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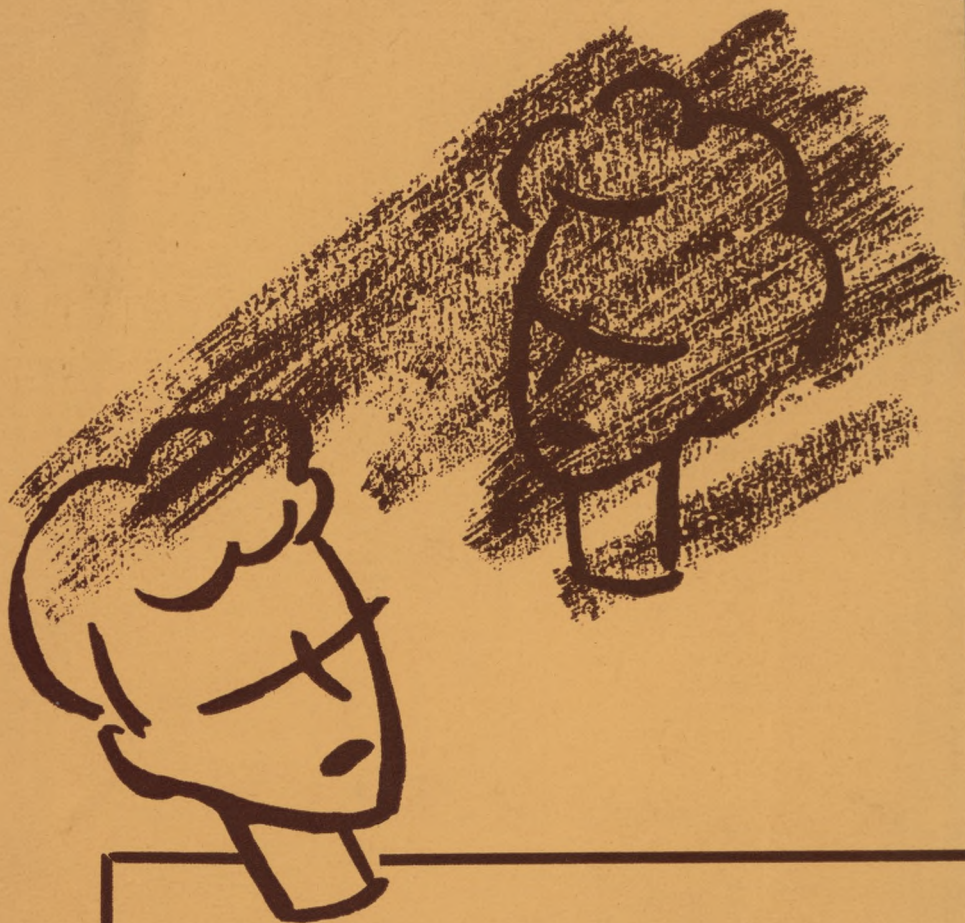
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personal adventures
in **RACE**
RELATIONS

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ESTHER POPEL SHAW

Esther Popel Shaw

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Mrs. Shaw, the author of Personal Adventures in Race Relations, is a Negro woman who teaches in a junior high school in Washington, D. C. These adventures were originally told in an address which she was asked to make at the Woman's Club in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. The Woman's Press has felt that they should be shared with a wider audience.

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We Need Atomic Understanding!

LET US think together in friendly but sober fashion about one of America's most vital—if not *the* most vital of—present-day problems: the problem of interracial and international good will, cooperation and understanding.

The unlovely story of race relations in the United States has been a matter of deep concern for many years. In the past half-decade, however, it has assumed major importance not only in national but in international circles. The eyes of the world have been, and still are, focused upon America and her methods of meeting and handling the issues that tie in with policies and procedures involving the treatment of minorities—the Negro minority in particular. Our fascist enemies have made of the “problem” a major weapon of propaganda in order to stir up internal strife among the several racial elements that make America “one nation”.

