

beautiful as the dark browns, light-browns, peach browns, or gold and bronze of the Negro girl. These are some of the things which make a walk through any Negro section of New York or Washington such a feast of delight.

Then, there is the matter of form. The bodies and limbs of our Negro women are, on the whole, better built and better shaped than those of any other women on earth — except perhaps, the Egyptian women's. And their gait and movement would require an artist to properly describe. The grace of their carriage is inimitable.

But their most striking characteristic is a feature which even the crude mind of mere man can appreciate. It is [*to quote "Gunga Din," added in reprint*] "the way in which they carry their clothes." They dress well — not merely in the sense that their clothing is costly and good to look at; but in that higher sense in which the Parisian woman is the best dressed woman in Europe. From shoes and stockings to shirtwaists and hats, they choose their clothes with fine taste and show them off to the best advantage when they put them on. That is why a man may walk down the avenue with a Negro cook or factory girl without anyone's being able to guess that she has to work for a living.

And, finally, in the matter of that indefinable something which, for want of a better word, we call simply "charm" — the Negro women are far ahead of all others in America. They have more native grace, more winsomeness, greater beauty and more fire and passion. These facts have already begun to attract attention, here and elsewhere, and, eventually, the Negro woman will come into her own.

What say you, brothers? Shall we not love her while she is among us? Shall we not bend the knee in worship and thank high heaven for the great good fortune which has given us such sisters and sweethearts, mothers and wives?



29. "In the Melting Pot (re Herodotus)," *New Negro* 4 (October 1919): 14–15.

In his October 1919 *New Negro* column "In the Melting Pot," written under the pseudonym "The Taster," Harrison offered some thoughts after rereading Herodotus (c. 484–c. 425 B.C.), the wide-traveling Greek scholar known as "The Father of History." Harrison argues that an accurate knowledge of Egypt's contributions to civilization would benefit Black youth and, as a step in this direction, he advocates a reprint of Herodotus's works at popular prices.

A recent re-reading of Herodotus, the "Father of History," has brought to the mind of The Taster a favorite ambition of his earlier years. It was the issuing of a series of reprints dealing with the history of Negro lands and lands in which Negroes are interested, from the works of those great writers of the past whose works are no longer "protected by copyright." This could be done at a price to suit the pocket of the average man, women or child — say at 25 and 50 cents. A good beginning could be made with the sec-

"In the old days white people derived their knowledge of what Negroes were doing from those Negroes who were nearest to them, largely their own selected exponents of Negro activity or of their white point of view. * * * Today the white world is vaguely, but disquietingly, aware that Negroes are awake; different, but perplexingly uncertain. Yet the white world by which they are surrounded retains its traditional method of interpreting the mass by the Negro nearest to themselves in affiliation or contact. The Socialist party still persists in thinking that the unrest now apparent in the Negro masses is due to their propaganda which its paid adherents support, and believes that the unrest will function largely along the lines of Socialist political thought."

It is necessary to insist on this point today when the Socialist party of America has secretly subsidized both a magazine and a newspaper to attempt to cut into the splendid solidarity which Negroes are achieving in response to the call of racial necessity. It is necessary to point out that "radical" young Negroes may betray the interests of the race into alien hands just as surely as "the old crowd." For, after all, the essence of both betrayals consists in making the racial requirements play second fiddle to the requirements dictated as best for it by other groups with other interests to serve. The fact that one group of alien interests is described as "radical" and the other as "reactionary" is of very slight value to us.

In the days when the Socialist Party of America was respectable, although it never drew lines of racial separation in the North, it permitted those lines to be drawn in the South. It had no word of official condemnation for the Socialists of Tennessee who prevented Theresa Malkiel in 1912 from lecturing to Negroes on Socialism either in the same hall with them or in meetings of their own. It was the national office of the party which in that same presidential year refused to route Eugene V. Debs in the South because the Grand Old Man let it be known that he would not remain silent on the race question while in the South. They wanted the votes of the white South then, and were willing to betray by silence the principles of inter-racial solidarity which they espoused on paper.

Now, when their party has shrunk considerably in popular support and sentiment, they are willing to take up our cause. Well, we thank honest white people everywhere who take up our cause, but we wish them to know that we have already taken it up ourselves. While they were refusing to diagnose our case we diagnosed it ourselves, and, now that we have prescribed the remedy — Race Solidarity — they came to us with their prescription — Class Solidarity. It is too late, gentlemen! This racial alignment is all our own product, and we have no desire to turn it over to you at this late day, when we are beginning to reap its benefits. And if you are simple enough to believe that those among us who serve your interests ahead of ours have any monopoly of intellect or information along the lines of modern learning, then you are the greater gulls indeed.

We can respect the Socialists of Scandinavia, France, Germany or England on their

record. But your record so far does not entitle you to the respect of those who can see all around a subject. We say Race First, because you have all along insisted on Race First and class after when you didn't need our help. We reproduce below a brief portion of your record in those piping times of peace, and ask you to explain it. If you are unable to do so, set your lackeys to work; they may be able to do it in terms of their own "radical scientific" surface slush. The following is taken from the majority report of one of your national committees during one of your recent national conventions. It was signed by Ernest Untermann and J. Stitt Wilson, representing the West, and Joshua Wanhope, editor of the *Call*, and Robert Hunter, representing the East, and it was adopted as a portion of the party program. We learn from it that —

Race feeling is not so much a result of social as of biological evolution. It does not change essentially with changes of economic systems. It is deeper than any class feeling and will outlast the capitalist system. It persists even after race prejudice has been outgrown. It exists not because the capitalists nurse it for economic reasons, but the capitalists rather have an opportunity to nurse it for economic reasons because it exists a product of biology. It is bound to play a role in the economics of the future society. If it should not assert itself in open warfare under a Socialist form of society, it will nevertheless lead to a rivalry of races for expansion over the globe as a result of the play of natural and sexual selection. We may temper this race feeling by education, but we can never hope to extinguish it altogether. Class-consciousness must be learned, but race consciousness is inborn and cannot be wholly unlearned. A few individuals may indulge in the luxury of ignoring race and posing as utterly raceless humanitarians, but whole races never.

Where races struggle for the means of life, racial animosities cannot be avoided. When working people struggle for jobs, self-preservation enforces its decrees. Economic and political considerations lead to racial fights and to legislation restricting the invasion of the white man's domain by other races.

It is well that the New Negro should know this, since it justifies him in giving you a taste of your own medicine. The writer of these lines is also a Socialist; but he refuses in this crisis of the world's history to put either Socialism or your party above the call of his race. And he does this on the very grounds which you yourself have given in the document quoted above. Also because he is not a fool.



31. "Just Crabs," *Negro World* (c. April 1920), reprinted in *When Africa Awakes*, 73–75.

In his diary, Harrison discussed the new methods and changes he brought to the *Negro World* after becoming its principal editor. In this context he mentioned "writing 'The