

Columbia Professor Strikes A New Note In Negro Education

Educator Says Pictures of Negroes Who Have Achieved Success Should Be Displayed In Classrooms of Colored Educational Institutions.

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—A professor of Teachers College of Columbia University, addressing the Associated Publishers at 1538 Ninth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C., sounds a new note in the education of the Negro. It may be fortunate that it comes from a white institution, for the "mis educated Negro" may now heed this advice which we

have been giving for many years. "This professor says, "I should like very much to list in a pamphlet on research sources, the addresses of publishing houses from which good pictures of prominent Negroes can be obtained. I have always been a great believer in a school's putting up before its pupils the pictures of men and women who have made notable achievements. I have been unable by myself, however, to locate the addresses of such publishing houses from which schools could secure such pictures."

The Associated Publishers took occasion to remind the professor that for a number of years it has been supplying pictures of all prominent and useful Negroes, ranging from the very smallest to life size pictures suitable for display in assembly halls. While the effort has been given adequate publicity our teachers have not thought of this unusual opportunity. They have probably been waiting for some one else to approve the plan. Now they have the necessary endorsement.

Commenting on the educational value of such service this professor says, "In my judgment, in issuing these pictures you are doing a splendid work. A picture of a man or woman who has achieved something worthwhile is a distinct asset in a school room, particularly if the individual represents a practical and attainable ideal for the pupils. When I was Professor of School Administration in the George Peabody College for Teachers nearly 20 years ago, I used to go out each year for a week or so to visit Negro schools.

"On these visits, I was struck with the fact that about the only pictures of persons in the schools were the conventional ones of Lincoln and Washington, or the artistic calendars gotten out by advertising companies. In very rare instances I saw an old, dilapidated picture of Frederick Douglass or Booker T. Washington. I took the matter up vigorously with various people at the time, but could find no such offering as you now make available. Accordingly, I wish you every success in this work."

This professor might have added that in some of these schools you find no pictures at all but those of the sort advertising chewing tobacco, showing how Doc Suters "Old Reliable Bitters" has stimulated weak men, and what Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for the relief of women. It can hardly be believed that such as these are placed on the walls to inspire the pupils. They indicate rather a lack of an esthetic ideal and the failure to make use of visualization in education.

When sold now for low prices ranging between two cents and a dollar almost any school may place on its walls the pictures of distinguished Negroes. The higher institutions, moreover, may do more than decorate rooms with ordinary pictures. With the large number of rising artists in the race like Aaron Douglass, J. L. Wells and Lola M. Jones, it is possible to place in our schools the paintings of the outstanding Negroes for whom these buildings are named. Why do we name our buildings for Dunbar, Douglass and Washington and then do not show enough interest to hang before the student body paintings of these world characters?

It is unfortunate that we find teachers themselves utterly unconcerned about such an important aspect of our education. You often see in buildings named for Crispus Attucks, Benjamin Banneker, Phillis Wheatley or Daniel A. Payne teachers who do not know anything about these characters or why these buildings are thus designated. These employees are there not to teach, but to make a living easily. Their bosses are not interested in the Negro. Why should they be?

Pastors of churches, too, are equally as ignorant of the founders of these institutions. A church recently celebrating its anniversary, instead of having its own story to give to the world, had to write us for a sketch and a picture of its founder. Pastors there have come and gone, but they were not interested in the written record. They were seeking collections to pay off mortgages and to buy gewgaws and toys. In this way we have lost ground and have tended to become a negligible factor in the thought of the world. Thus it happens with people when they forget what they have thought and felt and attempted and accomplished.

This failure to appreciate the men who have made the past and the consequent emphasis upon trifles of the present resulted from the terrible blow which slavery dealt us. That nefarious system severed our connection with the glorious past of the race and left us unable to evaluate the great factors which in their cumulative effect with the years have made life worth while. We no longer think of our race as having great traditions; and, being unable to look

back far into the past we cannot look far into the future. People who come from nowhere may not get any where.

From one of the philosophers, however, we may learn "what an 'enormous camera-obscure' magnifier is tradition! How a thing grows in the human memory, in the human imagination, when love, worship, and all that lies in the human heart, is there to encourage it; and in the darkness in the entire ignorance, without date or document, no book, no Arundel marble, only here and there some dull monumental cairn!"

We must go back to the achievements of these black men, then, and, looking into these black faces of heroes and heroines, get inspiration to achieve as well as they did. With a vision of these great souls looking down upon us and urging us on to complete the unfinished task to the performance of which they made an outstanding contribution, let us press forward to the next objective in the development and uplift of the despoiled and rejected of men.