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Is the American Negro to Remain Black or Become Bleached?

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Is the Negro race to preserve its physical identity or to be bleached white within any calculable time with which we need now concern ourselves? A satisfying answer to this query would not only go a long way towards relieving the American mind of a perplexing anxiety, but would also greatly facilitate practical and acceptable plans of race adjustment. The American white man has been so earnestly engaged in volunteer assistance to Providence to keep the races apart that he has failed to notice the plain indications of the outcome under the normal operation of biological and social law. A new Negroid type is gradually emerging which clearly foreshadows the immediate, if not the ultimate, physical destiny of the Negro race on this continent.

The world is now giving concern to the outcome of the contact, attrition and adjustment of the various races and nations of mankind in a more serious sense than it has ever done before. Easy transportation of material substance and the free communicability of ideas have brought the ends of the earth together in one human community. No longer do mountains, rivers and seas form fixed boundaries for human habitation. But according to the universal experience of mankind, race contact means race admixture. The primal passion of sex runs deeper than racial or cultural cleavage. Race antipathy, religious inhibition, social proscription and cultural pretensions, all break down in face of the cosmic urge to multiply and replenish the earth. The laws of biology care little for the decrees of the propagandist or the sanction of priests. Historically, the admixture of races has taken place despite the prevailing social polity, and mainly outside of the marriage vow. When two races of wide-apart levels are brought together, there is a mixed offspring without certified paternity. The stigma of illegitimacy is visited upon the children of natural passion unto the third and fourth generation, until the

process of fusion has been completed without trace. The process of race fusion is of no sociological importance beyond the time when the brand of bastardy begets an unfavorable social opinion. What boots it how the Anglo-Saxon came to be; whether the original fusion of blood was with or without the sanction of civil or ceremonial law? The important fact remains, that he is what he is. The census of 1890 recorded nearly seventy thousand octoroons in the United States. Practically all of these can cross, and many of them have crossed, the great race divide, carrying with them their quatum of Negro blood. That these octoroons were begotten through the process of bastardy, makes absolutely no difference in the final effect upon the blood composition of the American people. Our statesmen in their frantic efforts to keep the races apart by statutes and civil regulations should bear in mind that comprehensively, in the long run, miscegenation without the law will be just as effectual as miscegenation under sanction of law.*

The composite progeny is always the offspring of the males of the stronger and the females of the weaker race. The sons of God never fail to look lustfully upon the daughters of men. By the instinct of male jealousy, the males of the lower or lesser breed are forbidden personal or social intimacy with the females of the higher race and class. The same law of sexual jealousy would impel the males of the inferior order to give like shelter and protection to their own womenfolk, but they lack the power to give their purpose force and effectiveness.

*The dominant white sentiment in America abominates race admixture so far as the European and the African are concerned. Indeed, this is the general attitude of the white towards the non-white portions of the human race, which is most assertive in the Northern European or Nordic type. This feeling has been greatly accentuated in America since the end of the World War. Rabid propaganda has been stimulated and fostered. The resources of science have been ransacked for proof of the evil effect of race fusion. The discarded argument based upon an exploded theory of divine purpose has been resurrected and made to do service for the new propaganda. Men are ever prone to interpret facts to sustain their notions and to fashion their opinions to suit their prejudices. While science has given

no final word as to the effect of race intermixture upon the physical, intellectual and moral stamina of the offspring, yet the rabid advocates of race purity are asserting the baneful effects of such crossing, with the assumed authority of scientific certitude.* The physical separateness of the races is the one passionate dogma which dominates the American mind today. Its sanction is stronger than that of science, law or religion. Race consciousness is growing keener and keener with the passing years. † Physical distinction counts for more than cult or creed. The test of an ennobling brotherhood is determined by birth of the flesh rather than birth of the spirit. The white ‡ Christian must, by the essential requirement of his creed, assent to the doctrine of the equality of the soul, but he stubbornly balks at the suggestion of social equality. All sorts of devices are used to keep the races physically separate and socially asunder. Twenty-six states have passed anti-miscegenation laws. Separate schools and jimcrow regulations are made in the southern states where the Negro resides in greatest relative proportion. Custom and tradition forbid social intermingling by a sanction stronger than law. The Mongolian is placed under the same ban as the Negro. Facts can always be found and arguments fashioned to support dominant opinion. If the undesirable element be black, like the Negro, it must be excluded on the ground of inferiority which threatens general debasement. If it be yellow, like the Japanese, it meets with like treatment on the grounds of suspected equality, or even superiority. So feeble is the force of logic against the avowed dominant purpose. The continuance of this intolerant spirit on the part of the white race in America is as certain as any other social tendency concerning which we now have predictive data. It is with this attitude that we have to deal and against which, as a background, we must project all projects and plans for better race relations.