The viciously ugly practices of racial segregation and discrimination have brought about a spiritual gap between the races that is proving to be costly, stupid and stultifying. They foster in the minority groups a deadly feeling of inferiority and in the majority group an equally dangerous complex of superiority. At a time when all our energies are needed to meet and solve *together* the crucial problems of the postwar period, we find a large element of the population torn by resentment, suspicion and hatred. The constant and soul-searing humiliation that is the outgrowth of the dangerously reactionary policies of prejudice and biracialism serves to undermine the faith of the Negro, and other minorities, in the very foundation of the democracy they are asked to defend. Tensions have reached the explosive stage, and intelligent action is needed if we are to prevent consequences that can be utterly disastrous. In an atomic age we need atomic understanding! The same sort of cooperation that made possible the creation, or rather the unleashing, of the most devastating force for destruction in the history

of mankind, is now needed to build a brotherhood that can and should be the salvation of us all. Can it be done? That is the question!

Prejudice Becomes an Insidious Disease

IN A BRIEF but very wise little book, *Probing Our Prejudices*,¹ there appears a concise statement defining this very puzzling though general human attitude called *prejudice*:

"Prejudices are one of the most obstinate barriers blocking attempts to cope with social problems. We are beginning to realize that while prejudices are not innate, they have a long history in the experiences of individuals and that they must be attacked from many angles if we are to reduce them. . . .

"Practically everyone has some prejudices. None of us is so perfect as to be completely free of them.

"A prejudice is an attitude we have toward a specific situation that we reach without sufficient consideration of the facts about the situation. . . .

"The origin of the word prejudice is interesting. It comes from the Latin *praejudicium*. *Prae* means *before* and *judicium* means *judgment*. Judgment implies coming to a conclusion *after* a consideration of all the factors. Prejudice means jumping to a conclusion before considering the facts."

Thomas Brown's seventeenth century Oxford rhyme may be thought of as nonsense, but it reveals much:

*"I do not love thee, Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Dr. Fell."*

¹By Hortense Powdermaker. Quoted by permission of Harper Brothers. See "References on Race Relations for the Casual Reader," page 23.

So many little prejudices fill our lives, some harmless, some quite the opposite. Some of us like red, and hate blue. Others can't stand *green*, but "just love" brown, etc. Some people prefer blondes, others like brunettes. They can't tell *why* they do—they just *do!* Spinach is most tasty to many of us but "We wouldn't touch turnips if we were starving!" (So we say.) We *know* we couldn't eat snails (quite a delicacy to the French) or eels—"such horrible, wriggly creatures". These judgments are often made without so much as trying the foods to discover for oneself whether they are really good or bad!

During the Christmas holidays a friend visited in our home. In her midfifties, she is a person of superior education—a school administrator who has completed all the requirements for her Ph. D. degree in mathematics except for her thesis—a highly intelligent woman. *And yet, until Christmas, 1944, she had never tasted fruitcake!* Why? She had always "thought" she wouldn't like citron, raisins and all the other ingredients in a fruitcake, "mixed up and cooked together". This holiday, however, in an off-guard moment she allowed herself to be persuaded to taste one piece. Since then it has been difficult to keep her away from fruitcake, and she is quite bothered now at the realization of what she has missed all these years because of her bias. And so it goes!

The prejudices just cited are harmless. A prejudice against a dress because of its color is silly, perhaps, or stupid—but it can't hurt anyone. On the other hand, a prejudice against a person solely because of color or race may be just as unreasonable—but it is devastating in its effect. Anything that violates the dignity of the human personality, the integrity of the human spirit, no matter what the color or the racial identity of the body in which it dwells, is dangerous, cruel and destructive. And prejudice, when directed against races, religious groups or cultures, becomes an insidious disease that feeds itself on hate and destroys the ones in whom it dwells!

Because prejudices are phenomena deeply rooted in the emotional nature they are most difficult to overcome. Many of our atti-

tudes have grown along with us through the years. Most of them have been acquired unconsciously, and without thought on our part. Our reactions toward people, particularly, have been based largely upon emotional rather than rational considerations. So completely have these attitudes become ingrown that it is difficult even for an educated, trained mind to overcome the tendency to prejudge others on emotional rather than intellectual grounds. We tend to rationalize our prejudices, to justify them, to defend them and in so doing to make our intellects serve us.

Attitudes can be extremely ridiculous, as the following two incidents reveal.

