



"A new dimension in their thinking"—Scene at Raleigh, N. C., where a temporary organization to guide student anti-segregation activities throughout the South was recently formed.

# The Young Negro Is a New Negro

**He is proud of every advance, increasingly resentful of each remaining barrier and as bitter toward the 'Uncle Tommers' of old as he is toward the Southern whites.**

By HODDING CARTER

GREENVILLE, Miss. **T**HE middle-aged Negro porter in a downtown Baton Rouge store shook his head at the demonstrating students from state-supported, all-Negro Southern University.

"I jes' don't understand what's gettin' into people these days."

His incomprehension is shared by many hitherto relatively complacent white Southerners and by not a few older Negroes who are disturbed lest the wave of student "sit-ins" and the general disaffection of younger Southern Negroes get—to use a euphemism—out of hand.

But, in terms of the old racial conventions, the new generation of Negroes is already out of hand. That fact is arresting enough to those who approve or passively accept the enforced tranquillity of the old order. What is more alarming to the thinking whites and Negroes of the South, and to many outside the South, is the near-total

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breakdown of communication which might provide insight into "what's getting into people." We are not talking much to each other these days. We never really did, not man to man.

I do not profess to have a unique pipeline to the collective mind of the young Negro; and it may be that I am subconsciously influenced by two contradictory Southern white clichés. One of them has it that among American whites only the Southerner understands the Negro; the other asserts that no one can really tell what is going on in the minds of the children of Africa.

**B**Y reason of time and place and a long concern, however, I do believe that I am aware of some aspects of the Negro in transition and some of the factors that discourage and frustrate him, and encourage him and keep him going. I wonder whether the Southerners of my sons' generation will have even my advantage; for time and even place have changed and relationships have become vastly different.

For that next generation, and to a lesser extent for my own contempo-

raries, North and South, I want to recall two Negroes whom I knew long ago: the first in my boyhood, intimately, in the vanishing tradition of rural and small-town, inter-racial companionship on well-defined lines; the second, a fellow student in a New England college, whom I knew neither well nor favorably.

The first was the much younger brother of our cook in the rural Louisiana of my childhood; I once wrote a story about him and our companionship. I will not repeat it here. He is now in his early fifties and since we live in different states I see him only occasionally; but, save for a rather cautious interest in voting rights, his attitudes are outwardly little changed from our boyhood days. Our relationship remains what it was, warmly personal and stratified in a world in which everyone once knew his place.

I don't know whatever happened to the lone Negro student in the liberal-arts college where I was almost the lone Southerner. Steeped in a traditional aversion to racial intermingling except on the white man's own terms,

I avoided him. He represented to me an undesirable novelty, a Negro admitted to a sort of equality with whites.

I know now that it was a spurious equality—he had no roommate, he was one of a handful of non-fraternity pariahs, and his fellow-members of the glee club, his only campus activity, seemed to me to be a little self-conscious about what to do with him on club trips. He was almost sullenly quiet, and well he might have been. But from what other students told me he was apparently unconcerned either with the inequities existing in the town where much of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had been written, or with the grosser abuses directed against his contemporaries in my part of the country.

**T**HE difference between this Negro student and others, North or South, was, I believe, a matter of degree only. Among young Negroes in the Nineteen 'Twenties there was no great sense of unity in a cause, no cohesive purposefulness aimed at an ending of wrongs.

I think these two Negroes, the all-but-illiterate (Continued on Page 117)



**LEADER**—The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., here addressing students, is an architect of anti-segregation tactics.

## Young Negro Is a New Negro

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Louisiana boy who was my playmate and the college student whom I shunned, would be almost equally condemned or derided by the angry young Negro students of today—the one as a subservient “Uncle Tommer,” the other because he was only mildly concerned, if at all, with his disabilities or those of his less fortunate fellows elsewhere.

This is the primary distinction of the young Negro today. He is aggressively concerned. His interest has made him the victim of understandable short-term frustration. It has also imbued him with a long-term confidence that is not always realistic. Moreover, contemporary events and the quality and quantity of his education have combined to create a new dimension in his thinking.

