Dixie's New Negro: More Hope, Less Fear

Bob Greene Newsday Staff Writer

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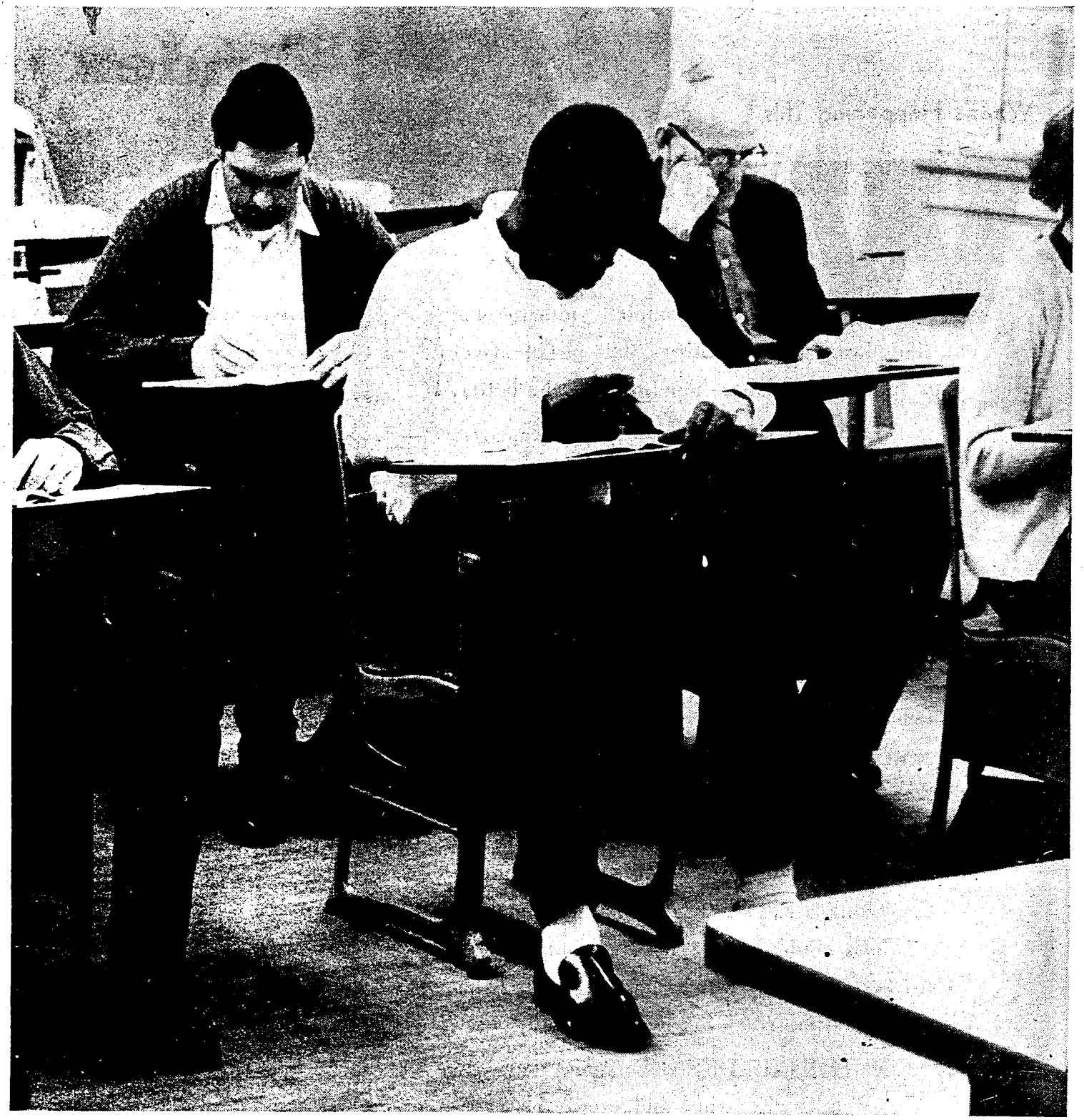
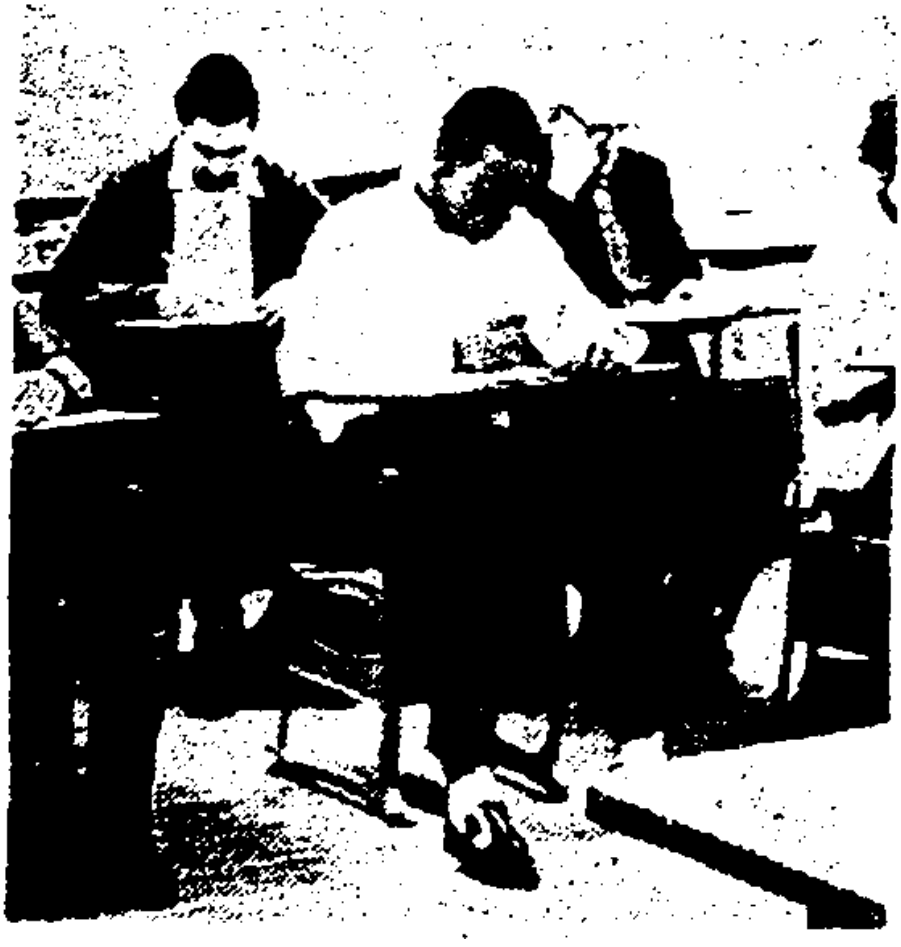


IN A CHANGING ERA, DIXIE'S NEW NEGRO FINDS ROOM FOR ADVANCEMENT: SEE PAGE 8

THE COVER



Symbolizing the changes that have taken place in the Deep South in recent years is this Negro student in an integrated adult education class in a public school in Columbia, S.C. The photo is by Maxie Roberts of The State & The Columbia Record; for Bob Greene's story about "Dixie's New Negro," see Page 8.

Dixie's New Negro: More Hope, Less Fear

A new spirit—a spirit of defiance, of rising expectations—has transformed the Negro in the South and led to changes that were unthinkable just a few years ago, reports Bob Greene, who recently returned from a month-long trip he made through the six states of the Deep South.