A liberal Westerner and his wife, both of whom were educators, made it a practice in their home to have their household employees eat at the table with them when meals were served. When the head of the family went to teach in a college in one of the Carolinas he and his wife attempted to carry this habit over into the new living situation. A cook and a laundress were hired, and when mealtime came the lady of the house invited the new "help" to sit down and eat the noon meal with their employers. Since it was not the custom of the South to allow this sort of intimacy between the races the teacher and his wife were not too surprised when their invitation was refused. But herein lies the point of the story. The cook related the incident to another of the faculty members and this was her indignant comment: "Deed, suh, somebody ought to teach Miz Brown some mannaahs! The idea of her expectin' me, her *cook*, to set down and eat at the same table with her *laundress!*"

The Negro director of a Federal Housing Project in Chicago was asked to find a place on his staff for a Japanese-American girl just out of a relocation center. She was seeking employment. When the director approached his colored office workers on the subject they all objected most strenuously. *They* didn't want to work with a "Jap". In order to change this feeling the director gave a long and stirring lecture to them on proper racial attitudes, until he finally succeeded

in overcoming their objections. The Japanese-American girl came, and as the weeks passed she and the one girl in particular who had at first so bitterly opposed her employment became good friends. One day the latter was talking about the Nisei girl to her director. After expressing her affection for the new office worker she said: "You know, Mitsui is very glad she's working here with us. She said she'd so much rather be here than with those Jews in the downtown office!"

And so—like the ball in the roulette game—"around and around and around it goes, and where it stops, nobody knows!"

Here are some of the high points and pertinent facts that have come from authorities in the field of race relations in America; facts concerning what one writer calls "America's number one domestic failure and her number one international handicap"; facts on the ugly and thoroughly dangerous questions of race prejudice, discrimination and segregation in the country that is the world's foremost exponent of democracy, the country which all the world is watching for patterns, policies and procedures in the treatment of minority groups. It must be remembered that these minority groups join with the majority to make the 130 millions who dwell in this so-called "land of the *free* and home of the brave".

"We are in the midst of a period in which the democratic way of life is being severely tested. . . .

"The democratic ideal is achieved to the extent to which *all* the people participate in the democratic process.

"Such participation implies freedom from limitations imposed upon the individual solely because of arbitrary factors such as race, sex or religious faith.

"Essentially a democracy implies a recognition of the value of the individual, such freedom of the individual as is consistent with the freedom of others; the right of the individual to be judged on the basis of his personal worth; and equality of opportunity for education and for freedom of occupational choice. Furthermore, the success of a democracy as a tool of progress is dependent on such education and

training of all individuals as will make them competent to become participating members of a democratic society.”²

The fair application of these principles is questioned when we consider the lot of the colored minority peoples in the United States—and by “colored” we mean those generally recognized by a *degree of visibility*. Grouped according to the 1940 Census estimates, there are today in the continental United States alone:

Negroes	12,865,518	Mexicans	3,500,000
American Indians ...	361,816	Japanese	126,947
Chinese	77,504	Filipinos	45,563
Hindus	2,405	Koreans	1,711

These colored minority peoples make a total of 16,981,464!

For years America has failed to appreciate the importance of the contributions which these colored minorities have made to American culture and to recognize how its treatment of minority groups has warped American institutions and influenced American character.

Melting Pot or Seething Caldron?

THE AMERICAN pattern of inequality, discrimination and prejudice has built up in the minorities such corrosive attitudes as resentment, cynicism and bitterness, to the end that today our well-known “melting pot” because it does not melt *all* the elements of our citizenry to make a united America, is fast becoming a *seething caldron* of friction, misunderstanding, hatred and fear which can only explode with volcanic force into a destructive holocaust defying the imagination, unless sane and thoughtful efforts are made to prevent it.

²From *The Socio-Economic Approach to Educational Problems* by Ina Corinne Brown. See page 23 in this pamphlet.

A few personal experiences will illustrate the point.

1. I was in college during the last World War, and, like all the rest of the youth of America, I was anxious "to do my bit" to make the world *safe* for democracy!

