

# Impact Of New Negro Hits All Communities

By AL NALL

The New Negro has shown the same drive and militancy in his own community as the New Negro at the state and national level. This drive—this militancy has had and is having devastating effect on the future and fortunes of community leaders and community organizations who drag their feet in the idiom of Uncle Tom, or who refuse to go along with the militancy and rapid progress of the New Negro.

Many leaders who have headed community organizations for years have arrived at their meetings on election night fully expecting to be re-elected—but only to find themselves dethroned by some member of the organization whom he only vaguely recalls as being "too drastic."

In other cases organizations which have been supported by their communities for years suddenly find that the community is

demanding that it either "do something" for the progress of the Negro or disband for lack of support.

## 'Do Something'

Everywhere the answer is the same—the New Negro is demanding in his local community that his favorite community project either do something constructive or fade from the picture.

It might be pointed out that the Urban League of Greater New York apparently has become

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aware of this to its own profit.

The League was once looked upon as the picture of conservatism in Harlem. As such it was rapidly becoming stagnated.

Its executive secretary, Ed Lewis, however, never the man to stand still, began to push the League more out into the mainstream where the New Negro was fighting.

The result was that there was an immediate increase in the League's membership and an increased appreciation by the community for the League's program.

## Backed by Prevy

It must be added that the League's president, Mrs. Sophia Yarnall Jacobs, works hand in glove with Lewis in this new approach of the League.

The New Negro's emphasis on his civil rights has had a devastating effect on many purely social groups who for many years have frittered away their own time and that of the public in lavish extravaganzas of dances and banquets without a purpose.

The New Negro has been quick to point out that it didn't make sense to him to spend \$30 for whisky and "balling" in a single evening when his cousin in Montgomery was fighting for his very right to spend ten cents on a bus and sit where he wanted to sit.

The New Negro hammered this point home to the extent that in 1956, Harlem saw many social groups which had never done anything but "ball," certainly become civic minded and begin raising money for racial progress.

## The Ball Is Over

Social groups joined the NAACP en masse. Others took out life membership. Still others cancelled their annual "balls" and sent money to the South.

At the present time the guilt complex is so great that it takes a rather bold group of Harlemites to just throw a "big ball" with no purpose behind it. Some still do.

But there is always the fear that some of their own members will revolt—or that the New Negro public on whom the success of the "Ball" depends, will kill it by staying away.

Probably the greatest community impact of the New Negro has been in the New York branch of the NAACP.

## NAACP Story

With racial tension mounting in the South the New Negro began pressuring his local NAACP for action. Russell Crawford, NAACP president, rose to the occasion.

Crawford clearly saw that in order to move with the New Negro he had to have more of the New Negro within his ranks.

He looked at his scant membership of 2,000 and set about increasing it. But Crawford is not one who believes that the NAACP means the National Association for the Advancement of CERTAIN People.

So, instead of aiming his membership drive at the CERTAIN or special people, in Harlem, Crawford set his sights on the man in the street.

Amsterdam News editors recognizing the importance of such a move immediately joined with him. The result is that today the NAACP has 12,000 members, is the third largest branch in the nation, and stands on a broader basis in the community than any branch in the United States.

## The Real Leaders

During the past election the one big charge Crawford's opposition levelled at him was that "he does not bring out the real leaders of the community."

Those who made this charge did not realize that they were simply saying that Crawford had picked up the theme of the New Negro and was giving stature and importance to the only real leaders in any community—the people themselves.

The payoff came when certain leadership interests tried to take the organization away from Crawford. The little people around whom he had built the organization came out on election night and soundly whipped Crawford's opposition.

## Get With It

Wherever one turns, the answer is the same in the Harlem community today. One either "gets with" the moving progress of the New Negro or he stands still and gets run over by it.

A case in point is the action of Dr. Kenneth Clark of the Northside Center for Child Development. Dr. Clark, like many other Harlemites had long known that Harlem schools were segregated.

Dr. Clark had said so often. But he had not found many willing to listen.

