

## The Need of Health Education Among Negroes

By ALGERNON B. JACKSON

I HAVE a habit of saying that I should much prefer seeing my boy or girl the possessor of the C. B. H. degree—clean bill of health—than an A. B. degree without the C. B. H. One is essential in order to get most out of and put most into life. The other is not. You do not have to possess a college degree to be a regular human being, but you must have health. From what I so often see I am sometimes inclined to think a degree frequently stands between certain persons and that attribute of humanness which should always be the highest concept of true education. In the light of present day thought any scholastic process which neglects to inspire the student with an appreciation and love for personal health and a regard for the health of his fellowman is nothing short of an absolute failure.

There is indeed both a need of and a desire for health education among Negroes, which is so sincerely expressed by the efforts which Negroes are putting forth to increase their efficiency along all lines toward making them more valuable and acceptable citizens. But, on the other hand, there is a very vital and definite need to educate the whites to understand that the question of health is a national rather than a racial one, which demands national consideration and treatment, or our whole scheme for human betterment breaks down. When it is considered how closely the races are brought in daily touch, it must at once become apparent that any effort intended to conserve the health of a nation must include all. If it presumes to dictate who shall be benefited and who shall not it results in little or no benefit to any one. In short, the white man must be educated to realize that his health problem cannot be solved so long as he is careless or indifferent regarding the Negro's health problem.

Up to the beginning of the World War very little care or study was given to the question of the Negro's health beyond a rather indifferent generalization which declared the race decadent and reeking with sickness and death. In face of this general notion the following note from the report of the provost marshal general must be considered at least interesting. "In the first draft, in June 1917, there were 737,628 colored registrants, or nearly eight per cent of the total registration of the country. Of the first group of 208,953 colored registrants examined under call of November 12, 1917, 36.23 per cent of them were accepted for service: Of 2,873,996 white men examined at approximately the same time, 24.75 per cent of them were accepted. In groups representing nearly an identical proportion it will be seen that in relative military fitness the Negro race outranked the whites by about twelve per cent." A still later report, Table 53, shows that for every 100 men examined physically, the ratio

of colored men found qualified for general military service was substantially higher than the ratio for white men by just five per cent, viz., 74.60 per cent as against 69.71 per cent. These reports are interesting from two standpoints. First, they show that the American Negro is not altogether the unhealthy menace we had heretofore regarded him, and in the face of these facts we owe it to him and our nation to see that he gets a human chance for that education so necessary to preserve and stabilize his health integrity.

For some time I have contended that physically the Negro is a better specimen than the white man, and now the latest anthropometric report from the Surgeon General of the United States Army proves the righteousness of this contention. In every measurement he excels except in breadth and depth of the chest. But in spite of these glowing reports the Negro still has both a higher morbidity and mortality rate than his white brother, due to no other reason than his general ignorance and indifference regarding the rules of health and self-preservation. In order to emphasize the need for a campaign of health education among Negroes, permit me to relate the following story. A dear old Negro woman called at the home of a white woman, for whom she regularly worked, to get the week's washing. The kind-hearted, intelligent white woman met her at the door and said, "No, Amanda, I shall not let you take my clothes to wash, for my children have the measles, and I don't want your children to get it." "Oh, that's all right," exclaimed the Negro washwoman, "my children's done had the measles two weeks ago!" This we can charge up to ignorance and nothing else!

No amount of intelligence can possibly save the educated from the menacing effects of the uneducated unless that intelligence is wisely used to dethrone ignorance and superstition, carrying the light of reason and well-being to all mankind, black and white alike. Just recently a book entitled "Public Health in the United States," by Dr. H. H. Moore of the United States Public Health Service, was issued by Harper and Brothers of New York. In the preface of this book, bearing the comprehensive title mentioned above, the author makes the following statement: "It is hoped that these data and facts thus compiled may be useful to members of the health committees of various civic organizations, to students in high schools, colleges and schools of social work, and to the administrative and legislative officers of local, State and Federal governments, as well as to those engaged professionally in public health activities." Of course I most naturally wanted to see what the book contained concerning the health of Negroes. Imagine my shock and surprise to find on page 20 not quite

twelve lines on the subject and they merely mentioned that the death rate of the Negro is higher than that of the whites! And this from a book which purports and presumes to serve as a guiding light to the many classes of persons mentioned in the author's preface.

