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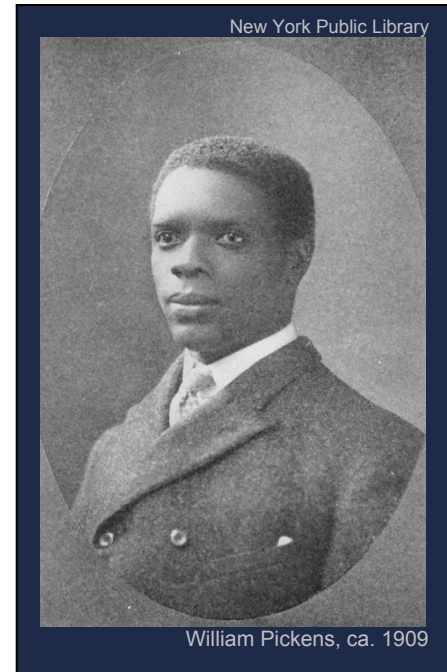
### Racial Segregation

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#### I

**R**ACIAL SEGREGATION is synonymous with Race Problem: where there is no segregation, there is no problem; where there is less segregation, there is less problem; where there is more segregation there is more problem. The amount and the meanness of the problem varies exactly with the extent or the degree of the segregation. Everywhere in the United States there is some segregation, therefore, everywhere in the United States there is some race problem. The difficulty of the problem, like the amount of segregation, varies from the hypocritical pretenses at “equality” in Boston, to the frankly degrading and insulting spirit and arrangements in New Orleans. This constant relation between the intensity of the problem and the degree of the segregation need not be accepted on mere theory and argument; it can be seen by simply looking at the face of the map and doing a few minutes of thinking: consider, for example, the varying conditions and the changing states of feeling from New York City to Washington and New Orleans; or from Mississippi to Missouri and Minnesota.

We are speaking here of *racial* segregation, wherein the sole criterion of the differentiation is race or color. There are, of course, other forms and other bases of segregation in human society: as of the diseased into hospitals and pest houses; of criminals into jails and other prisons; of chil-



dren into institutions that befit their ages. There is economic and incidental segregation in our type of society, of the richer from the poorer. Then there is, always has been, and will be much voluntary segregation of like to like and of common interests together — the flocking of the birds of a feather. But we are speaking here not of economic and conditional but of statutory and mandatory segregation not of private and voluntary withdrawal but of public and compulsory discrimination, under tyrannical custom, even where there is no statute — a society wherein a more numerous or better armed people prevent a less numerous or otherwise weaker people from enjoying absolute equality in places of public accommodation.

Whenever one form or degree of segregation is established it always calls for another. It is a monster that grows by that which it feeds upon, and whose appetite is not appeased but magnified by what is thrust into its mouth. Consider the schools: segregation in the kindergarten stimulates a desire for segregation in the grades; when it is established in the grades, there is sure to be a call for segregation in the high schools; then the atmosphere around the universities becomes less tolerant toward any group which

has already been cast out by the rest of the school system. Then, of course, people who are not fit to sit with you in college, are certainly not good enough to sit with you in the moving picture shows, or on the street cars, or on the park benches. Segregation in the churches must logically anticipate segregation in heaven. In New Orleans we have segregated grave yards — for segregation alive calls for segregation dead. So easy are the steps!

Many times have we discussed segregation from the viewpoint of its effects on Negro-white relations in America. But it is our purpose now to review briefly the effects on Negro-white relations, and then to consider what is usually not considered in such discussions: namely, the effects on the intra-group relations of the handicapped race — the secondary, but most important, effects of interracial prejudice inside of the Negro race.

## II

**F**IRST, then, let us review the effects on the inter-group relations of white and black. It is clear that there can be no such thing as equality for a dominated group if it is publicly segregated from the dominating and controlling group. For example, in residential segregation, the race that controls the government and the appropriations will get first consideration in the provision of sewers, pavements, lights, policing, and other public services; while the segregated minority will get what is left — maybe. If there is segregation on the trains and other public carriers, the weaker race is not going to be given the better accommodations; nor will it be given “equal tho separate” accommodations — for to think that people are not fit to ride in your coach and to think at the same time that they are fit to ride in a coach as good as your coach, is a psychological impossibility. The words “separate but equal accommodations” in segregating laws are a mere legal fiction, written in for the purpose of defending the enactment against constitutional technicalities. But every sound mind knows that real equality under such conditions is neither possible nor desired. If there is segregation in the schools of

