

## What the "New" Negro Wants

We are very much interested in anything that is new, but we have a notion that there is nothing new under the sun. The things, the ideas, the persons, we imagine to be new, in another time and place had existence in fact or in the imagination of some daring spirit who was not able to transmute them into fact. Lord Byron says very truthfully that "Many are poets who never penned a line, and perhaps the best," or words to that effect. With persons it is the same as with things; those who are new now were once old and those who are old were once new.

In our aspirations now we are only building upon the dreams, the prayers, the hopes of the slave fathers and mothers, who began as soon as they got out of the house of bondage to build homes and churches of their own and to educate their children so that they might be better prepared than they were for the high work of Christain manhood and citizenship. In doing this no people were ever more handicapped or ever had more success than they, and they accomplished it by infinite devotion, persistence and sacrifice. We can never appraise too highly these qualities in our parents who came out of slavery into freedom.

The *New* Negro proclaims it from the housetops that he is here and doing business. He has no reverence for the past or for those who gave him life and foundation upon which to build his vanity and ingratitude. Any way you look at him the *New* Negro is an object of curiosity and pity. There are more of the *New* Negroes in New York than anywhere else, most of them are without visible means of support and live by their wits. The Friends of Negro Freedom is a *New* Negro organization. Its secretary, Mr. George S. Schuyler, in a recent article in the *New York Globe*, says that "the *New* Negro has largely laid his superstitions aside like his old-time servility," which is a sufficient measure of Mr. Schuyler's vanity and ignorance, as our forefathers were not all by far superstitious and servile; many were men of common sense and courage who laid the foundations of our churches in slavery and of our educational and business progress after and since the civil war. Mr. Schuyler says, further, as to what they want:

The new Negro wants to see the United States really safe for democracy, with emphasis on the small "d." We believe in absolute political equality, economic equality, and social equality, and, what is more, we are aggressively working toward this end. Notwithstanding the ignorant and bombastic explosions of klan spokesmen the new Negro maintains that the United States is not a white man's country exclusively, but the country of all citizens, and we stand for civil liberty of the alien as well as the citizen. The Negro has done and is doing as much to build up this country as any other group, and we intend to harvest the reward of our labor the same as every other racial group in the United States.

By this statement of his wants we find that the *New* Negro does not want anything that the old Negro did not want and fought for, and is fighting for now in his sons and daughters, except the social equality business, which is an impossibility, as there is no such thing among any people, the matter depending upon personal choice and not upon law. It is this very thing that the white people of the South are failing in, in all of their efforts for higher and better things; that is, in making an arbitrary rule of social order that all white people are good and in the same social scale as well as in law, and that all colored people are, reversely, bad and inferior and in the same social scale as well as in law. The principle cannot be enforced because there are good and bad in all races and groups and the two sorts refuse socially to be so classed as the same; and when they are so classed the lowest drag the highest down to their level. There are no new Negroes. We are all as old as our generation and no younger, and as young and no older.