To thus dismiss such a subject so important to American interests is little short of criminal, and in my most charitable moment I find myself compelled to declare the author's judgment certainly a bit myopic. Yet, except in a very few instances, this is a fair example of the attention civic, state and national organizations are giving to the education of themselves and to the education of Negroes upon this very vital matter concerning the health of 12,000,000 American citizens. Most certainly this is the moment for all of us to open our hearts and minds to a keener and finer understanding concerning the health of these our fellow-citizens, for in no way can any one who is not himself educated carry knowledge to that uneducated group hampered upon all sides by social, economic, and general living restrictions.

Good health must be regarded as a national asset, equally important in time of peace or war, which is always purchasable. This is an investment which will yield perpetual dividends of comfort, happiness, protection, and safety. Many philanthropic persons have seen fit to devote large funds for preserving and protecting the health of white Americans but comparatively nothing to be spent in the preservation of the health of black Americans. Here lies a wonderful virgin field for the righteous immortalization of some good, unbiased American to establish a foundation for the study and improvement of health, social and economic conditions among Negroes. Such a fund could and would do immeasurable service to the Negro race and to the nation. For the past fifteen years I have been extending this invitation from press and rostrum, but up to this moment there has been no response and no organized, honest effort made to get at the bottom of the Negro's health problem. I am hoping that on this occasion my words will not again fall upon stony ground, but upon some soil rich in human love from which will spring the urge to do a real human service for God, man and nation.

Booker T. Washington has said: "Without health, and until we reduce the high death rate, it will be impossible for us to have permanent success in business, in property getting, in acquiring education, or to show other evidences of progress. Without health and long life all else fails. We must reduce our high death rate, dethrone disease and enthrone health and long life. We may differ on other subjects, but there is no room for difference here. Let us make a strong, long, united pull together." When he said the above he was speaking to the Negro but these words should fall upon the ears of our whole nation. The whole-hearted methods adopted to pre-

serve the health of white Americans when compared with the half-hearted methods to preserve the health of black Americans make a jest of the whole procedure. The Negro always receives the by-product of expended energy in this direction, yet he is expected to measure up to the same physical standards as those who enjoy every opportunity and privilege in the matter of conserving health. This bi-racial tendency which prevails in America regarding all matters, great and small, is not consistent with our boasted intelligence and foresight in our attitude toward national health and its relation to national economics.

However, in a great measure left to our own initiative, guided by the light of education, we are beating down our high morbidity and mortality rate. To Dr. Booker T. Washington and the National Negro Business League, of which he was founder and president up unto his death, we are indebted for the establishment of a National Negro Health Week. More than any other one factor, this movement has called the attention of Negroes throughout the nation to the value and importance of good health. Like most things this great man did, the Health Week was introduced to our race in a plain, practical way, calling to their attention the most elementary principles of good health and how to attain it. Negroes all over the land, both North and South, have caught the spirit and inspiration of that great teacher and they are making a practical application of the lessons he taught.

Just recently I sent out a rather comprehensive health questionnaire to sixty-two Negro colleges and universities. Thirty-one of these replied and the data obtained has been tremendously encouraging and enlightening. Fourteen require a physical examination of all students upon entering, twenty have compulsory physical education, and all are making some attempt to emphasize health teaching. In each, provision is made for giving medical care to sick students, and all express a desire to give a glad welcome to advice and financial help relative to establishing a working health and welfare service. Most of them are struggling along as best they can by doubling up their science teachers to give instruction in health and hygiene. The amounts estimated upon by all to place their health department on a working basis was in each instance all too low, for the average amount was set at \$1000 a year. Suppose we could divide \$50,000 next year among these thirty-one schools which are in dead earnest, and have that amount devoted to health teaching and student welfare service, can you not see how far reaching the results would be?