For lack of a more precise phrase, the educated young Negro of today might be called a black nationalist; he identifies the cause of other dark people elsewhere with his own and his own with theirs. He is proud of politically adroit Negro leadership everywhere. This being so, it is a national blessing, though not an unmixed one, that his heroes are men like Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. King resorted to non-violent protest in the shape of a Negro boycott of the Montgomery, Ala., bus lines. Gandhi triumphed through passive resistance plus nonviolent civil disobedience. Today's Negro students are advocating these approaches; and the danger is that when state or local laws are violated, as in the sit-in demonstrations, the temptation on the one side to commit violence and on the other to counter it actively can become irresistible.

**W**HAT I will say from now on and what conclusions I may draw are not the result of what is called scientific sampling. But it so happens that I have talked with hundreds of better-educated young Ne-

groes in the last ten years in all sections of our country: high-school and college students, North and South; men in uniform and men not long out of uniform; theologians and professional men and Government employes, representatives of the Negro intellectual and of the middle and upper economic groups.

Their common denominator is that they are uniformly dissatisfied. All would agree that most of them enjoy economic and even political rights undreamed of by their fathers and, within narrow limits, social acceptance by some white associates. But none of them considers for a moment that the Negro has arrived; and with each victory their resentment of the remaining barriers grows stronger.

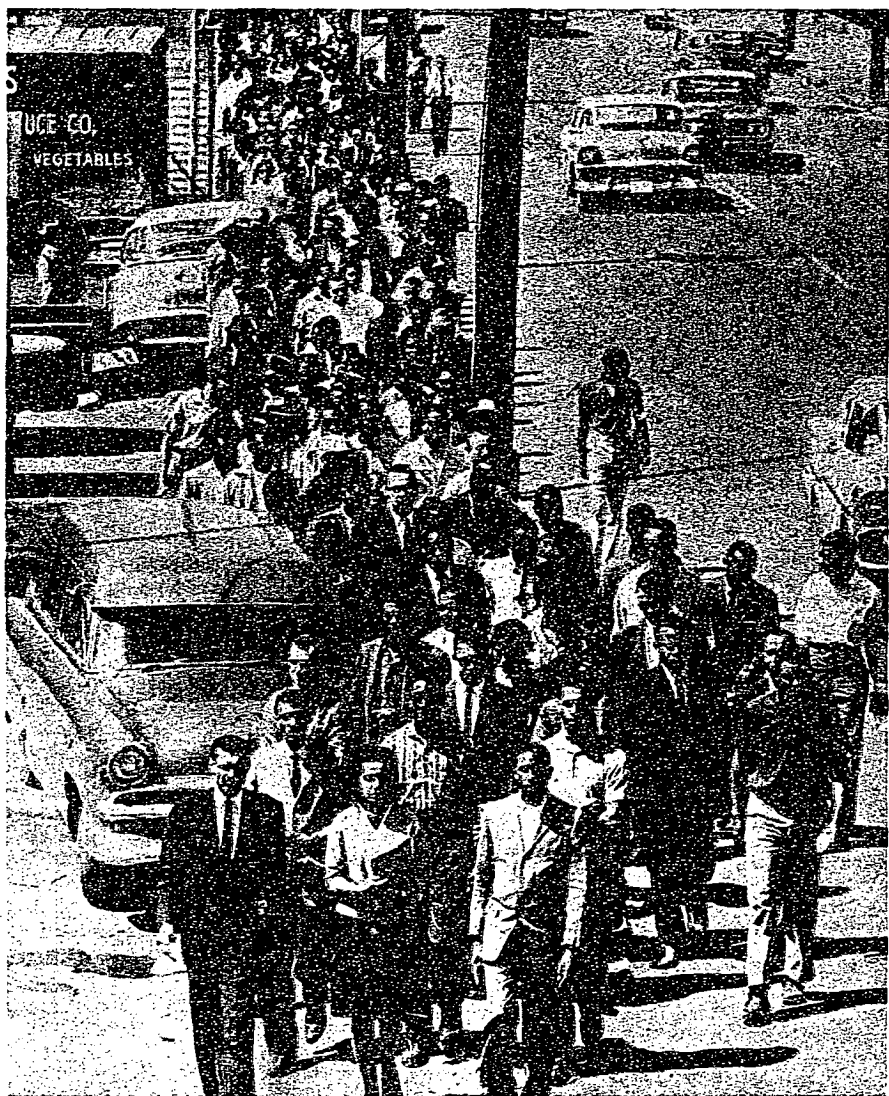
**T**HE short-term frustration the young Negro feels and freely expresses derives from disappointments political, material, psychological and, perhaps, spiritual.

