

*Die Negerfrage in den Vereinigten Staaten*¹

(The Negro Question in the United States) (1906)

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THE GREAT ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES THAT OPENED UP IN THE new North American republic at the beginning of the nineteenth century, combined with the homogeneity of its population and its institutions, let it appear not impossible that there—on the other side of the ocean—a nation would arise free of the crippling chains of the caste mentality, a nation in which social differences would be determined only by the different abilities and education of individuals. The Americans themselves did not at all doubt this development: they firmly believed that all people are created free and equal and are provided by their creator with certain inalienable rights, and that to these belong “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

In many strata of the young nation, to be sure, these principles were applied with a certain *reservatio mentalis*. The good old Puritan families in New England had an aristocratic fear of the mob, and for the plantation barons of the South, they alone were the “people.” Moreover, in those days of the emergence of the nation, one-fifth of the entire population was

everywhere silently ignored—the 1 million Negroes who were mainly servants and slaves.

In those days of turning inward that followed the French Revolution, the Negro Question too was pondered back and forth in America; the general view was that with the cessation of the African slave trade the Negro population would gradually disappear. Calmed by this assumption and by the rapid progress of Negro emancipation in the North and even in the South, the nation no longer concerned itself with this question, and the development of democratic ideas followed its quiet course over 30 years.

The internal history of the Union from 1800–1830 exhibits a decisive leveling tendency—political life had descended from John Quincy Adams to Andrew Jackson, social life obtained a utilitarian flavor, people were proud of a mean birth and a poor childhood. These tough people were admirable in their struggle with the world and, despite the coarseness and the general lack of cultivation [*Bildung*]² of the America of those days, that was nevertheless the time of the building, the strengthening of the nation.

It would have been strange if in the striving toward a new and powerful economic development a new stratum of people had not been suppressed and burdened, thus preparing the way for a new caste difference. In America, too, this happened, and the suppressed class was the Negro slaves. Under the liberal influence of the first years of the nineteenth century, they had slowly begun to rise up out of slavery. Of the million Negroes, 60,000 were free in the year 1800, already 320,000 in 1830. Before the Revolutionary War all states were—legally—slave states, in the year 1830 only the Southern states. Nevertheless only a few concerned themselves with the improvement of the situation of the slaves, while defenders of the system, on the contrary, occasionally stepped forth. The reason for this obviously lay in the growing yield of the cotton plantations. From 1822–31, the harvest was doubled and yielded 1 million bales, 1.5 million in 1838, 2 million in 1840, 3 million in 1850, and 5 million bales in 1860. That meant that an industry of world importance was already by 1830 based on slavery, and the enormous significance of this industry increased by leaps and bounds while political parties dodged this question, and moralists and churches enlisted the arts of casuistry.

In other words: in the heart of the nation that had laughed about social prejudices and that had set itself the goal of erecting a state with the least conceivable class differences, there existed from the very beginning the worst of all caste differences that, unheeded, grew to a threatening girth, namely a slavery based on race and color.

How could the nation get rid of this evil and remain true to its democratic task? In the 20 years between 1830 and 1850 the leading minds of the nation found no passable way out. Then they saw the dilemma with ominous clarity: if the industries of half of the nation were based on slavery and caste differences, then free labor in the other half of the nation would quickly disappear.

In a bloody four-year Civil War the nation decided that the agricultural laborer should be a free man. With what result? With the sole result of suppressing the *slave trade*; in the South workers could no longer be brought to the public market and sold. Otherwise the emancipation basically altered little. In the long and hard school of slavery the Negroes had become an unfree caste of laborers. No law changed any of this. The only way out was to use extraordinary means to bring Negroes up to a height such that they could enter into competition with the free American laborers or to distance them one and all from the country. The latter plan was unrealizable for three reasons: first, it would have meant the economic ruin of the South; second, the Negroes would not have liked to abandon the only fatherland that they knew; and third, the entire deportation would have failed because of, so to speak, its technical impossibility.

Thus the only remaining possibility was to uplift the Negroes. But this process was lengthy and expensive, the resolute opposition of the ruling stratum stood against it, and before it could be fully carried out, a new caste mentality had emerged that not unhappily looked upon "lower classes" and "inferior races" in the country.

Thus we must attend to three things: first, to the opposition of the former slave states against the improvement of the freedmen; second, to that which the freedmen managed to achieve with the help of their friends; third, to the new caste mentality that hindered the sons of the freedmen in their struggle for a more dignified human existence.

1. THE BONDSMAN

Slavery continued in the Southern states in two forms and under different names: as peonage and as convict slavery. Let us glance at the historical development after emancipation in order to understand the former.

Before the war the Southern plantation owner possessed 20 to 200 slaves and several hundred acres of land. Directly below the master stood an overseer who with the help of several slave foremen [*Obersklaven*] called "drivers," presided over the work. The regular slaves were divided into domestic servants, artisans, and field workers. Anyone over 12 years old had to work in some manner; children, the aged, and the infirm received a half-day's work.

The main crop of the plantations was cotton, but in South Carolina rice was frequently planted, in Louisiana sugar, and in the more northern states tobacco. Grain was less often considered and the yield of hay, fruit, and vegetables barely covered the plantation's own need.

Characteristic of these plantations is their large area. Although exact figures are not available, one can assert with certainty that from 1820 to 1850 the plantations steadily increased in size. The more the old lands were exhausted, all the more did the demand for virgin soil push the large farms to the south and west.

The first available exact numbers derive from the census of 1850 and from that of 1860. The intervening decade witnessed the high point and the beginning of the decline of the plantation system. The history of those years is the history of the struggle of the landowners for their economic predominance. The cotton market was favorable, the prices increased and remained high. The zone of large landholdings stretched more and more toward the west and south, and the depleted lands of the border states became slave-breeding farms in order to cover the growing demand of the cotton districts. Thus, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri became the seat of an expanded interstate slave trade. The average estimated value of the slaves (that was one-third to one-half less than the real value) rose from \$324 in the year 1840 to \$361 in 1850 and \$505 in 1855. As a consequence, the forbidden *foreign* slave trade increased significantly in the years before 1860.

Between 1850 and 1860 the average size of the plantations in the Southern cotton states grew from 427 to 431 acres; not counting Texas, whose live-stock ranches were still not yet real farms, the increase was from 353 to 408 acres, or 15.7 percent. But during this same time in the border states, where the land was exhausted and the plantation system was given up in favor of slave breeding, the average size fell from 282 to 258 acres.

Still more characteristic than the growth of the area of the great plantations of the Deep South was the fact that most of the slaves of the South were concentrated on them. The slaves made up about one-third of the population of that region, but the owners of these slaves made up only five or six percent of the white population and approximately three to four percent of the total population.

This economic system was destroyed by the Civil War. The land devastated by the armies declined in value, the 1.5 billion dollars of capital invested in slave ownership completely disappeared, and the population remained poor and severely in debt.

In almost all states the post-war development took a similar course. The old system of large-scale operation was partially rejuvenated with contract laborers and borrowed capital; but the system soon fell apart because the freedmen refused to work under the conditions offered. The result was a compromise between the landowners and the landless through which a kind of sharecropping system [*Halbpachtsystem*]³ was introduced.

This system assumed many different forms. Already in 1866 in South Carolina a plan devised by a Negro was implemented. The workers were supposed to work five days a week for the landowner. In return they were supplied with a house, provisions, three acres of land, and every second Saturday a mule and plow, and additionally \$16 in cash at the end of the year. This sum was supposed to represent the value of an extra half day per week, so that one-and-a-half days per week or a quarter of his labor time were devoted to the worker's own purposes and profit; his remuneration was thus calculated as equal to his room and board and one-quarter of the yield of his labor. This system was quite successful. In the second year several of the workers proposed to work only four days, to nourish themselves, and to receive in return twice as much land and use of mule and plow, but to

renounce the money. In the third year the three-day week was proposed. The workers also supplied part of their own team and, because many others paid off the rent on their house and on one acre with two days of work weekly, one often found on the same plantation different classes of workers who worked for the owner between two and six days weekly.

The most frequent kind of the sharecropping system consisted in giving a piece of land to the freed family—usually 40 to 80 acres—and taking part of the yield as rent. The size of this part depended on what the worker himself supplied. If he supplied nothing but his own labor and that of his family members, while the owner provided the tools, the draft animal, and the provisions, then the latter received two-thirds of the harvest; if the worker supplied his own provisions, the owner received half of the harvest. If the worker also supplied tools and animals, then the owner received one-quarter to one-third of the harvest. The details of this agreement naturally varied according to the situation, fertility and the harvest, and also according to the character of the parties concluding the contract; if the worker was lucky and industrious, the total rent of the land was eventually set at this or that much cotton or money, and then the true tenant or renter [*Pächter*] replaced the sharecropper [*Halbpächter*].

This system had as its natural consequence the disintegration of the great plantations of the South. The virtually constant decline in the size of the landholdings can be seen in the following table.

AVERAGE SIZE IN ACRES OF ALL FARMS
OF THE SOUTH FROM 1860 TO 1900

CENSUS	THE ENTIRE SOUTH	SOUTH-ATLANTIC	SOUTH-CENTRAL
1900	138.2	108.4	155.4
1890	139.7	133.6	144.0
1880	153.4	157.4	150.6
1870	214.2	241.1	194.4
1860	335.4	352.8	321.3

The average area of the farms in the South fell from 335.4 acres in 1860 to 138.2 acres in 1900, that is 58.8 percent. The decline was considerably

greater in the coastal states than in the central states. This change was largely caused by the fact that the large plantations were no longer worked by the owner with slaves or wage labor as a unified enterprise; rather they were rented in the small parcels to tenants and thus, according to the mode of payment, each of these pieces represented an individual farm.

Another result of the sharecropping system in the South was the emergence of the system of mortgaging the harvest. A closer look at this system is absolutely necessary to the understanding of the situation of the Negro tenant.

Let us assume: *A* is a landowner with 1,000 acres of land in one of the agricultural districts of Georgia, *B* is a merchant and *C* is a Negro with a wife and several half-grown children.

Before the emancipation the relations of these groups would have been as follows: *A* was the owner of *C* and his family; he provided them with a home, food and, in given intervals, with clothing; whatever supplies he did not have on hand, he bought from *B*, usually on credit, and paid after the harvest. At that time *B*'s business was primarily a wholesale business which he carried on at some centrally situated place like New Orleans or Savannah.