The Red Cross was urging that all and sundry take courses in first aid, and I became a member of a home-town group in such a course. One of the town's wealthiest women was in charge of these courses and when she organized our group she made us feel that we had an important job to do. We did it and finished the course creditably. When the time came for the presentation of certificates no move was made to give us ours publicly (we were a Negro group), though all other groups had had—and were still having—public presentation ceremonies. Finally one of my friends told me she had received her certificate *via Mrs. C—'s maid!* I can still recall the violent fury that seized me in the face of this insult. Not that I had any personal feeling against the maid—but the principle involved of minimizing the importance of certificates for this group was what made me so angry. That I refused to receive my certificate from the maid—and had to get it by mail instead—and that I wrote a strong note of protest to Mrs. C—, caused a minor flurry in my immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. Some persons condemned me for being too presumptuous; others thought me right. For myself, I had involuntarily built an attitude toward Mrs. C— (*and* the Red Cross) which I have not yet thrown off and which I probably never shall throw off. She had violated my spiritual integrity, had attempted to rob me of my self-respect—and I resented it bitterly, and fought back!

2. This incident proves the power of *visibility* where race relations are concerned.

Like hundreds of other college students I offered my services as a government clerk for the summer of 1918. My Civil Service rating was high but the Civil Service appointment processes were slow. Since I wanted work only during the summer—as I still had a year's work to

complete in college—I went to Washington and managed to secure a temporary appointment. When it came I was sent as a clerk to the Treasury Department where I stayed on my job for the three summer months in spite of the fact that a recent ruling had made it compulsory that no Negroes be appointed to the Treasury Department *above* the rank of messenger. When I resigned to return to school I took with me an enthusiastic letter of recommendation from my chief who promised that when I finished college I could have the same job back.

After graduation, I was reappointed (in September of the following year) and, as luck would have it, my former chief was the placement officer to whom I reported. He received me cordially and sent me to a division which needed clerks. When I reported, the personnel director looked at me. Three weeks by the sea had given me a healthy tan which the rose-colored sweater I was wearing seemed to deepen. She recognized my name—Popel—(having lived herself in Harrisburg) as the name of a long-known colored family there. The Popels had lived in Harrisburg since 1826 when my paternal grandfather as a six-year-old had been brought there by his free-born parents. So—she sent me back with the statement that they didn't need clerks; it was typists they wanted. It hadn't yet dawned on me what was happening. But when I returned to the placement office the chief expressed surprise at seeing me again. Then someone tapped him on the shoulder and whispered something in his ear about a telephone call. He came to me, flushed, confused and embarrassed, took my papers of appointment and seemed about to destroy them. Again slow fury started to rise in me. I suddenly sensed that *race* was to keep me from a job which I had already proved I could do, but my fury made me cool and alert. After a time he said:

"Miss Popel, there seems to be some question of race here. Have you by chance any mixed blood?" My prompt reply saved the day.

"Surely," I said, "plenty of it! On my father's side I had an Indian grandmother and a—!" But I got no further. He grabbed at the word "Indian" as a drowning man would clutch at a straw and turned to his assistant with these words:

"What do you know about this! Those idiots down at B-Unit sent Miss Popel back because they thought she was *colored* when it's Indian blood that makes her dark! She worked for me last year, and a darned good clerk she was, too! Here, Miss Popel, I'm putting you in my own unit and, if anybody bothers you again, just let me know!"

Sometimes it is advantageous to be a mongrel mixture of many races! Again, however, I was bitter, yet I stayed for fifteen months to prove to them and to myself that I could do a good job. And before I resigned to take up teaching I had worked up to a desk of my own in the exclusive Insurance Claims Section of the War Risk Insurance Bureau of the Treasury Department which was, we had been assured while in the special training section for this work, "reserved only for the cream of the intelligence in the Bureau"!

3. Another mistake in visibility was funnier, though I later learned it actually involved our physical safety. A friend and I—(she was often mistaken for a close relative since the resemblance between us was striking except that her hair was a lighter brown than mine and her eyes were grey-blue instead of brown)—were driving in South Carolina. My car heated up and we stopped by the roadside to discover the trouble. Soon a local car pulled up beside us and a very courteous southern gentleman came over to offer us aid. We were both well-dressed, in fact, quite dressed up, for we were going to the next town for a social engagement with friends. We both wore dark glasses because of the sun glare. My car had D. C. tags on it, so we were definitely strangers to the man beside us. My friend held an administrative post in a northern college for Negroes but she was a colored native of South Carolina and of the town from which the gentleman came. Since their paths never crossed when she made her visits to her home he naturally did not recognize her, but she knew him. And as he approached she whispered urgently, but with an amused chuckle in her voice: "Good heavens, that's Judge Green! You talk, but don't tell him who we are or where we are staying." When I asked her the "why" of these precautions, she replied: "He's one of the most violent Negro

naters in these parts and if he ever knew he had stopped to help colored women he'd die!"

