

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Negro in Chicago*. by Chicago Commission on Race Relations.

Review by: Kelly Miller

Source: *American Journal of Sociology*, Jan., 1924, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Jan., 1924), pp. 499-503

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2764191>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Journal of Sociology*

JSTOR

REVIEWS

The Negro in Chicago. CHICAGO COMMISSION ON RACE RELATIONS.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. xxiv+672. \$4.00.

The Chicago race riot raged during the week July 27–August 2, 1919. *The Negro in Chicago* was published September, 1922. The book is the production of the Commission on Race Relations appointed by the governor of Illinois to study the cause and cure for the then recent Chicago outbreak, and similar clashes between the races. The volume of 772 pages sets forth the result of three years' careful study and deliberation. The lack of logical sequence and integral treatment is the inevitable result of composite authorship. The conclusions are conservative and sincere, and represent the patriotic purpose and balanced judgment of a mixed commission. During the past year since the appearance of this volume, it has elicited many reviews, criticisms, and discussions. The chief value of a belated review is to point out the permanent merits of the contribution as disentangled from the painful incidents of the excited hour.

The book is notable in that it is the only document of its kind based upon the joint study and reflection of the two races co-equal in numbers, competency, and authority. The limited value of the reports of committees on race relations in the South grows out of the recognized inferior position of the Negro conferees as compared to their white confrères. In order that the results of negotiation between two groups may be genuine and trustworthy, the negotiants on both sides must feel perfectly free, and must be absolutely equal in their representative capacity.

The conclusions reached, while focused upon the situation in Chicago, are not limited to it. The local facts brought out are typical of like conditions in a dozen northern cities, while the conclusions are applicable to any municipality with a large and rapidly increasing number of Negroes. Wherever causes are alike, consequences will be similar. The provoking cause of race antagonism is not conditioned by lines of latitude or political alignment, but by the relative number of the disfavored race in a given population. The Negro receives greatest toleration where his numbers are negligible; race prejudice strengthens

as his numbers multiply. The issue becomes most acute where the numbers are competitive.

We have already had a sufficient number of race outbreaks, widely distributed in time and space, to determine the underlying cause and its mode of operation. Wilmington, Atlanta, East St. Louis, Chicago, Washington, and Tulsa are indicative of the outburst of the wrath of race during the past quarter of a century. They all come suddenly as a thief in the night, and are eruptive as the volcano emitting pent up fires. We can no more predict the time or place of the next outbreak than we can foretell the next volcanic eruption. We may predict, however, that these outbreaks are to be occasionally expected, that their duration and damage will be limited, and that after the cessation of wrath, race relations will settle down to their customary or normal adjustment. This will continue until we learn more than we now know of the underlying cause and its control.

Psychology is the determining factor in race relations. It is a question of attitude, or rather of attitudes. Just how race prejudice was acquired, within what limits it is modifiable, and just what influences will control it within these limits, would furnish a theme for interesting and curious speculation. We do know that it is a stubborn and persistent fact, and does not yield to any of the formulas of treatment yet devised. The fact that the so-called Nordic races exhibit race prejudice more rapidly than other European stocks of the same color indicates that it may not be a hopelessly incurable malady. The practical problem which confronts the student of race adjustment is to understand the nature and extent of race prejudice, to withstand its malignity as far as possible, and to stand the residue that may not be withstood.

The Chicago riot was based, in slight part, on the battle for bread which always brings out the primitive brutality of human nature. Just how fierce this struggle becomes within the limits of the same race is indicated by the atrocities of Herrin. The climax of horror would doubtless occur if the battle for bread became identical with the prejudice of race; but fortunately this did not happen in Chicago, and is not likely to happen elsewhere. The Negro is essentially a laborer, and basically his cause is in common with that of his co-laborer of whiter hue. At the same time he is as malleable as putty in the hands of the white capitalist. The labor struggle is triangular. The capitalist occupies the apex while the white workman and the Negro hold the basal angles. The interplay and counterplay of interest and prejudice will everywhere, as it did in Chicago, prevent the labor war from being waged along race lines.

Human nature is prone to accuse the adversary of misdeeds. It is a device as old as hate and cunning to make the enemy odious by calling him ugly names. An unscrupulous press and ghoulish journalism plays upon the crimes and alleged crimes of the Negro to arouse a hostile public sentiment, and bring about his undoing. At least two of the most violent race riots of record were precipitated by red journals parading in flaming headlines alleged crimes of Negroes, which subsequent investigation proved to be groundless. The bringing of a large number of unacquainted persons into a new and unfamiliar environment will inevitably lead to an unusual volume of crime which is the outgrowth of condition, and not race. The Negro in the northern cities, when we consider crowded conditions, radical change in environment, and the social stratum of the migrant, has not exhibited any unusual or unexpected misbehavior. One may walk the streets of Harlem, New York, or South Side, Chicago, for hours, where Negroes swarm as thick as Pharaoh's flies, with no more indication of trouble than at a Christian Endeavor picnic. Vigilance and precaution will be adequate to prevent race conflict at this point. Religion, ethics, politics, and legislation, all break down at the color line. The law is the one anchor that holds within the veil. Not only as concerns the race problem, but throughout our entire social fabric, the inflexibility of law must be invoked to save order from anarchy.