Immediately after the abolition of slavery the relations between these three main factors at first changed as follows: *A*, the previous white owner, who was almost or completely bankrupt, divided his land and let *C*, the black freedman, and his family work—let us say—80 acres for part of the yield. *A* still provided room and board, tools, working capital and maybe even clothes; *C* was supposed to cultivate the land and receive in return one-third to one-half of the net yield after *A* was reimbursed for the food and clothes. *B*, the merchant, from whom *A* bought the commodities on credit, was no longer a wholesaler, but a retailer in one of the neighboring market towns of 500 to 1,000 inhabitants who possessed a small fund of cash capital and a large supply of various goods.

This system proved to be very unsatisfactory. The end of the season usually found the freedman without surplus or in debt; furthermore, under the mild laws concerning debt collection current at that time, the merchant *B*, caught between the landlord and the worker, was in constant danger of losing everything. Because the freedman was the real producer of the harvest, it was obviously in the merchant's interest to enter into a direct

relationship with him, if he [the merchant] could only acquire some kind of legal claim on him [the freedman]. On the other hand, the freedman, who readily attempted to escape from a relation that was hardly better than the old slavery, gladly applied directly to the merchant. The previous master for his part was inclined to approve of any agreement that guaranteed him a satisfactory income from his land. Thus the economic situation changed between the years 1870–80 as follows. *A* provided the land, lodging, and animals. The rent amounted to either a precisely delineated part of the harvest, a certain number of pounds of cotton per acre, or a specific cash sum. *C* bought his supply of food, clothes, etc. directly from *B* on credit. New laws that gradually emerged favored *B* who could insure himself through a promissory note that represented a second mortgage on *C*'s ripening crop, the rent to be paid to *A* being the first. *B* was now a hawker who understood how to attract and to hold his black customers.

A study of this system based on the census of 1880 showed that a growing number of workers attempted to obtain credit in order to make themselves independent as renters, and that they wrote out their promissory notes mainly for their daily need, but to a certain extent also for fertilizer, draft animals, and farm implements. The effect of this new debt-peonage system on the freedman depended on the circumstances. Some few proficient Negroes who were in the hands of well-meaning landowners and honest merchants could well become independent property owners; indolent and unknowledgeable Negroes who found themselves in the power of unscrupulous landlords and merchants certainly sank to a lower level only a bit higher than that of slavery. The destiny of the mass of the Negroes lay in the middle between these two extremes and depended on chance or the weather. A good year with good prices regularly freed a few from their debts and made them into property owners; a normal year made slaves of most of them. Bad weather or unfavorable prices ruined almost all.

The agricultural population in the black belt shows today, 40 years after emancipation, four sharply separated economic classes that represent the different stages on the way to free property ownership.

The *renter* [*Pächter*] who paid a specified cash rent formed the highest stratum. His only advantage is that he can himself determine how he wants

to work his land and that he must himself bear the responsibility for his monetary affairs. While several of the renters [*Pächter*] are almost comparable to sharecroppers [*Halbpächter*], they are generally, however, a more clever and a more independent class; from them the independent property owners eventually emerged. We are interested, however, in the three other strata.

There is first of all the *agricultural wage laborer* who receives at the end of the year a stipulated wage of \$30–\$60 for his labor. Several are also provided with a house and garden plot; their supply of clothes and food is advanced to them; in this case the advance with interest is deducted from their money wage. Several of them are contract laborers, i.e. laborers who are paid yearly or monthly and whose maintenance is defrayed by the landowner. In the season they receive 35–40 cents daily; they are usually unmarried persons, among them many women; if they marry, they become sharecroppers [*Halbpächter*] or eventually renters [*Pächter*].

The second category, the “*croppers*,”⁴ possess no capital at all, not even in the sense that they can support themselves from sowing time to the harvest; they only perform the labor, while the property owner supplies the home, land, animal, tools, and seeds. At the end of the year the cropper receives a stipulated part of the harvest, but he must pay out of his part, with interest, for the food and clothes that were supplied to him in the course of the year. Thus we have a worker without capital and without wage and an entrepreneur whose capital consists primarily of the food supplies, etc. advanced to the workers. This arrangement is unfavorable for both parties and is usually found on poor lands with indebted owners.

Above the cropper stands the *sharecropper* [*Halbpächter*] who cultivates the land on his own responsibility; he pays the rent in cotton; the system of mortgaging the harvest supports him. The great mass of the Negro population belongs to this class. After the war this system tempted the freedmen because of the greater freedom that it offered and because of the possibility of obtaining a surplus. If the predetermined rent remained within reasonable boundaries, then the sharecropper was motivated to do his best; but if the rent was too high or the land exhausted, then the sharecropper became demoralized and his labor remained fruitless.

The tenant^s mortgages his mule to the merchant and his cart for seed corn and for a week's rations. As soon as the green cotton leaves appear above ground, the crop is mortgaged. Every Saturday, or in longer intervals, the tenant picks up his rations from the merchant: a side of bacon and several bushels of grain each month. In addition, shoes and clothes must be obtained. If the tenant or his family is sick, there is a bill for the druggist and doctor; if the mule needs shoeing, a bill for the blacksmith, and so on. If the tenant is an industrious worker and the harvest promising, he is often encouraged to buy more—sugar, better clothes, perhaps a small wagon—but he will seldom be advised to save. Last autumn as cotton rose to ten cents, the clever merchants in Dougherty County, Georgia, sold 1,000 wagons in a season, most to blacks.

The security that was offered for these transactions—the mortgaging of the crop and movable possessions—at first seemed little and thus the merchants related many a true story about deceptions that occurred and about the simple-mindedness of the population; how, for example, cotton was secretly harvested at night, how draft animals escaped and the tenants disappeared. But on the whole, the merchant occupies the most favorable position in the region of the black belt. He pulled the meshes of the law so cleverly and so narrowly around the tenant that only the choice between misery and crime remains open to the black man. All advantage that the law accorded to the homestead owners were circumvented in the contract. The Negro was not able to touch his own mortgaged crop which the law placed almost entirely under the control of the landowner and the merchant. The merchant watches over the ripening crop like a hawk; as soon as it is ready for the market, he takes possession of it, sells it, pays the landowner the rent, deducts his bill for that which he had delivered, and if—as sometimes happens—there is still a surplus, this is given to the black bondsman for the Christmas celebration.

The first result of this system in agriculture is the exclusive cotton culture and the chronic bankruptcy of the tenant. The currency of the black belt is cotton; it is a fruit of the field that is at all times saleable for cash money, that usually is not subjected to any large yearly price fluctuations, and one that the Negro knows how to handle. For that reason the owner

demands his rent in cotton and the merchant does not let any other crop be mortgaged. There is therefore no sense in suggesting a rotation system to the black tenant—he simply cannot introduce it.

As cotton prices fell in the year 1889, 175 of 300 tenants in a county in Georgia were indebted up to \$14,000; 50 had no surplus and the remaining 75 had together a profit of \$1,600. In the entire county the black tenants with their families must have had at least \$60,000 in debts. In more favorable years the situation is better; but on the average, most tenants close out the year with no surplus or with debts, that is, they work for naked subsistence. Such an economic organization is wrong from the ground up. Whose fault is it?

The causes that lie at the bottom of this situation are complicated, but explicable. And one of the main ones, aside from the thoughtlessness of the nation that let the slave begin his free life with nothing, is the viewpoint widespread among the merchants and employers of the black belt that the Negro can only be brought to work through the pressure of peonage. In the beginning a certain amount of pressure was doubtless necessary in order to keep the simple-minded and sluggish at work; and still today the mass of Negro workers need more stringent control than most of the workers of the North. But this honest and widespread opinion can also be the cover for much dishonest and many-sided exploitation of the ignorant worker. On this issue one must point to the evident fact that the enslavement of their ancestors and the system of unpaid hard labor improved neither the performance capacity nor the character of the mass of Negroes. This is not only true of Sambo; history shows us the same with John and Hans, Jacques and Pat, with all oppressed peasants. This is, today, the situation of the Negroes in the black belt—and the unavoidable fruits of their reflection about this situation are crime and a superficial and dangerous socialism. I see still an old gray-bearded Negro sitting along the wayside and giving an echo to the words of many generations: “White man does nothing all year long, nigger works day and night, nigger has hardly any bread and meat, white man takes everything: It is *not* right.”

And what do the better situated Negroes do in order to improve their situation? If at all possible, they buy land; if not, they move into the city.

As it was no easy matter centuries ago for the serf to flee to the free air of the city, so too still today difficulties are made for the agricultural worker. In many parts of the gulf states, and especially in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, Negroes are, so to speak, forced to work on the plantations of the bottomlands without wages. This is especially true of the districts where the farmers themselves are poor and uneducated whites, and where the Negroes stand beyond the influence of the school and interaction with their advancing fellows. When such a bondsman escapes, one can be sure that the police official, appointed by the whites, will catch him, bring him back, and not ask any further questions. If he escapes into another county, then one can be sure that an easily supported accusation of a petty theft will bring about his extradition. Even if an uncomfortably duty-bound official insists on a hearing, then the friendly jurors take care of the conviction, and the master can then buy cheaply the convict labor to be performed for the state. Such a system is impossible in the more civilized parts of the South or in the large cities. But in those extensive lands not reached by the telegraph and the newspaper, the sense of the 13th Amendment⁶ is severely disregarded.

Even in the better-administered rural districts of the South the farm workers' freedom of mobility is hindered through the laws regulating emigration agents. Some time ago the "Associated Press" reported the arrest of a young white in south Georgia who was an agent of the Atlantic Naval Supplies Company and who was caught as he lured away workers. The crime for which this young man was arrested carries a fine of \$500 in every county in which he intended to bring together workers in order to contract them outside of the state in question. Thus the Negro's unfamiliarity with the situation of the labor market outside of his immediate vicinity is perpetuated by the laws of almost every Southern state.

The unwritten law of the hinterlands and the small towns of the South, according to which a white man must vouch for every Negro not known in the locality, has a similar effect. Here we have the reappearance of the old Roman idea of the patron under whose protection the newly freed man was placed. In many cases this system was fortunate for the Negro and very often, under the protection and the leadership of the family of his previous master or that of another white friend, the freedman could improve himself

in moral and economic respects. But the system usually had the consequence that entire localities refused to acknowledge the Negro's right to move about freely and to self-determination. Thus, for example, an unknown black in Baker County, Georgia, can be accosted everywhere on the highway and made to talk and answer about his plans to any curious white. If he does not give a satisfactory answer, or if he appears too self-confident, he can be arrested or simply forced across the border.

