

# PLAIN TALK . . . . .

By  
Elmer A. Carter

And now they know. For Los Angeles—Mobile Beaumont and Detroit have spoken more eloquently than all the high sounding, vainglorious words about the four freedoms and liberty and equality that since Pearl Harbor have been shouted from these shores. The millions of Indians know and the brown people of the Southwest Pacific know and the blacks of Africa know that America's protestations of democracy are as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, and that oppression and persecution because of race and color may be found not only under the swastika of Germany but under the stars and stripes. And they will have a cleared idea of the perspective which America will bring to the Peace table and to the aspirations for freedom and equality of the non-white peoples of the world.



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We who are American citizens of African descent, we didn't lose at Detroit as much as America lost. It is true that the number of our dead and dying is greater by far than that of our attackers who were evidently aided and abetted by officers of the law sworn to protect the lives and property of the citizens no matter what their race or color. But we lost no prestige; we lost no respect; we lost no honor. But America lost and the measure of her loss is incalculable. For to the ends of the earth wherever there are those who possess skins that are dark, and they are numbered in countless millions, the luster of America's name will be tarnished and faith in the American democracy will begin to ebb. For what can America tell Great Britain of India! And how can America condemn the ruthlessness of Japan, America which sprinkles the pavements of her cities with the blood of citizens whose only offense is the color of their skin.

In the face of the pogrom at Detroit and the increasing boldness of those elements of the population intent on depriving the Negro of his rights as a citizen by threats, intimidation and mass murder, the silence of the President of the United States

is as strange as it is disturbing. His is the only voice that can stay a repetition of Detroit in a half dozen American cities including the city of Washington where racial tension is at the breaking point. And it cannot be expected that Negroes will supinely submit to these unbridled and unchecked attacks on their person and their property.

Great caution is being exerted by the federal government to keep accounts of the racial disturbances in American cities from Negro soldiers on the fighting fronts. But there is no way on earth to completely suppress the news, and unless there are assurances from those high in authority that the Negro at home will be protected by his government, there is grave and immediate danger that the bitterness and resentment of colored citizens in America will find expression in the ranks of colored soldiers who now face the enemy across the seas. For how can one fight an enemy abroad when he fears for his kinsmen at home knowing them to be at the mercy of enemies just as savage and brutal as the Germans or the Italians or the Japanese.

The Japanese radio is probably bristling with accounts of the race terror in America. And it won't make the task of the American forces in the Southwest Pacific any easier. In a score of native tongues and dialects the Japanese propaganda machine is probably broadcasting with suitable dressing-up the bloody story of Detroit, pointing ridicule at America's pretensions of democracy, sowing the seeds of distrust and hate among 30,000,000 brown men and women who are in the patch of American armed forces.

It may well be that Detroit's contribution to the war effort is to make it enormously difficult if not impossible for America to conquer Japan. And that would indeed be a high price to pay for racial prejudice—governmental apathy and incompetence and moral cowardice.

It seems that people are so used to paying-as-they-go, that they pass up the most priceless possession, salvation, which can be had without money or price.

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