I decided, therefore, to give him ample opportunity to be courteous. And how he rose to the occasion! He wouldn't let me get my "pretty little hands" dirty touching the radiator cap! He wanted us "nawthen ladies" to know "southe'n gentlemen" knew how to be courteous. He walked across the hot, dusty field to fetch us a pail of "wahtah" and, having no success, pushed our car down the road until he found a house with a well. Then in grand southern style he ordered a frightened little brown boy to bring a pail to him, and when that was done he *threw* a quarter tip for the boy to pick up from the dusty road. As the judge was pouring the "wahtah" into the radiator a group of young townspeople (white) drove up from the opposite direction, stopped their car to see what the difficulty was, and to their proffered help the Judge said, grandly—"Oh, no! There's nothing wrong. I'm just showin' these nawthe'n ladies that we South Ca'linians know how to treat them right!"

For the remaining two weeks of my visit I wasn't allowed to take my car out of my friend's garage until after dark! The fact that we had, before an audience, accepted common road courtesy from the southern "gentleman" had put our safety and the safety of my friend's home in jeopardy! And all because our light color and manner had given our benefactor the impression that we were "ladies"! It doesn't make sense—but it was true!

"I Never Did Like Caterpillars!"

THE ORIGINAL title of this discourse was: "I never did like caterpillars." Another personal experience will give the "why" of that reference as the subject. Some twenty or more years ago when I had been in the Washington—and therefore southern—atmosphere for

only a year or two, there was held in the city an international conference of women. The organization was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom—a group committed to the tenets of international good will and fellowship as the bases for world peace and understanding. It was interracial as well as international in scope. Therefore, even in Washington, it seemed quite correct for an all-Negro group of college women known as the College Alumnae Club to extend a gesture of hospitality to the visiting delegates. The note inviting the delegates to tea was sent to convention headquarters, where it was posted on the calendar of social events, and preparations for their entertainment were made by our club. Several of the College Club members were members of the "WIL" and known to many of the visiting delegates who seemed pleased to have the opportunity of meeting a larger group of dark American women whom they felt they wanted to know better. And so they came—not in groups of twos or threes as we had expected them to, but en masse—at least sixty of them. And, instead of coming for a few minutes and leaving after being served, they came at four o'clock when the party started and stayed until six, when the tea was scheduled to end.

Shortly after what seemed to be the last taxi had dropped its passengers, another cab drove up and from it descended two very charming ladies who came up the steps with assurance and poise, rang the bell and were greeted at the door by the young College Alumnae Club member whose assignment that day was that of doorkeeper. The ladies passed her by—apparently mistaking her for the maid—and then they seemed to freeze in their tracks and for some reason were unable to take the necessary steps that would get them from the entrance hall into the living room where the tea was being held. A combined look of panic and confusion revealed their discomfiture. Sensing that something was making them uncomfortable and unhappy, I decided, as one of the hostesses, to try to help them overcome the difficulty that held them rooted in the doorway. I managed to get them to follow me to the couch nearest the door and we three sat down together. The very brief interchange of casual conversation revealed to me what I somehow had

already suspected. These two ladies were American women, and their dialect was broad and flat "Georgia"! Apropos of nothing, the braver and more aggressive of the two found words, and this is what she said:

"You know—ah nevah did lak catapillahs—but ah do believe if ah evah took the tahm to learn a little mo' about them and to get to know them bettah, and maybe to undahstand them, ah could *learn* to lak them! And ah guess that's the way ah've always been about cullud people!"

