

"It's Like Getting New Glasses"

# Southern Whites Shocked by 'New' Negro

## 'Happy With Segregation' Myth Exploded by Student Sit-Ins

The law, which is a great teacher, seven years ago wrote a hard lesson for the U.S. South: its white schools must accept Negroes and, by extension, its white people in their daily lives must accept this as a moral right. Negro students—who, as it turned out, can also be effective teachers—added to the law's lesson by exploding, with sit-ins, the comfortable white belief that the Negro was content with segregation. Now the lesson is sinking deeply.

### DYING RESISTANCE

So far, only token compliance with the school desegregation law prevails. In the public schools of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina, integration is nonexistent. In Louisiana, it consists of four little Negro girls in two New Orleans schools. Fighting case by case against "the long arm of judicial tyranny," extremists decry race "mongrelization" by the "Jew-backed N.A.A.C.P." Even moderates double-think up evasions by "every legal means."

Yet Southerners—76% of them, says Pollster George Gallup—now generally concede that desegregation is inevitable.

In 1954 public schools were wholly segregated in 17 states,

today in only four. In Tennessee, where the Nashville city council now has both Negro and white members, state legislators last month adjourned for the first time without introducing a segregation bill. In once hotly resisting Virginia, segregation has vanished in many schools, most buses and all public libraries. In the 1961 gubernatorial campaign, how to fight desegregation will probably not even be an issue.

In Georgia, state legislators recently abandoned massive-resistance laws that were billed as sufficient to keep schools segregated "for 1,000 years." In New Orleans, businessmen have begun openly advocating real public school desegregation, and Catholic laymen have just formed a group to prepare desegregation of parochial schools. In Jackson, Miss., last week, nine Negro college students held the state's first sit-in demonstration at a public library—and duly got arrested. When 100 more Negroes applauded them two days later in front of the court, cops attacked with clubs, guns and police dogs. Yet the fact that Negroes even raised their heads in last-ditch Mississippi bespoke a new attitude.

The lesson is difficult because of the Southern white's almost traumatic shock at the sight of a wholly new Negro. Whites in all sincerity used to regard Negroes as stereotype Aunt Jemima, happily content with their lot. Now servants train themselves not to be subservient; the old smiling "Ma'am?" has become a cool "I didn't hear," or a crisp "Pardon me?" When Negroes deliberately step into traffic against a red light, or even throw an oath at a driver, whites feel a fear that stirs hatred.

Moreover, whites have been awed by the remarkable sit-in movement that Negro college students launched 14 months ago, by the spectacle of well-dressed Negro students inviting Gandhian-like arrest and throwing the white man's religion in his face. "There is no satisfactory negative answer," says one white South Carolinian, "to young Americans deprived of civil equality who parade before a state-house singing 'Rock of Ages.'"

Suddenly, whites are embarrassed at the discomforts that segregation causes. "For the first time," says one white attorney in Nashville, "people realize that a Negro child never used to be able to sit down and eat an ice cream cone uptown." Even white extremists concede the new Negro's courage. Geor-

## The Old Smiling "M'am" Has Been Replaced by a Crisp "Pardon Me?"

gia's Roy V. Harris, a top racist, recently told a meeting of segregationist GUTS (Georgians Unwilling to Surrender): "You have to hand it to (Negro Leader) Martin Luther King and his group. They're willing to go to jail for their beliefs."

### TRUE INTEGRATION?

But the Negro—and the white, too—is strongly aware that desegregation and true integration are different things. One is negative coercion, the other a positive acceptance that may yet be decades away. Because of increased desegregation, says one gloomy Nashville psychiatrist, "we may actually be farther from integration than we were before." Worse, the slow pace of desegregation itself may yet bring in Negro extremists such as the Black Muslims. In Savannah last week, one Negro minister warned that "the situation here has deteriorated from right vs. wrong to black vs. white."

### WHAT AFRICA THINKS

The lesson that the South is learning may improve the picture that the U.S. presents to dark-skinned nations abroad, but the South so far worries little about that. The Charleston News and Courier recently ran an editorial titled "Who Cares What

Asians Think?" and Negroes insist that any improvements should rightfully be for their own may yet come to have some weight. "The Southern white sakes. But the nation's prestige man who cared about it," says a Chattanooga editor, "could never make himself believe that the yellow man or the red man cared what you did to the Negro, but now that the black man himself is coming to the front in Africa, the Southern white is beginning to take another look."

The shape of the new era as it appears eventually throughout the South may be determined by white and Negro graduates of integrated schools, but meanwhile older Negro students have made an auspicious start. Gone is the white paternalism that flourished before 1954; a hard new respect is now the rule. Negroes look after themselves, and their growing economic power is a weapon as sharp as brotherly love. In Nashville last week, one Negro minister saw the results as "more sound and solid" race relations than ever before. "I sincerely believe," said he, "that the South will solve its race problems before the rest of the country gets anywhere with theirs."