

CHANGE WITHOUT PROGRESS

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Several years ago a trial took place. The results of this trial have held the attention of the world to this day. An individual was handed over to some citizens of one state by some citizens of another state under questionable circumstances. He was then compelled to work. The community was immediately aroused as to what would be his ultimate fate. This interest resulted in a trial, the proceedings of which are unusual, to say the least. To start with instead of the persecutors being charged and tried, their prisoner was charged and tried and his freedom was ultimately taken away.

You are probably beginning to wonder why this trial would hold the attention of the world. With all its peculiar ramifications it is not particularly overwhelming, and injustice is not an uncommon occurrence in this or in any other nation. Why then is it significant? I'll tell you why, but first we will have to make a few changes. Instead of several years let's make it several hundred years, three hundred and forty-four years to be exact. And instead of the defendant being an individual, let's make him a race.

It is true the trial that I have just related did not take place in any court room, but it did take place as surely as I am standing before you today. In 1619 when Dutch sailors exchanged eleven Negroes for water and provisions, slavery did not exist in Virginia or in any of the other colonies. And it was long and vigorously debated whether the Negro would become an indentured servant or a slave. We all know what the ultimate judgement was; however, it has been contended that if the Negro had been treated as an indentured servant, rather than as a slave, America's infamous race problem might not have developed to such serious proportions.

Whether or not this would have happened is insignificant because one hundred years after the great attempt to correct that unjust judgement, racial discrimination stands as America's number one domestic problem. Because of this fact of life, I and twenty-two million fellow citizens are haunted every day of our lives by questions that never cross the minds of the majority of Americans. Questions like, "Am I really free?"; "Will I ever really be free, and if so when?"; "Will my children really be free?". And the most important question, "Why does racial discrimination continue to exist?". My fathers have gone to their graves with these questions on their lips. But what is more tragic, American society has never clearly answered these questions.

In an attempt to avoid the plight of my fathers, I embarked upon a tedious pilgrimage, that carried me through the jungles of America's infamous race problem--from 1619 to the present day. I uncovered many shocking and enlightening things. You may think my findings absurd and in some instances unbelievable, but I beg your indulgence. During my pilgrimage from about 1863 on, something began to stand out, more and more. It was not restricted to any one section of the nation or to any one individual. It seemed to be at work whenever and wherever civil rights measures were being advanced. It can best be described as a scheme of change without progress. It is exactly what it insinuates, an attempt to reduce seemingly great progress to the status of insignificant changes by undermining them.

It is a very complicated scheme, and it takes many forms, but its goal is always the same--to keep the Negro in a state of stagnation. One of the tragic aspects of this scheme is that it is often aided by the efforts of many who in no way share its aspirations. This scheme has some dominant characteristics. The exploiters of it always seek to delay action as long as possible unless it will benefit them in some way. Whenever action is initiated, they seek to undermine it in its very inception or shortly thereafter. This scheme concentrates on those areas of life that are of greatest importance.

To illustrate just how this scheme works and how effective it is in reducing seemingly great progress to the status of insignificant changes, let us use for illustration what is considered to be the greatest civil rights advance since the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1954, in a series of cases, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional and contended that public schools should be integrated with, "All deliberate speed". The exploiters immediately began to undermine this decision. First, they exploited the, "All deliberate speed", clause, using it as a delaying device. In Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This has been effective for nine years. These states have only two Negroes enrolled

in what were formerly all white institutions, both of which are in colleges. In a recent "Newsweek" article, James Meredith contended that his attempt to integrate the University of Mississippi for all practical purposes had failed. In the majority of other states, methods that come to be known as "re-segregation" have been employed: grade a year programs which start with the lower grades, pupil placement laws, and gerrymandering of school districts. These maneuvers have amounted to token integration or no integration at all. In those school districts where integration has been called a complete success, unwritten policies and practices place unnecessary stress and strain on student to student, as well as student to teacher relationships. In the January nineteenth issue of the, "Saturday Evening Post", Carl T. Rowan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for public affairs, said, "In the seventeen states and District of Columbia where enforced segregation was law and policy prior to 1954 there are today, three million two hundred thousand Negroes enrolled in public schools. More than three million of them are as victimized by JIM CROW as the appellates who asked our highest court for relief a decade ago. So we see that the perpetrators of change without progress have been able to make as much a shambles of the 1954 decision as they did of the "separate but equal facilities", decision handed down in the case of Plessy V. Ferguson in 1896. The inherent unnequalness of which was the main factor in bringing about the great 1954 decision.