* The white man is primarily responsible for whatever race crossing has already taken place, or that threatens to take place in the future. Emerson somewhere says that no man can come near me except by my own act. The Negro woman has been victimized. The approximation of the races is the result. Should the white race issue a decree enforceable upon every

member of that blood, that there shall be no further intermingling of the races, the process would instantly cease. But instead, the burden of blame is sought to be placed upon the victimized race which bears the brunt of it all. One is again reminded of Aesop's wolf, accusing the lamb of muddying the stream from the lower level. There would be no need of drastic legislation, passionate assertion of determination, rabid propaganda and aroused rancor of race, if the white man's race pride could control his sex passion. But this is perhaps placing too great an inhibition upon human nature. Penelope, the wife of Ulysses, in the *Odyssey* kept her suitors in indefinite suspense by promising to render a final decision when she had completed knitting a fancy fabric. But the fidelity of her heart and the cunning of her mind led her to unravel at night the newly knitted section of the preceding day. So the answer was delayed until the return of her faithful spouse. The white man defeats by his lustful indulgences by night all of his finely spun theories of race purity elaborated by day.[†]

The fact that sex urge is a deeper and more profound instinct than race preference, or race pride, should lead to serious reflection as to the permanence of race consciousness as the dominant influence in human relationships. Nor is this the only passion that often rises above the distinctions of race. Political and patriotic fervor and religious zeal have often evinced a force and stubbornness that swept away all barriers of flesh and blood. The rise of Islam and its threatened renaissance show the possibility of the dominance of the spirit over the flesh. The basic principle of Christianity requires detachment of devotion and a strength of discipleship which transcend all racial animosities and antagonisms. The religion of the Nazarene, in its pure essence, recognizes neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bondmen nor freemen. Christianity is absolutely incompatible with caste or color. The attempt to reconcile the gospel of Jesus with the arrogant intolerance of the Nordic is a serious reflection upon the spiritual capacity of the Teutonic race, whose genius for concrete practical accomplishments is to be extolled beyond all praise. Spiritual kinship transcends all human and social relations among mankind.

In regarding the spirit of race intolerance as a fixed stubborn fact which conditions our present day policies, let it always be understood that we are dealing only with the present and the glimpse of future time now vouchsafed to us. Human shortsightedness cannot envisage the far reaching future. Our wisest foresight, like the head light of an engine, can see only a few furlongs in advance. The power of human prophecy is feeble; nor does it increase with general progress and advancement. No human being knows what a day may bring forth any more than he did in the days of Noah's Flood. Had any soothsayer predicted the present state of the world twelve years ago, he would have been ranked with the amiable fanatics who ever and anon amuse us with prophecies of the end of time. We are equally impotent to foretell the political, economic or social condition of the world a short ten years hence. The sudden emergence of deep seated moral and spiritual emotional propaganda may sweep away the sensibilities of race, and usher in a new order of things based upon more primal human passion.

All profound religious teachers and deep social thinkers base their hopes upon the social, moral and spiritual unity of mankind, as "the one far off divine event, to which the whole creation moves." According to any comprehensive and satisfying philosophy, the brotherhood of man is more fundamental than the fellowship of race. The ultimate physical and social identity of all peoples occupying a common territory is a logical necessity of thought. The straight-thinking mind, free from predilections and social bias, refuses to give assent to any other conclusion. This consummation, however, is too far removed from the sphere of present day sensibilities to have much appreciable effect upon practical procedure in this prosaic, work-a-day world in which we live. We are mainly motivated by apparent, persistent, stubborn realities which we can neither defeat nor frustrate. In our helplessness we are forced to deal with conditions as they are, rather than as we vaguely or vainly imagine they ought to be, or as we may cherish the hope they will be in the ages yet to come. To be regarded as a time-server is often considered as a designation of reproach; but finite comprehension can only serve its day and generation. It

requires omniscience to serve eternity. The deepest race distinctions in the world prevail in Christendom, which recognizes neither race nor color. But a pragmatic policy must deal with existing realities rather than with idealized abstractions. We must discuss the physical destiny of the Negro race in America, under the Christian dispensation as it prevails now on the earth, rather than according to some idealistic interpretation that has never yet been practicalized on land or sea.

