

WHO IS THE NEW NEGRO, AND WHY?

By J. A. ROGERS

Author of "From Superman to Man," "As Nature Leads," etc.

ONE hears much these days about the New Negro. Who is he, and who knows him? In slavery times there was a type of Negro, who worshipped his master and his family. He was a tattle-tale also, and whenever he saw one of his fellow-slaves do anything, he ran to the master, for which he would be rewarded with a ham knuckle, or a suit of old clothes. The betrayers of Nat Turner and John Brown were Negroes. The first person killed by John Brown was Hayward Shepard, a Negro.

This type was also made a slave-driver, then he became a tyrant of tyrants. When he became a slave-holder, as many did, he was even more exacting than the whites. When the Civil War broke out, this dog-like creature stayed at home protecting his master's family and property while the master was fighting to keep him enslaved, or he joined the ranks of the Confederacy. Benjamin Tillman later introduced a bill, to make these black Confederates and slave-holders "white," a quite unnecessary step, internally.

On the other hand there was a type of slave—stubborn, rebellious, liberty-loving—who, like Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey, kept his master awake at nights, worrying lest they should rise up, massacre him and his family, plunder the plantation and take to the woods, as was so often the case, particularly in Hayti, Jamaica and Guiana.

The Old Negro is the present-day type of the first; the New of the second. Faces, like styles, may change but the human nature underneath remains practically unchanged.

One may recognize the difference between Old and New in their bearing. The former, respecting color more than qualification, is apologetic when dealing with white people. He acts as if he were always in the way, as if he had no right to be on earth. One can hear the clank of the slave's chain in all that he says and does.

The New is erect, manly, bold; if necessary, defiant. He apologizes to no one for his existence, feeling deep in his inner being that he has just as much right to be on earth and in all public places as anyone else. He looks the whole world searchingly in the eye, fearing or worshipping nothing nor no one. Self-possessed, he makes himself at home wherever circumstances places him. In a word, he respects himself, first of all.

The Old Negro, on the other hand, worships the white man, because of his absence of pigment. He is like the old colored mammy, who seeing the Minister from Hayti at a social function in Washington was horrified that a black man should be associating on terms of equality with white people, many of whom were his inferiors.

The Old Negro has a contempt for his own people, and in speaking of them he uses the same terms of contempt that his spiritual predecessors did. Shut your eyes when he speaks, and you'll hear a cracker talking.

The New Negro wastes no time worrying about his color. He realizes that a human being if he is to be visible at all must have a coloring of some sort, hence to him, one shade of coloring is the equal of every other. If light-complexioned he does not deem himself better than his darker brother.

The Old Negro when insulted, grins and apologizes; the New either ignores it or acts in a way to make his manliness felt. The Old submitted supinely to massacre as in the New York and Philadelphia riots, and the Palestine, Springfield and East St. Louis ones. The New arms himself and prepares to exact as many lives as possible, as in Washington, Chicago, Longview, Houston, Brownsville. All of which makes it clear that the possession of a college degree or of polish and refinement does not necessarily make a New Negro. Also he may be old or young. Manliness is a quality that inheres in the very fibre of one's being—a quality that like wine, improves with age.

The New Negro would rather lose his tongue than betray his people in their struggle for freedom and equality. Should any amelioration come to him because of superior talent, it turns to gall in his mouth when he remembers the sufferings of the rest of his people.

The Old, hat in hand, is always begging white people, a sort of glorified cripple with a can. Because of this he always has two different messages, one which he gives to white people, the other to colored ones. He is a living lie.

The New Negro supports movements conducted by his own people, because he realizes that these are the only ones that are ever going to speak out frankly and forcefully on his grievances. White persons, in such matters as economics, religion, politics, range all the way from the rabid radical to the rank conservative. So far as race is concerned, however, the vast majority is but of one complexion—the conservative, hence organizations supported by them for Negroes, have at bottom, the same Nordic goal, that is keeping the Negro "in his place," or at best a little lower than the angels. The New Negro realizes that the finest work, the real work for the advancement of the group will have to be done by its own members. It's an old saying: The man that pays the piper calls the tune.

