

Poppy's Notes

The New New Negro

By POPPY CANNON WHITE

"You wouldn't have an aspirin tablet on you," said my friend with a large and heavy sigh. And later, "My, it's good to get off your feet for a little while — and let down."

After a moment she went on, "I tell you it's pretty complicated these days being a Negro. You have to be a new Negro, and not only that, but a new, new Negro!"

"So, in addition to being a wife, a mother, a job holder, a church member and a dues payer to the N.A.A.C.P., like in the old days . . . now it's a whole lot different.

"You have got to be on your feet and fighting or at least talking every minute. But you can't say too much, for if you do, people will say you are pushy. You have to be careful. You'll get the white people's dander up . . . start the back lash lashing.

"Then again, if you go about your business — just like anybody else, that's bad, too — very bad. In fact, haven't you heard? They have another organization, a new one now, formed by the students at Columbia and Barnard Colleges. They say their purpose is to combat apathy toward the civil rights movement among Negro students. Dr. Kenneth Clark's son, Hilton, is very



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much worried, it seems, because colored students are acting just like other students . . . going to classes more or less regularly, writing their papers, visiting the library, dating, dancing, worrying about men or girls, as the case may be, and marks. But with Negroes this is highly reprehensible. It is Apathy!

"It's hard to know what to do. If you try to move outside of Harlem, you're a trouble maker. If you stay, you're a stick-in-the-mud. If your friends are mostly colored, you are clannish and unmotivated. If you circulate in white circles, you are running out on the race.

"If you get yourself involved in the Problem — Topic A so-called, you run the risk of becoming labeled as a malcontent with a chip on your shoulder. If you write letters to the Editor, you're a publicity seeker. But if you bite your tongue and hold back, you're obviously disinterested, unthinking, unconcerned with the problems of your people.

"Integration! You must love it, for if you don't, you're probably a Black Muslim. You must approve, theoretically, of intermarriage, all mixed-up neighborhoods, togetherness in schools. But then again, you must always choose, marry and live with Your Own. Have you no race pride?"

Maybe Dr. Martin Luther King has the answers, but even he seems to spend most of his time between the lecture platform and the hospital bed.