Mississippi, where white people fill all the public offices and control the distribution of the school funds, Negroes of the state should be expected to get what Dr. Du Bois’ investigation shows that they do get — one dollar for each colored child to ten, fifteen or twenty dollars for each white child. If there were complete school segregation throughout the nation, nobody in his right mind can suppose that the Negro tenth of the population would in a thousand years be given exactly equal conveniences and opportunities for getting an education as those given the white majority. Such a duplication of effort and costs and supervision would not be possible, even if desired. Somebody would have to be handicapped, and present human nature will lay the handicap on the disadvantaged group. Public segregation can only be had by relegating an already disadvantaged group to a place of permanent inferiority. The only impartial arrangement for the education of such a minority must be in the common school of all the people. The fight for equality of opportunity is essentially a fight against public segregation.

A similar weakness is inherent in laws forbidding marriage between two such groups. The artificial marriage is the only thing prevented by such laws, while the natural marriage goes on unchecked. As between a weaker and a stronger group the natural marriage always takes place between the male of the stronger and the female of the weaker group; so that the forbidding law prevents only the harmless and non-essential formalities of the priests, the ceremonies and the signing of the papers. These laws all pretend to defend race integrity and to prevent amalgamation; but everybody knows that priests and ceremonies and the signing of papers do not cause the amalgamation. Experience demonstrates that the natural marriage, which is the sole cause of all amalgamation, takes place the more rapidly when the foolish law moves out of the way such petty inconveniences and partial obstructions as priests, ceremonies and papers. There are millions of mulattoes in this country who would never have come into existence if it had been necessary to prepare for their existence by contract and agreement. If the right of contract had been strictly enforced instead of being denied, it would have effectually

prevented the existence of nine-tenths of them. When a stronger race faces a weaker one, strictures in the laws that protect the rights of motherhood are the best checks on amalgamation. When these checks are removed, the result is immunity and greater temptation for the only active amalgamator — namely, the male of the stronger group. There is no preventive of amalgamation. It is as inevitable as the process of the suns. There can only be cheeks upon it. And the most effective check is equality of the races, the strictest equality in law. If the female of the weaker group had the right to enforce ceremonial and legal marriage whenever natural marriage was forced upon her, then race prejudice, caste pride and economic interests would tend to discourage them natural unions. But the same race prejudice and caste pride which would tend to check amalgamation as between two races who are on a plane of legal equality, will promote amalgamation when some law clothes the male of the stronger group in absolute immunity by removing his responsibility and sheltering him from the consequences of his act. Hence the seeming paradox: that a law to compel intermarriage would be more preventive of amalgamation than any law to prohibit intermarriage. If a law were passed compelling white men to marry the colored women with whom they are living or by whom they may have had a child, such a law would prevent more miscegenation in twelve months than a law prohibiting marriage could ever prevent in twelve generations.

### III

**T**HIS attitude of a stronger toward a weaker group has some inevitable effects in the mind and social consciousness of the weaker group. It tends to weaken group consciousness and to subordinate race pride to the more fundamental needs of individual self-defense. Colored Americans are often accused of “wanting to be white,” when a better analysis would show that what they really want is the freedom and privileges of white persons. They seem *ashamed* to be colored when in fact they are simply *afraid* to be colored. A civilization that puts a handicap on being

colored and a premium on being white, shows itself to be an arrant hypocrite when it says: “You ought to be proud to show that you are colored.” Self-defense is a more primary instinct than pride; pride is most abiding when it is a method of self-defense. Any act or attitude that is self-destructive, will not long be supported by pride. If in the United States it meant no more nor less to be black than to be white, there would be complete indifference as to color. Why should a beautiful brown skin want to become a white one? But as it is, perhaps a million mulattoes have passed over permanently and clandestinely into the white race. If passing for white will get a fellow better accommodations on the train, better seats in the theatre, immunity from insults in public places, and may even save his life from a mob, only idiots would fail to seize the advantage of passing, at least occasionally if not permanently. Colored near-whites are often derided for lightening their skins and straight-ening their hair. Why, that is not a Negro characteristic — not even a merely human characteristic; that is a universal animal characteristic. Animals take on the color and the contour of their environment for self-protection not because they think the environment is better than they are. The homopterous insect looks like a walking leaf when in motion, and in the presence of an enemy it hangs quietly among the leaves, to avoid being preyed upon. Another creature known as “the walking stick,” has come to look like a leaf stem among other leaf stems, to protect itself. For the same reason butterflies, moths and caterpillars imitate the form and color of the bark and leaves among which they dwell. The wild turkey, the loon and the ptarmigan blend with their landscape to avoid their enemies, and even the copperhead snake has marked his back with the colors and the linear configurations which make him indistinguishable from the leaves among which he crawls. Science recognizes this as “protective mimicry” among the lower animals. Why should human beings be presumed to have less brains or less disposition to defensive adaptability than has an insect or a snake? — During the race riot in Chicago a white family living in a colored neighborhood blacked its faces to avoid insult and escape injury. Those white people did not want to be black; they did not want to be hurt.