By Bob Greene
Newsday Staff Writer

THE midday sun burned down on Mississippi's U.S. Highway 51 and tar oozed from between the concrete strips. The bloated, fly-covered carcass of a huge dog baked on the grassy east shoulder of the road. And the stink of it clung to everything.

In less than an hour, the southward tramping Mississippi freedom marchers, herded to the shoulder of the road by police, would come to this spot and would have to pass over the dead animal. A small but gleeful gaggle of white farmers stood in a field across the way, breeze to their backs, waiting for the fun to begin.

A slim Negro sharecropper came down the highway headed for Como in his pickup truck. He surveyed the situation, stopped and got out of the truck. He kicked the dog's body and a black cloud of flies stirred angrily. Then he reached his hands underneath, lifted the dog and staggered across the highway towards the startled whites.

He dumped the dog in a ditch in front of them. He stood up straight, carefully wiped his hands on his faded denim overalls, and then wordlessly climbed into his truck and headed down the road.

This man and his act of defiance, in a sense, are symbolic of the new Negro emerging in the South. He is no longer afraid of the white man and the white man's world. It has been this fear, nurtured by lynchings, beatings and the lash of the economic whip, that has emasculated the black man of the South for more than a century.

It has been a fear, physically enforced by only a tiny minority of white southerners, dirt poor, red-necked men who scratched the only dignity they could salvage from life by jealously guarding a system which assured them that they were one step higher than the Negro in the pecking order of society. And it has been a fear that has provided unlimited economic advantages for the rest of the white men of the South, who would not stoop to violence themselves, but would not prosecute those who did.

A Negro who feared would not ask for better schools and teachers. He would not ask for better jobs, homes and training in skills. He would not ask for more money for his day's work or for the right to vote. And he would participate in the immolation of his own self-respect by walking to the back of the bus, stepping off the sidewalk as whites came by, and suffering the right of the Southern Bell Telephone Co. to list his women in directories without "Miss" or "Mrs." in front of their names.

There are 11,500,000 of the nation's 19,000,000 Negroes still living in the South. They have been the victims of discrimination, inferior education, grinding poverty and disfranchisement. Yet they have survived intact, and it was on the streets of Montgomery, Ala., capital of the Confederacy, that the civil rights movement was born to spread through the South and the nation, quenching fear in its wake.

In an effort to assess the change in the southern Negro that led to the civil rights movement and resulted from it, a Newsday reporter spent a month in the six Deep South states talking to Negro and white businessmen, students, ministers, teachers, sharecroppers and shrimp fishermen.

They all agree. There is a new Negro in the South, and he is coming on strong. He is not everywhere. There are still pockets of fear and there are still old people who cannot forget. But he is in enough places and making enough stands to have impact.

"I think that the major difference between the Negro here today and 15 years ago is that today's Negro is no longer physically afraid of the white man," said Dr. John Nixon, a Negro dentist, of Birmingham, Ala. "The headscratching, foot-shuffling Negro is a thing of the past . . . Now he is looking an employer square in the eye and asking for a job. And for the first time in history, our women will be able to stay at home and care for their own children."

Nixon's words are echoed through the South.

"Things are better now," said Leslie Williams, a potato grader, as he sat in the sun in front of the St. Augustine, Fla., slave market, where his ancestors were bought and sold 120 years ago. "Some things ain't never going to happen again. We're not afraid any more . . . Now, I work for you, I do what you want me to. You don't like what I do, tell me different or pay me off. But don't you hit me—no more, never again."

This surge of courage has begun to flow from the cities into rural areas, even into southwest Georgia, which ranks high nationally in both the brutality and number of Negro lynchings that have taken place in its deep pine groves.

"Things are getting better here for the colored folk," said Willie Ramsey, a gnarled, 56-year-old Negro who raised his four children by chopping wood in Alapaha, Ga., for $28 a week. "The white man still wants to be top dog, but you can see he's afraid about things. When you see he's afraid, it makes you less afraid. He still owns my body with his dollar, but I think different now."

THROUGHOUT the South, the vacuum created by dissipated fear is being filled by new concepts, images and drives. Foremost is the ambition for economic equality. There were 139 Negroes interviewed by the reporter and without exception, all listed economic improvement—"a piece of the pie"—as the single most important objective of the southern Negro.

The battle cry is "Freedom Now," and although many interpret this slogan in different ways, all southern Negroes feel that the millenium of freedom will

bring the right to compete for the dollar with the white man on equal footing. To a Negro sharecropper in Coldwater, Miss., freedom means "the white boss will pay me more for my cotton." To a cinnamon-skinned youngster in Columbia, S.C., it means he can become a doctor in a nationally known southern medical center. And to a buxom Negro spinster in Albany, Ga., it means she will be paid more than $15 a week for cleaning the white woman's house and raising her children.

But to achieve this economic parity, the southern Negro also recognizes the necessity for certain prerequisites. He must be recognized as a human being capable of performing on the same level as the white man. He must reshape his own image of himself; he must obtain quality education and training in skills, the tools of competition, and, through the vote, he must begin the long, hard battle to restructure attitudes in his community, state and area.

"What makes the new Negro is his image of himself," said the Rev. Jessie L. Douglas, Negro pastor of the First Christ Methodist Episcopal Church in Montgomery, Ala. "It's as though the Negro were sitting in a theater watching a picture on the screen. He has nothing to do with the picture; he is not involved, but he can't help identifying with it. The Negro has watched life on a screen. This is life, he is told, but you only sit and observe it.

"But some Negroes have grown restless. They have found a door in the rear of the theater; they have walked outside and seen the real sunshine, real life for the first time. They rush back in and shout to the others: 'Hey, you. What you're watching is a dream. Real life is just outside this door. Come on out.'

"But it takes a long time to make people believe, getting them to be involved," the pastor added. "Now they are all out and they are not shouting vague abstractions when they say 'Freedom Now.' They are saying lift the hindering elements: give me free access to whatever is my right. Let me get it by my abilities. For years the Negro could not see the value of education, because even with it, there were no jobs. Now there are opportunities and education is a fever with him and so is his vote."

THIS throwing off of the hindrances, tiny and great, is in evidence everywhere in the South today. Said one rights leader in Atlanta: "The coming of age does not occur in the street demonstrations or mass marches. They only set a climate. It happens as each Negro comes to grips with the system in his own personal confrontation on his own street in his own way. Every tiny thing counts. But each must be challenged with patience, dignity and purpose."

These challenges take many forms:

In the Delta town of Greenwood, Miss., last month, a Negro farmer was driving his car down the street. A young white woman stopped her car in front of him to chat with a pedestrian, blocking his way. On the sidewalk nearby lounged two deputy sheriffs. The Negro honked his horn. Incensed at his impertinence, the woman lashed him with a string of racial slurs. When she paused for breath, the Negro grinned, and honked his horn again. And then one of the white deputy sheriffs motioned her to move on. She drove off in anger, leaving rubber behind.

Only a few years ago, a Negro in the same town who threw the same small challenge would almost certainly have been jailed or worse on some trumped-

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At Last, a Chance

"There has been a dramatic shift in the past two years," says a psychology professor. "A few years ago, the southern Negro had a feeling of helplessness, of powerlessness, of inability to bring about change . . . I think the biggest part of the New Negro is a feeling in his head—a feeling up here—which says: me, by myself, I can effect change . . ."