Thus it comes about that in the rural districts of the South written and unwritten laws have imposed over broad reaches a system of villeinage, binding to the soil, patronage domination. In the countryside, too, the opportunity for illegal oppression is much greater than in the city, and almost all serious collisions between the two races in the last decade originated as conflicts between landlords and workers. The peculiar appearance of the "black belt" developed out of this situation and it also caused the emigration toward the city. The black belt does not, as many assume, owe its origin to a migration toward regions climatically more favorable for work. It was a crowding together of the black population out of a survival instinct, an assembling for mutual protection in order to find the peace and security necessary for advancement. This movement took place between emancipation and 1880, and only partially fulfilled its purpose. Since 1880 the move toward the city is the counter-current of those disappointed by the economic possibilities of the black belt.

In addition to peonage, the treatment of black *criminals* became a means to secure the bondage of blacks. The two labor systems that still blossom in the South are the direct descendents of slavery: these are the just-sketched system of mortgaging the harvest and the system of renting convicts. Through this latter system persons who are juridically convicted of crimes and transgressions become slaves in the hands of private individuals. Before the Civil War crime in the South was actually punished just as in the North. Except in a few states the number of crimes was lower than in the North; the situation was naturally modified by slavery. Only in exceptional cases could a slave be seen as a criminal in the eye of the law. The investigation and punishment of almost all usual offenses and crimes lay in the hands of the masters. Consequently, the state hardly had to busy itself with any kind

of serious crimes by Negroes. Criminal justice was almost exclusively tailored for whites; as usual with a dispersed population, it had predominantly aristocratic tendencies, it was indulgent in theory and lax in execution.

On the other hand the need to provide ordered conditions and surveillance of the slaves effected a cautious common procedure among the masters. The South was never rid of the fear of an insurrection and the fateful attempts of Cato, Gabriel, Vesey, Turner and Toussaint transformed this fear into an ever-present specter. Thus, a rural police force was developed that was at its post primarily at night and whose task it was to prevent nightly wanderings and meetings of slaves. This organization was usually very effective and held the slaves in fear. All whites belonged to it and had to fulfill their precisely defined service in specific intervals.

This system was destroyed in a single blow by the war and emancipation. Simultaneously, respect for the law among the whites became even weaker as a result of the unavoidable influences of inner conflicts and of social revolution; the freedman found himself in a particularly anomalous situation. The power of the slave police was based on that of the masters; as the power of the masters was broken, their police became an illegal criminal band that history knows as the "Ku Klux Klan." At that time the first and probably most unfortunate of that series of attempts was made through which the South sought to ward off the consequences of emancipation. The moralists will always disagree about the degree to which a defeated people must subordinate itself to the victor; under such conditions it is difficult to withhold a certain degree of sympathy from the resistors. But the South made the mistake that its kind of resistance in the long run weakened its moral feeling, destroyed respect for law and order, and little by little imparted a fateful predominance to the worst elements. The South believed in slave labor and was convinced that free Negroes would not work steadily and productively. Thus extensive and cleverly formulated laws were passed about apprenticeships and vagrancy in order to force the freedmen and their children to work for their former owners for practically no wage. These laws were rationalized by pointing to the unavoidable inclination of many former slaves to the life of a vagabond as soon as the fear of the whip was taken from them. Nevertheless, the new laws went

much too far and fully overlooked the existence of that large class of freedmen who wished to work and to gain their own property; they made an end to any competition of the workers among themselves and exploited the labor-power and freedom of children. As I have said, these laws saw in the Emancipation Proclamation and in the 13th Amendment only stipulations about the cessation of the slave trade.

The intervention of Congress in the reorganization of the Southern states prevented the implementation of these plans, and the "Freedmen's Bureau" consolidated and expanded different attempts to employ and guide the freedmen, in many places under the protection of the army. This guardianship of the government introduced free wage labor with the help of the army, supported by the ambition of the best blacks and the collaboration of many whites. The Bureau failed, however, when it came to the issue of regulating legal relationships. To be sure, it did institute Bureau Courts that consisted of one representative of the former masters, one of the freedmen and an assessor; but they never won the trust of the population. As the regular courts gradually regained their currency, they had to define through their decisions the changed position of the freedmen. It was perhaps just as natural as fateful that in the chaos of that time the regular courts attempted to bring about through their decisions that which the special laws had originally intended: namely, to make the freedman into a bondsman. This had as its consequence that the petty offences of a thoughtless, ill-bred class were punished with heavy sentences. The courts and prisons were filled with the simple-minded and the ignorant, with those who wanted to enjoy the newfound freedom, often enough with the innocent victims of oppression. The testimony of the Negro had little or no value in court, while the accusation of a white witness was usually decisive. Thus the criminals in the South seemed suddenly, at a single stroke, to increase acutely; so large was the increase that the state could not reduce or control it, even if it had wished; and the state did not wish. In the entire South laws were immediately passed according to which the officials had the right to hire out convict labor to the highest bidder. The bidder assumed the care for the prisoners and let them work according to his own discretion under nominal control of the state. Thus a new slavery and a new slave trade was introduced.

There has been much discussion of the misuse of this system. It was as bad as slavery, but without [slavery's] good sides. Innocent, guilty and downcast were crowded together; children and adults, men and women were completely given over to the discretion of a person who was in no way responsible and whose only purpose was to earn as much money as possible. The innocent became bad; the guilty worse; women were abused and children corrupted. Beatings and torture were routine and the cases of death as a result of the cruelties increased mightily. The overseers of such contracted prisoners usually belonged to the lowest class of whites and their encampments were often very distant from human settlements. The prisoners seldom even had clothes, they were miserably nourished with rye bread and fatty meat and they worked 12 or more hours per day. After work, everyone had to cook his own meal; shelter was poor. As late as 1895 in a camp in Georgia, 61 people slept in a room that was 17 by 19 feet and 7 feet high. The hygienic arrangements were pitiful; medical care was hardly, if ever, to be had, women and men were not separated at work or for sleeping, the former often wore men's clothes. In Camp Hardmont in Georgia a young girl was raped several times by the overseers and finally died in camp in childbirth.

These facts illustrate the worst sides of the system as it existed in almost all Southern states and still exists today in parts of Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and other states. It is difficult to say whether it is more ruinous for the whites or the Negroes. For the whites it reduced respect for the courts, allowed illegality to grow and gave the states into the hands of those who filled the prisons. The courts were subject to the politics of the moment, the judges were elected for ever shorter terms, and a public opinion developed that was no longer capable of judging a criminal as such, without consideration of the color of his skin. If the criminal was white, only in the most extreme cases did public opinion allow him to be sentenced to forced labor. Thus it came to the point that still today in the South it is difficult to apply criminal law against whites. On the other hand, it had become so customary to convict a Negro on the basis of a mere accusation that the public no longer wanted to give an accused black a real trial and often fell to the temptation of playing the judge. Furthermore, the state became a merchant in crime and

profited so much by this trade that it had a yearly net income from its prisoners; those who used convict labor also made a great profit. In these conditions it was almost impossible to free the state from this corrupt system.

The effect of this form of forced labor on the Negroes was most deplorable. In their views the concepts of crime and slavery were inseparably linked as equivalent forms of oppression by whites. Thus punishment lost a great deal of its deterrent effect and the criminal was pitied rather than despised. The Negroes lost faith in the integrity of the courts and the impartiality of the judges. And what was still worse was that the bands of convicts became schools for criminals that soon called into existence the *habitual* black criminal. It was indeed unavoidable that emancipation had a certain degree of criminality and vagabondage as a consequence. A nation cannot systematically devalue labor without corrupting the laborer, but the manner in which the Southern courts handled the freedmen after the war without a doubt enormously increased the criminality and vagabondage. There are no reliable statistics according to which the growth of criminality among the freed slaves can be established with some certainty. About 70 percent of all prisoners in the South are black; but this is partially explained by the fact that still today accused Negroes are easily convicted and given long sentences, while whites still easily avoid punishment. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that in the South since the war a stratum of black criminals, vagabonds, and good-for-nothings has emerged that means a danger for their black and white fellow citizens.

As the real black criminal appeared, the South became deeply agitated. For a long time the whites had used the criminal courts to force Negroes to work, but vagabondage and petty theft were really the only offences that had occurred, no crimes out of insubordination, violence or evil intent. As such crimes increased after times of financial depression, like for example 1893, the wrath of the people who were not used to an ordered system of penal law knew no more bounds and expressed itself in strange barbarian acts of revenge and cruelty. Instead of focusing the attention of the best people of these states and of the nation on the problem of Negro criminality, such occurrences discouraged and alienated the higher Negro strata and filled the better white Southerners with shame.

2. THE ASCENDANCE OF THE BONDSMAN

In the beginning most people, especially Europeans, certainly held as utopian the notion of raising the African Negro to the level of the modern white worker. Regarding the West Indies and Africa they would have said: this race is not ripe for such a development and such responsibility. Thus they see in the persistence of the Negro question in Africa only proof of the accuracy of this assumption. Thus they conclude that in a civilized country the Negro must be a pariah because he is too backwards for anything else.

When, however, one studies without prejudice that advance of the American Negro on the basis of reliable information, then one finds surprising results. First, the vitality of the race, even under very difficult circumstances, is evident through its steady increase:

GROWTH OF THE NEGRO POPULATION
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1750 TO 1900

1750	220,000
1780	462,000 ⁷
1800	1,002,037
1820	1,771,656
1840	2,873,648
1860	4,441,830
1880	6,580,793
1900	8,833,994

The birth- and death-figures are both high, but as far as reliable censuses are available, they gradually decline. In the course of the decade from 1890 to 1900, the latter has fallen from 32.4 per thousand in 1890 to 30.2. The number of deaths is probably lower in the rural districts where the Negro population is most dense.

This people, almost 9 million strong, has made rapid intellectual progress; the number of children above ten years old who can read and write has increased as follows:

GROWTH OF LITERACY AMONG NEGROES
IN THE UNITED STATES, 1860 TO 1900

1860	9%
1870.....	20%
1880.....	30%
1890.....	42.9%
1900	55.5%

If it continues in this manner, the next generation will have just as low a percentage of illiterates as the most favorably situated European nations. The number of academically educated is indeed small, but is steadily growing and has today reached some 3,000.