Many educated Southern Negroes assumed in 1954 that Jericho's walls would come tumbling down with the Supreme Court's decision. Then they discovered that the Deep South could and would employ a variety of means, from violence to threats and even the reality of school closures, to render the decision all but meaningless.

These Negroes feel betrayed by the Court's subsequent apparent approval of the “token integration” device, through which Southern school boards can sidestep any real integration by admitting a few Negro students and rejecting the mass through screening processes not ostensibly racial.

Politically, they exult over the emergence in key Northern states of the Negro as a balance power and in the tumultuous advent of self-government in much of Africa; but they rage at the low incidence of Negro voting in areas so important to them at home, and in the failure of the Federal Government to arrive at any formula that can really

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**ACTION**—Nashville students stage a protest march following the bombing of a Negro resident's home.

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 assure that the Negroes of the Deep South can vote in accordance with their qualifications and numbers.

They speak proudly of the Negroes on the assembly lines, the athletes and entertainers, the craftsmen and the practitioners in the courts and hospitals of America; but they know that the Negro is still the "last hired and the first fired," and they reserve a special contempt for the union leadership and rank-and-file which proffer the shadow but not the substance of job equality.

They acutely resent all outward symbols of second-class citizenship. Whatever satisfaction they get out of the continuing, generally quiet and orderly desegregation of transportation facilities—and it is going on at an astonishingly rapid rate—they are more aware of the persistence of Jim Crow's shadow in most of the South.

**A**ND more than anything else they are embittered by the absence of color blindness in Southern courtrooms, by the failure of too many white juries to indict or convict white murderers, lynchers, bombers and other major offenders.

It is my own unhappy ob-

servation that as a result of these conflicts the educated Negro in the South dislikes the Southern white man en masse as never before in our history.

This mounting antipathy—which is mutual—is psychologically complicated by the Negroes' inner resentment and outward defense of those among their fellows who neither do credit to their race nor impel white allies to enlist on their side. It is a resentment not often openly expressed but it is there.

Speak to them of the tragically disproportionate rate of major Negro crime, or the relatively low state of Negro morality in America, and they respond that this, too, is the white man's doing—as indeed in considerable part it is. They insist that victory must be achieved over the white opponents before they move broadly against their own worse elements.

While this may be the proper strategy, it does not make for understanding. I have often found myself wishing that young Southern Negroes had more inclination for home missionary work.

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**T**HE Negro of the slave quarters and the plantation cabin could find solace and hope in the old-time religion

as expressed in the spirituals and the pulpit oratory of a more primitive Christianity. But their children are not waiting for the sweet chariot to swing low and carry them to a better life above. They have not forsaken Christianity, but the churchmen whom they heed are the socially militant, well-educated ministers whose pulpits form the core of the Southern Negro's opposition to the status quo.

**T**HE determination to alter drastically and soon the patterns of segregation had a dramatic expression on Sunday, April 17. On that day 140-odd Southern and Northern Negro college students, plus several whites, formed in Raleigh, N. C., a temporary organization to supervise student anti-segregation activities throughout the South. It was a milestone in the civil disobedience movement that began with a sit-in at a Greensboro, N. C., chain-store lunch counter on Feb. 1, and that subsequently spread, with varying degrees of violence, usually white-provoked, into every Southern state.