If we are going to carry on health education among Negroes there must be a national awakening and national interest injected into the process. Our schools and colleges afford the finest possible opportunity to vitalize the health idea and make it profitable to both the individual and

the nation, but they must have help and support or they miss the mark. That the Negro has done much within the past ten years to improve his health condition is made manifest in recent reports issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the United States Public Health Service. These two agencies are a unit in saying that between 1912 and 1922 Negroes have increased their life span by more than five years, which is indicative of marked racial progression. Quoting from the United States Public Health Report of April 11, 1924, we read, "The colored show even more improvement than the white in expectation at birth in the past 10 years." Unquestionably this is due to education and better economic conditions; but still we have much more to do, for even our present day expectation of life is about that of whites 30 or 40 years ago. So you can see there is still much need for health education among Negroes,—in fact, we are just

beginning what is bound to be a long but profitable campaign. If a thought, an incident or a truth strikes us as important to our welfare, it arouses our interest and takes a place in our mentality, and if we are just to ourselves and our God, we at once set out to translate our interest into the most practical terms of humanity. Let us have no longer an aristocracy of snobbishness, but an aristocracy of service.

No man, whatever his motive may be, can help lift up his brother without lifting up himself. In the very act he must bend to the task, and when he arises therefrom he brings up two men, himself and his brother, and the close human touch has made both better men. All unconsciously, perhaps that altruism taught and practiced in the life of Christ has trickled down into the hearts of both, making one content and fit to save, and the other happy and fit to serve.

## *The Negro's Psychology and His Health*

By C. V. ROMAN

**P**HYSICALLY, health connotes the ability to function without fainting—to bear the stress of life without damaging strain. Its psychological connotations and spiritual implications are equally comprehensive; to will without wobbling, as well as to work without wearying—to trust without trembling as well as to fight without failing.

Biological continuity is also comprehended in the word HEALTH; for the healthy individual is not only able to live and function, but to reproduce individuals who can live and function and in their turn reproduce individuals who can thus live, function and reproduce.

THE NEGRO'S ABILITY TO THINK AND TO LIVE would be a fair explanatory amplification of our subject.

What is he thinking and how is he living? According to some critics, he thinks only of heaven and is

"Living at a poor dying rate."

Let us see.

### I.

The Negro is religious—fearfully and wonderfully religious. His song—

"My Lord calls me, He calls me by the thunder,  
The trumpet sounds within my soul,  
I ain't got long to stay here"—

is as sincere and soulful as the Scotsman's litany—

"From ghoulies and ghosties,  
And long-leggited beasties,  
And things that go Boom! in the night—  
Good Lord, deliver us."

Notwithstanding superstition and ignorance, religion is a potent factor in health as well as a determining influence in psychology. The mind

and body react upon each other. Faith heals the hurts of the body as well as hallows the altars of the mind. Religion is the pole-star of the Negro's intellectual night, and the land-locked harbor in the sea of his physical weaknesses. This is the key to his cheerful serenity and long-suffering endurance. He finds sustenance in song—

"Jesus is a rock in a weary land,  
A shelter in the time of storm."

He will not

"Learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled—  
The sullen hymns of defeat."

But

"Through the clear apocalyptic air"

he

"Hears new songs of ages yet to be."

### II.

The Negro is more devoted to personality than to principle. He believes more in people than in their professions. It is a peculiarity of Negro psychology that three centuries of injustice and oppression have not developed the hatred complex. For some unknown reason, which only God may ken, the colored man has faith in the white man.

"The hexiology of the Negro is distinctive. He has an adaptability to circumstances unsurpassed by the children of men. . . . He has received the most magnificent reward that ever fell to the lot of an oppressed people—the friendship of the world's best spirits."

