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*The Negro
in the Cities of
the North.*

In the cities of the North the Negro has a more severe struggle for mere existence than on southern plantations or in southern towns. His difficulties are accurately reflected in the high death-rates—especially in the frightful mortality of the Negro child. Migration northward and to the cities has increased the Negro population of Chicago to 35,000, of New York to 70,000, and of all the eastern cities to a number which justifies the current attempts in half a dozen communities to find out by first hand and dispassionate inquiries what are the economic and social conditions of these large colonies. Our national capital contains the largest Negro city of the world.

In this special number of CHARITIES, devoted from cover to cover to the social interests of the Negroes in the northern cities, it has not been attempted to study exhaustively any one locality, or to cover the whole country in even a restricted statistical inquiry. It has been sought rather to afford a suggestive survey of the common situation; of the salient and typical facts in regard to the make-up of these groups, of some of the forces which lead to emigration from the South, and of some of the embryonic forces that may retard the movement; and then, at greater length, of the social conditions which result from it, and the regenerative, educational agencies which have been brought into being by Negroes or on their behalf.

This survey has not purposely evaded, but has for the most part fallen clear of the more bitter elements of the race conflict which Mr. Page jealously insists is the southerner's problem; and it has been entirely possible to keep clear also of the controversy between the two diverse programs for the education and ad-

vancement of the Negro with their conflicting ideals best represented at Tuskegee and Atlanta. There has been of course no attempt to trammel the contributors to set and amiable lines—a liberality which has been met with wholesome frankness and consistent good temper on the part of the teachers, editors, physicians, clergymen and specialists of many kinds whose co-operation has been sought.

Certain features of these *Opportunity and Responsibility* studies stand out clearly.

They may be grouped about two words, "opportunity" and "responsibility." In his deprivation of one or the other, or both, lies the explanation of much of what we call the Negro's problem.

When the Negro is excluded from industrial opportunities, we have the Clark street strike-breaker; when kept from decent streets and obliged to live beside the worst of his own race and of all races, we have the breeding of Negro criminals; when earning only the wage of menials, we have the working mother and the broken homes whose cost Miss Friday and Dr. Waring tell.

On the other hand, when the Negro father is not held by the courts to the same accountability as the white breadwinner, there follows wife desertion, illegitimacy and kindred ills; when the "basket habit," or the old attitude of the slave toward property rights is winked at, not only does it breed larger thieving, but it destroys the economic motive; when the Negro voter, as Dr. DuBois pictures him in Philadelphia, is bandied by the ward bosses and treated with no sense of the integrity of his citizenship, he responds in kind; when a "black skin and the ability to pay rent," to quote a speaker at a business league meeting in New York, are the only qualifications of an applicant for a

Social Bonds in the "Black Belt" of Chicago

NEGRO ORGANIZATIONS AND THE NEW SPIRIT PERVAIDING THEM

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The last federal census showed the Negro population of Chicago to be about 35,000. The present population is estimated to be over 50,000, an increase of about forty per cent in five years. The colored people who are thus crowding into Chicago come mostly from the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Missouri.

The underlying causes are easily traceable and are mainly as follows:

1. Primarily to escape laws of race discrimination that have steadily increased during the last few years.

2. To obtain better school privileges.

3. On account of the good news circulated by the hundreds of young colored men and women who have been educated in the Chicago and Northwestern Universities and the professional schools, that Chicago offers the largest liberty to citizens of all colors and languages of all communities in the North.

4. Because of the many industrial strikes which in the last ten years have brought thousands of colored people to Chicago, either for immediate work as strike breakers, or with the prospect of employment through the opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that thousands of Negro men and women are now employed in the stockyards and other large industrial plants, where ten years ago this would not have been thought of.

This increase of Negro population has brought with it problems that directly affect the social and economic life of the newcomers. Prevented from mingling easily and generally with the rest of the city's population, according to their needs and deservings, but with no preparation made for segregation, their life in a great city has been irregular and shifting, with the result that they have been subject to

more social ills than any other nationality amongst us. Notwithstanding the disadvantages suggested, the colored people of Chicago have shown in their efforts for self-help and self-advancement a determination that is altogether creditable.¹ While it is true that they contribute almost more than their share of the sins of the community, what they contribute in the way of restraining and correcting influences over their own lives, is much more important.

