

Jose Marti's "My Race": A Translation

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By **RACHEL LOUGHRIDGE**

Jose Marti's "My Race"

A Translation

THE word "racist" is becoming a confused word and its meaning should be made clear. Man has no special rights because he happens to belong to one race or to another; when you say "man", you have said all his rights. The Negro, because he is a Negro, is not inferior or superior to any other man; the white man who says "My race" is guilty of excess; the Negro who says "My race" is guilty of excess. Everything that divides men, everything that classifies, separates or shuts off men is a sin against humanity. To what sensible white man does it occur to boast of being white, and what do Negroes think of the white man who boasts of his color and thinks that he has special rights because he is white? What must the whites think of the Negro who boasts of his color? To insist on the divisions into race, on the differences of race, among people naturally different from each other, is to make difficult both public and individual enterprises, which depend for their success on a greater rapprochement between the groups that must live together.

If you say that in the Negro there is no native fault or weakness which makes it impossible for him to develop all his capacities as a man, you are telling the truth, and this truth should be said and demonstrated, for in this world injustice is frequent and frequent the ignorance that passes for knowledge, and there are even those who may in all good faith believe the Negro incapable of the white man's intelligence and feeling. If such defense of man's nature is called racism, that does not matter, because it is no more than the natural reverence due to mankind, and the voice of man's heart demanding peace and life for his country. If a race is moving away from slavery, that is no proof of the inferiority of the once enslaved race, inasmuch as white Gauls, blue-eyed and golden-haired, were sold as slaves with chains about their necks in the market places of Rome; that is good racism because it is pure justice and it helps to remove the white man's prejudices. But here just racism ends, since it is the Negro's right to maintain and to put to the test the belief that his color does not deprive him of any of the capacities and rights of mankind.

What right does the white racist, who believes in superior rights for his race, have to complain of the black racist who also sees some special quality in his race? What right does the black racist who sees a special

character in race have to complain of the white racist? The white man who, by reason of race, believes himself superior to the Negro, admits the idea of race and so authorizes and brings forth the black racist. The Negro who proclaims his racial character, when perhaps the only thing he is proclaiming in this mistaken fashion is the spiritual identity of all races, authorizes and brings forth the white racist. Peace calls for the common rights of nature; differences in rights, being contrary to nature, are enemies of peace. The white man who draws apart isolates the Negro. The Negro who draws apart drives the white man into isolation.

In Cuba there is no fear of a war of races. Man is more than white, more than mulatto, more than Negro. On the battlefields of Cuba white and black have died and their souls risen together to heaven. In the daily life of defense, of loyalty, of brotherhood, of cunning, besides each white man there was always a Negro. The Negroes, like the whites, are separated by their character into timid or courageous, self-denying or self-seeking, into the different groups into which men are naturally divided. Political parties are aggregates of prejudices, aspirations, interests and characters. The essential resemblance is sought for and found above and beyond the differences of detail; and through the similarity in their fundamental quality, individuals are molded into parties, although they differ in what is incidental to, or in what can be ignored in, their common motive. But in the final analysis, as a uniting factor the resemblance between individual characters is superior to the relationships of men within a particular color group, sometimes divided within its own color, and this resemblance determines and operates in the formation of parties. Among men the attraction of like character is more powerful than the attraction of like color. The Negroes, scattered among diverse or opposing categories of the human spirit, will never be able to bind together, nor will they wish to do so, against the white man who is to be found in the same categories. Negroes are too weary of slavery to enter voluntarily into slavery of color. Ostentatious and self-interested men, white or black, will be found on one side, and generous and disinterested men on the other. Real men, white or black, will treat each other loyally and tenderly, because of their pleasure in real worth and their pride in everything that honors the land in which we, black or white, were born. The word "racist" will drop from the lips of Negroes who today use it in all good faith, when they understand that among sincere and frightened men it is the only strong and seemingly valid argument for denying the Negro the fullness of his rights as a man. Two racists would be equally guilty, the white racist and the Negro. Many whites have long since forgotten about their color, and many Negroes too. Black and white

work together for the cultivation of the mind, for the propagation of truth, for the triumph of the creative spirit and of sublime kindliness.

In Cuba there is never a war of races. The Republic can not go back; and since the very day of the redemption of the Negro in Cuba, since the first constitution of independence in Guaimaro on the tenth of April the Republic has never spoken of white or of black. Civil rights, granted by the Spanish government out of pure cunning and accepted as one of the customs before the independence of the Island could be achieved, will not be denied, either by the Spaniard who will protect them as long as he is in Cuba in order to keep on dividing the Negro Cuban from the white Cuban, or by the independence movement which could not deny under freedom the rights which the Spaniard granted under slavery.

And as for the rest, each man will be free within the sacred precincts of his own home. Native worth and the patent and continuous test of culture and of inexorable commerce will in the end unite mankind. In Cuba there is much greatness in black and white.

By ALLEN E. WOODALL

The New Vision

Mahatma Gandhi, may his troubles cease,
Awoke one night and wept for peace,
And saw an angel writing in an ancient book . . .
Mahatma needed neither ask nor look,
For there he knew were names of those who gave
All that they had to serve mankind and save,
And well he knew he was among the blest.
But Gandhi and the angel needed rest.
"How long?" said one. The angel shook his head,
"The earth is old and many hearts have bled,
And none are wholly right, but many wrong . . .
Sleep again, little saint, eternity is long."