The Persian dream of truthfulness, the Grecian dream of knowledge, the Jewish dream of righteousness, the Roman dream of power, and the English-speaking people's dream of fairplay will all

fructify in the patient, persistent, kind-hearted good-nature of the American Negro.

Lord Macaulay says, "Nine-tenths of all the calamities that have befallen the human race had their origin in the union of high intelligence and with low desires."

The Negro's desires frequently rise above his intelligence. He is one of the few sons of men whom the frown of science has not made melancholy, whose soul has not been frozen by the chills of penury.

The different emphasis placed by different people upon the same evidence is one of the most striking phases of popular psychology. The Negro concedes the white man's superiority in but one thing—diabolism or dishonor—the ability to be unjust. At his psychological worst the white man thinks the Negro a beast; the Negro at his psychological worst thinks the white man a devil. If either or both be right, our civilization is gone.

### III.

The Negro often manifests that inferiority complex of oppressed peoples which forbids self-criticism. He thinks telling the truth an evidence of enmity. He ignores the law of causality and substitutes the WHINE of emotion for the WHY of reason. He dissociates himself from the confluence of things and becomes self-centered and irritable. He thinks not of humanity but of himself, forgetting that the whole includes the parts. Fear leads him to attempts at deception where frankness would be a winning policy.

This psychology grows out of his unique position. Speaking the language of democracy and equality, he has been expected to graft the virtues of freedom upon the opportunities of slavery and to fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship while maintaining the bearing of a serf. That a confusing psychological complex should result is not strange. The condition cannot continue indefinitely. Education must progress or recede. Culture must triumph or die. The Negro must become a citizen or a serf. Western civilization must evaluate men upon their cultural worth or perish. Liberty and opportunity are for all or for none. This generation can decide upon the terms of civil life,—equality of opportunity and peaceful progress, or inequality of opportunity and progressive disintegration to the elemental starting point.

Even on this program colored people are listed to talk about themselves only. Personally, I would much rather have talked upon sex hygiene, illegitimacy or crowd psychology. Whatever the motive of the powers that be, the tendency is to promote ethnic egomania in the colored group.

Moral health is the dynamic of life. Undue racial egotism means disaster. Unlimited self-determination, whether racial or individual, leads to destruction. The Negro being judged by group, too often thinks that way,—by group.

"Christianity is the only religion in the world which regards each human individual as a child of God—The Father." Yet in Christian America individual evolution of character is systematically denied the Negro.

We speak English as a mother-tongue, not as an alien brogue, and are legitimate heirs to the conceptions of life embodied in that language.

It is a noteworthy incident that the date of the Negro's mastery of English is co-incident with the most vicious and heartless attempt at his repression. But tyranny does not always suppress; it sometimes rebounds and explodes. The Negro mastered English by 1850—then Fugitive Slave Law—then WAR—then Emancipation.

His mastery of English-speaking methods of thought means the appreciation of that conception of liberty and citizenship. Final possession is inevitable.

### IV.

Nature has built no more effective physiological machine than the American Negro at his physical best. Why then is his vitality the sneer of actuaries and his mortuary statistics the despair of health officers? The excessively high death rate and morbidity incidence are due to SITUATION and not to any defect in the Negro's constitution or his psychology.

The American Negro, individually and collectively, is immediately responsive to healthful surroundings. Patent medicines, garbage, bad water, sewerage defects, housing, dope-peddlers, and low dives are civic administrative sins against the Negro's health and social well-being over which he has little or no control.

The systematic exclusion of colored nurses and physicians from health departments, public hospitals, penal and eleemosynary institutions, where race distinctions are emphasized, is not only a grave injustice to the Negro but a menace to the general welfare. It is not humanly possible to be fair to one regarded as an inferior. The assumption of superiority, whether individual, social, religious or racial, always connotes injustice and cruelty. From the divine right of kings to the divine right of democracy, the evolution of society furnishes no exception to this fundamental law of psychology. Comparative racial statistics from such sources are practically valueless. A prejudiced mind cannot know, much less tell, the truth.

