

# Kelly Miller Says

The new Negro lacks the religious conviction of the old leadership and has nothing to take its place. In my view he is destined to lamentable failure until he strikes a deeper spiritual and moral note than which now seems to characterize his mood of mind and way of thinking.

He must needs develop the racial instead of the selfish motive. Race must rise above self in mind and imagination. He must not only be law abiding, but alert about the righteous enforcement of righteous law.

## The New Negro And The Higher Education

On May 16th I delivered an address upon this topic before the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity of Chicago, in connection with their "Go to College Week." Definition lies at the basis of all clear thinking. I endeavored to give a working definition of the New Negro as contrasted with the old.

The distinction was of course limited to the educated Negro with respect to the leadership of the race. The intellectual elite grew out of the Civil War and were the product of schools and colleges which sprung up as a consequence of this great conflict. The type of product is largely determined by the nature of the influences which produce it.

### Older Leadership

The older Negro leadership had its mainspring in philanthropy. It revolved upon the pivot of religion. The main purpose was at first to produce ministers of the Gospel who should stand in the high place of religious and moral direction of the ignorant and unawakened masses. The motive was purely altruistic. The missionary can only give what he has.

The Northern men and women who came South immediately after the war were religious enthusiasts. They looked upon the Negro as a great missionary field for religious and evangelistic effort. There was more joy in their heart when one Negro sinner confessed repentance than when ninety and nine learned a good lesson.

### Religion Dominant

The old Negro leader was therefore motivated by religion as the chief means of redeeming his race, both in America and in Africa. The two continents were one and inseparable as furnishing the sphere of endeavor for the Negro convert and graduate.

I wish to stop here to commend the comprehensiveness of their wisdom which surpasses that of our short sighted present day policy. The race question can never be solved in America apart from the basic factor on the African continent.

Race and color will be a stigma and and reproach as long as there remains that great reservoir of blackness, ignorance and degradation. So long as blackness remains as a cause of inferior qualities anywhere on the face of the earth, the African will share the stigma wherever he is to be found.

The white race boasts of its superiority because wherever the white race is found it stands for a certain average of civilization and culture which ranges far above the level of that of other races and colors.

### Hypothecated Program

The old Negro leader was led to believe that equality with the white race, like the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. He felt that all that was necessary to do was to acquire the requisite education and advancement in cultural ways, and prejudices would speedily pass away.

Upon the basis of this belief he hypothecated his whole program of procedure. The old political leader like the early Christian believers, thought that the great consummation would come in their own day and generation before many then living should have tasted death.

The political leaders believed, with an unshakable faith, that the Civil War Amendments would immediately be enforced. They sought to bring about national legislation to hasten the conclusion by legislative fiat.

### Economic Factor

The old Negro leadership believed more in man than in money. Little did it reckon on the economic factor as an element in race solution.

Booker T. Washington brought in this essential doctrine but was bitterly combatted by those who had been steeped in the more ethereal doctrine of equity, justice and brotherhood. But the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy did not essentially change the type of character of Negro leadership. It merely added a new factor. But hope and doctrine remained the same.

Then came the World War. A new order of things, it was thought, was to be ushered in. The Negro felt that he was to be the beneficiary of this new order. Democracy, and brotherhood became the watchword. High sounding phrases filled the ear. The lesser breeds of men believed that their day had come.

## Rude Awakening

But the Negro soon had a rude awakening. He found himself pushed backward, rather than forward on the scale of brotherhood and equality. He began to re-examine the foundations of his former belief. He wished to be reassured of the faith that was in him.

It was in the midst of this critical self-examination that the New Negro was born. It does not yet appear just what he shall be. So far he has no definitely stated philosophy and no stated program. He hopes for a better day and a better way, but is impotent to find the means of effecting either. He notes the comparative failure of the older dispensation. Philanthropy has done much, but has not accomplished the great ends it aimed at in the beginning. Its great objectives have not been realized.

