

## The 'New Negro'--And Some Humor to Match

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# The 'New Negro'--And Some Humor to Match

By Joel Seldin

As a result of the strikes, sit-downs, freedom rides, and other anti-segregation activities of Negroes in the South, one of the absorbing preoccupations for Negroes today is the "New Negro."

At conferences, discussion groups and private gatherings, Negroes are spending more time exploring the characteristics of the "New Negro" than on any other topic. They are proud, elated and heartened by this new image of themselves, but not entirely clear about the details.

They have developed many yardsticks for sharper delineation of the "New Negro," and, like every troubled minority,

they have turned part of their attention to one yardstick that is universally understandable—humor.

At the recent meeting in Chicago of the Negro American Labor Council, Negro leaders told a few anecdotes to illustrate some of the facets of the "New Negro."

### "Not One of Those"

The first involved a "portly white Southerner," on the front seat of a bus in New Orleans, who became agitated when a Negro sat next to him. "Boy," said the white man, "get to the back of the bus." When the Negro ignored him, he repeated in a louder and more peremptory tone, "Boy, I told you once; get to the back of the bus!"

At this point, to the delight of the audience, the story has the Negro reply, calmly but firmly: "Listen, mister. I am not one of those peaceful, passive, non-resisting Negroes you have been reading about. Leave me alone."

A second story had a Harvard researcher interviewing a Georgia Negro farmer on his views about integration. The researcher asked about desegregation, and got a non-committal reply. The result was the same with a question about discrimination. Perturbed, the Harvard man asked whether the Negro had no strong feelings about such significant subjects.

"Mister," was the reply, "I certainly do have strong feel-

ings, but I don't want to offend anybody. I figure, I'm related on both sides of the question."

A third anecdote concerned the Negro who, because of his anti-segregation activities, "left South Carolina by bloodhound, not Greyhound." Safe in the North, he was beset by guilt feelings for having deserted the fight, and sought the guidance of God.

"You," said God, "should return to South Carolina."

"Lord," said the Negro, "You don't know what you are asking. Will You be willing to go to South Carolina with me?"

To howls of laughter from the audience, God's reply was: "Yes, I'll go with you. But only as far as Cincinnati."

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