The Old Negro is too thankful for small mercies; he believes that the employer does him a favor by hiring him. He is always praising enemies of the race like Cole Blease or Tillman or Vardaman, because of some trifling sop given by these individuals to some isolated group or person, while doing all they can to keep back the group, as a whole. The New Negro, on the other hand, is satisfied with no concessions or patronage of any sort. He wants neither more nor less than his rights as a man and a citizen. And this difference between the Old and the New enters into their respective attitudes toward the times

in which they are living. While the New Negro prepares to live, to live vigorously, and dangerously, if necessary, to make the whole weight of his presence felt while he moves on this earth; the Old prepares to die, and go to a heaven where he will at least be a white man in complexion. "Wash me," he sings, "and I shall be whiter than snow." He tries to get a corner on religion, and sinks his money in churches, which brings no returns and are shut four-fifths of the week. He is as priest-ridden as the Italians of the Middle Ages, and enjoys it. The New on the other hand, invests his money in homes and factories. He tries to get a corner on business and education that will fit him to compete successfully with the whites, while the Old is singing psalms and repeating like parrots the religious nonsense that the enslavers of his forefathers used also to enslave their primitive minds.

The Old Negro is chiefly interested in what Abraham, Moses, David, Jehosaphat and other fictitious and semi-fictitious creatures of a barbarous tribe did in Palestine thousands of years ago. So far as his thinking is concerned he is a walking mummy. The New Negro relegates all these things to their proper, infinitesimal place in the scheme of things, and is interested most of all in life as it stirs around him. He jettisons Matthew for Marx; David for Darwin, and prefers Douglass to Lincoln. He studies economics instead of wasting his time with epistles.

The New Negro joins unions either of his own, or forces the whites to take him in, and once in never rests until he gets fairplay. He realizes that if white men have to create unions in order to get justice from white men like themselves, then this step is even more necessary for Negroes. The Old Negro, on the other hand, is an individualist. He pulls off to himself and begs the employer for work, thus paving the way for his being used, not as a union, but as an individual, to break strikes.

The Old Negro, once having reached what he believes to be the top of the ladder, spends a great deal of his time kicking off other climbers. He wants to rule the roost alone, to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, while the New Negro, remembering his own hard struggle, is eager to give other aspirants a helping hand, even though the newcomer gives promise of eclipsing him. In other words, he is a good sport. He is, further, not afraid of contradiction, and does not believe he is an oracle on what will solve this so-called race problem. He is ever eager for new information.

The Old Negro falls glibly for all the agencies used by white friends to sidetrack the mind of the Negro group from its real problems such as over-stressing of Negro art, spirituals, piffing poetry, jazz, cabaret life, and the puffing into prominence of mediocre Negroes. The New Negro again relegates these to their proper place. He

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many of the Bimbi and Banwari warriors, mortally wounded were dragging themselves out from under the stamping feet of the contending armies. It looked as though the Banwari, despite their surprise attack, were not faring so well. In one or two places they were beginning to give way before the strenuous attack of the Bimbi. Near the gate—now closed—he saw his father, the Chief, surrounded by a crowd of his warriors, in a fierce struggle with the cream of the Bimbi warriors.

Kojo thought fast. His leap to the top of the wall had been detected only by the Banwari. Why not turn the tide of battle? Jumping into the kraal, he rushed swiftly to the great gate and unbarred it. Then he rushed, yelling and brandishing his spear, to the great hut of the Bimbi chief in the center of the kraal. Taking a fagot out of the fire in the deserted hut he set fire to the dry thatch and soon the hut was in flames. He repeated this over and over again.

This done he rushed back to the gate, threw it open, and with a savage yell began to spear the Bimbi warriors from the rear. Several of them sank groaning, while others attacked him savagely. Furiously he fought back but he had attempted too much. His shield arm grew tired from warding off the blows of the Bimbi spears. He lowered his shield just the least little bit from weariness and quick as a flash he felt the sharp pains of many spears entering his side. The blood spurted from a half dozen wounds, and growing dizzy he fell forward into the brown mud under foot.

It seemed centuries before he opened his eyes again. In fact it was only a few hours that he had lain unconscious. When he came to himself he was back in his own hut and the first one he saw was the faithful Bwandi and his aged instructor, M'tara. As he attempted to rise a thousand pains shot through his side and his head began to swim.

