

New Negro History Texts

NEGRO educators and the public generally should suffer no let up in the insistence that race history texts be given a place in public school curricula. Several appropriate texts have been prepared by competent Negro historians of which Dr. Carter G. Woodson, of Washington, D. C., director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History is a leading figure. Because of circumstances, however, over which principals and teachers do not have control and because of insufficient general interest in the subject, these books have not found wide use in the class rooms. Dr. Woodson has just announced the publication of two new texts, "African Myths," compiled especially for use for children in the lower grades, yet enjoyable to persons of advanced age, and "Negro Makers of History," intended for the upper grades or junior high school. "African Myths" is a compilation of stories which prove the continent of Africa is not as dark as commonly averred. They outline a beautiful philosophy of life and a high moral sense in the African. "Negro Makers of History" constitutes a more extensive treatment of the subject found in various books which have recently appeared.

Unfavorable sentiment toward Negro academic education which existed to a distressing degree some thirty years ago has practically disappeared. Educating the Negro has now been quite generally accepted as a commonplace, and each year sees his educational opportunities and facilities expanding. Now is the favorable time to press for the introduction of his race history in the public schools, particularly the Negro school. With public officials in the majority of Southern states evincing a willingness to meet the demands of Negro education, it is not too much to entertain the confidence that the time is now favorable when no few of them will accede to sincere and insistent importunities that these Negro history texts be given a place on the proscribed public school curricula of colored schools at least.

In spite of all the economic and civil proscription to which this race is heir, it suffers no more seriously retarding handicap, than the inferiority complex too widely existent. And it suffers this inferiority complex because it knows nothing of the meritorious history of its ancestry. Dr. Woodson rightly says: "To inspire the Negro he must have the opportunity to learn something about himself when he is young. If he waits until he is thoroughly indoctrinated with the theory of inferiority as it is now being presented in our high schools, and colleges and universities, there may never be any hope for the so-called educated Negro. Instead of becoming devoted to his race his education may cause him to despise it, to lose courage, and to perish in the present struggle."

A number of prominent whites associated with educational work among Negroes have already gone on record as favoring the Negro history text in colored schools. Under this sanction, several of our schools presided over by race conscious and enterprising heads have worked out a race history course for their institutions. They are to be commended and encouraged, but we need now concerted effort to have this course officially adopted by educational officials. And now is the time to push the effort.