The real problem of the social life of the colored people in Chicago, as in all northern cities, lies in the fact of their segregation. While they do not occupy all the worst streets and live in all the unsanitary houses in Chicago, what is known as the "Black Belt" is altogether forbidding and demoralizing. The huddling together of the good and the bad, compelling the decent element of the colored people to witness the brazen display of vice of all kinds in front of their homes and in the faces of their children, are trying conditions under which to remain socially clean and respectable. There are some who are all the time breaking away from these surroundings and by purchase or otherwise are securing good homes on desirable streets. But the old and unsanitary shacks from which the good and the thrifty escape are immediately occupied by others less fortunate. For there are always too few houses to meet the demands of the newcomers.

As already suggested the colored people themselves are not indifferent to the demoralizing conditions of their environments. The organizations created and maintained by them in

¹ The Negroes of Chicago support some twenty lawyers, as many physicians, about a dozen dentists, about twenty school teachers in the public schools, and an ever-increasing number of them are carrying on successfully many small business enterprises that give employment to scores of educated young colored men and women

Chicago are numerous and touch almost every phase of our social life.

Is this passion for organization peculiar to Negro people? Whether this be answered in the affirmative or not, it is a fact that the Negro individual does not like to be alone in good works. His bent for organization is a sort of racial passion. Suggest to the average man something that ought to be, and he immediately proposes an organization. There is scarcely a thing in religion, in politics, in business, in pleasure, in education, in fighting race prejudice, or anything else desirable that is not the object of organization. A catalogue of the organizations created by colored people in this country would make a very large book, and would contain an interesting story of the many ways by which the Negro seeks to improve his condition. It is a common complaint that the Negroes will not support and protect each other in any united effort; but this is clearly not so. It is true that more of these organizations fail than succeed, but the failure is not due to a lack of the co-operative spirit, which is the most helpful thing in our race character. The failures are mostly due to a lack of comprehension and intelligence in working out the details. The weak point is administration. It is a common thing for men of no training and no experience to start an organization that requires the highest order of executive ability to carry out. They will take as a model the constitution and by-laws of some well-established white organization that is prominently successful. Officers, directors and committees will be made up exactly as in the organization which is its model—this, with the utmost enthusiasm and good faith that their success is assured. The colored man who ventures to suggest to them that they cannot succeed, for various and obvious reasons, is at once branded as a "traitor to his race." The enterprise may be fore-doomed, but the result will be charged up to the failure of the people to support and sustain it.

The pathway of our progress is thickly strewn with such failures, but they do not discourage other and similar attempts.

A colored man who has joined and pinned his faith to an organization that has failed, will join another society of the same kind to-morrow. It is at once pathetic and splendid to note how persistent is this faith that emancipation from the ills of poverty and ignorance and race prejudice is through co-operation. Indeed, no race of men and women feel more strongly than we do the force of that maxim that "in union there is strength."

The Negro Church.

First in importance is the Negro church. There are 25 regularly organized colored churches. This number includes 9 Methodist, 8 Baptist, 1 Catholic, 1 Episcopal, 1 Christian and 1 Presbyterian. In addition to these there are numerous missions in various parts of the "Black Belt." These churches are for the most part housed in large and modern stone and brick edifices that cost from \$7,000 to \$40,000 each, and have a seating capacity of from 300 to 2,000 people. Most of these churches are burdened with oppressive indebtedness, and because of this their usefulness as agents of moral up-lift is seriously handicapped. For example, the members of one of the largest have raised and paid in over \$60,000 during the last five years, but the church still carries an indebtedness of over \$24,000.

Despite this serious handicap of a slowly diminishing debt, the colored church is the center of the social life and efforts of the people. What the church sanctions and supports is of the first importance and what it fails to support and sanction is more than apt to fail. The Negro church historically, as to numbers and reach of influence and dominion, is the strongest factor in the community life of the colored people. Aside from the ordinary functions of preaching, prayer, class meetings and Sunday-school, the church is regarded by the masses as a sort of tribune of all of their civic and social interests. Thousands of Negroes know and care for no other entertainment than that furnished by the church. Theatres, concert halls, and art galleries mean nothing. What they fail to learn of these things in the churches remains unlearned. Nearly every night the church building

is open, either for worship, or for concerts, lectures, and entertainments of all kinds. Even political meetings of the most partisan sort, are not barred. The party leaders find it to their advantage, if they want to secure a large audience of colored people, to hold their meetings in the colored church. In a purely social way, the church leads in setting standards of social conduct. Weddings and receptions of all kinds, except those including dancing, are held within its walls and in this respect the church has become progressively liberal. Among other nationalities, there are Young Men's Christian Associations, Young Women's Christian Associations, social clubs, gymnasiums, reading-rooms, university extension lecture courses, etc. The colored people, generally speaking, have none of these liberalizing and elevating influences, except as they are supplied by this single institution.