The organization, which plans to remain closely identified with Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was named the Stu-

dent Non-Violence Coordination Committee. The student delegates not only discussed further sit-in demonstrations but also tentatively planned "selective buying programs," a phrase less provocative perhaps than "boycott." They postponed any action pending a study of the proposal.

The delegates then went on record as encouraging students arrested in nonviolent protest activities to go to jail, instead of making bail before their trials. Adult Negroes, probably members of the King organization, counseled with the students during their sessions.

**T**HE civil disobedience movement, the present and proposed boycotts and the emphasis upon nonviolence in each tactic express much of what is in the minds of younger Negroes today. Rarely, during the epidemic sit-ins, have the Negro demonstrators resorted to force even when attacked. The whites almost invariably have been the assailants. Of one encounter between young Negroes and whites The Richmond News-Leader, no proponent of integration, said editorially on Feb. 22:

Many a Virginian must have felt a tinge of wry regret at the state of things as they are, in reading of Saturday's "sit-downs" by Negro students in Richmond stores. Here were the colored students, in coats, white shirts, ties, and one of them was reading Goethe, and one was taking notes from a biology text. And here, on the sidewalk outside, was a gang of white boys come to heckle, a ragtail rabble, slack-jawed, black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill, and some of them, God save the mark, were waving the proud and honored flag of the Southern states in the last war fought by gentlemen. *Eheu!* It gives one pause.

Whether the sit-ins will result in net gains or losses for the Negro cause is debatable. Basically, under the laws of the various Southern states, they are illegal; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has employed only legal approaches in its successful assaults on the South's white citadel. And even former President Harry Truman, whose championship of Negro rights won him the hostility of much of the white South and brought about the States' Rights vote in 1948, has commented that if, as a business man, he was the target of a sit-in, he would run the demonstrators out.

**I**N its recent report on the student protest movement, the Southern Regional Council had this to say, in part:

"What has happened these last few weeks, and what may lie ahead, has worried and dismayed many Southerners. These include not only the persons who are the everyday enemies of Negro equality, and those others who see in each

new Negro demand a 'setback to race relations.' There are Southerners friendly to the Negro cause who have doubts as to the practical wisdom of the student protests, and the turn toward violent conflict has deepened their concern.

"This is not a point of view to be shrugged off. At the very least, it is an indication of a segment of Southern opinion. More basically, it is an expression of a view, which has been implied in some of the Negro press as well, that the student protests will hurt other more important objectives, especially school desegregation."

In the same report the S. R. C. commented on the great potential of Negro economic pressure, which is legal. It is already being used. The Wall Street Journal of Feb. 21 reported that the volume in four S. H. Kress stores in the South had dropped 15 to 18 per cent. It was also reported that a variety store in Charlotte had had a 65 per cent drop and a Greensboro store 35 per cent. More than incidentally, Negroes in Charlotte spend \$150,000,000 annually, and Negroes account for some 20 per cent of all Southern retail sales.

**T**HE militant young Negro today reads these figures. In them and in other statistics and events he thinks he can also read a handwriting on the wall. And it is this vision that contributes to the long-term confidence which perhaps offsets his short-term frustrations.

He is aware that strong forces, most of them greatly resented by the white South, work in his behalf: the N. A. A. C. P.; the racial policies of the Federal Government; the several race-related decisions of the United States Supreme Court since 1954; the moral dilemma plaguing many Southerners and aptly expressed by Governor Leroy Collins of Florida who, while not challenging the legal right of merchants to serve whom they choose, questioned the morality of such selectiveness; and, perhaps most important of all, the potentialities of militantly non-violent action, especially in the economic sphere.

**B**UT, however unreal or justified the optimism, however real or exaggerated the immediate frustrations, this much is true: the young Southern Negro of today is far more dissatisfied and determined than most white Southerners believe. Whether these white Southerners are as determined to resist the changes implicit in the student attack on segregation is as yet unclear.

I am not hopeful about a region-wide solution satisfactory to all sides. I do know that there is now being created a climate in which my Negro childhood friend and my Negro fellow-collegian would have been, in the time I knew them, vastly uncomfortable. And so, too, am I. For there is little of amiability among us today.