Religious earnestness no longer obsesses the mind and haunts the soul of the Negro intelligentsia. A cold and painful religious indifference has supplanted the former zeal and enthusiasm.

### Religion Recedes

The first missionaries would be appalled could they revisit the schools and colleges which their faith founded and find such little faith still remaining.

The spiritual and moral leadership of the race has not been recruited from the college and the university to the extent and degree which they hoped their endeavor would bring to pass. Equality between the races seems to recede as an ideal when they thought they were in sight of the goal. Political and civil rights then thought to be secure have since slipped back to an amazing degree.

Peace and good will which they prayed would come through progress and righteousness now seem as far off as ever. Has the old type of leadership, based upon religion, consecration, equity and brotherhood failed? or are we merely passing through a darkened phase of the changing moon?

### New Negro

Can we reach the way out by pursuing the same old beaten path or must a new and better way be found? The New Negro flounders amidst these perplexing queries. Like the old Negro, he relies upon the influence of the higher education. The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity alone, to say nothing of other intercollegiate fraternities and sororities, numbers some three or four thousand graduate and undergraduate members. They seek a principle and a program.

Dr. Locke has suggested what he calls the "creative way out". According to this philosophy, the Negro intelligentsia must enter upon creative work in literature and art. By so doing he will show to the world that he has in him the fine stuff out of which fine people are made.

The old Negro leader was intellectually sterile. He could only repeat; he could not create. This is always the effect of philanthropic guidance. It produces pupils, but never disciples. So far, so good.

### Creative Genius

The New Negro will do well to create. Let him turn his soul wrong side out in music, poetry, art and rhythmic motion. But herein lies a danger which needs a word of caution. Any race which sells its soul damns its soul.

Merely to burlesque Negro life and character for the amusement of white folk is self belittling and self-debasing. The self-respecting Jew, under similar stress of inducement, did rather hang his harp upon the willow tree than sing the songs of Zion in a strange land for the sport and mirth of strange ears.

### Lacks Conviction

The New Negro lacks the religious conviction of the old leadership, and has nothing to take its place. In my view he is destined to lamentable failure until he strikes a deeper spiritual, and moral note than which now seems to characterize his mood and mind and ways of thinking.

He must needs develop the social instead of the selfish motive. Race must rise above self in mind and imagination. Above all things, he must be right and righteous in all the ends he aims at. He must not only be law abiding but alert about the righteous enforcement of righteous law.

The old Negro was chiefly concerned about himself and his problem. The New Negro must get a world mind and a world consciousness.

## World Wide Problem

Any group of people who limit their intellectual and emotional concern to their own problems will soon become cramped with ingrowing pains. The Jews became specialists in every domain of human knowledge. But in every instance it redounds to the honor and glory of the Jewish race.

The Negro can not solve his little problem as it were in a corner. Our domestic race problem is but a part of the world wide issue of race adjustment. The Negro scholar is as important a factor in race solution as the worker in practical fields of endeavor. Indeed, the Negro controversialist must meet upon the field of the intellectual arena every form of scholarship and scientific acumen.

### Garvey Movement

It was of curious interest to note the attitude of the Negro intelligentsia towards the Garvey Movement. In almost every instance the opposition condemned Marcus Garvey in terms of the most scathing condemnation, without evincing the slightest interest in the future of the mother continent.

There was much of the half concealed conceit that insistence of including the dark continent in our racial program could only serve to defeat our insistence to race equality in America. I have just contributed an article on this subject which is shortly to appear in a British magazine. I take the position that the Negro question can never be settled in America until it is settled in Africa.

Universal race questions cannot be settled the Japanese question in California or the Japanese question in California or in Hawaii until it is settled in Japan. The New Negro must interest himself in the universal Negro problem in both its American and African aspects.

We must still look to the higher education for the solution of all of our great national and human problems. Let it be hoped that the Negro college will justify itself in the future even more completely than it has done in the past.