In the United States the original red race is rapidly being extinguished by the encroachment of a too strenuous civilization. The yellow race is excluded by drastic immigration restrictions calculated to keep America white, or as nearly white as may be, with the troublesome non-white elements now on hand. The white and black races will be the residuary constituents of the population of the continental United States. America has been called the great international melting pot in which the various nationalities of Europe are to be fused into one homogeneous type. This process, however, is supposed to include only the different branches of the Aryan race. The white race alone is deemed a worthy component of the desired compound. The non-white races of Africa, Asia, and the scattered isles of the sea, are not considered as contributory factors of the forthcoming American race. But the rejected elements are also being fused into ethnic solidarity, which is basically Negroid. There will be, not one American race, but two; the one white, and the other neither white nor black, but a brownish-yellow or a yellowish-brown.

The term Negro is used to designate a group of peoples whose maternal ancestors came from Africa. It involves all of the complexities of blood and varieties of color of the entire human family. There is no race variety on the face of the globe that is not represented through some trace of its blood in this new Negroid type, now in process of fusion. While the term Negro denotes color, it also connotes condition and status. The social segregation of the Negro race, together with all who bear marks of physical semblance thereto, is made easy by reason of its traditional servile relationship. The color line constitutes the deepest and most easily distinguishable line of cleavage in our cosmopolitan population. All elements of the

white race are the more consciously and agreeably solidified by appeal to the antithetic colored race. In Europe, where they have no such racial antithesis, intra-racial divisions and strife are far more sharp and acrimonious. The division of mankind into Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, Christian and Heathen, white and colored, rests upon the basis of contrasted cultures. Those who belong to the higher assumption feel themselves drawn closer together by reason of the superior conceit which lifts them above the level of the baser groups that fall without the circle of their coveted ennoblement. The phrase "white and colored" is relished as a talismanic expression which distinguishes the white man from his less favored and more unfortunate fellow creatures.

The American Negro does not constitute a race in the sense of a compact ethnic unity, imbued with a common consciousness and impelled by a common impulse. There is no sufficiently unified physical basis as a background for the emergence of a collective soul with the passion and stubbornness to compel coördinated action and persistent procedure. There is rather a promiscuous assortment of individuals with diverse physical and spiritual dispositions, actuated by the antagonistic instincts of the Ishmaelite. The imported slaves represented disjected and expatriated individuals, captured from wide apart areas of the African continent, and representing tribes that differed widely in cult and color. The process of transplantation covered the period of two centuries. The enslaved captives, if they had ever acquired, had doubtless lost a patriotic devotion to country and native land. There was no social sense of the wrongs and injustice involved in their capture, enslavement and expatriation. For the most part they were slaves or captives in their native land. To them, crossing the ocean was merely shifting the scene of their misfortune from one continent to another.

Psychologists tell us that group consciousness emerges most readily and is most easily sustained on a basis of physical likeness. The wide distribution of the African slaves in time and space, and the vastly varying social circumstances of their native land, made of them an aggregation of unrelated assortment of unfortunates, united only by the bond of a servile status

and a somewhat similar color. These unfortunate children of nature were divested of every semblance of self expression and development, along the line of their natural bent and genius. The alien master directed every move they made and controlled the channels of intra-communication. Wherever two or three of them were gathered together, a white man was placed in their midst to confound their spontaneous council and to frustrate the formulation of a common purpose. There never was more unpromising material and untoward circumstances out of which to build up and develop a race.

The white race began to mix its blood with that of the Negro with the landing of the first ship load at Jamestown. From that day to this the sun has never set and risen without the reënforcement of European blood in African veins. * In the beginning, this libidinous miscegenation was wholly without social consciousness. It was only when a considerable body of mulattoes appeared that the philosophers and statesmen of that day began to animadvert upon the possible future jeopardy of a half-caste issue. Even now, the effect that the absence of the mulatto might have had on race relations is a matter of curious but interesting speculation. We are told in Greek mythology that Father Chronos devoured the offspring of his lust in order to avoid future complications of a troublesome issue. The white race in America sought the same end by relegating the mixed issue to the status of the mother's race. This policy served, for the time being, to keep the white race legally pure while mixing the Negro race. But here again the inexorable laws of biology proved to be stronger and more effective than the cunning legal contrivance of man. * The Latin races, on the other hand, incorporate the composite progeny into the dominant race, which becomes frankly mixed, ostensibly leaving the lower and weaker element pure. The immediate effect of the pragmatic policy of the Teuton proves to be more agreeable to his asserted pride of race; but in the cosmic scheme of ethical requitement, the time must come for a reckoning for the awful sin of imposing the consequences of the lustful burden of one race upon another. * Theodore Roosevelt, in one of his contributions from South America, raised the query as to whether the Teutonic or the Latin policy would lead sooner to final and

satisfactory race adjustment. But like Pontius Pilot, in his query as to the nature of truth, he did not vouchsafe an answer. The Negro woman is made to bear the brunt of all of the races, nations, and varieties of mankind now living or sojourning in this country.

