

LABOR'S WAY OUT  
By James Oneal

(Editor's Note: This is the third installment of a new booklet, "The Next Emancipation", written by one of America's foremost historians, James Oneal. It has been published to sell at cost, 10¢ postpaid, by the Negro Labor News Service, P.O. Box 66, College Station, New York City, or 2653 Washington Blvd., Chicago.)

The wage worker, Negro and white alike, is bound to be the slave of the masters of industry so long as the masters can buy labor power. They will be able to buy your labor power as long as they own the raw materials, the transportation agencies and the plants of production. The OWNERSHIP of these things makes them the masters of all wage workers. This is the fundamental basis of all servitude of the wage workers of this and other modern nations. So long as they are compelled to sell their labor power to a small owning class they are dependents, whether they are white or black. And dependents are not free men.

Consider the enormous advantage the capitalist owner has over the workers in industry. You MUST sell your labor power in order to live. The capitalist owners MUST buy labor power in order to run their plants, but they do not have to buy ALL that is offered for sale. You cannot hold your labor power off the market very long. It is a part of you. It consists of your brains, bones, muscles, blood, tissues and bodily strength. When you sell it, you go with the sale!

In short, you are forced to sell yourself day by day, week by week, and month by month, to those who control employment. You must sell in order to eat, in order that your families may eat. This is your weakness as well as the master's strength. Knowing your wants from day to day, he is inclined to give the jobs to those who will work for the smallest wages.

What applies to the Negro worker applies to the white worker. It is the basis of the servitude of both. It should also be the basis for the solidarity of the Negro and the white worker.

What can we do about it?

Booker T. Washington gave an answer to this question. It was his opinion that all Negro workers should learn a trade, save their money, and go into business. In other words, they should try to become capitalists. Suppose a Negro worker did become a capitalist now and then. Would that help the mass of Negro workers? Not at all.

Because we have capitalists with white skins does not mean that the white workers are happy, or contented, or emancipated. It means that some whites are in a position to skin many other whites. A Negro worker becoming a capitalist would mean a Negro skinning many other Negroes. To take a few of those who are skinned and make skinners out of them settles no question whatever. The skinning of millions of Negroes would go on just as it now goes on in the case of the white workers.

If Mr. Washington really had a solution of the problem of the Negro it is not likely that he would have been supported by such notorious white skinners as John D. Rockefeller and the late Andrew Carnegie. Mr. Washington accepted the point of view of white skinners, and they in turn helped him to spread his ideas. Washington tended to accept discrimination against the workers as a CLASS. In his "Up From Slavery" (p.84) he wrote that he would have been better satisfied with the South if the "possession of a certain amount of education or property, or both," had been made "a test for the exercise of the franchise, and a way provided by which this test should be made to apply honestly and squarely to both the white and black races."

A man with those ideas may be sincere, but there is no hope for any class, white or black, that accepts disfranchisement without protest. Already there are thousands of Negro and white workers who are deprived of the ballot in the South by tests similar to those advocated by Booker T. Washington.

On the other hand, mere voting for the Republican or the Democratic parties will not bring emancipation to the Negro workers. If such voting would bring emancipation the white workers would have been emancipated long ago. But they still sell labor power to the owners of industry, just as the Negro does. We shall have more to say about voting later on.

The idea of trying to become a capitalist and thus escaping from the robbery and subjection that is the lot of Negro workers is like the advice to run away in the days of slavery. A few could escape and reach the Northern states and Canada, and thus be relieved of the tyranny of white slave owners. But the whole Negro population of slaves in the South could not escape slavery in this way. The mass of them were doomed to be slaves until all were emancipated.

The same is true today. The mass of Negro wage workers are doomed to be wage workers all their lives until all Negro wage workers are free. Nay, more. They cannot escape from the servitude of wage labor until the white wage workers also escape. Both must escape together or neither will escape. The white wage workers cannot abolish wage slavery without abolishing it for the Negro workers. The latter cannot abolish it without abolishing it for the white workers. As neither the white nor the Negro workers alone can abolish it by themselves, we again reach the conclusion that both have the same common interests. Both must act in common for the same common interests.

(To be continued)

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CROSSWAITH EXPELLED FROM RESTAURANT--HOSTS SUE  
DENVER--On the protest of a woman falsely representing herself as an official of the Waiters' Union, who refused to eat in the same room with a "nigger", Frank R. Crosswaith, famous Negro orator and editor of the Negro Labor News Service, was expelled from the Silver Grill Restaurant here. He was eating with three white patrons, members of the Socialist Party, which Crosswaith was speaking for that evening.

On advice of Whitehead and Axelson, attorneys, the white patrons who were hosts to Crosswaith will bring suit for damages against the restaurant.

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