And what they were up against for one day of their life, the average American Negro is up against every day of his life.

Naturally these social complexes are nearly always discussed in the way in which we have so far discussed them; that is, to point out the need of more honesty and square dealing on the part of the stronger race. And usually the colored audience thinks of white people and feels self righteous and oppressed. But now we are going to do the unusual; we are going to point out the more particular responsibility of the weaker race itself. In the first place it is the Negro's duty to himself and his children to prevent this eternal semblance of an inferiority feeling from becoming a real inferiority complex. This natural, simple, biological reaction of the handicapped Negro to the controlling and dominating environment will cause some of his white neighbors of lesser education or lesser sympathies to develop a superiority complex toward him. That must be expected. But the Negro must persistently analyze himself and his environment. Colored children should be systematically taught the truth, and the whole truth — not "protected" against it. The most dangerous kind of protection, in the end, is protection against the truth. They should be taught that there is no virtue in race or color as such; and that the virtue which those qualities seem to have is simply an advantage derivative of the environment. To retaliate by teaching them that black is superior to white simply sets one folly or falsehood against another. Strange to relate, when bright colored children begin to see that the superior position of the individual white man is often due, not to his own virtue, but to an advantage in the environment, those children are disposed to discredit the whole achievement of the white race, and it actually becomes necessary to sober them with the suggestion that after all the Caucasians are perhaps every bit as good as Negroes. In America the black man must at least be more of a philosopher than the white man in order to maintain both his self-respect and his equilibrium.

Colored children should have their intelligence and understanding fortified against one of the most weakening follies of their elders: namely, the sporadic attempts to draw color

lines and create factional prejudices within the Negro group. Imitating and reflecting the great American color psychosis, we have sometimes had lighter-skinned Negroes exhibiting a scorn of the darker-skinned; and occasionally the darker-skinned, as in the case of one big black man in New York City, preaching scorn and ostracism of the lighter-skinned. It is conceded, I think, that the lighter-skinned Negroes, in very natural imitation of the advantages known to be arrogated to the great white environment, have been the aggressors in this dividing and weakening of the force and spirit of the Negro group. Just a little philosophy and reasoning will serve to correct this error in the psychology of the Negro of mixed blood, whatever the degree of the mixture: for example, he cannot scorn either black or white without scorning so much of himself as is either black or white. Contempt in one of mixed blood directed against either element of the mixture, must induce in that one a definite and inescapable inferiority feeling in the presence of the opposite blood. The only person who could, with uninjured self-respect, scorn or despise the so-called "opposite race," must be a person of entire white blood or entire Negro blood. If a mixed blood scorns black, he necessarily confesses in his innermost self, where confessions are really important, that in so far as he has black blood, he is in that proportion inferior to people who have all white blood; and on the other hand, if he scorns white, he confesses that in so far as he has white blood, he is in that proportion inferior to people with all black blood. To the right and to the left of him lie paths of self-contempt; his only safe road is straight ahead. The only true haven of self-respect for the mixed blood is a firm and unyielding belief in the equality, or the indifference, of race. Of course, among the unmixed whites, or those who think they are, and the full-blooded black, if there be any such, the morons may still continue to despise and hate each other, at least without self-attack. The only ultimate cure for them is in the slow improvement of intelligence and education, and in a better knowledge of the history of man and perhaps of the science of biology. And if all that fails, they should be confined in the proper asylum.

## IV

**A**MINORITY people subjected to segregation is not only in danger of factional division but also runs the risk of the general destruction of its fighting morale. Beyond a certain point of intensity opposition tends to divide rather than to solidify — to dishearten rather than to stimulate. Up to a certain point pressure may tend to strengthen an arch, but beyond that point it begins to demolish the arch. Distrust and suspicion, and especially jealousy and envy, are likely to be very keen within a group socially cornered as the Negro is cornered in America. When an opening is made for somebody to advance, there will be extra-bitter and, unreasonable competition. It is like as when people are hemmed in a house that is on fire: as soon as an exit is discovered, there is a panicky scramble to get out. Nobody seems to want anybody else to be first. "Competition is fiercest within the group," some scientist has said. The internal struggle is the greatest menace to a beleaguered group. Fifteen million people would be a mighty power anywhere in the world if they could keep their forces coordinated and co-operative.

