

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

what we exhibit as a result of our incipient moment forget that our part in this exhibition is not only for the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern states, but especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement.

The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long, in any degree, ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of those privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house.

In conclusion, may I repeat that nothing in thirty years has given us more hope and encouragement, and drawn us so near to you of the white race, as this opportunity offered by the Exposition; and here bending, as it were, over the altar that represents the results of the struggles of your race and mine, both starting practically empty-handed three decades ago, I pledge that, in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race; only let this be constantly in mind, that while, from representations in these buildings of the product of field, of forest, of mine, of factory, letters, and art, much good will come, yet far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth—September 18, 1895.

## OUR NEW CITIZEN

From whence came our new citizen? Who is he? And what is his mission? It is interesting to note that the Negro is the only citizen of this country who came here by special invitation and by reason of special provision. The Caucasian came here against the protest of the leading citizens of this country in 1492. We were so important to the prosperity of this country that special vessels were sent to convey us hither.

Shall we be less important in the future than in the past? The Negroes are one eighth of your population. Our race is larger than the population

of the Argentine Republic, larger than Chile, larger than Peru and Venezuela combined—nearly as large as Mexico.

Whether the call has come for us to clear the forests of your country, to make your cotton, rice, and sugar cane, build houses or railroads, or to shoulder arms in defense of our country, have we not answered that call? When the call has come to educate our children, to teach them thrift, habits of industry, have we not filled every school that has been opened for us? When with others there have been labor wars, strikes, and destruction of property, have we not set the world an example in each one quietly attending to his own business? When, even here in the North, the shop, the factory, the trades have closed against us, have we not patiently, faithfully gone on taking advantage of our disadvantages, and through it all have we not continued to rise, to increase in numbers and prosperity? If in the past we have thus proven our right to your respect and confidence, shall it be less so in the future? If in proportion as we contribute, by the exercise of the higher virtues, by the product of brain and skilled hand, to the common prosperity of our country, shall we not receive all the privileges of any other citizen, whether born out of this country or under the Stars and Stripes?

You of the great and prosperous North still owe a serious and uncompleted duty to your less fortunate brothers of the white race South who suffered and are still suffering the consequences of American slavery. What was the task you asked them to perform? Returning to their destitute homes after years of war, to face blasted hopes, devastation, a shattered industrial system, you asked them to add to their burdens that of preparing in education, politics, and economics, in a few short years, for citizenship four or five millions of former slaves. That the South, staggering under the burden, made blunders, that in some measure there has been disappointment, no one need be surprised.

And yet, taking it all in all, we may, I think, safely challenge history to find a case where two races, but yesterday master and slave, today citizen and citizen, have made such marvelous progress in the adjustment of themselves to new conditions, where each has traveled so fast in the divine science of forgetting and forgiving; and yet do not misunderstand me that all is done or that there are not serious wrongs yet to be blotted out.

In making these observations I do not, I cannot, forget as an humble representative of my race the vacant seat, the empty sleeve, the lives offered up on Southern battlefields, that we might have a united country and that our flag should shelter none save freemen, nor do I forget the millions of dollars that have gone into the South from the hands of philanthropic individuals and religious organizations.

Nor are we of the black race leaving the work alone to your race in the North or your race in the South—mark what this new citizen is doing. Go with me tonight to the Tuskegee Institute in the Black Belt of Alabama,

in an old slave plantation where a few years ago my people were bought and sold, and I will show you an industrial village, which is an example of others, with nearly eight hundred young men and women working with head and hand by night and by day, preparing themselves, in literature, in science, in agriculture, in dairying, in fruit-growing, in stock-raising, in brick-making, in brick masonry, in woodwork, in ironwork, in tinwork, in leatherwork, in cloth, in cooking, in laundrying, in printing, in household science—in the duties of Christian citizenship—preparing themselves that they may prepare thousands of others of our race that they may contribute their full quota of virtue, of thrift and intelligence to the prosperity of our beloved country. It is said that we will be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but we shall be more, we shall turn the wood into houses, into machinery, into implements of commerce and civilization. We shall turn the water into steam, into electricity, into dairy and agricultural products, into food and raiment—and thus wind our life about yours, thus knit our civil and commercial interests into yours in a way that shall make us all realize anew that “of one blood hath God made all men to dwell and prosper on the face of the earth.”