The Negro's mental reaction to these conditions is often one of bewilderment at the contradictory attitudes assumed by his white fellow-citizens. Charged with low aspirations and degenerative tendencies, he frequently finds his upward way deliberately barred and the downward way ostentatiously and flagrantly opened.

One of the most serious phases of race contact is forcing Negro culture into comparison with

Caucasian squalor. Negroes able and willing to build beautiful homes are too often compelled to place them where they contrast with white poverty and ignorance. The locations of practically all of our colored schools and colleges illustrate this point.

This adds social jealousy to race prejudice—a mixture that is brewing the sociological poison that is hampering the welfare of the nations.

### V.

The Negro is as worthwhile as any racial entity in our modern civilization. He has more elements of compatibility and companionship in his psychology, and more units of strength and durability in his physical make-up than any other people. He is not going to die out and he is not going to be pushed out. By construction, he is an integral part in the constitution of things—

FATE'S final factor in anthropology, the acid test of democracy and the residuary legatee of Providential dispensation.

I believe in one God and in one humanity. The capacity for every emotion and every thought is in every people. The "will to believe" is the explanation of many of the conclusions of the doctrinaires of racial inequality. Creeds express thought and organizations incarnate purpose; but the human spirit seeking a meaning for things gives dignity and worthwhileness to life. Poets and hymnologists are often prophets and seers.

As I close, there rises before me the vision painted in Walt Whitman's interrogatory poem—"Ethiopia Saluting the Colors," and I accept his prophetic words—

"Be not disheartened, affection shall solve the problems of freedom."

## Discussion

IT WOULD be as interesting to discuss the psychology of white people and Negro health as to discuss the psychology of the latter in relation to his own health. It has been well nigh impossible in the South to get communities to adopt health programs when it was thought that the Negro would share the benefits. This has been part of the psychosis of the white South in which fear of the Negro has dominated. It has only been where the menace of unhealthy Negroes to white people has been shown that whites have been inclined to include the Negro in their health programs. Even in these cases they have seemingly hesitated between the evil of sharing the ill health of the Negro and giving him a better physical basis of propagation.

Moreover, we must consider the question of the extent to which the Negro has been able to control his own health. In southern communities, as Atlanta for instance, where a group of Negro physicians would combat the spread of venereal diseases among Negroes exclusion from practice in hospital clinics has made them helpless in the situation. White physicians, regarding the Negroes simply as experimental material, have jealously prevented the Negro physician from participating in the fruits of their work.

On the side of the Negroes themselves there are two psychological factors which affect their health. In adjusting themselves to the social system of the South, Negroes have developed a psychology difficult to describe. It may be called the psychology of negation, or the psychology of people in subjection. In not appearing to assert themselves in the face of the dominant white overlord, they have developed the psychology of the sick. For example, I have observed in tramping through the rural South that most Negroes when asked as to their health reply that they are "right poorly." Upon investigation.

physical ills are hardly ever found—they appear simply psychologically sick. Seemingly the colored group expects pity at least if it is a sick people.

Another psychological factor in Negro health is his conception of the cause of illness. Many Negroes in the South refer illness to purely "magical causes." In saying they show primitive habits of thought, I am not upholding the opinion of classical anthropologists who postulated a series of stages of mental and social evolution. These habits of thought are purely cultural and cannot be referred to any character in the germ plasm. At any rate, one could list a large number of magical causes of illness among Negroes. In fact, I have known personally of deaths resulting from a belief in magical causes of illness. The same applies to cures for illness. It would be an interesting study to collect the magical cures for diseases which Negroes use in the South.

From what I have said, it is apparent that in order to improve Negro health generally the white people of the South must be taught, first, to value the Negro as any other human being, and Negroes themselves must be educated as other citizens. A step in this direction will be the refusal of the North to leave the race problem to the South; and to see that any Federal aid to education will not be distributed between the whites and blacks of the South according to the present system of distribution of State funds.