In this fierce struggle the morally weaker individual will often sell the common interests of the group for the price of individual advantage and immunity. Those who compromise naturally develop an extra keen hatred of those who will not compromise — a hatred strengthened by envy and embittered by fear. We can hate most bitterly those whom we are conscious of having wronged most grievously. These are not characteristics of the Negro: they are characteristics of humans who find themselves in the predicament of American Negroes. Ask the Irish: they had seven hundred years of struggle towards freedom — and seven hundred years of cowards, deserters and traitors. The condition is so based in natural causes that advice does very little good about it. It is almost useless to advise a man not to be envious or jealous or afraid. We might as well advise him not be hungry. But discussion and clear thinking at least inject another cause among the causes, and tend to build an antitoxinal element in our social vitality. "Know thyself" is the only hope

of salvation.

Colored Americans in business often charge their failure to a disposition in colored people to trade with white people rather than with another colored person. Such a disposition may control some individuals but could hardly be true of the majority of a whole race. The more likely cause of failure is that some Negro business men do not realize that colored people of a given economic status demand the same quality of goods and the same punctiliousness of service as do white people. There is an inferiority complex in the colored merchant who expects colored people to be satisfied with inferior goods and service. Often a colored man who has been helping some white man to conduct a fine hotel for white people, will go into the hotel business for himself, catering to colored folk, and immediately lower his standards — lowering everything but the prices. The business fails and he thinks that the colored race has failed, when only he has failed. Colored masses, like all masses, may have small power of analysis, but some instinct prevents them from being satisfied to pay to a colored merchant higher prices than are paid to white merchants. They do not believe in paying a black man for being black, especially since nobody else in America rewards him for that achievement. Consequently wherever a colored man is succeeding in business among colored people, he must be competing in the relation of quality to prices — in service, goods, or security. The average Negro doctor succeeds better than the average Negro lawyer, because colored people know that, while color prejudice may cause a black lawyer to fail to impress a white court, disease germs have no prejudice against black doctors. The Negro theatre owner who thinks that colored working people can appreciate only slap-stick comedy and dull risqué jokes, will find many of his patrons drifting away to other places of amusement. Then there is the matter of business politeness or commercial good manners. Does the colored man in business for colored people offer the same respect and deference to his colored patrons that he used to offer to the white patrons of the place where he worked as a hired man? The merchant who acts in a condescending manner, as if conferring a favor on the customer,

will lose the customer. When the white merchant discounts standards for the Negro race, he may be actuated by the superiority complex of the white race; but when a black merchant discounts his race, he discounts himself.

This does not mean that colored common people are free from inferiority complexes, altho a mass is likely to be less bent than an individual. The colored American has been so domineered in a white world that he must have more brains and courage to stand up straight like a man — *homo sapiens*. When some Negro seer first made pictures of black and brown angels, for example, the Negro masses laughed. Angels had to be white to suit the psychology that had been builded into them. The first beautiful brown dolls went a-begging for a buyer. Little white children and their mothers would select a black doll quicker than would colored customers. Colored people had seen the Negro imaged in art only as a caricature, and so they hardly stopped to even observe the first beautiful brown dolls, passing them over as simply additional caricatures. Whenever one has spoken of a beautiful black cat, a beautiful black horse, or a beautiful black dress, the colored audience sat in dignified silence, seeming to comprehend — but as soon as the speaker mentioned a beautiful black woman, the same audience laughed

hilariously. But a change has been in progress during the last score, even the last decade of years: Now dolls of different shades of brown adorn many shop windows, altho they are abnormally expensive, and dark angels are blowing their trumpets on the walls of many homes. Negro slang has almost stoppped saying: “We will treat you white,” and has substituted for it: “We will give you brown-skin service.”

The retort of colored people is that the white has all of these same weaknesses of jealousy, envy and treachery. That is true. But it is not also true that the white American at least is a disadvantaged minority. An entrenched majority may survive some weaknesses which would be fatal to a handicapped minority. Such a minority must generally show a greater merit for an equal reward. When the Negro is the criminal before the court, the white man is the jury: the Negro may get 15 years. When the white man is the criminal before the court, he is still the jury, and may punish himself by a suspended sentence. The minority needs eternal vigilance not only outwardly but inwardly. The effects of oppression are baleful enough in the relations of the stronger to the weaker group. But it may have tendencies even more baleful within the ranks of this weaker group.