I could go on and on and give illustration after illustration, but now that we see how some of these undermining methods work. Let us turn to why they are really employed. Let us cut through the arguments that are the so-called reasons for racial discrimination. When the arguments are carefully analyzed they fall into one of three categories: they are completely false, they can be directly attributed to racial discrimination, or they could equally apply to any other segment of American society. The real reason for the continuation of racial discrimination is this--it is one of the most lucrative vices in the world. It has, and is still depriving the American Negro of untold billions of dollars. In those sections of the nation where racial discrimination is practiced in a sensational manner, in the state of Mississippi, for example, according to statistics, Negroes earn on the average as little as one-third as their white counter-parts. This varies from state to state, but in no state will you find a significant number of Negroes of equal merit earning in proportion with their white counter-parts. According to the Civil Rights Commission, and its 1961 Report on Employment this is even prevalent among Civil Service employees, as well. Racial discrimination is a multi-billion dollar business, and it is unrealistic to think that its exploiters will give it up, no matter how much human suffering and national disgrace it costs the American people.

Now let us look at some of the men and the solutions that have advanced to resolve racial discrimination. I pointed out earlier that the exploiters of change without are often aided by the efforts of many who in no way share their aspirations. No where is this more prevalent than among Negro leaders and their solutions. Negro leaders have knowingly overrated the actions and motives of politicians from Abraham Lincoln to John F. Kennedy, and have de-emphasized the circumstances that compelled politicians to do what they have done and are doing. This coupled with their refusal to admit that many of their solutions have failed their contending that great progress has been made in certain areas of civil rights when they know that it has not. Also their rating of certain sections of the nation as better than others as far as racial discrimination is concerned. More sensational forms of racial discrimination may be practiced in Mississippi than in New Jersey, for example, but racial discrimination practiced in New Jersey is just as vicious to a New Jersey Negro as racial discrimination practiced in Mississippi is to a Mississippi Negro. I could go on and on and use illustrations involving such famous Negroes as Booker T. Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is unnecessary, for after one carefully analyzes solutions aimed at eradicating racial discrimination, putting all fantasy aside, in reality he can conclude only one thing--these solutions have failed. Although today I may use the front, instead of the back door, I can't do any more in the "big house" than my fathers could do, a hundred years ago.

The reason that the exploiters have been so successful is that they have been able to convince the American people that the Negro is somehow, not quite a human being. This was the foundation argument for slavery in 1619, and it is the foundation argument for racial discriminating today. To illustrate how successful they have been in projecting this image, let's turn to an illustration. During the 1960 Presidential campaign the now President John F. Kennedy, told Jackie Robinson, a famed Negro athlete, "I don't know anything about Negroes; I have never come into contact with those people". This insinuated that contact with other Americans was not sufficient background for understanding Negroes. As elementary as it may sound, the day the Negro is able to convince the American people that he is a human being, subject to no more or fewer vices and virtues than other human beings, that day will (Cont. p 39)

mark the beginning of the end of racial discrimination. This can be accomplished in three ways: First, through academic instruction. Only one state--California--teaches Negro history in its high schools, and it has been doing so for only two years. Books by themselves, however, can not accomplish this goal, because they usually establish too high or too low a standard. Secondly, personal contact is necessary but it, without the academic instruction, can not accomplish the goal, either. The reason for this is that many Negroes are as full of misapprehensions about themselves as are the staunchest white segregationists. These two factors may convince the American people that the Negro is a human being, but they must be accompanied by a third factor, the constant exposing of tactics used to undermine civil rights advances. To succeed in these three areas the Negro is going to have to make use of an asset that he has too under-rated. This asset is feared more by the exploiters of change without progress than the forms of trickery and manipulating that they, themselves, employ. This asset is simply--the truth; on the truth about Negro history, the truth about the Negro as a human being, the truth about American civil rights. By exploiting the truth to the fullest extent, the Negro may be able to accomplish what to this day has proved to be impossible.

This philosophy was epitomized by Jesus Christ when he said,

"And ye shall know the turth,
And the truthor will set you free."