Within the last six years, the colored churches of Chicago have begun to recognize the larger social needs of the people, and as much as their intense denominationalism will permit, they are endeavoring to enlarge their influence as a factor for betterment. One of the large churches has carried on such activities as a kindergarten, a day nursery, a boys' club and reading-room, a penny savings-bank, gymnasium, a kitchen garden, mothers' club and sewing school.

Nearly all of the large churches have literary clubs which have become attractive to hundreds of young colored men of intelligence. The effect has been a wider and more intelligent interest in things that concern the progressive life of the people.

In fine the colored churches must be reckoned with in every movement of a social character that aims to reach and influence life. They might do more and be more to the ever-increasing number who need guidance, social ideals, and higher moral standards, if they were less burdened with debts and an unyielding orthodoxy. The important thing, however, is that the Negro church in Chicago is becoming more and more liberal and intelligently interested and earnest in its endeavors to meet the peculiar requirements of the city Negro.

The Secret Orders.

Next to the Negro church in importance, as affecting the social life of the people, are the secret orders, embracing such organizations as the Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, True Reformers, the United Brotherhood (a fraternal insurance association), the Ancient Order of Foresters, and the Elks. Nearly all of these secret orders have auxiliary associations composed of women. The Masons and Odd Fellows are strongest in point of numbers and influence. There are about fourteen lodges of Odd Fellows and about as many of Masons. Their estimated membership is respectively 2,000 and 1,600.

The colored people believe in secret societies. I believe it is safe to say that fifty per cent of the better class of Negro men are enrolled in some secret order. These affect every phase of their social life and represent the best achievements of the race in the matter of organization. In no other way is the organized Negro so reliably responsive to the requirements of his social obligations. In no other form of organization do the terms brotherhood and mutual obligations mean so much.

Thousands of dollars are paid into the treasuries of these societies every month, and it is very rare that we hear of any charge of dishonest dealings in money matters. They take care of the sick and provide for the dead with a promptness, fidelity and abundance of sympathy that is not to be found in any other form of society amongst us. The lessons of right living, of charity and truthfulness are enforced in these societies more rigidly even than in the churches.

Most of the colored men belong to more than one secret order and many belong to as many as four or five at a time and live up to their obligations in all of them. In nothing does the colored man live such a strenuous life as he does as a lodge man. The lodge, more than any other merely social organization, is a permanent and ever-increasing force.

Other Organized Activities.

There are other social organizations among the colored people of Chicago that are indicative of a desire for progress and

improvement. For example there is one organization that supports an institution known as the "Old Folks' Home," in which some twenty-five old colored men and women are comfortably cared for and saved from eking out their existence in the dreaded almshouse.

There is a Choral Study Club composed of about one hundred young men and women under competent leadership and devoted to the study of music. A business league, composed of colored business men and women, is a part of the National Business League of which Booker T. Washington is founder and president. A physicians' club has undertaken a campaign of education as to the cause of tuberculosis and methods of prevention, together with lessons on domestic sanitation and kindred subjects.

And there are, of course, numbers of purely pleasure clubs. Love of pleasure is in good part a hopeful characteristic of the Negro people. Painfully conscious as we all are of our present position, which tends to exclude us from things that are most prized in human relationships, there is an all-pervading light-heartedness which saves us from the pessimism that must inevitably banish from the soul all hope and joy. Young men's social clubs, young women's social clubs, fellowship clubs, whist clubs and social charity clubs fill nights and holidays with laughter, song and dance.

*The Negro in
His Relations
to the
Dominant Race.*

From what has been said in describing Negro organizations it might be inferred that the colored people are quite capable of taking care of themselves and of advancing their own condition in every direction. Let us be undeceived in this. In every community the Negro is practically dependent, for nearly everything of importance, upon the dominant race. He must live in places set apart for him, and that often in the worst portions of the city. He must find work below his capabilities and training. He must live on the outer rim of life's advantages and pleasures. His merit, whatever it may be, is more apt to be discredited than recognized. Even though he be educated, public opinion still persists in rating him as ignorant, and treating him as such.