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up charge such as making improper advances to the woman. And another Negro would have been kept in his place.

In Columbia, S.C., three weeks ago, Sanders Goodwin Jr., 30, a Negro, heard some disturbing news. A full-time, civil service employe at the local veterans hospital and night manager of a parking garage downtown, Goodwin learned that a white youngster working in the garage as a helper was making 75 cents an hour. This is 10 cents an hour more than Goodwin is earning as the garage manager.

It has been a tradition in the South, vigorously enforced by the white structure, that if necessity requires that a white man work side by side with a Negro at the same job, the white man will be given more money for his work. The extra 10 cents for Goodwin's white helper was a token of that tradition.

GOODWIN, a 10-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, had already broken another sacred taboo of the South. He was empowered by management to give orders to white employes. He went to the garage owners and told them that as long as he was manager, he would be paid more than the help. Management has asked for a month to make its decision.

"This (Columbia, S.C.) is a good town for the Negro," said Goodwin. "But there are still a few vestiges of the old times. You have to meet each one of them square on. I think the owners are going to go my way. But, if they don't, I'm going to bring in a union. I've asked every man who works here, and they'll all go with me. Right is right."

Only a few years ago, Negroes who questioned white employers in South Carolina and other Deep South states about disparity in wage rates, would have found themselves quickly jobless throughout the entire area. And unions would have been deaf to their pleas for organization.

In picturesque St. Augustine, Fla., where two years ago Klan-inspired mobs sought to tame the Negro minority with fire-bombs and beatings, a sedate, middle-aged Negro widow ran for city office last year and intends to do the same thing against next year.

"I was scared to death when I was first asked to run," said Mrs. Rosalie Gordon, guidance director at a local Negro school. "We had had so much trouble and now I was being asked to be the first member of my race to seek local office. My people begged me to make the race for city council. They said we had to have some communication with the whites. My first reaction was no, I didn't want to be a martyr. I didn't think I had the courage. Of all the things I had wanted to be growing up, I had never wanted to be in politics."

A shy, self-conscious person, Mrs. Gordon nervously drummed her fingers as she talked in the living room of her pleasant, tree-shaded home. "I prayed over it that night," she said. "I asked God about it. And I got up the next morning proud to run. (She defeated a white incumbent in the primary but lost the runoff election.) Not one unkind word was spoken to me by anybody in the campaign. I came out very encouraged. A lot of good came out of it."

It is doubtful if anything would have happened to Mrs. Gordon had she decided to run for the same office 10 years ago. The Negro woman in the South, with the exception of an occasional rape, has been peculiarly immune from violence and the other more blatant outrages of the segregated system. The black man has been the target and the victim. But there would have been little encouragement for her to campaign 10 years ago; there were almost no registered voters in St. John's County. Now 52 per cent of the Negroes eligible to vote, 2,234 persons, are registered.

August Tinson, 33, is like many of the other Negroes of Plaquemines Parish, La., where bitter segregationist Leander Perez is undisputed political boss. Tinson despises Perez, but he loves Plaquemines. He attended two years of business college in New Orleans just 40 miles away and in another world as far as Plaquemines Negroes are concerned. He could have gone North like most educated young Negroes. Or he could have gone to New Orleans to live. Instead, he chose to come back home—where civil rights workers still fear to come—and work running the scales in a local oyster cannery where black fishermen dump their loads.

He stood on a dirt road in the shadow of the Mississippi levee in Pointe a la Hache, La., several weeks ago and explained why he had come back home. "The Negro is treated like an animal here," he said. "They still call you 'boy' even if you're 80 years old. They lock you up for running your car into a ditch. There is no school integration—not even the thought of it. But this is our home. I was born here. We own our home here. My people are here."

Tinson is registered to vote. It took him five years to do it. Each time he tried, the registrar would find a tiny fault in the form, such as lacking the hour he was born. But then he learned through TV that federal registrars were in the parish. He went to register again, this time successfully. Although he is not a professional civil rights worker, he is getting all of his friends to register too.

"I came home because I loved it and wanted to make it better. No sense running from something you love. I registered because that's the way to start changing it. Now the others are doing what I did. The only thing Perez can do is jail us. We all own our own homes and we are mostly shrimp and oyster fishermen. We own our own boats and sell in New Orleans. We are going to do our own fighting right here."

A few years ago, it would have been futility for Tinson to return to the land he called home. At worst, he would have disappeared one night into the trackless bayous, never to appear again. At best, there would have been no federal registrars and he would not have been able to cast his vote. But the time is now. And without the benefit of a single demonstration or rights worker to help them, 1,298 Plaquemines Negroes—44.8 per cent of the total—have registered.

Each of these southern Negroes has come to his own personal confrontation with the system, the man who honked his car horn, the garage manager who is demanding an end to a double-standard wage rate, the woman who ran for public office and the college boy who spurned the advantages of other places to win his fight at home. They are not exceptions, they are ordinary people. But they represent a new mentality.

Robert L. Green, a professor of educational psychology at Michigan State, has been working with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the South for the past year, while on a leave of absence from his school. Currently the tactical commander of the Mississippi Freedom March, Green has given careful study to the emerging new Negro in the South.

"THERE has been a dramatic shift in the past two years," said Green. "A few years ago, the southern Negro had a feeling of helplessness, of powerlessness, of inability to bring about change. The average Negro felt that the system was so bad and the power that supported it so strong, that nothing could be done for him. I think the biggest part of the new Negro is a feeling in his head—a feeling up here—which says: me, by myself, I can effect change. This feeling has begun to affect the behavior of the southern Negro, but it will be a while until it permeates his behavior patterns. I think the most important thing is he has a new image of himself."

This feeling is most evident in the younger Negroes of the South, the high school and college students and

for Change

persons in their early 20s. These are the bulk of the people who march in demonstrations, who lead the registration caravans and who are willing to undertake new confrontations in their everyday life. To them it is all real and meaningful. They will have the better educations, better jobs and better lives. And they are convinced that their children will do even better.

Older southern Negroes range from enthusiasm to apathy in their feelings. New job opportunities can do little for them. Crippled by an economic system that made them leave school as toddlers for the cotton fields, they have neither the education nor the skills to compete in the economic system. Many, particularly the older Negroes of the Mississippi cotton plantations and other rural South areas, have never beaten their fear of the white man and are too old and set in their ways to accept new ideas.

"NOT all Negroes have lost their fear," said the Rev. Mr. Douglas. "I doubt whether Negro people over 35 are really over their fear. They acknowledge with their words that there is nothing to fear any longer. But it takes a long time to forget the whippings and burnings. Still, they are getting there."

Nevertheless, many older Negroes are registering and attending church rallies to advance their cause. The older Negro is optimistic, said Negro attorney Matthew Perry of Columbia, S.C. "Opportunity exists for his children that was inconceivable for him at the same age. He is fired with ambition for his kids; he no longer views them as extra cotton-choppers in the family, but as the potential pride of his old age."

The Negroes of the South are also acutely aware that they have something else going for them, personal relationships with the white men. It is a paradox of the South that the white man, unlike his brother in the North, has always had a personal contact with the Negro. The white man could sometimes be cruel, sometimes kind, always paternalistic, but he knew Negroes on an individual basis and—within the confines of the system—associated with them and sometimes even loved them.