One hundred and eighty pages or about one-fourth of the volume are devoted to questions of the Negro population, its migration from the South, its settlement into totally eclipsed areas and surrounding penumbra, and the housing problem growing out of its congestion. The movement of the Negro population to the large centers and its segregation in black belts constitute the most acute phase of race relationship at the present time. The same phenomenon is taking place in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Cleveland, and Detroit. Indeed, the same process is going on in every large city of the country, North and South. The white race everywhere withdraws under pressure of the Negro's physical presence. Residential separation of any two groups is inevitable where each regards the other, or either regards the other, as socially dissimilar. This may be effected by the congregative tendency of like in quest of like, or it may be accomplished by force of external compulsion. Both of these factors operate separately and conjointly. The Supreme Court of the United States has declared unconstitutional all ordinances fixing the bounds of domicile by race or color. But segregation goes on

space. The question which is now agitating every large city is whether lines of residential demarcation shall be fixed or flexible. The Negro's contention for flexibility is not based upon mere insistence upon abstract right or technical legal construction, but because he knows that fixation of boundaries would shut him up in the most undesirable areas. The favorable sections which he now occupies came as result of the pioneer spirit to push over the boundary into the confines of the forbidden territory. The destiny of the Negro population in all of our large cities is clearly indicated by the tendency of social gravitation. In the main it will settle in zones and belts as sharply defined as the land of Goshen. A fragmentary residue will be scattered among the white community. The segregation of the Negro will be both a cause and a cure of race friction. The arrogance and haughtiness of race does not vaunt itself while men are at work or engaged in serious duties, but during the periods of diversion, rest, and recreation. The Negro's relation to the white man is far more agreeable at his place of business than at his club or at his church. The Negro will develop his own churches, theaters, places of recreation and amusement, hotels, barber shops, restaurants, and social centers in the segregated areas, and the friction engendered by close intimacy of contact will thus be diminished.

In the South where the Negro is relatively most numerous, the scholastic separation of the races is the fixed and unvarying policy. This issue is now agitating the northern cities from Atlantic City to Los Angeles. In the lower half of the lower tier of northern states, such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, where the Negroes constitute a goodly sprinkling of the population, separate schools have long been in operation. The Commission on Race Relations studiously avoided a definitive recommendation on this point. Such an issue would probably have caused a racial cleavage. And yet there are already eight public schools in Chicago including one high school with over 80 per cent Negro children. A school attended mainly by white children is usually known as a white school; by parity of designation a school whose constituency is mainly colored would be known as a colored school—albeit, they are public schools both. In the present temper of the racial attitudes, it is generally deemed best to have colored teachers for schools that are colored because of readier sympathy and meeting of minds of teacher and taught. The suggestion that so-called mixed schools tend to produce race friendliness and reduce race friction is not borne out by facts of observation and experience. The racial attitude is fixed by the adults in family life and social circle. The

child mind is always free from race prejudice but is quickly indoctrinated by adult persuasion. White and Negro children in the South have played together without prejudice from time immemorial, but race prejudice has been but feebly affected by such childhood intimacies. The Negro fights separate schools because separation usually connotes inequality and inferiority. The northern cities are not likely to adopt complete scholastic separation; but in congested Negro districts there will be colored schools by sheer force of Negro numbers. *The Negro in Chicago* has not merely local and temporary value, but a general and permanent meaning.

Governor Frank O. Lowden, who appointed the Commission on Race Relations, has earned the thanks of the public at large, and of students of race problems particularly, by making such an informing and suggestive publication possible.

KELLY MILLER

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

The Poetic Mind. By FREDERICK CLARKE PRESCOTT, Cornell University. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922. Pp. xx+308. \$2.00.

Primitive Mentality. By Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Professor at the Sorbonne. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923. Pp. 458. \$5.00.

There are, according to the author of *The Poetic Mind*, two ways in which men think: one way when they work, and another when they dream.

The ways in which men think when they work gives us a sort of knowledge which, when systematized, we call science. But the ways in which men think when they dream, produces the material, if not the form, of poetry.

In the first case, the process of association is controlled with reference to a definite aim and all the steps in the process by which this end may be attained are clearly foreseen.

In the second case, the associative process is uncontrolled. It is, as the author says, "entirely associative—that is, it consists of a train of images linked by contiguity or resemblance. There is no reasoning. Imagination has free play and takes the liveliest forms."

"The poets, according to Daudet, are men who still see with the eyes of childhood." Children's thinking is dominated by the free play of the associative process. That is what is meant when we say that