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In discussions of health conditions in the South and the inroads that venereal diseases are making among Negroes as reported by health experts there is an apparent disregard of *all* the sources of infection.

The burden of correction has been repeatedly placed upon Negroes. We are constantly being shown the gruesome situation and admonished to use our untiring efforts to correct this evil. The utter helplessness of Negroes in the South to change the moral status is frequently overlooked.

Negroes in many sections of the South are regarded as the legitimate prey of other race groups.

Who knows from what source disease germs spring, whether from palace or from hovel, under existing conditions?

Little attention is given to Negro health in many sections of the South. Indeed, in many communities, largely the rural ones, there is an entire lack of health help.

Insurance companies do not employ Negro registered nurses nor do white insurance companies

employ Negro physicians to make examinations and report cases. There are few clinics, and I make bold to say that very little attention is given Negroes in these clinics to better their condition substantially. In the majority of towns there are no clinics.

As to migration, history shows that all races seek countries or sections of countries where problems economic, educational, spiritual and moral can be worked out to greatest advantage.

The boll weevil in the South is a large contributory factor in the migration situation, but the great thought and hope of the Negroes who are leaving the South is that conditions might be made better for them.

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## Negro Workers in Buffalo

By C. L. PEAKE

UNTIL quite recently most of us considered that business had for its sole object the making of profits. Within the last year or two, however, we have increasingly heard of business for service. "He profits most who serves best" is the motto of the Great Luncheon Club which met in Toronto, Canada, a week or two ago. Sinclair Lewis and a few of our weekly periodicals may be inclined to be amused at this constant preaching of service, yet I wonder if it is not in some measure an indication of a real change which is gradually taking place in business.

The fact must remain that no business enterprise can long exist which does not show a profit. Just as surely, those who come to be a part of any business enterprise or industry must be individually profitable. That is, they must stand the test of efficiency. Sooner or later, therefore, we must ask and receive a direct answer from the Negro. Is he an efficient worker in industry?

Few concerns have seen fit to conduct a complete and scientific investigation of the efficiency of the Negro as compared with the efficiency of the white man. In certain plants, however, where the majority of the workmen have long been Negroes they have stood well towards the top when ranked according to profitable performance. This and certain other facts have led us to believe that there is no considerable difference between the efficiency of the Negro and the white man taken man for man.

Nevertheless there are several pretty definite problems which the Negro still has to meet in industry. One of these problems is the question of attendance. In certain plants, where an investigation has been made, it has been found that the absenteeism among Negroes runs 25% or 30% higher than absenteeism among white men. In one southern plant it has long been necessary to maintain a gang of 40 or 50 extra men to supply the places of those Negro workmen who are will-

ing to work only four or five days a week. The Negro cannot expect to hold his proper place in the industrial world until this situation has been corrected.

"A Negro is only a good worker when he is broke" is a saying which has long been prevalent among a good many employers of Negro labor. I have even heard of a certain concern which makes it a practice to introduce an expert craps shooter or two into Negro camps on Saturday night to make sure that the Negro worker would be broke and on the job again Monday morning. The most of our enlightened employers can now well understand that such practice is only encouraging the very instability which they are trying to stamp out among the Negro employees, but I wonder if there is not a fundamental principle there to which it would be well to give attention.

Mr. Whiting Williams points out that in certain southern mining camps where it was desirable that the men work their full six days a week it seemed impossible to persuade them to work more than half that time. At length it began to dawn upon some of those in touch with the situation that the miner was making more in the three days he worked than he could spend in the full seven days of the week. His grocery bill was small, he had no reason for more than one suit of clothes, and his house rent was almost negligible. Beyond these three items there was no inducement for him to spend money and certainly there was no reason for his saving it. Why then should he earn more than three days' pay?

It has further been pointed out that when the Negro first started to come into our northern cities he had been accustomed to earn thirteen or fourteen dollars a week. In the North he earned eighteen or twenty dollars in three or four days. Why then should he earn more? It was not long, however, before he saw that the other Negroes