"Negroes will move faster in the South than they have in the North now that the chains are breaking," said Kenneth J. Huenink, white dean of the all-Negro Florida Memorial College at St. Augustine. "In the South, no matter how you might characterize it, there has always been a form of social relationship between the white and the Negro—as long as the Negro kept his place. Now that the law has given the Negro his place, the transition will be much faster. In the North there has been no such relationship."

Southern Negro high schools and colleges are a barometer of the hope that now motivates younger Negroes. The Rev. Robert Lovett of Florida Memorial College estimates that Negro college enrollment in the South (traditionally the highest among Negroes in the nation) has doubled in the past 10 years. The number of high school graduates has nearly tripled. "We're having a tremendous boom," said the Rev. Mr. Lovett.

"The young Negro isn't afraid of anyone or anybody," said Montgomery's the Rev. Mr. Douglas. "They haven't experienced terror or been weighed down by hardships from which they knew no escape. It's our job—that of all adults—to direct these youngsters into responsible channels. We are putting the emphasis on development of skills and potentials. We tell them: if you are prepared, don't worry, opportunity will still be there."

Negro leaders in the South are hopeful that this enthusiasm for education coupled with the realization that jobs are opening in the land of cotton will reverse what could become a disastrous trend—the northward flight of the young Negro male. In the 10 years between 1950-60, 32.3 per cent of Alabama's Negro males between the ages of 15 and 34 moved northward. The figure for Georgia was 30.9 per cent and Mississippi a whopping 47 per cent.

Some of these males left because automation forced them off of farms and they joined relatives up North. Others came to get a better education or skill training. And many came because they could no longer stand the rigidity of the segregation system and the void of opportunity in the South. Many others left because their educational level was so high that there was no place for them in the southern economic system. Potential Negro leaders were caught in the flood North and the southern Negro was deprived by their loss.

"One of the great tragedies of the South is that Negro leaders are flocking away to the North," said Prof. Green. "Now, with the advent of rights and opportunities, some are starting to filter back and we hope for a reverse trend. But in the (civil rights) movement we find a tremendous void in the male Negro age groups between the ages of 21 and 40. Many have been in the armed services, seen the rest of the country, and decided there are better places to live. They could be our potential leaders, our core of strength. But they have gone."

Meanwhile, the Negro churches of the South continue to provide the bulk of the leadership in the struggle for equality. Historically, churches have been the one accepted meeting place for Negroes in the South, primarily because religion was thought to have palliating qualities.

But Negro churches have proved the undoing of the segregationist system in the South. In the largest cities and in the smallest farm hamlets, they have been the wellspring of the rights movement. And Negro ministers such as the Rev. Martin Luther King and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, contrasted to the Negro political leaders and street-corner orators of the North, still are symbolic of the movement in the South. Church domination is also largely responsible for the nonviolent, deeply spiritual vein of the southern movement.

"FOR the Negro, his church has been the Moses of the Southland," said the Rev. Mr. Douglas. "In the South, since the time of slavery religion has been the only hope of the Negro. The Negro here identified with the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt. And they knew, that if they kept their religion, God would come to their aid. The Negro of the South has kept his religion and the churches have kept alive in him a strong moral fiber that will make him stand as a giant among men as freedom comes."

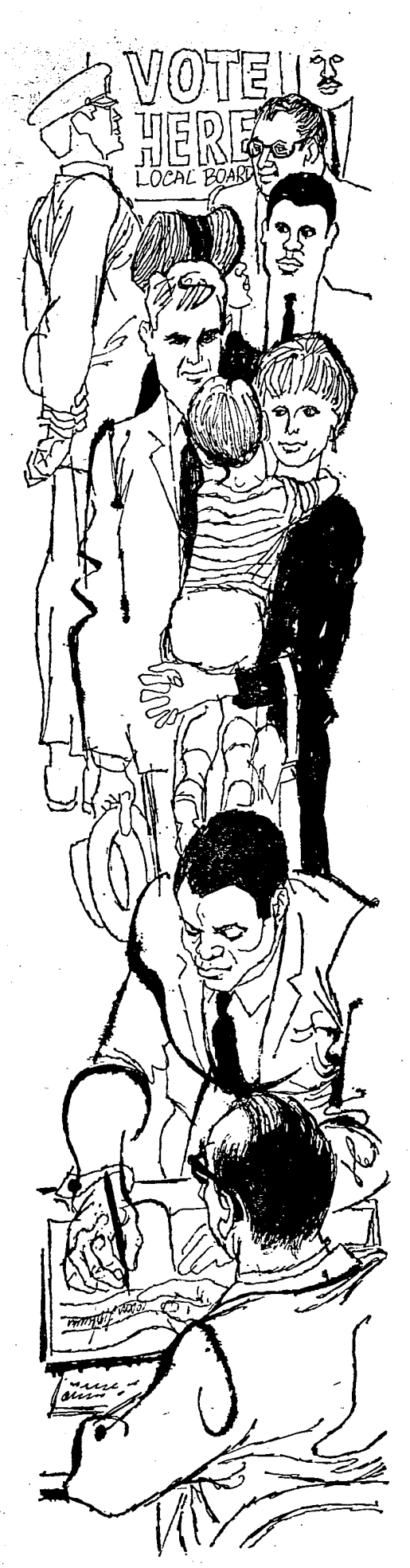
Such was evident last month in Lowndes County, Ala., in a dusty field just off U.S. Highway 80 leading from Selma to Montgomery. Sitting in front of a small collection of tents, her legs swathed in bandages, a crutch at her side and a child's Bible in her lap, sat Mrs. Viola Lusae, too old to remember her age.

Mrs. Lusae and her four children had been banished from their sharecroppers cottage, her lifetime home, a month after she registered last November. Since then she has lived in a tent in the fields, as have two other families similarly exiled.

The sky was blue and the sun was warm and Mrs. Lusae stretched out her arthritic legs to sop in the heat through her bandages (she has been unable to get medical attention). Nearby, okra, sweet potatoes and peas grew in her little garden. She was asked, if she had the choice again, would she register?

"Lord yes," she said. "My vote go'n' take me to freedomland."

Dixie's New Negro
Continued Monday on Page 1A



Dixie's New Negro: The Power of the Ballot
Greene, Bob
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South Carolina Negroes, who have had no trouble voting and registering since 1947, line up to register in Columbia.

Dixie's New Negro: The Power of the Ballot

This is the second of a six-part series that began in Saturday's Weekend With Newsday.

By Bob Greene

History was made with barely a ripple in South Carolina two months ago.

The state chairmen of the South Carolina Democratic and Republican parties traveled to Orangeburg and staged a political debate before the student body of South Carolina State College. It was hardly an ordinary event. The college enrollment is almost entirely Negro and the politicians were there to publicly woo the Negro vote. It had never happened before.

AP Wirephoto

A Negro voter literally cools his heels as he waits to register in New Orleans.

Throughout the South, candidates and political leaders are beginning to tour Negro neighborhoods, cuddle Negro babies and shake black hands in their quest for votes. In the process they are also forced to become aware of Negro problems ranging from unemployment to unpaved streets. And they are promising, at least, to bring about change.

Although Negroes have been able to vote for many years in North and South Carolina, Atlanta, Ga., New Orleans, La., Memphis, Tenn., and a few other spots, the vast majority in the South have been barred from the polls. As a result, they have been unable to use their votes to win equality in the southern system.

But there has been a rapid change since the federal government has sent voting registrars into the South to protect Negro voting rights. In 1960, for example, only 1,400,000 or 28 per cent of the eligible Negroes in the South were registered to vote. Last month, Negro registration there had spurted to 2,469,837 or 49.4 per cent.