With racial violence mounting in the South and the New Negro champing at the bit, however, Dr. Clark called attention to our Jim Crow schools again.

This time the time was ripe. The New Negro picked up the charge and today, those who do not care to fight against Jim Crow schools in New York have found it wiser and safer to keep their mouths shut about it.

People like Mrs. Lurce Brown,

president of PS 10's parents association and Mrs. Thelma Lyons, chairman of the committee on school construction for PS 10, got with Dr. Clark.

In an untiring program, which continued far into the vacation period, these courageous parents led their group in a campaign to get a new school. Their plans also included building the school in an area which would permit the implementation of integration.

These New Negro women have now seen funds allocated for their new school in the city's capital budget. Also they have seen to it that many white children will profit as well.

Closely in line with the child education program is a system of sound community centers, in which youth can expend their energies and grow into healthy, useful citizens, capable of leading the community of tomorrow.

## Can't Stand Still

In Harlem we have Morning-side Community Center, Mrs. Albert Kline and the City Mission Society's Minisink Town House, Harlem Friendship House, Crispus Attucks Youth Center, and many other religious and social service groups.

Whether these centers are operated by "New" Negroes or not, stand to be seen since many of them have existed for years. But neither they, or others can long stand if they allow themselves to become stagnated.

The New Negro is dynamic, militant, abreast with the times and not willing to give an inch. As such he stands ready to kill off stagnated groups within his community. The New Negro will, however, help alert, alive groups to stay alive.

In line with this is the Third Moravian Church which recently put on a drive to reopen the community center it was forced to close last summer. Under Rev. R. Waite Stennett the center campaigned strenuously and came back strong to serve a community in need.

## Rev. Callender's Role

To point out a few energetic New Negro fighters who, in some instances disregard their own interests to build the community into a place where tomorrow's leaders may proudly grow, one can start with Rev. Eugene S. Callender of the Mid-Harlem Community Parish, who shows a continued interest in the community.

Rev. Callender's parish is used by approximately 300 children per week. It is equipped with various athletic facilities for this activity. The young minister proudly announces that his congregation consists mostly of dispossessed persons, who have been by-passed by many other groups.

He is currently in a campaign to organize block associations to combat the notorious absentee landlord, who has for years failed to provide the vital necessities for his tenants.

## Active Charity

Derrick Kant, another Harlemite, has devoted his full time to charitable work via The Derrick Kant Foundation which supplies the needy with clothing and food. He listed his aim as "to get more supplies so that food can be issued to at least three institutions per week during 1957."

The People's Civic and Welfare Association chairman and founder, Glester Hinds lists the goals of his organization as "to improve the appearance of Harlem's streets, sidewalks, buildings, parks, and the community in general."

The role played by Hinds and the Rev. V. Simpson Turner in the successful fight for a new Harlem Hospital has already sunk deep into the minds and hearts of the New Negro. Hinds is the fighting militant type.

Typical of the way the New Negro works behind the scenes is Harlem barber Joe Valdez, who recently contributed many trophies to participants in Police Athletic League competition.

His idea was that every PAL member has earned a prize—not just the winners. Valdez has also shown his interest in youth by offering to share his knowledge and equipment with any youngster who wishes to enter the barber profession.

## Little Man Approach

He has fought to get better hours and prices for community barbers, and has pledged to increase his support of the NAACP. The Florida native recently led a fight to eliminate the parking problem on 135th St.

G. Thomas Davis of the Harlem Mortgage Improvement Council represents the New Negro approach in his drive to rehabilitate the underprivileged Harlem area.

The prime factor needed in saving a community from gross deterioration is money—or credit. Davis and his constituents have long sought to get this vital necessity through the State Legislature. The New Negro has lined up with him in this fight.

Then we have Arnold P. Johnson of the Committee for the

Improvement of Tenants and Business. Johnson recently stood before the Board of Estimate and argued on behalf of the Harlem tenants who were to be evicted in the city's slum clearance campaign.

He has been fighting a long time but recently he has learned that his militancy is beginning to be appreciated by the New Negro.

Harlem is on its way—and a New Negro is leading.