Forty-five percent of the population ten years and older is employed; the main occupations and their growth since 1890 can be grouped as follows [see following table]:

DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONS
OF WORKING NEGROES IN 1900

KIND OF WORK	WORKING NEGROES OF BOTH SEXES AT LEAST 10 YEARS OF AGE				DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING NEGROES AMONG JOBS IN 1900
	1900	1890	INCREASE 1890-1900		
			NUMBER	PERCENT	
TOTAL	3,992,337	3,073,164	919,173	29.9	100.0
<i>Jobs with more than 10,000 Negroes</i>	3,807,008	2,917,169 ⁸	869,095	29.86	95.4
Agricultural workers	1,344,125	1,105,728	237,397	21.5	33.7
Farmers, planters, overseers	757,822	590,666	167,156	28.3	19.0
Workers not reporting their jobs	545,935	349,002	196,933	56.4	13.7
Servants and waiters	465,734	401,215	64,519	16.1	11.7
Laundry workers	220,104	153,684	66,420	43.2	5.5
Drivers, coachers, etc.	67,585	43,963	23,622	53.7	1.7

Railway workers	55,327	47,548	7,779	16.4	1.4
Mine and quarry workers	36,561	19,007	17,554	92.4	0.9
Sawmill workers	33,266	17,276	15,990	92.6	0.8
Porters, shop boys, etc.	28,977	11,694	17,283	147.8	0.7
Teachers and professors	21,267	15,100	6,167	40.8	0.5
Carpenters and cabinet makers	21,113	22,581	1,468	6.5	0.5
Turpentine farmers and workers	20,744	9	—	—	0.5
Barbers and hairdressers	19,942	17,480	2,462	14.1	0.5
Nurses and midwives	19,431	5,213	14,218	272.7	0.5
Ministers	15,528	12,159	3,369	27.7	0.4
Tobacco and cigar workers	15,349	15,004	345	2.3	0.4
Stable hands	14,496	10,500	3,996	38.1	0.4
Masons	14,386	9,760	4,626	47.4	0.4
Tailors	12,569	7,586	4,983	65.7	0.3
Iron- and steelworkers	12,327	6,579	5,748	87.4	0.3
Seamstresses	11,537	11,846	309	2.6	0.3
Doormen and vergers	11,536	5,945	5,591	94.0	0.3
Maids and concierges	10,596	9,248	1,348	14.6	0.3
Fishermen and oystermen	10,427	10,071	356	3.5	0.3
Machinists and stokers (excluding railway)	10,224	6,326	3,898	61.6	0.2
Smiths	10,100	10,988	888	8.1	0.2
Other occupations	185,329	155,995	50,078 ¹⁰	32.1	4.6

For historical reasons most of the Negroes are farmers and most Negro farmers sharecroppers. But here too there is obvious progress. Between 1890 and 1900 the number of farms cultivated by Negroes increased about 37 percent.

In the year 1900 there were in the United States 746,717 farms cultivated by Negroes; of these 716,514 with buildings. These farms encompassed

38,233,933 acres or 59,741 (English) square miles, that is an area that is only a little smaller than half of Prussia; 23,362,798 acres or 61 percent of the total area was prepared for new cultivation. The total value of these farms amounted to \$499,943,734, of which \$324,244,397 represented the value of the land and of the improvements, \$71,903,315 that of the buildings, \$18,859,757 that of the machines and implements, and \$84,936,265 that of the livestock. In the year 1899, the gross value of all products of Negro farms amounted to: \$255,715,145. In these totals, however, the sum of \$25,843,443 is included for the products fed to the animals and which then reappears in the given value of animal products like meat, milk, butter, eggs and poultry, that is, this sum is given twice. If we subtract it, we thus have a yield of \$229,907,702 or 46 percent of the total value of farms cultivated by Negroes. This sum represents the gross yield of the farms. In 1899, a total of \$8,789,792 was spent on Negro farms for labor and \$5,614,844 for fertilizer.

Of the 746,715 farms cultivated by Negroes in 1900, 21 percent belonged completely, and 4.2 percent partially, to the farmers who cultivated them; in other words: 40 years after emancipation, 25.2 percent or one-quarter of all Negro farmers had become property owners.

Of all Negro farming families 120,738 or 21.7 percent were owners of their farms in 1890. In the year 1900, there were 187,799 farms that belonged to Negroes and 190,111 Negro families with private farm ownership. Thus the number of Negro farmers increased from about 36 percent to 38 percent, but that of property owners more than 57 percent and the percentage of self-ownership 3.5 percent. Although these percentual relations are based on numbers that are not completely comparable, they are exact enough in order approximately to establish the degree to which Negro farmers in the last decade have neared ownership of their own operations.

In the following table the Southern states are arranged according to the percentage of farmers with their own operations and indeed in declining order.

DISTRIBUTION OF FARM OPERATION AMONG NEGROES
IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1900

NEGRO FARMS IN THE YEAR 1900 RUN BY: STATE OR TERRITORY	PROPERTY		PÄCHTER		
	OWNERS PERCENT	FOREMEN PERCENT	TOTAL PERCENT	RENTERS PERCENT	SHARECROPPERS PERCENT
W. Virginia	72.0	1.1	26.9	9.1	17.8
Oklahoma	71.2	0.3	28.5	7.6	20.9
Virginia	59.2	0.5	40.3	15.4	24.9
Maryland	55.8	1.8	42.4	9.6	32.8
Indian Territory	55.4	0.3	44.3	7.1	37.2
Florida	48.4	0.7	50.9	40.7	10.2
Kentucky	48.0	0.6	51.4	7.0	44.4
Delaware	40.5	1.8	57.7	9.2	48.5
N. Carolina	31.2	0.2	68.6	19.0	49.6
Texas	30.7	0.1	69.2	12.9	56.3
District of Columbia	29.4	11.8	58.8	58.8	—
Tennessee	27.8	0.2	72.0	32.2	39.8
Arkansas	25.4	0.2	74.4	33.7	40.7
S. Carolina	22.2	0.2	77.6	49.7	27.9
Mississippi	16.3	0.1	83.6	44.5	39.1
Louisiana	16.1	0.1	83.8	36.5	47.3
Alabama	15.0	0.1	84.9	59.7	25.2
Georgia	13.7	0.3	86.0	41.9	44.1

The total landed property that found itself in the hands of Negroes is worth some \$230 million. If we add the estimated value of total movable property, we thus have about \$300–350 million of wealth that has been accumulated in a single generation by a multitude of black bondsmen.

In 1890, Negroes had 23,462 church organizations with 2,673,977 members and \$26,626,448 in property. In 1899, 5,000 businesses led by Negroes existed with a capital of almost \$9 million. These were primarily grocery stores, small shops, printing businesses, funeral businesses, drug stores, and so on. There existed 3 banks, 13 building and credit unions, and several consumer associations. There are also many philanthropical institutions

led by Negroes for the best for their comrades, among them 7 hospitals, 20 or more orphanages, and at least 100 insurance funds against accidents and illnesses.

Negroes are responsible for many of the crimes in the United States, which is indeed understandable for a recently emancipated race. Their previous and present conditions of life have, as we have said, contributed to the increase of this tendency. From emancipation until 1880, criminality slowly increased. Then it grew more rapidly and reached its highpoint around 1890 to 1895. Since then it has slowly declined. Most of the crimes were such as are characteristic of a class with an unclear concept of property and little sense of ordered life, namely theft and assault. Negroes are especially accused of crimes in the sexual area; this is not correct. Even of the 2,000 Negroes who have been lynched in the United States since 1885, less than one-quarter were accused of rape and one can be certain that a large part of them were innocent. Marital infidelity and births out of wedlock naturally occur very frequently among the Negro masses, and that is only too natural for a race whose women were 300 years long the unprotected victims of the lusts of white Americans; have not today some 3 million—if not more—of the 9 million American Negroes mixed blood? And still today Negro girls of the South are little protected by the law and hardly by manners.

In the veins of many prominent Americans flows Negro blood. Alexander Hamilton, one of the most prominent fathers of the constitution, was born in the West Indies and probably had Negro blood, although it is the mode today in America to deny it. Frederick Douglass, a mulatto, was one of the main instigators of freeing the slaves. The Negro actor Ira Aldridge was honored in all of Europe and made a member of the Prussian Academy for Art and Science. The paintings of the artist Henry O. Tanner, a mulatto, were hung in the greatest galleries of Europe including the Luxembourg. A Negro invented the system employed for lubricating the machines of most American railroads. And in the whole world today, telephone parts are used that another Negro invented. A Negro literature has appeared that describes the struggles and hopes of the race and exhibits such works as Walker's *Appeal*, the *Autobiography* of Douglass, the history of Williams, Washington's *Up from Slavery*, Dunbar's history and Chesnutt's novellas.

Must I also speak of the wonderful “sorrow-songs,” the most beautiful contribution of American Negroes to world literature?

3. THE NEW CASTE MENTALITY

One should suppose that, if a mistreated and oppressed class within a nation, after it has been given several chances to work itself up, has within a generation increased in intelligence, has in large proportion become economically active, has been able to dam up the criminality and lawlessness that followed from a sudden liberation, earns some 4 million marks of wealth yearly,—that then this race should at least receive respect, sympathy, and assistance, especially from a nation that is supposedly as democratic as the United States.

To be fair, one must say that many classes in the United States have performed admirably in the social education of the freedmen. Churches and mission societies have spent millions for the education of the Negroes and self-sacrificing men like Ware, Cravath and Armstrong have given their lives to this work. But this movement was never a national one and today it is limited to the churches and a certain group of philanthropists. The nation as such has done practically nothing for its wards, and there exists today a directly hostile tone of public opinion toward the Negro. This attitude is naturally the result of the tough opposition to the Negro in the former slave states, and it is necessary to clarify precisely of what this public opinion consists and from what it draws its nourishment.

In the cultural life of the present, social conflict and the relations of people among each other may be presented according to some few viewpoints: in the first place one must mention the spatial proximity of the homesteads and places of residence, the kind of group formation among neighbors and the points of contacts of those so grouped. Secondly, and above all in our time, economic relations are important—the kinds of cooperation among individuals for supplying goods, for the satisfaction of needs and for the creation of wealth. Then come the political relations, the common participation in political life, in government, and administration. Fourth come the not so visible, but especially important forms of intellectual contact

and interaction, of exchange of ideas through conversations and meetings, through newspapers and libraries and above all in the gradual formation of that remarkable *tertium quid* that we call “public opinion.” Closely related are the different forms of social contact in daily life, while traveling, in the theatre, in domestic interaction, through marriage, etc. Finally, one should also mention the different forms of religious undertakings and organizations for mutual benefit.

Primarily in these different ways members of the same community are brought into contact with one another. For that reason I would like to indicate how the common life of blacks and whites in the United States and above all in the Southern states is formed in these respects.

In terms of *living together* it is possible in almost every Southern community to draw a color line on the map which separates the homes of the whites from those of the blacks. The geographical course of this line is naturally different in the various communities. I know several cities where one can draw a straight line through the middle of the main street which separates nine-tenths of the whites from nine-tenths of the blacks. In other cities the older settlements of the whites are surrounded by a broad ring of blacks, in still other cases small settlements of blacks emerged directly amidst the whites. Usually every street of a city has its pronounced color and only occasionally are the colors mixed in closer community. Even in the countryside something of this separation can be seen in the smaller regions, above all, of course, in the more significant phenomenon of the black belt.