Even if Negro registration reaches 100 per cent in the South, the Negro vote will never be dominant. The northward migration of the Negro over the past 30 years, has depleted his voting strength in the South. Whites outnumber Negroes in every state, in almost every congressional district and in all but a handful of counties.

But for the first time, and white politicians are acutely aware of it, a unified Negro vote can be the balance of power in many state and local elections. This vote, overwhelmingly Democratic in the South, recently helped win the gubernatorial primary for Robert King High in Florida and defeated Sheriff Jim Clark in his bid for re-election in Dallas County (Selma), Ala.

Some men, such as Alabama Attorney General Richmond Flowers, who lost his bid to unseat the Wallace dynasty in his state despite solid Negro support, dream of a new Democratic party in the South, a populist combine of Negroes and low-income whites. It is this very economic strata of whites, however, that has been most vociferously segregationist.

"It's a pitiful thing," said the Rev. Jessie L. Douglas, Negro pastor of First Christ Methodist Episcopal Church in Montgomery, Ala., "that even the poor whites think they are better off than the Negro. They fight against things the Negro advocates simply because the Negro is for them without realizing that in many areas such as housing, skills and education, they would be the first to benefit if Negro aims were achieved."

But most Negro leaders in the South, spurred by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference are battling to educate Negro voters to use their ballots within the framework of existent major political parties and press for moderate and progressive white candidates. An exception is the Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a smaller organization, which has formed splinter politicial units such as the Black Panther Party to nominate and back only black candidates.

Unkept Promises

There are some differences, however, among Negro leaders as to what a white must do to win the Negro vote. In South Carolina, for example, there has been a succession of moderate governors, no racial violence, and with the exception of a few rural counties, the Negro has had no trouble registering and voting since 1947.

Rev. DeQuincy Newman, NAACP director in Columbia, S.C., feels that Negroes must move cautiously with their votes. "We have accomplished a good deal here by careful, planned use of our votes, not hardheaded, demanding bloc voting that could harden the white majority into a reactionary counter-bloc . . ."

In Atlanta, Vernon Jordan, director of the Voter Registration Program of the Southern Regional Conference, disagrees with the Rev. Mr. Newman. "Not fast enough," snapped Jordan. "The Negro is only operating at the point of decision—when the election takes place. He still has not been allowed to help shape policy or help name who the candidate will be. To me that is still second-class."

Meanwhile, rights leaders are battling both to overcome Negro apathy towards registration and to instill a sense of sophistication and discrimination in new voters. "It's a two-way battle," said Dr. Robert L. Green of Atlanta, an SCLC leader, "getting the vote and learning to use it."

At first glance, registration figures are baffling. In Canton, Miss., where whites constantly challenge the Negro's right to vote, registration is better than 65 per cent. But in South Carolina, where Negroes have been able to register with relative ease for 20 years, only 49 per cent of the Negro population is registered.

In McComb, Miss., a klan-bound town, Jessie J. Williams, a 73-year-old Negro farmer explained why he hadn't registered. "When this all first began," he said, "I thought it was kind of dangerous. I decided to hold my peace a while until it all came clear. Now there's signs in the church on how to register. I guess I'm going to, but I want to look longer."

Teaching new voters sophistication is another thing again. On rain-spattered U.S. Highway 82 in Tuytuy, Ga., Henry Andrews, 22, a new Negro voter, complained: "Now the white politicians are coming out to our places asking for our vote. They promise us all kinds of things, but they don't keep their promises. Why do they do that?"

And in St. Augustine, Fla., Oliver Mitchel, 41, and unemployed has come to his own solution. He said: "Now I'm voting, but nothing is coming to me. The only answer is federal force, that's the only way to make politicians do anything. Meanwhile, I believe in changing them, getting them out of the rough every chance you get."

In STAR (literacy) schools in Mississippi, teachers are telling their Negro pupils about the problems of Reconstruction and warning them not to misuse their vote. And in Selma, Ala., Negro voters repudiated Clark and nominated moderate Wilson Baker. But in Jacksonville, Fla., NAACP director Rutledge Pearson has problems. "We have a corrupt machine in this city and they are buying Negro votes," said Pearson. "We've still got to educate my people to take the man's money, but vote for anyone they want. They still don't understand."

Tomorrow: Schools and Education

Dixie's New Negro: Education Is Still The Greatest Need
Greene, Bob
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pg. 1A

Dixie's New Negro:

James Henderson Jr. returns to St. Francis High School in Yazoo, Miss., to address the graduating class. Henderson, who is the president of a Hartford, Conn., firm now, was graduated from the school in 1949.

Education Is Still The Greatest Need

THIRD OF A SIX-PART SERIES

By Bob Greene

A middle-aged Negro woman laboriously scrawled on a piece of paper at the STAR center at St. Francis School in Yazoo City, Miss. She finally dropped her pencil and studied the paper intently. Then she burst into tears. She had written her own name for the first time.

This woman and thousands of other Negroes who are flocking to Mississippi's 18 STAR (federally-financed literacy schools) centers, are evidence of the fever for education which has begun to grip the southern Negro. The Negro college system is beginning to groan under the burden of increased enrollments; the trickle of Negro students into previously white universities is swelling to a flow; the number of high school graduations is soaring.

"The Negro in the South is putting a tremendous premium on education," said Joseph Reed of Montgomery, Ala., director of the Alabama State (Negro) Teachers Association. "Education has become a movement in itself There are more Negroes, male and female, in school in the South than ever before."

For many, particularly younger Negroes, the thirst for education is based upon the cold realization that schooling is the key that will open the door to previously closed economic opportunities. For older Negroes, literacy spells an end to the indignity of having to sign their names with an X, the embarrassment of asking other people to read them their own private mail, and the omnipresent suspicion that the grocer is padding their bill.

The linking of job opportunity with education by the Negro has within it the seeds of new growth for the black male in the South. "For the first time," said Reed, "the Negro in the South is pushing the education of his male children. Ten years ago, the Negro sent his daughter to school and put his son behind the plow. He figured there were no jobs for his son even if he graduated from college. As a result we have always had literate Negro women and illiterate males, completely emasculating male leadership possibilities and holding the southern Negro down far longer than was necessary."

Willie Turner, 18, of Columbia, S.C., is typical of the education-hungry, young, southern Negro. The son of a sharecropper, he wants to be a doctor. Right now he is working as a waiter to save enough money for college. Said Turner: "Things have changed. Other than money, I don't think there is anything in this state that could stop me from becoming a doctor. The one thing you have to have is a good education. Once you have it, you can be whatever you want."

The same attitudes are shared by most young southern Negroes. Next June, William E. Miller of Jackson, Miss., and another student are scheduled to become the first Negro graduates of the University of Mississippi School of Law. Miller, 33, is one of the many young Negroes who are beginning to reverse the trend of going North once they get good educations.

"I'm going to Ole Miss, because I intend to stay in Mississippi," said Miller. "Not only am I getting a good education here, but when I go into the courts, most of the people I will be dealing with as the years go on are my classmates here. I might as well get to know them. There can be a great opportunity for the educated Negro in this state if he will only stay here and help lead his people."