"Quiet! Quiet!" warned the old man. "You are very badly wounded but I tell you your father is proud of you, and the Banwari sing your praises over a hundred fires where fat steers are roasting, and drink your health with the Bimbi beer."

"But did we win?" Kojo eagerly asked.

"Why certainly," M'tara replied as if surprised that he should not have known. "When you opened the gate and the Bimbi kraal began to burn furiously, the Banwari pressed forward and attacked with new energy. The Bimbi gave way and we entered the kraal. We captured many head of cattle, slew many Bimbi warriors and captured many wives. The Bimbi have sued for peace and promise to pay tribute regularly."

Kojo sank back gladly. He was satisfied. He had met the test of a warrior and a Prince.

(Note: Similar stories which we trust will be of interest to our young people will appear each month in THE MESSENGER. Let us know what you think of this one.)

Business and Industry

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The Standard Life Insurance Company of St. Louis, Mo. (Heman Perry, Presi-

dent) wrote \$1,015,250 business during its first month of existence. The capital stock of \$100,000 is fully subscribed and paid in, and there is a \$50,000 surplus.

The Liberty Industrial Life Insurance Company of New Orleans, La., has concentrated its agents' debits in keeping with modern insurance methods and in order to save time and men. *Nothing like efficiency, folks!*

According to the National Urban League, colored molders have received work as laborers in mills in Columbus, Ohio, until business speeds up; more Negroes are being used in the building trades in Columbus and in Austin, Tex., and more Negro porters and helpers are being hired because they are cheaper labor. (*Naturally!*) It is also reported from the same source that in Jackson, Mich., the New Hotel Hayes opened recently and is hiring colored bell boys and waiters under a colored head waiter. In Cleveland, colored girls have been placed as elevator operators in a large department store which formerly used men (*exploiting color and sex*).

At the new Shywater Park Development in Albany, Ga., is said to have a payroll of \$20,000. Negroes are doing all the work, skilled and unskilled.

In San Antonio, Texas, a colored manager has been employed for a million-dollar theatre in the Negro section. *Why not own our own theaters?*

The Nuway Laundry Company of Los Angeles, Calif., has appointed Mr. T. Curtis Smith (Negro) as a representative. *We ought to have more laundries owned by Negroes. Certainly we have had experience enough washing clothes.*

A group of St. Louis business men have completed plans to purchase the WIL radio broadcasting station, now controlled by the St. Louis Star, for \$10,000. *Those St. Louis boys are up-to-date!*

Dr. Oscar Dowling, President of the Louisiana State Board of Health, in his crusade against impure milk found that the milk served from the dairy of a New Orleans Negro was the purest, cleanest and highest above the minimum standard set, of any dairy, distributing agency hospital or other institution. *Well, well! Try that over on your piano!*

Eric D. Walrond has resigned from the staff of OPPORTUNITY, and Noah D. Thompson, the affable little fellow from California, will hereafter draw down the bucks as Business Manager.

The Grand Lodge of Tennessee, A. F. & A. M., has received a permit to erect a six-story stone, steel and concrete lodge and office building in Nashville, Tenn., costing \$150,000. *Why not a factory?*

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realizes that the race question is almost solely an economic one, and is satisfied with nothing less than equal opportunity for employment with equal wages. He sees that in all those things that make for the benefit of the nation, as a whole, there is no color discrimination. That is, as in paying taxes, no one asks his color; it is only in getting a return that there is discrimination. In short that in all those things that make for the white man's bene-

fit, he is a white man, but in those that make for his, he is only a Negro.

The Old Negro is also more interested in "high-yallers," football, boxing, handball, in mastering the intricacies of the black bottom and the Charleston, in making signs in "frats" and lodges and splitting hairs about points of order in such places, in parading in gaudy uniforms, and in slicking his hair than in doing something vital towards getting himself and his group out of the rut of semi-slavery. Improving his mind by reading good books and acquiring a knowledge of the history of his racial group, is to the Old Negro, a real pain.

The Old Negro protests that he does not

TO OUR READERS:

Very few folks know more about the history of the Negro than Mr. J. A. Rogers. For years he has delved into musty tomes and obscure volumes seeking the facts about Homo Africanus. During his research he has run across much information about Negroes of courage, resourcefulness, and intellectual brilliance. Each month hereafter he will tell you about one of these great spirits. You cannot afford to miss a single number of the MESSENGER. This series of articles will run for some time.