This separation according to color does not depend on that natural amalgamation of social equals. A Negro back street can be suspiciously near to a white villa-quarter; especially often, however, white “slums” are found in the center of a respectable Negro quarter. One thing above all seldom occurs: the upper class whites and the upper class Negroes almost never live in any proximity. So it happens that in practically every Southern locality whites and blacks get acquainted with one another from their worst side. This is a great difference from earlier where through the common life of the masters and house slaves in the patriarchally-led great house the best of both races came into close contact with one another, while the dirt and the

monotony of the working life of the other slaves lay outside of the horizon of the family. It is easy to understand that someone who thus knew slavery from the living room of the parental home, and today gets acquainted with freedom in the streets of the large city, has no understanding of the new picture. On the other hand, the mass of Negroes firmly believes that the whites in the South have no goodwill toward the blacks and this belief has been strengthened in the last years through the constant daily contact of the better Negroes with the worst elements of the white race.

The *economic* relations of the races seem to be well enough known through several studies, many discussions and not to be underestimated philanthropic efforts; and yet several essential points in the common work and business life of the Negroes and whites are easily overlooked or not correctly understood. The average American imagines the Southern states as a wealthy land impatiently awaiting development and populated by black workers. For him the problem of the South lies in making industrious labor power out of this material through the necessary technical education and through the investment of sufficient capital. The problem is, however, not so simple, because these workers had just been raised centuries long as slaves. They show the advantages and disadvantages of this upbringing: they are willing and good-natured, but not independent, scrupulous and careful. If, as seems probable, the economic development of the South demands their intensive utilization, then we will have a mass of workers who must subject themselves to a merciless competitive struggle with the workers of the rest of the world without having enjoyed the education of the modern independent democratic worker. The black workers need careful, personal guidance, they must be led in small groups, by men who have a heart for them, in order to educate them to reflection, precision, and honesty. There is also no need of ingenious theories about racial differences in order to prove the necessity of such education after the mind of the race has been killed by a 250 year long education to subjection, thoughtlessness and dishonesty. After the liberation of the slaves it was a public duty to take over this guidance and education of the Negroes. Here I do not want to inquire further about whose duty it was, whether that of the former white masters who had enriched themselves through unpaid labor, or that of the philanthropists of the northern states whose tenacity

brought the crisis to a head, or that of the national government whose edict freed the slaves. I only want to express here that someone should have been concerned with preventing these working people from being left alone and without leadership, without capital and land, as completely without skills, without economic organization, as they were; even the protection of law and order was denied them. They were left to themselves in this large land—not in order to grow peacefully in a slow and gradual development, but in order almost immediately to take up the competitive struggle with the best modern workers—subjected to the rule of an economic system where everyone struggles only for himself and often without any consideration for his neighbor.

For we must not forget that the economic system that has succeeded the old one in the South today is not comparable to that of the industrial North, of England or France which have their trade unions, their set of protective laws, their written and unwritten modes of interaction and their long experience. It is rather a likeness of England in the earliest years of the nineteenth century before the passing of the factory laws—that England that moved the intellectuals to sympathy and inflamed Carlyle's anger. The scepter that was taken from the gentlemen of the South in 1865, partially through force, partially through their own evil will, has never been given back to them. It has rather gone to those men who had come to take into their hands the industrial exploitation of the South—the sons of poor whites who were driven by a new hunger for wealth and power, ambitious and greedy Yankees, clever and unscrupulous Jews. Into the hands of these men fell the workers of the South—white and black—and not to their own good fortune. These new leaders of industry felt neither love nor hate, neither sympathy nor romantic empathy, for the workers as such. For them it was a matter of cold cash and dividends. Every working class must suffer under such a system. Even the white workers are not yet intelligent, ambitious, and disciplined enough to defend themselves against the powerful encroachments of organized capital. The result for them too is long working hours, low wages, child labor, and lack of protection from usury and fraud. But for the black workers the situation is aggravated, first of all by racial prejudice that wavers between the doubt and mistrust of the best white elements and the glowing hate of the worst, and secondly by the

miserable economic legacy that the freedman inherited from slavery. With this preparation it is difficult for the freedman to learn to seize the opportunities already offered to him—and new opportunities seldom open up for him, rather they offer themselves preferentially to whites.

This unfortunate economic situation does not mean an obstacle to every advance in the black South, nor the complete absence of a class of black landowners and artisans who despite all disadvantages accumulate property and become good citizens. But it results in this class not being at all as numerous as it could be under a just economic system, it impedes so much those who survive the competition that they achieve much less than they deserve, and above all it leaves the selection of the successful to chance and not to a well-considered choice or a rational method of selection.

The relations of the Negroes to their fellow white workers and especially to the trade unions is of special interest:

The Evans brothers, who came as agitators from England in 1825, took up among their 12 demands the following: “10. The abolition of slavery.” From 1840 to 1850 social reformers were in many cases upright abolitionists; thus one of them said in the year 1847: “In my opinion the great worker question will, when it arises, surpass all others in importance and the factory workers of New England, the peasants of Ireland and the workers of South America shall not forget the slaves of the South.”

And the anti-slavery agitation and the organization of workers in the United States proceeded apace; both were revolutionary in character and although they struck out on different paths, they had the same goal: namely the freedom of the working man.

Several worker disturbances that had economic causes accompanied this movement, especially the series of uprisings in Philadelphia from 1829 until after the war, in which Negroes had to endure much from white workers. The Civil War with its accompanying evils weighed heavily on the working classes and called forth expanded agitation and many attempts at organization.

Especially in New York the workers found that the conscription was unjust, for the wealthy could buy themselves free for \$300. Loyalty to the Union declined and a bitter feeling toward Negroes emerged. Dockworkers

and railroad employees went on strike from time to time and attacked non-organized workers. In New York Negroes replaced dockworkers and were attacked.

The struggle reached its highpoint in a three-day long uprising that to a certain extent became a war of extermination [*Ausrottungskrieg*] against Negroes.

Before the Civil War a number of trade unions existed, among others: the Boilermakers/Boilermen of Boston (1724), the Shipbuilders of New York (1803), the Carpenters of New York (1806), the Typographical Society in New York (1817). There was also an attempt to unite the trades and workers in general organizations, like, for example, the Workingmen's Convention of 1830 in New York, the General Trade Union of New York in 1833 or, earlier, the National Trade Union in 1835, among others. Negroes had no part in any of these movements and were either silently or expressly excluded. The trade unions then began to develop from local to national bodies. The print workers came together in 1850 and formed a national union in 1852; the iron founders banded together in 1859; the machinists in the same year and the ironworkers in the year before. Before and soon after the war the railway unions emerged and the cigar workers and masons founded organizations; almost all excluded Negroes from their membership.

After the war attempts were renewed to organize all workers and to unite the trade unions, and under the influence of the Emancipation Proclamation the tone against blacks became less hard-hearted. On August 19, 1866, the National Labor Union stated in its proclamation:

In this so difficult hour for the working class we call all workers, whatever their nationality, whatever their faith or whatever their color, whether they are skilled or unskilled, trade unionists or not organized, to reach to us their hand in order to abolish poverty and all evils that accompany it.

On August 19, 1867, the National Labor Congress in Chicago (Illinois) assembled; 200 delegates from the states North Carolina, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri were present. Among other things in his report, Z. C. Whatley, the president, said:¹¹

the emancipation of the slaves has put us in a new situation and the question now arises: what position should they assume within the working class? They will begin to learn and to think for themselves, they will soon become wage laborers and thus come in contact with white workers. But it is necessary that they do not work against them; for that reason they can do nothing better than to form trade unions and thus work in harmony with whites.

But not until after the organization of the Knights of Labor did the joint action of workers show success. The Knights of Labor was founded in Philadelphia in 1869 and held its first national meeting in the year 1876. For a long time it was a secret organization, but from the very beginning it was not supposed to have recognized any differences, "neither of race, nor of faith, nor of color."

Nevertheless, admission had in all cases to depend on the vote of the local meeting to which the candidate had applied, and initially three black balls sufficed to reject an applicant. Actually, therefore, Negroes in the northern states were mostly excluded. On the other hand, the shadow of black competition gradually arose on the horizon. Most expected it very soon and the exodus of Negroes in the year 1879 greatly alarmed working class leaders of the North. Signs of the workers' movement also became visible in the South and in 1880 the Negroes of New Orleans went on strike in order to win a daily wage of a dollar, but they were suppressed by the militia.

Such considerations induced several trade unions at the beginning of the 1880s, for example, the iron and steel workers and the cigar makers, to eliminate the word "white" from the statutes that limited their membership and at least in theory to open admission to Negroes. The Knights of Labor also began to proselytize in the South and could report from Virginia in 1885: "The Negroes stick with us with body and soul and have organized here (in Richmond) seven conventions, and in Manchester one, with many participants."

Around 1886, The Brotherhood of Carpenters, that had black branches in the South all the way to New Orleans and Galveston, also expressed similar sentiments: "In the Southern states the coloreds who work in trades have applied themselves to the organization with zeal, so that the Brotherhood in the South encompasses fourteen trade unions of colored carpenters."

Even the anarchists of that time (1883) declared themselves “for equal rights for all without differences of sex or race.” In the year of the great worker uprising, 1886, working class leaders declared that the color line was broken and that now blacks and whites work together for the same cause. In the same year, however, at a meeting of the Knights of Labor in Richmond, shadows of evil forebodings arose. One Negro delegate, R. I. Ferrell, sent by District Assembly 49 of New York, confronted multiple difficulties in the hotels and theatres and at the introduction of Governor Fitzhugh Lee to the assembly. It was necessary to turn to the chief of police for protection, the press became excited and the “Grand-Master Workman”¹² published the following defense of its position in the *Richmond Dispatch*:

You are confronted with a vital, inescapable fact—with a responsibility that cannot be avoided. The Negro question is as important today as ever. The first fact that confronts us is the following: The Negro is free; he is here and will remain here. He is a citizen and must learn to take care of his own affairs. His labor and that of the white man will be offered on the market and no human eye can discover a difference between an object produced by white and one produced by black workers. Both lay claim to the same amount of protection that is accorded to American labor, and both must set aside their disputes or become a prey of the slave labor that is now being imported into this land.

Does someone want to explain to me why the black should work for starvation wages? As long as many capable black workers in the South are not educated enough to demand sufficient wages, it is not difficult to predict that as long as this race increases in number and ignorance, prosperity will never knock at the door of the Southern worker and even much less enter into his home.