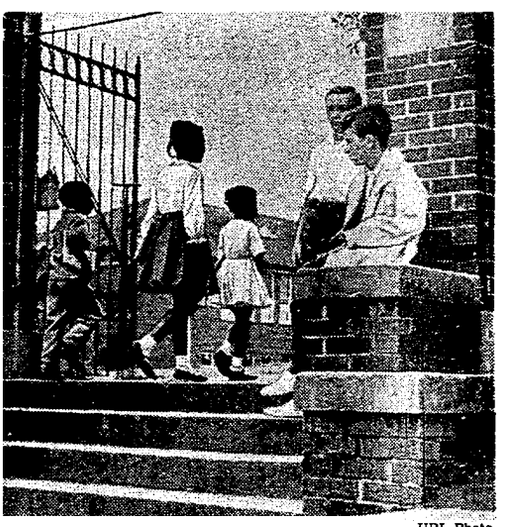
Charles Johnson, a 23-year-old senior at Jackson State (Negro) College in Jackson, Miss., is going to begin graduate work at Ole Miss next year in the field of biochemistry. "We have a small bunch at college who don't want to get involved," said Johnson. "They say: 'You stir the beans and we'll eat them.' But most of my classmates feel that education can get them jobs here. We're going to stay in Mississippi and help make those jobs for ourselves."

Most of these youngsters are jamming Negro schools under the still-segregated southern school system. Integration is mostly token and barely inching along. Under new federal guidelines, agreed to by most southern school boards, students have freedom of choice as far as school is concerned, but individual parents must seek the transfer of their children in a written application to the white school. For a number of reasons—fear, ignorance, or just plain convenience—transfers are slow.

As a result, according to rights leader Dr. Robert Green of Atlanta, Ga., young Negroes are attending schools that are educationally inferior, unwittingly diluting their ability to compete for jobs with whites. While conceding that the entire southern educational system is generally inferior, Green is convinced that the segregated southern system "was purposely designed to make an educational cripple of the Negro."

On leave from Michigan State University, where he is a professor of educational psychology, Green, a Negro, cites outdated textbooks, poor or nonexistent educational aids, inadequate funds and inferior teachers as the problems of the Negro school system. "It is a vicious cycle," he said. "These schools produce inferior pupils, who become inferior teachers and the cycle begins again."

Many southern Negroes agree with Green and send their children elsewhere to be educated. Eleven out of 14 upper-income Negroes interviewed by Newsday were sending their children to northern schools. The Rev. Robert L. T. Smith, a Negro bank director in Jackson, Miss., angrily threw a sheaf of job applications from Negro college graduates down on his desk. "Look at what our colleges are turning out," he said. Many of the applications had frequent misspellings and punctuation errors.



UPI Photo

Negro pupils enter previously all-white school in Columbia, S.C. In most of the Deep South, integration of schools is still on token basis.

In Albany, Ga., Rufus Medlock, 50, an assembly line worker in a harvesting machine plant, who has already sent one daughter across the state to Savannah University on his $55-a-week salary, explained some of the problems involved in sending his other girl to a white school.

Said Medlock: "My daughter is a high school senior and she wants to be a nurse. This year under freedom of choice she can transfer to the white school. I would like her to. I told her it would be good for our race. But she knows all her teachers and classmates in the Negro school. She would like to finish there. But she's thinking hard on it. She wants to do what's right." And in nearby Alapaha, Ga., woodcutter Willie Ramsey is confused over the integration situation. "Why are they talking about going to the white school here when the colored school is newer?" he asked. Most Negro parents, however, are afraid that under freedom of choice, their own children will be the only Negroes in white schools. "I'm not raising my children to be martyrs," said one mother.

All southern Negro leaders concede, however, that the school system, even though inferior, is better than nothing and the education received in them is a start toward opportunity. And so the flow of enthusiastic students heads for the flood level. And the attitude, as expressed by a Negro college boy from Ironton, La., is: "I'll get my degree and then it's all blue sky.

Tomorrow: Job Doors Are Opening

Dixie's New Negro: At Last, Job Doors Are Opening: Fourth of Six-Part Series
Greene, Bob
Newsday (1940-); Jun 29, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Newsday
pg. 1A

UPI Telephoto

Increasingly, southern Negroes are finding new opportunities in jobs once open only to whites. Here, Robert Coffee, left of Little Rock, Ark., and Walter Barnes of California learn to operate a lathe in a Texas Job Corps center.

Dixie's New Negro: At Last, Job Doors Are Opening

Fourth of Six-Part Series

By Bob Greene

The school orchestra courageously plowed through the strains of Verdi's Triumphal March from Aida and the graduating class of 1966, St. Francis High School, Yazoo City, Miss., solemnly trooped down the gymnasium aisle under the fond gaze of assembled parents, teachers and friends.

In other places, the 25 graduates might have received wristwatches or charm bracelets from their parents. But this is Yazoo City in Yazoo County, where black men and women, no matter what their high school attainments, can aspire to no higher vocation than that of ditchdigger and cleaning woman. St. Francis is a Negro school. And so, as in the past, nearly half the graduates each received as a gift the ultimate expression of their parents love—a bus ticket to the North.

"There is nothing here for them," said Sister Michele, of the School Sisters of St. Francis, principal of the school. "The ones who go to college stay in the state. But the ones who don't are too well educated to live with no opportunity. And their parents know this. Our graduations are a literal farewell."

The story of Yazoo City was once the story of the South. In some areas it still is. But in many other parts of the South the picture is slowly but certainly beginning to change. Negro salesgirls are beginning to blossom behind the counters of hundreds of stores; blue-shirted, steel-helmeted Negroes are beginning to pepper the previously all-white building crafts; there are more dark faces behind reception desks and stenographer's pads; there is rapid growth in the ranks of Negro professional men. Opportunity is opening.

Part of the answer can be found in a liberal and increasingly bureaucratic federal government. Federal agencies ranging from the Post Office Department to the Internal Revenue Department have become the largest single employers of white-collar Negroes in the South. And federal law has forced employers even remotely dealing in government contracts to hire a substantial number of Negro employes.

There is a second reason, the rapid industrialization of the once agricultural South. The economic impact of industry on such states as North and South Carolina and such places as Atlanta, Ga., has actually created a labor shortage sufficiently acute so that whites are backing training in skills for Negroes so that new industries will come to give jobs to both.

South Carolina is an example of two facets of the problem, a universal desire to attract industry with a strife-free climate, and a recognition of the fact that good industry will seek out a large, skilled labor force, even if it must include Negroes.

"We got $600,000,000 in new industry alone here last year," said Earle Morris Jr., chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party. "If we had an Oxford or a Selma, we might as well lock the door and throw the key away as far as new industry is concerned. Big plants aren't going to move into an area beset by racial strife. Both our whites and Negroes know this. Both races must be ready and trained to meet the new job challenges that industry brings."

New opportunities are not only limited to the federal government and defense industry, or to the liberal precincts of booming Atlanta. In Jackson, Miss., eight Negro women blow their whistles and bring red-necked white truck drivers to a screeching halt in their $8-a-day jobs as school crossing guards and 10 Negro policemen, guns strapped to their belts, patrol parts of the city.

Even in Plaquemines Parish, La., the barony of bigot Leander Perez, an increasing number of Negroes are making up to $3.50 an hour as skilled union construction workers in the shipyards and refineries. And in St. Augustine, Fla., a Negro educator said that recruiters ask him 10 times a week to supply Negroes for white-collar jobs. He is unable to fill them because his students have insufficient skills. "We (the Negro colleges) are going to have to stop turning out lawyers, teachers and ministers and offer new courses if we are going to help our people," he said.