Having said that, she settled back on the couch and seemed in full possession of her equilibrium which had deserted her in the entrance hall. As for me—I had to make a rather quick adjustment. Until that minute, I, with my Pennsylvania background, had never dreamed that anyone but "deep South" *Negroes* talked with such an accent! Remembering my role of hostess, however, I was able to think fast enough to assure my guest that we weren't quite so *fuzzy* as caterpillars and to remind her that even caterpillars—if given time enough—developed into things of beauty. And on the butterfly and moth note I went to get the ladies tea and cakes while chuckling inwardly at having been put in the same category as caterpillars. The ladies did not leave their seats on the couch but they did do something they had never done before—they *ate* their cakes and *drank* their tea with *me*—a "cullud" person, and when they left not long thereafter they took with them the memory of sights they had never seen before. They had seen sixty well-bred, well-dressed and friendly European women mingling freely and comfortably with an equal number of well-bred, well-dressed and friendly brown American women. Had the candle lights burned out and left them all together in the dark there would have been no way of telling which were which!

I've often wondered what became of my two ladies from Georgia. The memory of their names did not stay with me. If they were to stand before me today I should not recognize them. But let anyone mention race or race relations to me, and immediately I can hear the words, "Ah nevah did lak catapillahs!"

"Race relations are not so much the relations that exist between individuals of different races as between individuals *conscious* of these differences. . . .

"When the people involved are integrated on a racial basis and thus regard themselves as separate races *in competition for status* the situation becomes racial. . . .

"Group consciousness has been described as taking the form of in-group and out-group attitudes. It is the difference in *we* and *they*. The in-groups 'belong' and so are accorded privileges denied to outsiders. These privileges include the right to be judged by different standards. All sorts of favorable emotional connotations are associated with the in-group while unfavorable ones are associated with the outsiders. We believe the best of one—the worst of the other."³

Not All Slaves Were African in Origin

THE STORY of the development of attitudes and antipathies toward or against peoples is a long and fascinating one, but the limits of this discussion permit no detailed consideration of them. It is interesting to note, in passing, however, that "until the rise of Christianity the divisions which separated peoples seem to have been what we might call general cultural ones" (and by *culture*, we mean the "total complex of beliefs, habits, customs and ways of living of a people.") "The antagonism was generally against the foreigner, irrespective of his foreignness. After the rise of Christianity the sharpest divisions of the civilized world came to follow religious lines and this kind of division continued until the discovery of the Western Hemisphere and the rise of the slave trade. The in-group was the religious group—the out-group were pagans, heathen, infidels or heretics."⁴

³From *The Socio-Economic Approach to Educational Problems*.

⁴*Ibidem*.

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The condition of slavery itself was not limited to any specific race, however. In ancient times, fair-minded and blue-eyed Angles were sold by the Roman slave dealers in the market places of Rome and her provinces; and in Ireland and parts of Northern Europe it was a common sight to see primitive Britons put up for sale in the slave stalls there. The Greeks and Romans took slaves from whatever parts of the world their victorious legions had overrun and conquered, whether these places were in the North of Europe, in Eastern Asia, or along the African shores of the Mediterranean. Later on, when the Christians and the Moslems engaged in holy warfare with each other, the Christians enslaved the Islamites when the favors of war turned toward them. Likewise, the Moslems, when it came their turn, enslaved the Christians.

In Africa black slaves were held by black masters, and in both North and South America Indian masters held Indian slaves. It can be seen, therefore, that slavery per se was not a "racial" thing or condition. And not all slaves were African in origin.

As for the Christians, it was the common belief among them that the nonbelievers in the Christian doctrines were heathen and infidels whose souls were forever damned and whose bodies belonged to whatever Christian nation happened to be their conquerors. They further considered these "barbarians" as being wholly without spiritual or civil rights because they were infidels. And so it was deemed good Christianity and a virtue (and later, by the Moslems, good Mohammedanism and a virtue) to mistreat and rob, cheat and injure all those of a "heathen" religion who fell into their hands. And when the fair-skinned Christians moved onward into the new and unknown portions of the Western Hemisphere it was not too inconvenient for them, even after the so-called period of "enlightenment" had come to Europe, to use this "religious" doctrine as an excuse and a justification for enslaving first the native, "infidel" Indians, and later on the imported, "heathen" Negroes, so sorely needed in the exploitation and development of the new country. One might make this further observation: Christians who followed this so-called "religious" line of reasoning

were quite often shocked and unpleasantly disturbed when they discovered that primitive peoples with whom they came in contact frequently used the same sort of double standard in *their* dealings with white men! "Gander sauce" for the "goose" somehow did not make sense to the Christian aggressors!