On the labor market and as American citizens we know no lines of separation, neither of race, nor of faith, nor of politics, nor of color.

That was a high point for a leader of the workers, probably too high a one for his constituents, for the history of the workers’ movement from 1886 until 1902 shows us a gradual retreat from these just views on the position of the Negro.

After a brilliant career—they probably had at one time more than a half-million members—the Knights of Labor began to decline as a result of inner dissension and have today maybe 50,000–100,000 members. With the decline of the Knights of Labor, the advance of a greater and a more successful movement fell apart. That success now went to the American Federation of Labor [(AFL)] with some million members. This organization was founded in 1881, at a meeting of discontented members of the Knights of Labor and other workers. From the very beginning this movement represented the particularist notion of trade unionism against the all-encompassing, centralizing tendencies of the Knights. And although the central administration has recently grown in power and influence, the AFL is however above all a federation of autonomous, mutually independent trade unions—a federation intended to lead them [the autonomous unions] to concerted action and mutual understanding. The expressed racial politics of such a body is less important than that of the Knights of Labor, for it gives advice rather than regulations to the individual trade unions. The attitude of the Federation has been summarized as follows: “It was always one of the main principles of the Federation that workers must stand together and organize themselves without consideration of faith, color, sex, nationality, or politics.” Earlier the Federation expressly rejected every trade union that in its written statutes excluded Negroes from admission. For this reason the International Association of Machinists was held at arm’s length for several years until it crossed out the word “white” from its qualification for membership. It has been said, too, that at that time the color line was the main obstacle to the unification of the Brotherhood of Railway Firemen with the Federation.

Nevertheless, the Federation seems to have modified its views. The Railway Telegraphers and Tracklayers were accepted though they limit their membership to whites.

One can say that the American Federation of Labor has gone through the following stages.

1. “The workers must band together and organize themselves without consideration of faith, color, sex, or politics.” That was the earliest declaration, but it was not written down in the statutes. In 1897, it was again

- confirmed, though with some opposition. Bodies that only accepted white members could not join [the AFL].
2. For central trade unions, local unions or federated trade unions, that have exclusively black members, special statutes can be passed. This statement was accepted by the General Assembly of the year 1902; it recognizes the admissibility of the exclusion of Negroes from local unions, central workers unions and so on.
 3. A national trade union that expressly excludes Negroes by statute can join the AFL. This changed policy was not expressly announced, but it became obvious with the above-mentioned cases of the Railway Tracklayers and Telegraphers among others.
 4. A national trade union that has already joined the AFL can change its statutes such that Negroes are excluded. The Stationary Engineers did this at their meeting in Boston in the year 1902, and the Molders attempted the same thing in the same year. The AFL took in these cases no public steps.

Thus unfolded the struggle for the maintenance of high and just ideals that ended in defeat; more broad-hearted workers' leaders like Samuel Gompers had to give in to narrow prejudices and selfish avarice. These struggles are similar to those of Negroes for their political and civil rights; just as they were temporarily defeated in that case, so they have encountered resistance in the search for economic independence. Nevertheless, there is probably a greater number of Negroes who are members of unions today than ever before; a renewed inclination to industrial activity is becoming visible, and at the same time a better understanding of the workers' movement. On the other hand, the economic growth of the South has brought into leading positions a number of white workers who since birth have looked at Negroes as inferior and who only with the greatest difficulties can be brought to see in them brothers in the struggle for better working conditions. These are the forces that confront each other in mute struggle.

Of great interest is the *political history* of the Negroes in the South.

In many colonies in the earliest times free Negroes had the suffrage if they were in all other respects qualified, but later this right was taken

from them as, for example, in Virginia in 1723. After the Declaration of Independence they received the right to vote, but it was later often limited by qualifications as, for example, in New York in 1821, or through the limiting of suffrage to whites, as in Pennsylvania in 1838. The 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, passed after the Civil War, sought to punish states that limited the suffrage, and the 15th Amendment declared illegal differentiation of voters according to race and color. These declarations were made necessary by the resistance of the South to the Freedmen's Bureau and through the obvious intention of Southern legislation to make the freedmen again into slaves through the restriction of citizenship rights, laws against vagabondage and special laws. Through these amendments the government of the Southern states during the years 1866 to 1876 was put in the hands of the freedmen. In any community such a sudden expansion of the suffrage would have brought discontent and difficulties, but under good leadership the final result could have been different. As the situation was, dishonest politicians interested only in their own advantage, in the North as well as the South, exploited unknowledgeable Negro voters for their own purposes and the consequence was much waste and in places bad government. Despite that, it was correctly said about these governments:

They obeyed the Constitution of the United States and annulled the debts of the states, counties and cities resulting from the bonds issued to conduct the War of Rebellion and to maintain armies in the field against the Union. They introduced a public school system where previously public schools were unknown. They made the ballot box and the jury bench accessible to thousands of whites who until then were kept from them because of their lack of property. Self-administration was introduced into the South by them. They abolished public whippings, branding, the pillory and other barbaric forms of punishment that were prevalent until then; they reduced the crimes punishable by the death penalty from about twenty to two or three. In a time inclined to waste, they were wasteful of the sums that were set aside for public works. In the entire period the human rights of no man were limited by law. The life, house and hearth and the business of every democrat were safe. No one obstructed a white

on his way to the polls, limited his freedom of speech or boycotted him because of his political views.

And a Negro legislator of that time said in defense of his race that those who criticized the indiscretion of the time between 1869 and 1873 forgot to mention:

those imperishable gifts that were given by Negro voters to South Carolina between 1873 and 1876—the finance laws, the erection of penal and welfare institutions and above all the introduction of a public school system. We began in 1869 as children in lawmaking and thus did not consider many a wise measure and uncritically accepted many a law. However, because we learned the consequences of bad laws through experience in the administration of business during the next four years, we immediately passed modifying laws for every branch of the state, county or communal administration.

These laws are *still in force today* in South Carolina. They are living witnesses for the fitness of the Negro as voter and lawmaker.

Despite this the Negro governments were abolished in 1876 through violence and betrayal; and since then the Negro is still today robbed of his voting right, be it through physical force, through fraud at the elections or through clever lawmaking. The consequences of these concealed methods were so fatal that in about 1890 a movement arose in the South to rob the Negro of his voting right through a legal path. This has now actually happened in Mississippi, Louisiana, South and North Carolina, Alabama and Virginia and in other states a movement in this direction is making itself felt. The expressed purpose of these amendments to the [state] constitutions is (a) to rob no white voter of his vote, (b) to withdraw the vote from as many Negroes as possible. This has happened through the following voting qualifications.

1. Education. The voter must be able to read and write. (This is directed against Negroes, because the system of public schools in the South is much less developed for blacks than for whites.)

2. Property. The voter must possess taxable property in the value of not less than \$300 and pay taxes on it. (This is naturally directed against the propertyless race of freedmen who before 1863 could have no private property and who today are disadvantaged because of their color and inadequate training in economic competition.)
3. Poll tax. A voter must have paid his poll tax. (This demand only has a disadvantageous effect when it is applied retroactively to a period of several years like in Virginia.)
4. Employment. A voter must have steady employment. (Herewith Negro workers are supposed to be excluded; it is a source of unequal treatment because the truth is difficult to ascertain here.)
5. Military service. Soldiers or their descendants may vote. (Guarantees the vote to all descendants of soldiers of the secession.)
6. Character. Persons of "good character," who "properly understand the duties of a citizen," may vote. (This is a source of great injustice and gives arbitrary power to those who register voters.)
7. The "Grandfather Clause." Persons who were able to vote on January 1, 1867—i.e. before Negroes received the right to vote—or their descendants may vote if they are enrolled within a specific time. (Admits ignorant white voters while the same class of blacks is denied.)
8. The Understanding Clause. Persons may vote who can "understand" a paragraph of the Constitution and explain it when it is read to them. (Gives great freedom of decision to the election officials.)

In the attitude of American public opinion to the Negro question one can recognize with astonishing precision the dominant views about the forms of government. In the 1860s we stood strongly enough under the influence of the reverberation of the French Revolution in order still to believe rather strongly in universal suffrage. We argued—rather logically, as we then believed—that no class is so good, honest and unselfish that it might be completely entrusted with the political destiny of the others, that in every state those directly concerned decide best about their own destiny and that, consequently, the greatest good for the greatest number is only to be attained when each is given the right to have his vote count in the politics of the

state. Certainly, there were objections to our arguments, but we believed to have convincingly refuted them. If someone complained about the lack of education of the voters, we answered: "Teach them." If others complained about their venality, we replied: "Take the right to vote away from the venal or put them in prison." And if finally someone feared demagogues and the inborn baseness of many people, then we asserted: that time and bitter experience would teach even the most hardheaded. At that time the question of Negro suffrage was raised in the South. What should happen to this unprotected, suddenly freed people? How should it be protected from those who did not wish its freedom and who were determined to destroy it? "Not with violence" said the North, "not with preferential treatment from the government" said the South—"therefore through the vote, the only and legal weapon of a free people" said the healthy common sense of the nation. No one thought at that time that the former slaves would use the vote especially intelligently or very effectively. But it was believed that the possession of so great a power in the hands of a great class of the nation would force its fellow citizens to educate this class to a rational use of this power.

In the meantime the nation changed its thinking: the unavoidable period of the moral retrogression and the political swindles that always follow wars came over us too. The political scandals became so notorious that respectable people began to concern themselves no longer with politics, and thus politics became unrespectable. People began to pride themselves for having nothing to do with their own government, and thus they made themselves guilty of tacit consent to those who saw public offices as a private source of enrichment. This view made it easy to close an eye to the suppression of Negro suffrage in the South and to advise the better Negroes to let politics take its own course. The respectable citizens of the North who neglected their own citizenship duties found the exaggerated importance that the Negroes attributed to voting rights laughable. Thus it easily came about that the better classes of Negroes followed the foreign advice and gave in to domestic pressure and no longer worried about politics; the exercise of the voting right was left to the simple-minded and venal of the race. The black voters who remained were not trained and educated, but corrupted still more through open and shameless bribery, through violence and fraud, until

they were completely saturated with the thought that politics is a means to enrich oneself through dishonest means. But today, when Americans are beginning to understand that the persistence of republican institutions on their continent depends on the purity of the elections, on the education of the voters to the citizenship duties and on making voting itself a holy obligation which a patriotic citizen can neglect only to the ruin of himself and his children's children—in these days where we strive for a renaissance of citizen virtues—, what should we say to the black voters of the South? Do we still want to say to him that politics is an unrespectable and useless form of human activity? Do we want to cause the best class of Negroes to take less and less interest in government and to give up their right to such interest without protest? I do not say a word against the legal attempts to take the vote away from criminality, ignorance and pauperism. But few pretend that the current movement for the restriction of the suffrage in the South pursues this purpose; it is almost every time and in every case clearly and openly stated that the purpose of the laws is to drive blacks out of politics.