All southern Negroes making the transition into new jobs face difficult periods of adjustment, but no person has a more difficult time than the new Negro cop. A reporter interviewed two such policemen, both high school graduates and Army veterans, as they patroled their beat down Lynch Street in the Negro section of Jackson, Miss.

UPI Telephoto

Jesse Meadows, believed to be first Negro police chief in his state, heads the force in rural Crawfordville, Ga.

The 10 officers are still segregated. They work different shifts from those of white officers; they are limited to Negro neighborhoods; they are herded into a separate room for roll call; they are barred from the sauna rooms and gymnasium of the new police academy, and each year they are openly and deliberately excluded from the policeman's ball.

Said one: "The white officers can belong to the Whites Citizens Council or anything they want. We cannot belong to a civil rights organization and I would be fired if I registered my daughter in an integrated school. But we feel we are doing a tremendous thing for our people simply because we are here, we are the foot in the door. And each one of us realizes that we must show the white people of this state that we are capable. We can't be as good as the white cops, we've got to be better."

Said the other: "The pressure is tremendous. We know that we have got to be the best. The white bigots are just waiting for us to make one mistake. Our own Negro leaders are constantly telling us to do even better. But we patrol the Negro district and the people we arrest are Negroes. And they say to us: 'Why are you picking on me? I'm a Negro like you. What are you, the white man's police dog?' "

All of the 10 police officers, one of them said, are proud that in less than two years "we have made the Negro district of Jackson the safest place in the city." Are they happy? "Maybe not happy," one said, "but proud. We are here and we are the first. We have opened another door."

The Rev. Robert Lovett of St. Augustine, Fla., said: "The prospect of job opportunities has helped to foster a new Negro attitude in the South. Young Negroes are showing a readiness to go for jobs that were once out of reach, even taking exams they know they cannot pass for jobs just so they can measure how far they still have to go educationally . . . They have a powerful drive to attain a certain economic level . . . They realize that poltical equality will mean little without a solid economic base."

Political involvement for Negroes, however, has caused many of them, particularly in St. Augustine and Jacksonville, Fla., and Selma, Ala., to stimulate lively debates on the inability of city government to attract new industries and jobs. Many whites, themselves seeking prosperity, have taken a new look at their cities and joined with Negroes to get things moving.

Things are brighter in many parts of the South. But for some Negro parents in Delta Mississippi and southwest Georgia, a bus ticket to the North is still the most precious gift they can bestow upon their educated children.

Tomorrow: A Tale of Two Cities

Dixie's New Negro: A Tale of Two Cities: FIFTH OF A SIX-PART SERIES
Greene, Bob
Newsday (1940-); Jun 30, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Newsday
pg. 1A

AP Photo

Negro child joins white youngsters in a game in Atlanta, Ga., playground.

AP Photo

In Birmingham, Ala., in 1963, water hoses were turned on Negro marchers.

Dixie's New Negro: A Tale of Two Cities

FIFTH OF A SIX-PART SERIES

By Bob Greene

If Atlanta, Ga., is the triumph of the southern Negro, Birmingham, Ala., remains his sorrow.

Both cities have relatively proportional Negro populations; both have healthy economies and high employment figures and both are sophisticated industrial complexes. Yet, in Atlanta the Negro has achieved as nowhere else in the nation, and, in Birmingham, despite repeated demonstrations, he has barely moved forward.

A sprawling, vibrating city, spiking the sky with skyscrapers of steel, stone and aluminum, fast-growing Atlanta is the commercial metropolis of the South. The city hums with activity and its 1,250,000 inhabitants burst with civic pride. And Atlanta's Negroes, nearly 40 per cent of the city population, are an integral part of the scene.

Atlanta is a deep-South city. But under a succession of progressive mayors it has lead the South in its swift and orderly desegregation of public and municipal facilities, in successful attempts to improve and utilize Negro skills, and in efforts to develop attitudes of genuine cooperation between races. To a great extent, Atlanta has succeeded.

As a result, Atlanta boasts one of the largest Negro middle-class populations in the nation. Housing is no more integrated than on Long Island, but miles of attractive Negro homes ranging in price from $14,000 to $100,000 stretch through the desirable northwestern suburbs. There are Negro sales girls and insurance salesmen, construction workers and telephone operators. There are 75 Negro officers on the 785-man Atlanta Police Department and they patrol everywhere. And in this prosperous, progressive atmosphere, Negro drives are no longer focused on equality, but on getting middle-class status.

Negroes have even obtained political status. In the national furor that followed the refusal of the Georgia legislature to seat elected Negro representative Julian Bond because of his views on U.S. policy in Vietnam, most critics overlooked another fact. The same legislature that spurned Bond seated six other Negro representatives from Atlanta and two Negro senators. This was possible because in 1962 Fulton (Atlanta) County eliminated the practice, common throughout the South, of electing on a countywide basis (designed to prevent the election of Negroes) and adopted a system of election by districts.

Atlanta is not all-perfect and the motives of city leaders are not altogether altruistic. But they make sense. "We are concerned with making Atlanta the business capital of the South, a rich city," said one white city official. "To do this we must present a good image and field a unified people. All of us have found that our economic well-being is more important to us than our prejudices."

Dr. Robert L. Green of Atlanta, an official of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, put it this way: "The poor Negro in Atlanta can look at a large Negro middle class here and can say: 'There is a way. I can do it if I try.' So he tries hard. The Negro in Atlanta is the hardest-working Negro I have ever seen. Sometimes he holds two or three jobs down to make that middle-class rung. He works like the world was going to end."

Typical of Atlanta is Clyde Ireland, 46, Negro father of three children. He owns his own suburban home, is a senior clerk in the post office, drives his own cab at night and his wife is a school teacher. He worked his way through college in Atlanta. "There is no place else in the world that I would want to live," said Ireland. "We are treated first-class. We have a say in what goes on. We don't say give us everything. We say that if we can do a job better, let us have it. If we can do it as well, let us compete for it. We have jobs, the vote and respect here." Eleven other Negroes interviewed in Atlanta agreed. They said they would never move.

Birmingham is different. To an extent this flame-belching steel city of 346,000 persons huddled beneath a giant, hilltop statue of Vulcan, mythical god of the forge, vibrates like Atlanta. But for the Birmingham Negro, most of the vibrations are out of tune.

It was in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963, that a shocked nation saw police dogs loosed on marching, hymn-singing Negroes demonstrating for participation in city affairs and the appointment of Negro police officers. Like Atlanta, the Negro population of Birmingham is nearly 40 per cent. The white power structure, promising better times, created interracial study committees and the demonstrations ended.

It is now 1966 and there are only two Negroes on the Birmingham police force—the same two appointed shortly after the demonstrations. There are only four Negroes on city boards, and only two of these boards, the planning commission and housing authority, have meaning. There are no elected Negroes. Said one Negro leader: "The Negro in this city just hasn't been able to advance the way he has in other cities of the South. Frustration is setting in."

Dr. John Nixon, a Negro dentist who heads the newly-activated NAACP chapter in the city (the organization was barred by law from the state of Alabama until recently), goes even further. "This city could be a tinderbox," said Nixon. "There has been only slight improvement. Negroes are still barred from decent jobs; they are constantly by-passed from upgrading and promotion in industrial plants. Segregation is still here, but now it is subtle, not out in the open where you can fight it head on. Employers publicly ask for Negro workers and then devise application tests impossible for anyone to pass."