In the veins of the so-called Negro race, there courses some strain of the blood of every known subdivision of the human family. Not only within the limits of the same race itself, but within the veins of the same individual, strains of blood are mixed and mingled in inextricable confusion. Indeed, if there be such a thing as natural race antipathy, the Negro race would be rent asunder by internal and external animosities.

The physical destiny of the Negro race is not immediate amalgamation with the white race, but the blending of these diverse bloods into something like physical homogeneity, and the formulation of a group consciousness upon a substantial basis of physical solidarity. If this was not a normal tendency, enlightened race statesmanship would make it a conscious policy. The integrity of an outcast and self-despised race never has been, and never can be, preserved. The Negro in America will either be bleached by bastardy or destroyed through debauchery unless it develops a leadership and an *amor propre*, proudly conscious of its place and mission in the general scheme of human advancement. The Jewish race has preserved its physical purity through four thousand years, though densely crowded and envired by an unfriendly gentile world. And yet the unsanctioned overflow of Hebrew blood has enriched the veins of every race and nation among whom the chosen people have dwelt since the days of Abraham. The integrity of the breed, however, has been maintained by religious sanction rather than by any biological promptings or physical racial instinct.

The quickest and perhaps the easiest solution of the race problem in America would be the immediate physical absorption of the Negro element into the white race. Were the quantum of black blood evenly diffused throughout, the resulting blend would average eleven-twelfths white. This would meet the legal definition of a white person in several southern states and would represent as slight a strain of Negro blood as

can be traced with any scientific or practical certainty. There is no proved precedent or convincing argument that the physical, intellectual, or moral result would be deteriorative. This result, however, is not probable and hardly possible, in face of the fixed and determined attitude of the white race which controls the situation. Nor would it be the most helpful solution, so far as the world problem of race contact and adjustment is concerned. To absorb a handful of Negroes in America and leave the unbleached millions of Africa in their savage blackness, would be to deepen the gulf of racial cleavage as a world problem. It would be worse than useless from a sociological point of view for the whites of the Pacific Coast to absorb the few hundred thousand Mongolians now sojourning in their midst, and leave the half billion yellow Asiatics confronting them from the other side of the sea. If there is any divine purpose in working out the universal plan of racial amity and good will throughout the world, it would not be promoted by the immediate amalgamation either of the Negro or the Mongolian fragments now living in America.

*The attitude of the Negro race towards amalgamation can have only a negative effect. The more anxious he seems to bring about amalgamation, the more certainly will he help to defeat its consummation. The weaker race can destroy its separate identity only by a process of complaisant prostitution, whose ethical implications are too repugnant to be contemplated as a serious racial policy. The American Negro will be forced by outside compulsion to maintain his social and physical identity, independent of any purpose or policy on his part. The Negro will thus become one with himself long before he becomes one with the American people. †

While we muse, the fire burns. A new sub-race variety is forming under our very eyes. The future Negro race in America will be neither black nor white, but a yellowish-brown with albicant tendency. The federal census shows unmistakably the direction in which the wind is blowing. The mulatto element has steadily increased over the black from the earlier decades to the present time. Strictly speaking, the term Mulatto includes only the first offspring of Negro and European parentage; but according to census definition it includes all Negroes

with a perceptible trace of white blood. Due allowances must be made for discrepant definitions of the several censuses and also of the ability or inclination of the enumerators to differentiate finely as to shades of color and degrees of blood composition. The Negro himself can furnish no trustworthy data. Frederick Douglass used to say that genealogical trees did not flourish among slaves. The census of 1890 defined as "black" all persons having three-fourths or more of black blood. This is perhaps as close a margin as the average enumerator would be able to estimate. After passing the three-fourths limit, in case of the black quadroon as of the white quadroon, the individual would normally be classed with the race from which he derived the preponderance of his blood. The Fourteenth Census shows that there were 1,660,534 mulattoes in the United States in 1920, as against 2,050,686 in 1910. This discrepancy may be accounted for by the probability that part of the number returned as mulattoes in 1910 were classed as white in 1920, and partly by the larger probability that many more of them had been swallowed up by the mass-life of the race and returned as black.