Among the Negroes, great and near-great, that Mr. Rogers will tell you about, are: Capt. Bartholemew Roberts, noted buccaneer; Chaka, Zulu conqueror; Alexander Dumas; Major Martin R. Delaney; Nat Turner; Captain Cudjoe; Christophe, Haytian Emperor; Henri Diaz, the George Washington of Brazil; Nefertari, Egyptian Queen, and many others.

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want social equality; the New, seeing that this is but another phrase for social justice, demands it. No social inequality for him. He feels that the first and foremost of all duties is to seek freedom, hence he has a perfect right to take any step, however violent, to rid himself of tyranny. With Thomas Jefferson he repeats: "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God." Like the five colored immortals, Anderson, Copeland, Green, Leary and Newby, who joined John Brown in his raid on Harper's Ferry, he stands ever ready to head or to join any movement that will strike for freedom.

The New Negro is not afraid of such bogey labels as rebel, atheist, pagan, infidel, Socialist, Red, heathen, radical, realizing that what they really connote is "thinker." He will be anything else but a sheep.

And where is this New Negro of whom we have been hearing so much? Is he an ideal or a reality? This much is evident, that many who have been making a noise

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DIALOGUE OF THE OLD AND NEW

By A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

Uncle Tom Porter—How is you, son?

New Porter—Can't say it, Pop.

U. T. P.—Can't say what? What's th' matter wid you? 'Specks you got dat Randolph fever, too, eh?

N. P.—What d'you mean?

U. T. P.—Don't try to fool de ole fox, son. Bin heah too long. You know what I mean. What about dat Brotherhood?

N. P.—Well, what about it? Anything wrong with it?

U. T. P.—I ain't saying no or yes. Is you joined yet?

N. P.—Why do you want to know? Did Mitchell or Burr tell you to ask me?

U. T. P.—Now, look heah, son, you muss think I is a stool pigeon.

N. P.—Well, I wouldn't know, Uncle. I ain't taking no chances.

U. T. P.—Now, sho nuf, son; 'twixt you, me and the gate post, what do you think about dis Union business?

N. P.—Well, since you have asked me, I'll tell you. I think it's the best thing that could ever happen.

U. T. P.—But suppose dat Randolph fellow should run away wid de money? I done heah dat he went to Russia or was gwine to.

N. P.—Don't be a dummy, Pop. That's Pullman propaganda. Don't you know if Randolph *only wanted money*, he wouldn't have to run away with the porters' little money they pay to join and in dues. He could get plenty money from *those* who want to *stop* the Union.

U. T. P.—You know, son, I never thought of dat.

N. P.—Well, Pop, you want to get your thinking cap on or you'll be in Dutch.

U. T. P.—But son, do you think you kin win agin des white folks?

N. P.—White folks are no different from any other kind of folks, pop. It all depends on how much *power* you got, and you can't get power unless you are *organized*. You know the old joke about the farmer not bothering *one* hornet because of fear of the *rest* of the *hornets* standing *behind* him. Well, that's all we porters got to do. That's all the Negro race has got to do—*stick together; be all for each and each for all*.

U. T. P.—But, son, you know des "*niggers*" ain't like *hornets*, dey ain't gwine to *stick*.

N. P.—That's nothing but the slave psychology in you, Pop. You don't think a black man can do anything a white man can do. That's all bunk, pop. Get that stuff out of your noodle. This is the 20th Century. Understand that "a man's a man." A Negro can do anything he is big enough to do. When you're right, pop, and got "guts," you can stand up and look any man in the face and spit right square in his eyes if he tries to give you any *hot stuff* about your rights.

U. T. P.—Yes, boy, but suppose des white folks hot-foot you off des cars?

N. P.—That's all pure moonshine, put out by such spineless Negroes as Perry Howard, I. Garland Penn, Bishop A. J. Carey, Mel-

vin Chisum and their ilk. That crowd is no good. Nobody pays them any mind, any more. Everybody knows they sold out to the Pullman Company. Don't be an old fool. The Pullman Company *couldn't* put anybody else in the Negroes' place if they *would*, and *wouldn't* if they *could*.

