account for the different death rate. He cites the difference in susceptibility to certain diseases. The Negro seems to be more susceptible to chest diseases especially tuberculosis. The Negro seems to be less susceptible to Scarlet fever, Measles, Diphtheria, Hook worm, etc. The professor attempts to prove that his Susceptibility to scarlet fever, etc. increases in proportion as admixture of white blood increases.

Insurance companies use the increased death rate as substantial reasons for refusing to insure Negroes. Some cities and states use the facts as a justification for segregation.

Even insurance companies are having an about face in their opinions. One insurance statistician of national and international repute has just about apologized for many of the opinions he advanced on the Negro death rate 15 years ago.

Helpful hints

by Nancy Lee

Mothers complain about their children being disrespectful. "Have they lost the Bible instructions, Honor thy father and mother?"

For thousands of years, children have been taught to honor their parents, and this admonishment has been strictly adhered to and enforced by fathers throughout the world. There was no knowledge to back this exhortation, only blind obedience to tradition; even the fathers themselves were ignorant of its meaning and purpose. Now the rising generation have broken this law, because they feel that they have intelligence enough to understand and demand a reason. When they learn the reason for this rule, which they will in the near future, they will love and respect their parents of their own free will, and not because they are forced to do so. Intelligence, reason, and knowledge will be their guide.

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BOOK REVIEW

"THE INVISIBLE FULCRUM"

By J. John Gilbert (New Publishing The Company, Chicago.) Reviewed for The Advocate by Clifford Mitchell

By reading this book you can mentally explore the universe. Transcending all physical and tangible bodies the theme of "The Invisible Fulcrum" dwells wholly on the laws of nature as they apply to the mind, thought, association of ideas, right thinking and perpetual life.

The religion of life, of love, of true understanding, happiness and peace, is illustrated in simple language in a manner that combines the truth principles of all faith, denominations and cults and reconciles the truth between religion and science.

The law of mental action is clearly defined as the law of gravitation and in a conclusive manner proves that man cannot go contrary to the law of nature but that man can take advantage of the law of nature and just to the extent that his mental forces are harmonious with same will his success be measured.

A simple mental rule of success is laid down in the treatise, as follows: Desire plus fixation of attention plus concentration plus suggestion equals desire realized. The theory is then analyzed and supported by concrete statements of facts and examples.

After reading this book it is not surprising to me that in many communities it has been dramatized as a pageant of life and endorsed by leaders of many religious faiths, civic organizations, etc. It is "The Drama of Life".

Note: The editor of The Advocate wishes to announce that every book reviewed in these columns is to be found in her collection of books.

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