But when all this is said, I repeat, gentlemen of the club, that you of this generation owe to the South, not less than to yourselves, an unfulfilled duty. Surely, surely, if the Negro, with all that is behind him, can forget the past, you ought to rise above him in this regard. When the South is poor you are poor, when the South commits crime you commit crime, when the South prospers you prosper. There is no power that can separate our destiny. Let us ascend in this matter above color or race or party or sectionalism into the region of duty of man to man, American to American, Christian to Christian. If the Negro who has been oppressed, ostracized, denied rights in a Christian land, can help you, North and South, to rise, can be the medium of your rising to these sublime heights of unselfishness and self-forgetfulness, who may say that the Negro, this new citizen, will not see in it a recompense for all that he has suffered and will have performed a mission that will be placed beside that of the lowly Nazarine?

Let the Negro, the North, and the South do their duty with a new spirit and a new determination during this, the dawning of a new century, and at the end of fifty years a picture will be painted—what is it? A race dragged from its native land in chains, three hundred years of slavery, years of fratricidal war, thousands of lives laid down, freedom for the slave, reconstruction, blunders, bitterness between North and South. The South staggers under the burden; the North forgets the past and comes to the rescue; the Negro, in the midst, teaching North and South patience, forbearance, long-suffering, obedience to law, developing in intellect, character and property, skill and habits of industry. The North and South, joining hands with the Negro, take him whom they have wronged, help him, encourage him, stimulate him in self-help, give him the rights of man, and, in lifting



up the Negro, lift themselves up into that atmosphere where there is a new North, a new South—a new citizen—a new republic—January 31, 1896.

## DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

It is said that the strongest chain is no stronger than its weakest link. In the Southern part of our country there are twenty-two millions of your brethren who are bound to you by ties which you cannot tear asunder if you would. The most intelligent man in your community has his intelligence darkened by the ignorance of a fellow citizen in the Mississippi bottoms. The most wealthy in your city would be more wealthy but for the poverty of a fellow being in the Carolina rice swamps. The most moral and religious among you has his religion and morality modified by the degradation of the man in the South whose religion is a mere matter of form or emotionalism.

The vote in your state that is cast for the highest and purest form of government is largely neutralized by the vote of the man in Louisiana whose ballot is stolen or cast in ignorance. When the South is poor, you are poor; when the South commits crime, you commit crime. My friends, there is no mistake; you must help us to raise the character of our civilization or yours will be lowered. No member of your race in any part of our country can harm the weakest and meanest member of mine without the proudest and bluest blood in the city of Brooklyn being degraded. The central ideal which I wish you to help me consider is the reaching and lifting up of the lowest, most unfortunate, negative element that occupies so large a proportion of our territory and composes so large a percentage of our population. It seems to me that there never was a time in the history of our country when those interested in education should more earnestly consider to what extent the mere acquiring of a knowledge of literature and science makes producers, lovers of labor, independent, honest, unselfish, and, above all, supremely good. Call education by what name you please, and if it fails to bring about these results among the masses it falls short of its highest end. The science, the art, the literature that fails to reach down and bring the humblest up to the fullest enjoyment of the blessings of our government is weak, no matter how costly the buildings or apparatus used, or how modern the methods in instruction employed. The study of arithmetic that does not result in making someone more honest and self-reliant is defective. The study of history that does not result in making men conscientious in receiving and counting the ballots of their fellow men is most faulty. The study of art that does not result in making the strong less willing to oppress the weak means little. How I wish that from the most humble log cabin schoolhouse in Alabama we

## ASSIMILATION

of the progress of the South. We are helping and encouraging you, and with education of head, and buy your surplus land, make and run your factories. While in the past, that you and your people, faithful, law-abiding, and we have proved our loyalty by watching by the sick bed of those of them with tear-dimmed eyes, in any way, we shall stand by you, ready to lay down our lives for our industrial, commercial, and that shall make the inter-relationship of purely social we can be as things essential to mutual

except in the highest intelligence, there are efforts tending to these efforts be turned into the most useful and intelligent thousand per cent interest. It is that gives and him that

and from the inevitable:

and

joined

in pulling the load upward. We shall constitute one of the South, or one who shall prove a veritable every effort to advance

in our humble effort at it overmuch. Starting with a few quilts and pumpkins (resources), remember, the production of agricultural products, books, statuary, banks, has not been while we take pride in

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