U. T. P.—But son, dey done already put some of dem Filipinos, whatever you call 'em, on club cars.

N. P.—And now you're scared stiff. That's just like those ghost stories about old slaves scared to death at a bed-sheet over the head of their masters. There's nothing to it. Just a trick to frighten you away from the Union. It's just like this: The Pullman Company will use Negroes against white workers when white workers try to organize and they'll use Filipinos against Negroes when Negroes try to organize. But that didn't keep white workers from organizing and it won't keep Pullman porters from organizing. Besides, I am not going to lose any sleep over losing a job because I join a Union, as white men do, to get a living wage. Suppose they put Filipinos on the cars, what of it? They'll organize, too. Don't you forget it, Pop.

U. T. P.—Specks you's right, son. But I'm old and feeble; won't be heah long, and I can't fool around wid no Union dis late date, 'cause I mightn't get no pension.

N. P.—Get that rabbit out of you, old man, and be a real man. It's all bosh about the Company not paying you your pension if you join the Union. Look at Dad Moore of Oakland and "Cy" Taylor of the Pennsylvania District. They are two of the biggest Brotherhood men in the country, and they receive their pension, too. Listen, Pop, because you are about to be pensioned is just the reason why you ought to have brains enough to ditch that Employee Representation Plan sham and get into a regular Union. Don't you know that if porters get more wages, you'll get more pension? You ought to see that. It's as plain as the nose on your face.

U. T. P.—Look heah, son, do you know I never thought of that before. You sho is telling the truth.

N. P.—Sure, nothing but these Uncle Toms and stool pigeons are putting out that nonsense.

U. T. P.—Look out, son, hold dat Uncle Tom, stool pigeons stuff, hold it. I ain't none of dem things. I is a man.

N. P.—Well, Uncle, don't go hand me no lip service on this man business. Our slogan is, if you ain't for us, you are against us. I've got a blank right here with me. *Put up or shut up*.

U. T. P.—Wait a minute, son. I's wid you.

N. P.—Can that bunk. You ain't with us unless you lay the cold cash on the wood. No use beating around the bush. The Brotherhood can't print booklets, leaflets, circulars, pay organizers, railroad and Pullman fares, stenographic services, expenses of expert economists and Donald R. Richberg, on *air pudding and wind sauce*. It re-

quires money and the porters must supply it for they benefit from the work. The time is here when Negroes must fight for their liberty and pay for it, too. We've been begging long enough. Get that.

U. T. P.—I don't miss it. But, son, suppose des white folks find out I'se jined dis Brotherhood?

N. P.—They won't find out unless you tell 'em. The Company hasn't got enough money to buy a name of a Brotherhood man from the Brotherhood. This is a New Negro steering this ship, now, Pop.

U. T. P.—Suppose des white folks ask me whether I'se a member?

N. P.—Well, you don't have to tell 'em you're a member. They lied to you for over 50 years.

U. T. P.—Son, you's jist too radical anyhow. Whar in the devil did you come from? Well, the truth is the truth. Des white folks sho is bin lying to us "*niggers*" and robbing us, too.

N. P.—Well, it doesn't matter to me what you call me. I know this. The New Negro does not propose to permit white folks to flim flam him any longer, iob or no job, Filipino or no Filipino. Organization certainly can't make things any worse. And you've got to take a chance just as white workers have done. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Of course today you're not taking any chance. Success is a sure thing with organization. You can't fail.

U. T. P.—Well, son, you think I's an Uncle Tom, don't you? Now I want you to show me everything, all the cards. Now put up or shut up. You're suppose to know everything and so radical and everything.

N. P.—What d'you say? You don't mean to tell me you're there. Good night, Pop! Well, there is everything!

U. T. P.—All right, son. Now shove me your mit and slip me the pass word, and I don't mean maybe.

N. P.—I ain't giving you nothing different. I'm coming 'cross with the whole works.

U. T. P.—Everything is pretty, old top. I'm bluffing these white folks to death. They think I'm the worst enemy of the Union in the service. Good night, lower 8 is ringing me again. We got to hit the ball, you know, and give 'em service jam-up, 'cause we are loyal Brotherhood men. If we do our work right, pay our dues, pay our assessment and get the slackers to join, we can't lose.

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like New Negroes have proved to be but asses in lion's skins. When a lion appeared they took to the woods.

For Free Books

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