As the slave system developed in America its hapless victims were, in time, all of African origin. And because so many slaves of dark skin were to be found here it soon became the fixed belief of the white master class that *all dark-skinned* peoples were servile, and therefore inferior. The result is that today this attitude has become a fixation in the mental processes of the so-called "dominant majority" in America. And the rigid system of color, caste and class has become its major unsolved problem. Today in our many-colored Christian nation, we find the house divided against itself. Christianity and enlightenment have brought us all a long way *together*; and yet the darker brother has little defense against the "Christian" violence of his fellow citizens when they are driven by the furies of racial hatred and injustice!

"So many persons assume that racial antipathy is a natural or instinctive reaction that it is important to emphasize the fact that race prejudice as we know it did not exist before the modern age."⁶

In ancient times the important values involved *religion* and *intellectual status*. Race or color had no special significance. Today, however, the divisions which are most deeply rooted and persistent between men are those of race, and the most distinguishing badge is color.

In seeking for an approach to the solution of the question of racial antipathies one has to accept the fact that the problem must be faced from both sides of the color line, and that with us here it must be faced as an American problem. "When the dominant group considers Negroes as 'the problem' and Negroes think the only problem they face is getting their rights as a race, there is little hope of progress toward meeting fundamental American needs."⁶

⁶From *The Socio-Economic Approach to Educational Problems*.

⁷*Ibidem*.

If Any Link Is Weak—

AS PATRIOTIC and intelligent citizens we are expected to serve our country as best we may in furthering the cause of national security and in fostering peace in our time. It is of prime importance that the larger issues which confront us receive our wholehearted support, without waste of talent, constructive energy or sane mental attitudes. But if the nearly seventeen million members of the combined minority groups in America are compelled to dissipate their skills, misuse or neglect using their special gifts and creative forces solely because of race and their second-class status as citizens; and, if they are forced to know confusion, insecurity and distrust of their 120 million compatriots, who is to assume responsibility for the resultant, criminal loss of their constructive manpower? Disunity is a nonproductive commodity in a world that *must go forward* if it is to survive. And the 120 million majority, great in numbers though they be, dare not forget that they are but a part of the whole chain that is America. If any link is weak the whole structure can be of little value in times of stress and tension.

Get Together, Americans! is the title of a book that has recently been published.⁷ It should be, however, more than a title. It might well be a ringing challenge to us all regardless of skin color, race or creed. By way of emphasis at this point there comes to mind an incident whose significance is of paramount importance.

It concerns a young, well-educated Negro woman, a high school teacher and civic leader in her restricted racial community. She is the product of a completely segregated environment, an educator whose horizon has been limited because her color permits her to go only so far and no farther in her circumscribed world. She is at present interested in promoting an intercultural, interracial program that will involve the students she teaches. Her enthusiasm for this project is great but her

⁷By Rachel Davis Dubois (Harper, 1943).

inner attitude is dangerous—to her own integrity of spirit, to her project and to her pupils. Encountered recently in a pre-Christmas crowd while she was on her way to do her Christmas shopping, she gave forth this amazing piece of evidence of the deep-seated, inner resentment which controls her life whether or not she realizes its import. These were her words as she joked about Christmas shopping:

"I just *love* Christmas time, and Christmas shopping. It gives me a chance to get my arms full of bundles and go barging through the stores where I can bump into these old 'crackers' and step on their toes and push them out of my way. And they can't do or say anything about it because in a Christmas crowd nobody has to be bothered about being polite to them!" Christmas Spirit in the 1940's!

This is as eloquent an indictment of racial proscription as one may cite. And the tragedy underlying it is significant also, for hers is not the only soul that has become warped in such fashion. Nor, with conditions as they now are, will her tribe decrease as time goes by. *Get Together, Americans!* is indeed more than a book title. It has implications that are too obvious to be ignored.