Today the Southern black has almost no part in determining how he should be taxed or how these taxes should be used; who should execute the laws and how they should be executed; how the laws should be made and who should make them. It is deplorable that in these critical times the greatest exertions must be made in order to bring the lawmakers of several states to the point during a controversy that they will even listen to a respectful presentation of the matter from the side of blacks as well. From day to day Negroes come more to viewing laws and jurisdiction not as protection, but as sources of humiliation and oppression. The laws are made by people who have little interest in them; they are executed by people who have absolutely no reason to treat the blacks with politeness or consideration; and finally, the accused is not judged by his own kind, but often by people who would rather punish ten innocent Negroes than set a single guilty one free.

Until now I have attempted to clarify the physical, economic and political relations of Negroes and whites in the South as I see them, and to this purpose I have also included the questions of criminality and education. But after all that has been said about these more graspable aspects of human relations, for a correct description of the South an essential part remains

that is difficult to fix in generally understandable terms: the atmosphere of the country, the thoughts and feelings, the thousands of small actions of which life consists. In every community or nation it is these small things that do not let themselves be grasped easily, but which are of the utmost importance for every clear picture of social life in its totality. What is thus true for all human communities is especially true for the American South where, beyond written history and beyond the printed laws, such storms and struggles have for a generation convulsed the hearts, where occurs such a fermentation of feelings and a struggle of spirits as have seldom been experienced by any people. Inside and outside the dark shadow of color powerful social forces were at work: striving for progress, next to which is destruction and despair; tragedies and comedies are being played out in social and economic life, and storms of destiny fling the hearts of people up and down so that in this land suffering and joy abide next to one another and change and commotion prevail.

The center of the spiritual struggle was always the millions of black freedmen and their sons whose destiny is so fatefully bound to that of the nation. And yet the occasional visitor to the South sees little of that: he notices the increasingly frequent recurrence of black faces during the journey southwards, but otherwise the days glide peacefully by, the sun laughs and this small world seems as happy and content as other worlds that he has visited. Indeed, he hears so little of the question of questions, of the Negro problem, that one could almost believe that it was intentionally kept secret. The newspapers seldom mention it, and when they do, it happens coolly and looking down from above, and it appears as though everyone forgets and ignores the dark half of the land until the astonished visitor is inclined to ask whether the problem exists at all. However, if he whiles away enough time, then comes the awakening: perhaps he is a witness of a sudden outbreak of passions that terrify him in their dark intensity, more probably through the gradual appearance of things that he did not notice at first. But little by little his eyes begin to notice the shadows of the color line; he encounters crowds of Negroes and then again of whites; or he suddenly notices that he does not see a single dark face; another time he perhaps finds himself at the end of a walk in a strange assembly where

all faces are colored dark or brown and the indeterminate, uncomfortable feeling of being a stranger comes over him. Finally he recognizes that the world around him has silently, without resistance, divided itself into two great streams. They run their course in the same sunshine, they nourish themselves and mingle their waters in apparent unconcern, they divide themselves again and flow widely separated. Everything happens quietly, no mistakes are made, or if one does occur, the law and public opinion stand on guard as, for example, recently when a Negro and a white woman were arrested because they spoke to one another on Whitehall Street in Atlanta.

With more exact observation one will see that despite all the physical points of contact and despite the daily interaction between these two worlds, there is almost no commonality of intellectual and spiritual life nor are there points of contact where the thoughts and feelings of the one race can come in direct contact with those of the other. Before and immediately after the war, as the best Negroes were house servants in the best white families, bonds of intimacy, of affection and sometimes of blood relations between the races existed. They lived in the same home, shared family life, often attended the same church and talked and amused themselves together. But since then the increasing civilization of the Negroes has naturally led to the development of higher classes: there is an increasing number of ministers, teachers, doctors, merchants, artisans, and independent farmers that from nature and through upbringing are the aristocracy and leaders of the blacks. Nevertheless, little or no intellectual and spiritual interaction exists between them and the best white elements. They attend different churches, they live in different parts of the city, they are strictly separated from one another in all public assemblies, they travel separately and begin to read different newspapers and books. The coloreds have either no access at all to most libraries, lectures, concerts and museums or only under conditions that must wound the self-esteem of those classes whose visits were to be expected. The daily newspapers report the incidents of the black world from above looking down, without great concern for accuracy and so it goes through all categories of intellectual means of communication: schools, assemblies, welfare endeavors and so on. The white is bound

just like the Negro by the color line and many humane plans, many intentions of open-hearted empathy and generous brotherhood between the two must remain unrealized, because some busybody pushed the color question into the foreground and called out the enormous power of the unwritten laws against the reformers.

It is hardly necessary for me to say still more about the social contact of the two races. Nothing has replaced that fine sympathy and love between many masters and servants which in the last years [of slavery] allowed the sharp emphasis on the color line almost completely to disappear. One can imagine what it means to a world that places so much value on extending a hand to a man and sitting next to him, on looking him straight in the eyes and thinking that he too has a feeling heart, a world in which a shared cigar or cup of tea means more than the House of Representatives and journal articles and speeches—one can imagine what it would mean to such a world when almost every social friendliness between the alienated races ceases and the separation is even expanded to hotels, parks and street cars.¹³

There is no social interaction with the black population. On the other hand, the South is—as though driven by a guilty conscience—exaggeratedly generous where it is a matter of simple alms and the support of the old and sick and social contact does not come into question. Black beggars are never sent away with empty hands and an appeal to benevolent hearts always finds a response. I remember that one time in a cold winter in Atlanta I did not approach a welfare foundation because I feared that Negroes would be disadvantaged. When I later asked a friend: “Are blacks supported too?” he said: “Naturally, almost only blacks.”

But the heart of the matter is not touched by this. Human progress is not promoted through alms, but through compassion and common work among those classes that would not accept alms. But in this land the color line separates at the heights of [social] life, those who should naturally be friends and comrades in the struggle for the good, the noble and the true, while it is effaced and disappears in the depths of social life, in the whiskey bars, in the gaming dens and in the bordello.

While this quiet struggle of the races rages in the South, the ideology [*Ideenkreis*] of the American people has shifted. The causes of this are (1) the

growing inequality in the distribution of wealth, (2) the rise of imperialism and (3) the color line.

The doctrine of democratic equality as it was announced in America 60 years ago emanated from the obvious social equality of Americans at that time. They began life with little accumulated wealth, but rich sources of help stood open to them; the economic starting point was rather equal for all, mostly the end point too. Even if someone became richer than his fellows through cleverness or thriftiness, the sons easily squandered the wealth so that the figure of speech “between shirtsleeves and shirtsleeves lie three generations,” became a telling expression for economic rise and fall. The second half of the nineteenth century saw many indications of a change. The large corporations came into being; the millionaire followed soon after; and little by little the American nation became conscious of the fact that in the distribution of prosperity great and apparently lasting inequalities predominate. Private wealth of fabulous and almost incomprehensible proportions was accumulated next to which appeared the question of the poor, the lack of employment, homelessness and child misery. For a nation that is so individualistic as the United States, it was difficult to look these new problems in the face and to admit that in America too class differences have become visible.

But instead of turning its thoughts and mental powers to the solution of these steadily growing social problems, a new turn occurred and, despite all of its previous traditions, the United States became a “world power” in that it annexed several foreign territories in different parts of the world. How can one explain this peculiar development? Every growing nation naturally has its time where it is overcome with the sickness of imperialism, but in most cases predisposing causes can be determined—in England the adventurous seafarers prepared the ground, in France it was the Napoleonic epidemic and in Germany the boiling of the new national feeling. But in America this politic was ridiculed and not considered good; the brotherhood of nations was emphasized and not the tutelary relation. But this has changed—and did it not least occur because America discovered within its own borders a large class of citizens that it did not call brothers and did not want to treat justly, not to mention as equally

entitled? This was naturally not the only cause of the annexation of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Panama and Hawaii, but it contributed.

The indications of great changes cannot escape any candid observer. There was a time when personal achievement meant much more than today; the phrase "upper and lower classes" begins to mean something; strong and influential groups look with disapproval at every form of education that is not above all and exclusively intended to secure the perpetuation of the current social and economic situation. Americans begin to show not only open contempt for the "bastard races," but also a growing respect for snobbism and they gladly began to forget the color of their grandfathers' fingernails. Great contemporary forces, broad-hearted philanthropy and a healthy democratic ideal are certainly not lacking, and yet all know that American democracy is very sick and that even large and growing efforts at social reform develop tendencies that make them just as often into contributing causes of social separation as of the promotion of the advance of classes.

That the mass of Americans notices and reflects upon the growth of class differences especially in economic relations is evident in the results of the last three presidential elections. This vote is in no way thought out or logical, but it gives expression to a widespread and deep feeling that might be expressed in the following words: "If in a land of unlimited opportunities a group of people works together for its livelihood and if a man accumulates more wealth from the fruits of this labor than he will ever be able to spend, while the others can hardly live somewhat respectably, then this is an unjust distribution of the profit. And if on the basis of this unjust distribution increasing class and racial privileges are built, then the injustice becomes a lasting one and a crime." I do not want to say that the quarter million who voted for Mr. Debs in 1904, or the million who voted for the silver-currency man in 1900 and 1896 had a clear picture of the evil of which I have spoken or rational suggestions for improvement. I only want to express what the protest really was that guided them unclearly during the election, and to say that they were right.

As soon as the poison of the class mentality penetrates the life-spirit of a nation, then the standpoint of the privileged classes alone determines its judgment of good and evil. In the United States this can especially be seen

in the school question. How should the children of the serving classes be raised? Earlier the Americans said: "as men"; now they whisper: "as servants, then we will have better servants." How should the children of the artisans be raised? "As carpenters," they begin to think, "so that we will get better houses." That seems to be a healthy logic and it is, too, when servants and comfortable houses are the final goals of national life. But are they? Class hierarchy grows today in America, in the land that was founded as a mighty protest against this folly that rules the world. It grows almost undisturbed, for its victims today are mostly blacks. But the Americans should not for that reason let themselves be lulled into a false security! The Negro question is only one indication of the increasing class and racial privileges and not, as many optimistically believe, its cause.

