

# The Reader's Digest

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## Should the Color Line Go?

Condensed from *Current History* (Sept. '23)

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**W**HY do few people outside the South seem to understand or care what consequences will follow the destruction of the caste system upheld by a color line? A certain inexorable race law should be kept in mind if one would understand the magnitude of the issue involved: No two homogeneous races will long continue to exist side by side in the same country on terms of perfect equality without race blending. One is prone to think of miscegenation as a thing foreign to the United States, and yet ethnologists generally declare that such blending between whites and blacks will take place, and that the Southern States will eventually become mulatto.

A few years ago Colonel Roosevelt told of the rising tide of color in Central America — the fusing of whites and blacks into a mulatto civilization; how a prosperous negro would marry an impecunious white woman, how the male offspring would repeat the process, so that, after two or three generations, they would become a white family. And similar conditions exist today in Cuba, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal and the French colonies, where marriages between whites and blacks are well-nigh universal.

Schults in "Race or Mongrel" declares that "if conditions that now exist continue nothing need be done with the negro; the problem will solve itself. The immigration of Southern mongrels is in-grafting more and more negro blood in our veins." To the same effect is Hoffman's "Racial Traits and Tendencies": "The process is now rapidly going on and the black race will be absorbed; a condition which, though unpopular,

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is not unwelcome to many thinkers." Document 188 of the Carnegie Foundation has valuable data showing universal race blending in Jamaica and Bermuda. Sir Ilivier, Governor of Jamaica, advocates the blending of whites with blacks "as a buffer to prevent race conflict."

Viscount Bryce asserts that "the Brazilian lower classes intermarry freely with the black people; the Brazilian middle classes intermarry with mulattoes and quadroons"; and intimates that three-fourths white is white enough for Brazilians and Portuguese. The Journal of Heredity, October, 1916, contains a statement that the union of the races is inevitable; and to the same effect speak the Literary Digest of October, 1917, and the Century Magazine of March, 1903. In the "Future of Evolution" race-blending in the South is taken for granted; Reuter in "The Mulatto in the United States" implies that race-blending will take place if the color line and race segregation are not maintained.

We must conclude, therefore, that eventually the two races in America will blend if they be placed on social and political equality.

Are Southern whites and blacks socially and politically equal? And now we touch the first sorry spot. Is a man free who cannot vote, hold office or serve on the jury; is he free when he must ride in second class coaches, sit in the gallery at public places, occupy rear seats of electric cars and flee for his life when suspected of being a dangerous character? Can man or race be free with a spirit in chains? And does it lie in the mouth of the white man to charge that the negro is but a race of boot-blacks, when we have confined him to the task of blacking our boots?

We are not now considering whether these things should or should not be; we are merely asserting that in the "Black Belt" they are. And they are for a definite, a fixed pur-

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pose. In order to maintain the present servile condition of the negro it is necessary to put him under foot and to keep him under foot. Roosevelt's papers made a lasting impression on the South. They described the process of race blending and showed how the crossing of white and mulatto produced a quadroon; the crossing of quadroon with white person produced an octoroon; the crossing of octoroon with white person produced a person called "passing for white"; and the crossing of "passing for white" with pure white produced "fixed white," and after "fixed white" there was no further reversion to black color.

If it were possible at the present time to blend the races, Southern people would have more than one-third colored blood in their veins. Northern people would have about 3 per cent colored blood and 97 per cent white. Moreover, if amalgamation were to take place now, the whole of South Carolina and Mississippi and half of Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana would grade about 50 per cent negro blood and 50 per cent white. The North, on the other hand, would grade about 3 per cent colored blood, a mixture well within the rule of "fixed white," whereas the Southern mixture would not reach the grade of "passing for white," the offspring of such persons being subject to the law of reversion of color.

It is not possible to place Southern whites and blacks on terms of social and political equality as soon as the blacks are fitted for citizenship, as many philanthropic organizations are now insisting, because the Southern white man is tenacious of his rights and on this subject is regardless of consequences. If Congress should pass a Force Bill and undertake to put it into operation, the Irish upheaval would be a mild affair with conditions in the Southern States. Either the white man would exterminate the negro, or the negro would exterminate the white man. The white man

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will brook no peer. It is not a question of whether the negro is a good citizen or bad; it is deeper than this; it has to do with race integrity, race autonomy. Men of the South place race integrity above politics, property, religion, or life itself. The South alone among nations is today making a fight against a universal ethnological law of race-blending. The mistake is in not boldly admitting the facts.

This, then, is the line-up. Can actual warfare be avoided? I think it can. There is nothing strange or alarming about the situation. The negro desires to be free and he is right. The white man claims that the South is his to rule and control, and he, too, is right. But while man has busied himself in the endeavor to solve matters, in the wrong way, the God of nations seems to have taken a hand, pointing the way of escape, even as He pointed it out to Abraham and Lot: "*And Abraham said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee. Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me.*" Even so today is God moving the black man to separate himself from the Southern white man, and, by the thousand, are negroes leaving the South.

The way out is to change our mental attitude on this subject and vitalize every legitimate movement for negro migration North, East and West. Let those States welcome the negroes to equal rights make known the fact, opening wide these doors, and negroes will continue to leave the South.

But I go further. Were I a negro, facing the future, I would cease to fight against white prejudice, by raising the banner of "Pan-Africa. I would herald "Unity of the Colored Races" until my latest breath. And why shall not the National Government sponsor negro exodus, making ready a suitable home for the race? Why may not French Guiana and Sierra Leone be added to Liberia, creating an ample fatherland for such

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Afro-Americans as choose to go? Shall we not send another Goethals with means and equipment and make Liberia as healthy as Panama? During the present year a British commission after nine months' travel reported that in the three essentials—climate, productivity and health (with proper attention)—Africa is the most favored of the nations, that it possesses marvelous flora, wonderful water-power, fertile soil, extensive mineral deposits, abundant hard wood.

The negroes are tractable and will follow such course as their leaders may map out for the race; a course which should be thought out, it must again be insisted, not along the impossible, makeshift lines of racial equality in the South, but in the quite opposite direction and in terms of hundreds of years. While permanent plans are under way, every energy should be exerted to educate and fit the negro for a new, a saner life under ampler skies. America may not justify herself at the Final Assize until she live up to the truth that the white man is right, that the negro is also right, and that of these two contradictions neither is wrong.

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