Both Sides of the Fence

WE WHO are on the "dark" side of the fence must take stock of ourselves, to see to what extent our conflicts, our resentments and our frustrations are destroying our faith in ourselves, in our fellows, and in our America! We must do our part to foster understanding and good fellowship even when our efforts may seem useless. In countless little ways it is possible to maintain one's sense of values and cling to a deep-seated feeling of the rightness of things if they can be approached from the human rather than the racial angle. "Judy O'Grady, the Colonel's lady" and Mary Brown—all "are sisters under the skin!"

Those who are on the "bright" side of the fence must recognize their responsibility, too. They must not measure all members of a race by applying the yardstick to a single individual and so ascribe to *all*, the attributes that may be negative, unwholesome and destructive in that one member. Minorities, like majorities, are composed of separate human beings, each one of whom is a person in his own right, with the qualities, strength and weaknesses common to humankind. The white person needs to acquire a sense of values and rid himself of tendencies to generalize or condemn because he has come upon some maladjusted personalities of dark hue who are objectionable, just as individual personalities in *all* races can be objectionable, when factors over which they have little control warp their lives or make them totally unacceptable. It is too easy to lump all of one race together.

Recently the Negro janitor of a fashionable church in the nation's capital, died after a long period of service in this role. He was a capable workman, who was satisfied to be a good janitor and to make it a life work. He was, further, a good man, and well-loved by the parishioners—that is, so long as he stayed "in his place" as the janitor! The minister's wife in making her comment about him (and she was quoted in the daily newspaper) paid him this tribute: "He was such a good Negro. He reminded me so much of Dr. Carver!" Humble, untrained Negro janitor, great Negro scientist and creative genius—to her they were both just "good Negroes" with little degree of difference in achievement or scope of service to distinguish between them!

Getting back to our "dark" side of the fence—ours is an important role in that those of us who have had some opportunities for personal advancement and achievement, must extend a hand of fellowship and understanding, of service and of helpfulness, to the masses of our brothers, to guide them to the higher levels of living, to decent standards of housing, of education, of economic security and of worthy American citizenship. We must make the masses want the worth-while things of life, and *not* want them in vain!

Should the Negro Want Less?

CONCERNING THE Negro's wants, these are the major ones and, viewed dispassionately, they cannot be considered as exaggerated desires and aims:

"Negroes want to be accepted as citizens, who really belong, who have the respect of their fellowmen, and equality of opportunity for 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'. They want what good men want in every democratic society. If they wanted less they would not deserve the status of citizens. . . .

"They want democracy, like charity, to begin at home; they want an equal share not only in the performance of responsibilities and obligations, but also in the enjoyment of rights and opportunities. . . . They want the same racial equality at the ballot box that they have at the income tax window; the same equality before a court of law that they have before an enemy's bullet; the same equality for getting a job, an education, decent housing, and social security that American kinsmen of our nation's enemies possess."⁸

Should the Negro want less?

The race problem is bitterest in the South, but it is not confined to the South. We know that something must be done not only by the South but by all of America—to raise the economic, educational, social and moral levels of the masses of the Negro race and of all colored minorities, to relieve the tensions and frustrations which make for antisocial reactions in any man, any group that must eat the bitter fruits that grow from the trees of prejudice, discrimination, segregation and hate. We cannot be blind to the fact that a people's patience is not everlasting. Awareness of neglect grows into racial resentment; resentment grows into hysteria; and hysteria erupts in racial conflict.

⁸From *What the Negro Wants*, by Rayford Logan. Quoted by permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

No Child Is Born Prejudiced

TO THE question of "what to do?" there are many answers. Each of us perhaps can play only a small part in finding solutions. But each part is important. We who are mothers, teachers, community leaders, touch many lives, young lives—and it is largely through our children and their innate sense of fairness and fair play where human relations are involved that solutions and unity will come.

In *Some of My Best Friends Are Soldiers*^o is this choice bit of irony: ". . . these Southerners [and Northerners] didn't ask to be brought up feeling the way they do about Negroes [and other minorities]. They didn't look up from their bassinets and say, 'Mother, please teach me a legend about Negroes that is going to make me nervous, the Negroes wretched, and people on other continents kind of sick.'"

No child is born prejudiced. What he becomes, how he develops is the responsibility of the adults around him, who shape and mold his life by the attitudes and examples they reveal in his presence.

^oBy Margaret Halsey (Simon and Schuster, 1944).

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