The only salvation from such a situation evidently lies in not placing all energy on the class standpoint.

We want to adopt the old national standpoint in the Negro question and shove aside on the one hand the demands of the plantation owners of the South and the capitalists of the North, on the other the purely personal wishes of the blacks; and here we must first establish certain axioms of the situation:

1. The Negro question is an inescapable legacy from which America cannot free itself without further ado. It is a debt that has been entered into to the advantage of the Americans living today. The contemporary industrial development of America is based on the blood and sweat of unpaid Negro labor in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The black race's right to exist is based on that. Men who 10 or 20 years ago came ragged and ruined across the ocean have no right to drive Negroes from the land that their ancestors trod upon before the pilgrim fathers.
2. Caste mentality produces caste mentality; the fact that there is in America a proscribed race also makes it easier to proscribe classes, and class privileges are responsible for the fact that Negroes find deaf ears for their wishes.

3. The political situation in the South where most Negroes live can only be temporary or the republican form of government is condemned to death. If the “rotten borough”¹⁴ system is naturalized in Louisiana, Alabama and South Carolina, if the payment of taxes without parliamentary representation becomes the norm south of the Ohio, then democracy will not only perish there, but the beginnings of a free government in the entire country will be nipped in the bud.
4. The well-being of the American worker would be seriously threatened if the Negroes of the South are made into a proscribed, patronized class whose living conditions come close to serfdom and that enters into competition against the rest of the working class.

Keeping in mind these four points, we can thus formulate the more comprehensive question: can the white and black race live together in America in freedom and equality?

What does “living together” mean in a free, modern state? It means first of all economic cooperation—joint labor for a livelihood, further, political interests come into consideration, and finally it means complete social freedom for all, according to their personal needs, as long as the freedom of the one does not hinder that of the other.

Objections have been raised against all of these forms of common life and, indeed, by alluding to the ignorance, to the inability to perform and the immorality of the Negroes, and to the repugnance that many people have to personal interaction with them. For example, artisans, women workers, clerks did not want to have Negroes as fellow workers because they are supposedly unskilled. As a race Negroes are unskilled, but many Negroes are certainly capable people, and to refuse to accept a skilled worker because his brother or cousin or some still more distant family member is unskilled is more foolish than the proscription of a man because his father was a rag-picker [*Gassenkehrer*] or peasant. Many states refuse blacks the right to vote, officially because of a lack of education. Forty-five percent of the Negro race are illiterate; but many black men are not uneducated, and it is senseless to take the right to vote away from an

educated Negro because there are members of his race who are not. Many people raise their objections against the Negro criminal; with justifiable indignation they point to the criminality, the immorality, the depravity of many Negroes. And that is correct—it is not to be regretted that the American people oppose crime, but only that they are often too mild in their judgment. But for that reason all the more justice should be accorded to the individual Negro who is not a criminal so that his fellows see that it is worthwhile to remain respectable.

But most objections that are made against blacks and whites living together are not at all clearly based on pointing out the lack of education, inability, or criminality of the Negroes. It is simply a matter of unconsidered antipathy toward blacks, not necessarily a matter of hate or ill will. One feels an antipathy, their physical characteristics are displeasing, they alienate. This is characteristic for the behavior of the better classes of whites toward the Negroes in the North, and since they make no secret about it, the masses imitate them and, in so doing, exaggerate. And the shop girls and factory workers, the foreign immigrants—all who are conscious of their own precarious position on the border line see the shadow of caste and flee hurriedly so that they themselves will not be entwined in it.

Free human beings indeed have a right to their sympathies and antipathies. That is one of the cultural achievements. But when personal antipathies and moods are given into to the point that democracy is endangered, that progress is derailed, that human souls are enchained and 9 million are forced into a life full of despair and humiliation, then it is time to limit somewhat the rule of sympathies and antipathies with healthy common sense and the most common respect. It is a prerogative of the American woman to choose her husband; but it is not her prerogative or her duty to choose husbands for all of her neighbors. It is a prerogative of the American citizen to buy those comforts that he can afford, in the train, theatres and other public institutions. But it is not his prerogative to insist that I do not have the same right. It is a holy prerogative of every American to decide who shall enjoy the hospitality of his home, but no man may presume to audit the guest lists of the nation or of an individual of the nation. It is the duty of every citizen to help govern his city and his country, but it is not his duty to want to tear this privilege from

his neighbor simply because his neighbor has red hair. In other words: it is the prerogative of every American to give in to his personal antipathy toward certain races or individuals, but this personal antipathy may not be permitted to hinder other people at work, in the exercise of their political rights and obligations, and in the enjoyment of public institutions. If it is really permanently impossible for respectable white men and respectable blacks to work and vote together, to visit the same public events, to allow each other to go their own ways in their legitimate peculiarity, without it resulting in war, slavery, caste difference, lies, stealing and lynching, then American democracy is a dream. If human collaboration is made impossible through lack of education, then we have an education problem not a racial problem. If collaboration is hindered by inability, then it is a matter of training that is not exclusively a racial matter. Insofar as crime is a problem, it is just as much a problem for whites as for blacks.

The fact of racial antipathy is as old as the interaction of people with one another. But the history of the centuries is the history of the discovery of the human soul and in every age the curse of the average person was his own narrowness, his blindness toward the riches that surrounded him, the notion that his own narrow heart and his small mind are the measure and borders of the universe. Above all in our days we do not want to forget the trivial observation that even in the nooks and alleys, and under threadbare clothing, lay hidden riches and depths of human life that we will perhaps never experience in ourselves.

In the struggle for his human rights the American Negro relies above all on the feeling of justice in the civilized world. We are no barbarians or heathen, we are educable and our education is increasing; our economic abilities have proven themselves. We too want to have our chance in life. Whoever wants to get acquainted with our living conditions, be welcome; we demand nothing other than that one gets acquainted with us honestly and face to face, and does not judge us according to hearsay or according to the verdict of our despisers.

And above all consider one thing: the day of the colored races dawns. It is insanity to delay this development; it is wisdom to promote what it promises us in light and hope for the future.¹⁵



NOTES

1. [Original] editor's note: the following, and also a series of other new publications by Negroes and about Negroes in the United States, will be reviewed by one of the editors in one of the next few volumes. This will provide the occasion to address several of the contentual [*sachliche*] dimensions of the problem. In the meantime we are pleased to be able to provide one of the most outstanding intellectual representatives of the American Negroes the opportunity to express his views. [Special issue editor's note: This essay originally appeared in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (see Du Bois 1906). The journal was jointly edited by Werner Sombart, Max Weber, and Edgar Jaffé at Heidelberg, Germany. All notes or text enclosed in brackets are by the translator or editor of this special issue, including bibliographic information.]
2. [Translator's note: misspellings of English words, names, and place names used in the German original have been simply corrected without comment. Brackets either indicate English words added for the sake of clarity or contain the original German word(s) if not easily and clearly translatable]
3. [Translator's note: in the discussion of the various nuances of the sharecropping system throughout this section, Du Bois uses variations on the term "*Pächter*" to capture the nuances of the system, and even then he resorts in one case to the English term "croppers." In the translations of these terms I have used the following criteria. Du Bois uses the term "*Pächter*" itself in two ways: in a generic sense, which I have translated as "tenant"; and in a specific sense, referring to a tenant who pays money rent, in which case I have translated it as "renter." Since Du Bois defines the *Halbpächter* as one whose rent consists of a share of the harvest, I have translated it as "sharecropper." Du Bois also uses the English term "croppers" to denote those who are essentially wage laborers, but who receive their wages not in cash but as a share of the harvest.

In one of the best recent works on tenant taxonomy in the post-Civil War South, the authors, Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, divide into two categories what Du Bois covered in one (Ransom and Sutch 1977). They define "sharecropping" as a system in which all but board and clothing was provided by the landlord who then took in return 50 percent of the harvest. They add, however, the category of "share tenancy" to describe the system in which the landlord provided only land, housing, and sometimes fuel, while the tenant provided tools, seed, wagons, etc. In this case the landlord took only one-fourth to one-third of the harvest. Sutch and Ransom add that this form was relatively rare since it required an amount of initial capital that few freedmen possessed (92). Du Bois, however, referred specifically to this system of working on "thirds or fourths" as a system of sharecropping, only quantitatively different from a situation in which the landlord took half of the crop.]

4. [Translator's note: "croppers" in English in the original.]
5. [Translator's note: in this and the following three paragraphs, Du Bois seemingly uses the term *Pächter* in its generic sense as "tenant" which can refer both to renters

- (*Pächter*) and sharecroppers (*Halbpächter*). Since the scenario he describes in these paragraphs could befall both the renter and the sharecropper, I have translated *Pächter* throughout as “tenant.”]
6. Amendment to the constitution of the United States that forbids slavery.
 7. According to Bancroft’s estimation.
 8. Excluding turpentine collection.
 9. Not counted in 1890.
 10. Including turpentine collection.
 11. [Translator’s note: the sentences following those attributed to Whatley were not set off in quotation marks in the original. I assume therefore that Du Bois is paraphrasing.]
 12. [Translator’s note: this is the title of the leader of the Knights of Labor, *Terence v. Powderly*.]
 13. [Translator’s note: here there is either a grammatical or typographical mistake or Du Bois is using a formulation no longer current. Whatever the case, his meaning is unmistakable. The German reads: “*Man kann sich vorstellen, was einer Welt, wo es so viel bedeutet, einem Mann die Hand zu reichen und sich neben ihm zu setzen, ihm offen in die Augen zu schauen und daran zu denken, dass auch er einfühlendes Herz hat, wo eine gemeinsame Zigarre oder Tasse Tee mehr bedeuten als die Abgeordneten Häuser und Zeitschriftenartikel und Reden, es heisst, wenn fast jede soziale Freundlichkeit zwischen den entfremdeten Rassen aufhört und die Trennung sich sogar auf die Hotels, Parks und Strassenbahnwagen ausdehnt.*”]
 14. [Translator’s note: in English in the original.]
 15. [Original] bibliographic note. In the following publications the author addressed in greater detail the questions raised above: *Atlanta University Publications*, Nos. 1–9 [(Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems 1896; Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems 1897; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 3*, 1898; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 4*, 1899; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 5*, 1900; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 6*, 1901; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 7*, 1902; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 8*, 1903; Du Bois, W. E. B., *Atlanta Study No. 9*, 1904)]. *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903, 265p [(Du Bois, W. E. B., *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903)]. *Philadelphia Negro*, 1899, 520 p [(Du Bois and Eaton 1899)]. *Bulletin of the U.S. Census*, No. 8 [(Du Bois, W. E. B., Negro Farmer, 1904)].

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