His virtues are generally overlooked or reluctantly believed in. He is the victim of more injustice than is meted out to any other class of people. In the matter of employment, the colored people of Chicago have lost in the last ten years nearly every occupation of which they once had almost a monopoly. There is now scarcely a Negro barber left in the business district. Nearly all the janitor work in the large buildings has been taken away from them by the Swedes. White men and women as waiters have supplanted colored men in nearly all the first-class hotels and restaurants. Practically all the shoe polishing is now done by Greeks. Negro coachmen and expressmen and teamsters are seldom seen in the business districts. It scarcely need be stated that colored young men and women are almost never employed as clerks and bookkeepers in business establishments. A race that can be systematically deprived of one occupation after another becomes an easy victim to all kinds of injustice. When they can be reduced to a position to be pitied, they will cease to be respected. It is not surprising then that there has been a marked lowering of that public sentiment that formerly was liberal and more tolerant of the Negro's presence and efforts to rise.

The increase of the Negro population in Chicago, already referred to, has not tended to liberalize public sentiment; in fact hostile sentiment has been considerably intensified by the importation from time to time of colored men as strike-breakers. Then again a marked increase of crime among the Negro population has been noted in recent years. All these things have tended to put us in a bad light, resulting in an appreciable loss of friends and well-wishers.

*The Frederick
Douglass Center.*

Out of these seemingly hopeless conditions a new movement has grown that is destined to have an important bearing on the status of the Chicago Negro. The organization of the Frederick Douglass Center and the Trinity Mission Settlement are in response to these needs of the hour. The Frederick Douglass Center is unlike anything of the kind in the country. It is the outgrowth of a comprehensive study of the situation by some of the best people of the city of both races. The head

and soul of the movement, Mrs. Celia Parker Woolley, is a woman who has given up social pleasures and the pursuits of culture in behalf of a people and of a problem to grapple with which requires more than ordinary patience and intelligence.

The Frederick Douglass Center is intended primarily as a center of influence for the better relationship of the white and colored races along the higher levels of mutual dependence and helpfulness. The society is incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois. Its by-laws recite its purposes as follows:

1. To promote a just and amicable relationship between the white and colored people.

2. To remove the disabilities from which the latter suffer in their civil, political, and industrial life.

3. To encourage equal opportunity irrespective of race, color, or other arbitrary distinctions.

4. To establish a center of friendly helpfulness and influence in which to gather needful information and for mutual co-operation to the end of right living and higher citizenship.

In order to properly house the movement there has been purchased, at a cost of \$5,500, a large three-story gray-stone house on Wabash avenue, near Thirty-first street. The location is adjacent to the "Black Belt" in the rear, and the white belt of aristocracy and wealth on Michigan avenue in the front. This new home for social improvement is fitted up with an attractive assembly room for meetings, a club-room and workshop for boys, a reading-room and offices and living-rooms for the head resident. Arrangements are being made for mothers' meetings in the interest of the home, men's meetings, classes in manual training, cooking and dressmaking, club work for intellectual and moral culture, and domestic employment. Lectures are also being provided for under the departments of sanitation, neighborhood improvement and civics.

Mrs. Woolley has succeeded in interesting in this new work many of the well-known people of Chicago, judges, lawyers, professors, business men and women of wealth and culture. Along with these she has the co-operation of nearly every colored man and woman of standing.

The Trinity Mission.

Another effort toward social betterment is the Trinity Mission. This is the beginning of a more distinct social settlement. It is located in the very heart of the "Black Belt" on Eighteenth street between State and Clark streets, a neighborhood properly called "Darkest Africa." Here there is scarcely a single ray of the light of decency. Neither church, nor school, nor anything else of a helpful character can be found. The head of this enterprise is a young man, Richard R. Wright, son of President Wright, of the State Industrial School, at College, Georgia. A crèche, a reading-room and a home for working girls are being carried on and substantial encouragement has come from people who are in sympathy with the principle of settlement work.

One of the results of these new organizations is the serious view the more intelligent colored people are beginning to take of the responsibilities of city life among their people. The Negro's worth as a citizen is to be tested in the great cities of the North as nowhere else in the world—the use he makes of his opportunities here, and his strength of character in resisting the malign influences of city politics.

To summarize:

1. The colored people themselves have begun to develop a sort of civic consciousness as manifested in the tendency of the Negro church and the Negro lodge to participate more largely in efforts to improve the social condition of their people.

2. The men and women who have organized in various ways to bring about a better Chicago, as well as a larger Chicago, have begun to recognize that if the ever-increasing Negro population is treated and regarded as a reprobate race, the result will be an increase of crime and disorders of all kinds, that will grow more and more difficult to handle and regulate.

3. Recent organizations with the settlement spirit are preparing to do many things in a rational way that have never before been attempted, and to make answer to many false and harmful things that now go unchallenged. In other words, by these new movements the Negro is to be generously included in all efforts to promote civic righteousness among all the people.