

Laughing To Keep Crying

By REY L. GILLESPIE

(Editor's Note: Gillespie is a feature columnist for the strike-bound Sunday Cleveland Plain Dealer. This is his third contribution to Call & Post columns.)

The "New Negro" in American life is not a racial figment but is an integrated part of our changing times. It matters not whether he resides in the North, South, East or West, he rightly considers himself a full-fledged American.

There are, of course, critics of the so-called Negro race who feel that the "new Negro" is impatient and that "his people" need time and education before they should be accorded their constitutional rights as first-class citizens.

Many times I have been asked by both white and colored people if I thought that the Negro was ready. The question somewhat amuses me because Negroes are all kinds and colors of people. Some even have the audacity to pass for white on their jobs in the day and return to their race at night.

There are other people who ask what the Negro wants. Here, too, is a laugh line in that different Negroes want different things. In fact, some of them really don't know themselves what they want in life. This is just as true of white people.

What all people need is self-examination. In other words, they need to take heed of the age-old philosophy "to thine own self be true."

Is there any reason on God's green earth why a Negro should give approval to any theory or practice of white supremacy? To do so would be just as absurd as to accept membership in a Negro lodge of the Klux Klan.

This reminds me of my favorite joke which is as old as the hills. The public relations committee of the Klan upbraided a Georgia farmer who had painted on his barn that he was a 100% American.

The spokesman said that the local Kluxers were very much disturbed about his action in that they boasted of being 100% Americans because they hated the three K's--the Koons, Kikes and Catholics.

FARMER BROWN was in no jocular mood at the time of their visit. His wife had run off with a traveling salesman and his daughter was expecting "an unknown American."

"What business is it of yours what I paint on my barn?" he asked. "I hate everybody!"

Now hate is not confined to race, creed, or nationality background. It is a human evil that has haunted mankind since Eve seduced Adam in the Garden of Eden. We have seen people who hate people that they don't even know for reasons that they have come to believe are valid.

ACTUALLY, HATRED can become a mental disease that may cause people to do all kinds of stupid things. It is contagious and is often passed down from father to son. This is especially true in race relations in the South where it is fashionable for white and colored people to hate each other.

In World War I, when the Allied armies were straining to defeat the Central Powers, race hate was as dangerous as the enemy. The same thing was true when the Axis Powers kept up a steady attack on the well-being of the whole world.

Though race hate is not as dangerous in the North as it is in the South, it is a familiar factor anywhere in this, our beloved land. At the same time we have made immense progress in research and may some day find methods of cure for it. So, at least, we can say that we are moving forward toward a democratic society.

Don't believe for one moment, however, that the changes we have witnessed in American life during the last ten years means that the "new Negro" is loved.

He must still fight on to achieve his status as a first-class citizen.

ANOTHER ONE of my favorite stories deals with "the brother" whose doctor gave him a box of colored pills and told him, "take these pills three times a day and they will turn you white in 30 days."

Two months later he called the medico and said, "Doc, I turned white but I still think like a Negro. Do you have any other kind of pills that will make me hate them?"

THERE WAS A white fellow from Mississippi who was in even worse shape. His best friend met him on the street one day and thought he looked awful.

"What's the matter, Charley?" he asked.
"I can't sleep. It's that rotten insomnia again."
"Why don't you try the old remedy of counting sheep at night?"

Angrily he replied, "You know darn well there's a black sheep in every family."

THIS REMINDS me of the father who told his son to go out and play with his friends.

I don't have but one friend and I hate him," was his extremely comic reply.

YOU MAY have heard the one about the colored sergeant who went into a bar and asked for two drinks. He drank one and seemed to pour the other in his pocket. When he ordered another round the barmaid asked him if he was crazy.

"Of course not," he told her, as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a white officer. "Tell her, Major," he said, "what happened to you when we were on that campaign in Africa and you called that witch doctor a darkie."