

# "PART 5"

## "The Negro Problem"

Thomas N. Page , shares experts from his book, THE NEGRO: THE SOUTHERNERS PROBLEM, in the McClure (1904) His aim is to outline research, his experience and interpretation of the race problem in the south. His points are "plain, candid and temperate." His very general note of the ideal white southerner although conflicting shows his authenticity. When he says, "no man can entirely dissociate himself from the conditions amid which he grew up, or free himself from the influences which surrounded him in his youth. The most he can do is to strive earnestly for an open and enlarged mind and try to look at everything from the highest and soundest standpoint possible."

The themes of his writing is both one-sided and complex post-bellum / slave era mentality. Which gives a fresh ideology and thought of a "open and enlarged mind" that has distinct flaws. He attempts to balance complex ideals while trying to "seek a high regard more then just being right. His essays are well informed, simplistic and easy to understand. What is undeniable with these essay's, his view is an well-expressed witness to the mentality of his times.

Here are brief summaries of Page's three part essays on "the Negro Problem in the South":

### First Paper

"Slavery and the Old relation between the Southern Whites and Blacks"

Page biggest concern, was that over a forty year period the chief public question overshadowing all others is "the Negro question". This is the chief problem having kept "alive sectional feelings; inflamed partisanship, distorted party politics, costing hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of lives. He felt that the southern whites who know the negro best felt as though the Negroes at large needed a more substantial foundation for full citizenship by building itself industrially.

Based on the historical relations of the two races who's views are diametrically opposed and divergent within doctrine of blind bigotry wasn't always that way. But because of the money, brains, philanthropy of those from the North who experimented with the suffrage of the Negro things began to change. With all their passion and economic support, intern brought only immense disaster to whites and little benefit to those they were intended to uplift. The false doctrine pushed after being enslaved being that the Negro should be an equal to whites, was unrealistic and misguided. Page sets a precedence, of the institution of slavery having widespread roots in a every historical context worldwide, making its presence in the US mainstream. But a different light was cast on the south, when "Uncle Tom's cabin came out, the world was then given a one sided perspective of slavery, which "crystalized feelings against the South throughout the world. For the first time the world had only the imaginable horrors of slavery that didn't reflect the full picture of the slave experience in the United States."

Page, then gives a somewhat slighted approval to how well behaved the Negroes were during the war. And he makes a very tempting point to dismantle the negative impression most people had of the south and the treatment of its slaves. Page writes, "Had slavery in the South been the frightful institution that it has ordinarily been pictured, with the slave driver and the bloodhound always in the fore ground, t "then how even when the Negroes were offered several opportunities for freedom many still remain loyal to their masters. He explains further the loyalties of these faithful guardians of their masters homes and families; as trusted agents and the shrewd counselors of their mistresses. They raised the crops which fed the Confederate Armies, and suffered the privations which came alike to white and black from the exactions of war. On the approach of the enemy, the trusted house servants hid the family silver and valuables, guarded the horses and other property and resisted all temptation to desert or betray."

He continues, "During the war, the hostile feeling between the Negro and plain whites was dispelled, on the one side by the heroism shown by the poor whites, and on the other by the kindness shown by the Negroes to their families while the men were in the army. When the war closed, the friendship between the races was never stronger, the fidelity of the Negroes throughout the war was appreciated and the care and self denial of the whites were equally recognized by the Negroes. For years after the War the older Negroes men and women remained faithful guardians of the white women and children of their masters families. The preservation of a kindly relation among the slave owning class, remained in tact because, there was hardly a child who had not been rocked in a colored mammy's arms and whose first ride had not been taken with a Negro at his horses head not one who's closest playmates in youth had not been the young Negroes of the plantation. This feeling may be hard to explain for those who don't know its connection that possibly existed as a feudal or clan instinct. It was more then affection something more personal, more universal.

## **Second Paper**

"Some of its Difficulties and Fallacies"

Page describes a very unique experience of the relations between Whites and Blacks when emancipation came, as more kind and peaceful then the changes that had taken place in the early 1900's. He explains a rising dissension creating errors which have been committed that effected both races. The dissension he explains, was either sown since emancipation or inherent in the new conditions during the early 1900's. The conditions after the war and for many decades after was everyone both black and white was to secure a way of living in sections of the country that had been swept clean, and the entire labor system was disorganized. Arrangements with the government and entire household had to be repurposed. There weren't many options, so old masters informed their servants that their homes were still open to them and if they were willing to work they could stay. But the options represented on the other side of freedom was radiant and alluring, and most Blacks went off for a time, though a large number of them returned. Most of the blacks who left and stayed gone, where more likely able to make the good off of the rations the government distributed immediately after the war.

The fundamental error made for the Negro's, the conduct of the North towards the Negro was founded on the following principles; First, that all men are equal and that the Negro is the equal of the White; secondly that he needed to be sustained by the government, and that the interest of the Negro and the whites of the south were necessarily opposed, and that the Negro needed protection against the White. These fundamental distress for the Southern White was the reasoning behind insisting on a progression of the two races based on one principle and one policy founded on a conception of the absolute equality, the conception of this policy was enormous, not for mere political tenet but spoke to the very foundation of race preservation and the unimpeachable economic truth for the entire white population of the South as the most passionate dogma of the White Race.

Lastly, with the fixed idea that there could be no justice towards the Negroes in any dealings with the former masters all matters relating to the Negroes were entrusted by the government to organize. From this position "no statement of any Southern white person, however pure, lofty in morals, high minded in principle he might be, was accepted. His experience, his position, his character, counted for nothing. He was assumed to be so designing or so prejudiced that his counsel was valueless. The one thing that saved the Southerners from immediate bitterness and animosity was that they knew that it was not the Negroes but the Federal Government who held them in subjection. The Negro was left to feel that he was the ward of the nation, he was a particular people who the nation had taken under its wing and would support and foster and that he could by its fiat would be made the equal to whites.

Then came the worst enemy that either race had ever had, the post-bellum politician. Adding to a problem that was already sufficiently complicated when politics were injected into it made it worse.



(Thomas N. Page)

Click links below to read the full articles:

Reference:

1. Page, Thomas N. (March, 1904), "*The Negro- Part One*", McClure Magazine pdf page 138-144
2. Page, Thomas N. (April, 1904), "*The Negro-Part Two*", McClure Magazine pdf page 93- 100

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