Former Mayor Arthur Hanes, one of the state's most prominent attorneys and a leading citizen of Birmingham, thinks differently. "My father helped incorporate this city," said Hanes, "and I think that all of us, Negroes and whites together, have made wonderful progress here.

"There are 1,200 Negro school teachers in this city," he added. "That is more than in the state of Ohio, New Jersey and all of New England combined. In this city one of every two Negro families owns its own home, one out of three owns a car and 96 per cent of the Negro families own TV sets. I think the Birmingham Negro is doing very well. There is no Berlin wall to keep him here, but he stays here just the same."

Replied Nixon: "There is a void in this community because there is no real leadership. The power structure is the United States Steel Corp. (largest employer in the city) and we are going to have to concentrate our fire here to get things done. In this city the power structure—the whites—both keep denying us everything they legally can. There is no communication, no cooperation, no attempt to move forward together. The housing we own is substandard; the jobs we have are menial and our future is bleak."

Perhaps the most meaningful comment on Birmingham was offered by an unemployed Negro construction worker lounging on a church stoop near the plush, new, private Downtown Club. "The pay went up," he said. "So a white man took my job. Nothing in this town for a black man. No way up. Atlanta. That sure is the place to go."

Tomorrow: Looking to the North

Dixie's New Negro: A Look to the North
Greene, Bob
Newsday (1940-); Jul 1, 1966; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Newsday
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UPI Photo

A Negro man deliberately turns his back on Gov. and Mrs. Wallace of Alabama, far left, after registering to vote at Clayton, Ala., courthouse.

LAST OF A SIX-PART SERIES

Dixie's New Negro:

A Look to the North

By Bob Greene

"I think the southern Negro is emerging as the leader of the Negro in the United States. In some ways, the Negro in the North is getting a better shake. But things have come too easy for him. He just doesn't have the drive to get out of his lazy seat."

These words were not spoken by a northern racist. The man speaking was Joseph Reed, 28, a dynamic, hard-driving southern Negro who is the director of the Alabama State (Negro) Teachers Association. His views are shared by many others like him who have a profound faith in the destiny of the Negro in the South.

These leaders are proud of what their people have been able to endure, likening the ordeal to the forging of steel. And they bask in the reflected glory of a people who were able to break their chains with dignity and stage a bloodless revolution. They think of the southern Negro as a single entity with roots, religion, ambition, purpose and drive.

"I think that the Negro in the South is one of the strongest Negroes in the country," said the Rev. Jessie Douglas, a Negro minister in Montgomery, Ala. "The Negro in the South never gave up. Many southern Negroes migrated to the North as an escape mechanism. The Negroes who stayed here faced the music and now they have learned the score. The Negroes who remained here kept their roots and identity."

Robert L. T. Smith, a Negro leader in Jackson, Miss., said he felt that the Negroes who migrated North had given up. He said that the southern Negro has taken the mantle of national leadership because he had stayed behind and fought for it. And in Birmingham, Ala., Negro attorney Arthur Shores said: "The South will produce very strong Negro leaders because we have had one helluva fight to become men and no one is going to take our manhood away again."

Some civil rights leaders feel that the southern Negro, despite centuries of oppression, has had more going for him in Dixie than north of the Mason-Dixon line. "In a sense, the southern white has had more integrity than his brother in the North," said Dr. Robert L. Green of Atlanta, a rights leader born and raised in the North.

UPI Telephoto

Dr. Robert L. Green plants flag on Jefferson Davis memorial in Grenada, Miss., during recent freedom march.

"In the South," said Green, "it has been far easier to recognize the enemy and draw the battle lines. If a white man opposed you, he made no bones about saying it. It was easy to read the signs on the rest-room doors and over the drinking fountains. You could concentrate your fire and count the casualties.

"But in the North," Green added, "it is always so subtle that the enemy is someone beyond, some shadowy thing that you can never really come to grips with. Up there, people speak love, but somewhere, someone is stopping you and you can never really identify him. The people in Harlem, Watts and Paradise Valley in Detroit feel frustrated and totally subjugated by the system. These people have no mark to measure themselves against."

The attitude of most southern Negroes interviewed was expressed by St. Augustine, Fla., civic leader Mrs. Rosalie Gordon, a Negro who attended college in the North. "I could cry when I think of endless educational and cultural opportunities that the Negro in the North has ignored and wasted. I think we in the South will prevail and succeed because we appreciate and use everything we had to fight for."

There are a few southern Negro leaders, however, who are concerned that their people are becoming complacent as a result of too many victories. One such leader is Vernon Jordan, 32, of the Southern Regional Conference in Atlanta, Ga. Jordan has been leading the Negro voter registration program in the South.

"The southern Negro right now is suffering from the advances he has made," said Jordan. "Folks call him 'Mr.'; he can sit where he wants on the bus or the train and he can quench his thirst at any fountain. He thinks that this is great, that this is real equality, that he has it made. As a result, the subtle issues no longer command his maximum participation, things like the necessity of becoming a sophisticated voter or the complexities of school bond issues. These are not martyrdom issues; in his mind they are unimportant and he doesn't respond. He jeers the complacency of his northern brother, but he himself is in danger."

There is no question but that the average southern Negro, particularly in the more advanced areas, finds his new equality a heady commodity. "Every time I go to the Braves (baseball) game, I purposely sit next to a white man," said Atlanta, Ga., restaurant manager Richard Johnson, 39, a Negro. "I talk to him and he talks to me and we buy each other beers. Isn't that fantastic?"

And in St. Augustine, Fla., last month, Negro potato grader Leslie Williams walked out of a drug store with a huge smile lighting his face. Only two years before, Negroes had been barred from the drug store by battling white mobs. A few moments before, complaining about stomach pains, Williams had gone to the drug store lunch counter and asked for an Alka-Seltzer.

"You know what that white waitress did?" grinned Williams. "After she gave me the medicine, she asked me about the pains, how long I had them and how did they feel. She said if I kept having them I should go to the doctor. And then you know what she did? She gave me the name of her own doctor—her own doctor. And you ask if we have equality? That's equality there. It's respect. Do you know how it feels to be black and just walk into a strange lunch counter and have somebody white feel enough about you to name her own doctor?"

The new equality is taking some getting used to on both sides of the racial fence. "White people will stop and talk to me on the street corner," said the Rev. Robert Lovett of St. Augustine, "and you know they want to talk on an equal basis. But they still keep looking over their shoulders, half-afraid that one of their friends will frown on it."

And in Columbia, S.C., attorney Matthew Perry laughs over the way his fellow Negroes are paving their way into a gracious white acceptance of the public accommodations act. "When we go to a previously all-white restaurant, we overdo it in trying to make the white waitress comfortable, in trying to have her accept us as desirable customers. Our manners are so fastidious that the Dutchess of Windsor would look like a longshoreman in comparison. And we always overtip—way overtip. Sooner or later it will even out, but right now I even find myself doing it." A white waitress in Jackson, Miss., agreed. "Their (Negro) table manners are so good, I find myself going home and screaming at my sloppy kids," she said. "And do they tip."

Most rights leaders do not share Jordan's dread of impending complacency in the southern Negro. Said one: "We have had a long hard fight. And we will fight again. But every once in a while, you have to pause and taste the fruits of victory and consolidate your gains. Let them drink freedom. They've earned it."