

WHITE THINGS

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MOST things are colorful things—the sky, earth, and sea.

Black men are most men; but the white are free!
White things are rare things; so rare, so rare
They stole from out a silvered world—somewhere.
Finding earth-plains fair plains, save greenly grassed,
They strewed white feathers of cowardice, as they passed;
The golden stars with lances fine,
The hills all red and darkened pine,
They blanched with their wand of power;
And turned the blood in a ruby rose
To a poor white poppy-flower.

They pyred a race of black, black men,
And burned them to ashes white; then,
Laughing, a young one claimed a skull,
For the skull of a black is white, not dull,
But a glistening awful thing;
Made it seem, for this ghoul to swing
In the face of God with all his might,
And swear by the hell that siréd him:
“Man-maker, make white!”

THE NEGRO AND THE NORTHERN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



1. THE PROBLEM OF THE MIXED SCHOOL

THERE is a pressing problem among Negroes which is giving rise to deep and far reaching difference of opinion. Public expression, however, to this difference of opinion is usually confined to severe condemnation and there has been altogether too little careful reasoned examination of the matter. The question is this: when colored children go to mixed northern public schools do they receive the proper education, encouragement and attention; and if they do not, what is the remedy?

There is no doubt but what in some cities colored children in mixed schools are discriminated against. They do not get proper consideration or attention, they suffer veiled and open insult, they are systematically discouraged and they leave school prematurely. Too many colored folk think the only remedy for this is a segregated school system in the North and they advocate this, not only because they think their children will be better treated, but also because such schools will furnish employment to numbers of educated and deserving Negroes who otherwise might not get employment.

To this it may be answered: First, it is not true that all cities and all mixed schools mistreat colored pupils. In large numbers of cases they receive intelligent and sympathetic training. On the other hand colored people of experience who have studied the Negro problem know that of all evils, segregation in education is one of the greatest and that this evil cannot be outweighed by the few benefits which result from separate schools.

The great objections to separate public schools are: (1) It plants race prejudice in children during their most impressionable years. (2) It makes whites and blacks fail to understand or appreciate each other because of lack of mental contact. (3) It fosters among colored children a fear of white people and a belief that Negroes are inferior. (4) It fosters in white children a contempt for Negroes and a belief that whites are superior. (5) It increases the cost of the school system to such an extent that Negroes are bound to get inferior

schools with lower standards calculated to fit them for the lowest places in society. (6) The public school is the only real foundation for democracy.

2. THE SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK CITY

On the other hand it will not do simply to rail against the advocates for separate schools. They are not all fools or selfseekers. They see a real evil and those who oppose them must not do so in anger, but rather must show constructive effort to overcome the present evils of Negro children in mixed schools. It happens that New York City is pointing the way in which this may be done. New York City, after a severe struggle which ended less than a generation ago, abolished her segregated Negro schools which had existed for a century. Today there are nearly 300 teachers of Negro descent in the public schools. They are scattered all through the system from the high schools to the kindergarten and they teach white children even more often than they do colored. There is in the service one Negro principal who has had under him for over 12 years an entire set of white teachers and a school of hundreds of white pupils.

The New York school system is conducted so completely without reference to color that it used to be impossible to get statistics concerning colored children. With the large influx of Negroes to New York within the last ten years, however, much attention has been focused upon the colored group, and perhaps it was natural that the problem of the colored child should become most acute in that part of the school system where it touches nearest industry.

The question arose in this way: the industrial opportunities of colored folk are limited. Should therefore the school training of colored children likewise be limited to preparing them for the careers probably open to them? This question was asked in the matter of Negroes attending High Schools; and especially it arose in the case of the Manhattan Trade School, a technical high school.

3. THE MANHATTAN TRADE SCHOOL

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