

ISTHMIAN ECHOES

A Selection of the Literary Endeavors of the
West Indian Colony in the Republic
of Panama



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Selected and Edited by
SIDNEY A. YOUNG

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A NEW AWAKENING

all world affairs. From time to time the various local divisions of the U.N.I.A. have special Women's Day observances at which laudatory speeches are wafted on the air and forgotten. These are of service in a way but what is needed is not oratory alone which reaches the already progressive woman, but concentrated effort for the enlightenment and emancipation from vice and superstition of our numerous sisters of misfortune and ignorance.

Sunday March 20th, 1927.

A New Awakening

PRIDE of race is said to be the keystone of racial progress. Long before the era of written history, before the first rude hieroglyphics were carved on stone or the first crude symbolical signs were painted on the skins of animals, primitive man told in song and story the proud deeds of his tribe. The lowly folksong of the humblest tribe and the noble epics of Greece and Rome described from generation to generation, the feats of heroism, the triumphs and the achievements of the tribe and nation. Thus past glories were lived anew and exalted tradition inspired new achievements or brought bright hopes of greater glories with the consciousness of innate powers.

Today the nations of the world revel not only in their individual history but in the reflected glory of the race to which they belong. Even when divided by

national ambition, the urge of conquest, greed and envy; the common bonds of race have had a unifying effect. It is the misfortune of the Negro that his minstrels are mute, that his history has not yet been written; or rather, that from the dim recesses of the past, his former glories have not been deciphered by himself and his folksongs and epics lost in the void of time. So he has been led to believe that he had no former existence, no resplendent past, no period of greatness in the rise and fall of nations throughout the ages, and to accept in the scale of racial achievements his valuation from indifferent if not hostile sources. With his acceptance of the civilization and standards of the dominant race, he has come to despise his origin and to be shamed by a past which he has not unravelled. It was not so long ago that a colored West Indian would be angered to be called a Negro. His African origin and the comparatively recent years of bitter captivity were buried in voluntary forgetfulness and so his more remote past. For him the path of destiny seems to be in the direction of forming a new race on the lines of those of his former masters. He thought of himself as a foster-child and had hopes that legal adoption would invest him in blood relationship in the ideal of the "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man." But today there is a new awakening. The Negro has realized that his adoption has not raised him to any higher status than that of the bastard of the races. In every direction his path is blocked by questions of his race and he has been made to feel an outcast in the human family. Opportunity beckons brightly only to have the door of accomplishment closed in his face.

There is no other recourse, and reason indicates that for the Negro to succeed he must fall back on his

BOISTEROUSNESS

race. The tragedy of his recent history is that he has spent the greater portion of his life in living away from himself. He has measured himself by the standards and virtues of the dominant race but heretofore he has not measured the standards nor questioned the virtues of the dominant race. This is one of the tendencies of the new awakening to question the theory of racial superiority and to find the cause or causes of human progress. One of the causes of human progress has been pride of race and the intelligent Negro of today, viewing his achievements under the most distressing handicaps of segregation, injustice and the denial of ordinary human rights, and looking back into the history of the rise and fall of nations and races, is beginning to feel proud of his race.

Wednesday March 23rd, 1927.

Boisterousness

ONE of the most outstanding of the least desirable characteristics of a great proportion of our people is that of boisterousness. In every walk of our activities, from our most solemn to our most hilarious actions there is this fetish for noise. The beat of the tom-tom seems to be still ringing in our ears and to all appearances we are in the primeval forest, and so our manners and our speech are given free expression without restraint and without dignity. This characteristic of boisterousness is noticable in our individual and our collective life. Half of the misery in the neighborhood of tenement dwellings is due to this curse of obstreperous and irrepressible in-