The rapid growth of the mulatto element is not due in any great degree to its inherent fecundity. The mulatto birth rate is probably lower and the death rate higher than that of the blacks, under similar conditions of living. Every fresh infusion of white blood increases the proportional strength of the mulatto element. The Negro offspring of white parentage may be regarded as a continuing, though a gradually diminishing, factor in the equation of the colored population. There is not likely to be much further fresh infusion of white blood into the Negro race. Under the institution of slavery, the Negro woman was suppressed below the level of self-respect. She often felt her enhanced importance by becoming the mother of a mulatto child. The white master or overseer felt no legal, social or conscientious restraint in victimizing the female chattel. Had this institution continued another two hundred years without fresh importation of blacks from the continent of Africa, the race would have become well bleached through this libidinous process. But the growing sense of self-respect on the part of the Negro, as well as the increasing restraints of law and con-

science on the part of the white man, have checked, if not halted, this bastardizing process. The establishment of domestic ties and family pride in colored society effectively forbids such illicit relations, and makes social outcasts of the illegitimate issue. The laws of twenty-six states forbid the intermarriage of the races, which absolutely estops legitimate mulatto offspring. The states in which the bulk of the Negroes reside are found within this number. The social sensibilities of the races have grown so delicate, even in the North, that intermarriage has become exceedingly rare, even where there were no forbidding laws. The residential segregation of the Negro will lessen the opportunity of intimate contact of the races and therefore of illicit offspring. Illicit relations will decrease in proportion to the extension of separate areas of racial domicile. The rise of the "sage femme" and the widely advertised practice of race suicide, also serve to limit the fresh production of mulattoes. There are few mulatto babies born in Harlem, or in Philadelphia, Chicago or Detroit.*

Of the 1,660,000 colored persons returned as mulattoes in the census of 1920, and of more than as many more with concealed white blood in their veins, the overwhelming majority, especially of the younger generation, are offspring of colored fathers and mothers. There is already a large quantity of white blood in Negro veins. This blood tends to diffuse itself equally throughout the whole mass until it shall have assumed an approximate oneness in color and physical likeness. The process of diffusion will be greatly facilitated by the well known tendency of the darker male to mate with the lighter female. A homochrome marriage within the colored race is unusual.

The obvious proneness of the male for the lighter female is set forth by Paul Laurence Dunbar in his allusion to "the swarthy maid with her swarthier swain."

Many thousand Negroes have crossed, are now crossing, and in the future will cross, the great racial and social divide, and incorporate themselves into the white race, in order to escape the nether status of their mother blood. It is needless to denounce or condemn this clandestine tendency. They are pursuing the normal human motive of self interest and personal advantage. These racial transmigrants carry with them as

much of the despised blood as can easily be concealed under an albicant skin and unkinking hair. The white race will take only such homeopathic dashes of Negro blood as to remain substantially pure, at least in outward semblance. The transposition of the quadroon and the octoroon will tend to widen the physical margin between the races, and will also facilitate the more rapid diffusion of the residuary white blood throughout the Negro race.

A careful observation of Negro schools, churches, and other assemblages, in all parts of the country, convinces the writer that fully three-fourths of the rising generation have some noticeable infusion of white blood. One finds about as many children of undiluted Negro type as of the opposite extreme who cannot easily be detected from white. Both extremes, however, are rapidly diminishing in quantity, while the average of the race is approaching a medium of color and physical characteristics. Within the next three or four generations it will be hard to find a pure blooded Negro outside the remote black belts of the rural South. The near whites will have crossed the line or bred backward on the color scale. A new Negroid race will have arisen.

Thus a clear indication of the physical destiny of the Negro element in America ought to enable us to deal more effectively with the complicated and perplexing problem. The welding together of this incoherent racial group into a compact physical and social unity, to awaken a race consciousness and to inspire a concerted purpose of coöperation with the larger white group in all the ways of civilization and human advancement, ought to engage the highest energies of Negro leadership and to enkindle its keenest enthusiasm for human service. On the other hand, it ought to free the white man from the frantic dread of amalgamation and race debasement which now harrasses his waking hours and haunts him in his dreams.