

Science has proved that there is no difference in the physical and mental capacity of the two races. The Commentator can remember tales told by his grandfather about the immigrant Irish of a century ago—how they were regarded as a lower order of humans, a little above the ape. In his own time the Polish immigrant was looked upon as a brute, fit only for the lowest forms of manual labor. They had the advantage that they were white. They seized their opportunities to gain education and acquire property; opportunities that were not withheld from them by prejudice.

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THE NEGRO'S HANDICAP

THE Negro is still under the handicap that he was once a slave. When the Declaration of Independence was written, there was scarcely a free Negro in the country. Slavery was legal in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania till 1780; in New Jersey till 1804. Yet that Declaration held the truth to be self-evident that men were created equal! Was a slave a man? No, he was property. He continued to be property in almost half the settled country until after the Civil War, less than 80 years ago. As property, he was given only such education as a dog is given, to make him useful. He was degraded and debased. The rise of the Negro in the past three or four generations has been phenomenal. Wherever he has had the opportunity to improve himself, he has seized it. Unfortunately, that opportunity has not been nation-wide, and in many states it is still far less than the opportunities furnished by the whites for themselves. But that situation is constantly improving, as the whites learn that the mentally-advanced Negro is an asset they cannot afford to be without.

The change in the status of the Negro from property to freedom, from ignorance to education, from poverty to the possession of property, has changed his own outlook. He now resents discrimination. He is demanding the right to work for his country, and above all to fight for his country, on equal terms with the whites. This attitude is resented by ignorant whites who still hold the ancient prejudice, and transmit it from generation to generation. "The Negro must be kept in his place." But he has lost his place. He is no longer a slave nor a servant. The Constitution says he is a citizen on an equal footing with all other citizens. That does not mean that he demands intermarriage; it does not mean that a Negro in dirty factory overalls is to be admitted to hotels and theaters, though his pockets bulge with money, any more than would be a white man in similar case. The Negroes themselves can take care of that. They are just as choosy as the whites. What they object to, and rightly under the Constitution, is Jim Crow discrimination against them.

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HOODLUMS ON BOTH SIDES

ANY educated Negro will tell you frankly that his problem, as a Negro, is the suppression of ignorance, the inculcation of high ideals, the raising of the level of his people. That is also the problem of the white race. Neither can afford to encourage, or even tolerate, the hoodlum and the bum. And it was the hoodlum and the bum of both races, not any fifth column, who were responsible for the events of Sunday night and Monday in Detroit. They started the fracas; it was picked up by men and women who claim higher status, but in whom the rankling race-prejudice exists. The decent people of both races kept out of trouble.

The Commentator happened to be in the City Hall Monday when a Negro started to leave the building. A white man stopped him.

"You'd better stay right here awhile. I don't like

Headlines for the Axis



The Commentator

By W. K. KELSEY

FIFTH COLUMN NONSENSE

WHAT nonsense is this about the racial trouble in Detroit being fifth column activity? Is someone trying to take a slap at the FBI? Is there any evidence whatsoever that a pro-Axis fifth column is operating here? If there is, let's have it. Nothing would be easier to deal with than a fifth column. Bring in the leaders, put 'em out of circulation.

The situation is not that simple. The antagonism between white and black is deep-rooted, and nothing can wipe it out but education—book-education, and education in tolerance. The schools and the churches must deal with it, the press helping.

The main fact is that the Negro is here, and under law which is so fundamental that there is no possibility of change, he is a citizen with rights equal to those of the whites. We cannot have two republics in this country, one white, one black. There is but one republic, one citizenry. What are the alternatives to getting along together? One would be deportation of the American Negroes. That would require a constitutional amendment depriving them of citizenship. Not even the South would vote for that; its economy would be wrecked. Another would be a general St. Bartholomew massacre. What thoughtful citizen would stand for that? There is no alternative; the whites and blacks must make the best of the existing situation, and get along together.

the looks of that crowd on the corner. You'd be taking a chance."

The Negro thanked him, and stayed. There were two decent citizens. There are 1,800,000 like them in Detroit. It is only the small minority that are other-minded.

Let us therefore not magnify the situation. It is not good; it may not be good for another hundred years. There is much deep antagonism that must be lived down. Education and tolerance work slowly, but they will and must prevail. There is no other solution.

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