

The Negro

by
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THE NEGRO CRIMINAL

W.E.B. Du Bois

From his earliest advent the Negro, as was natural, has figured largely in the criminal annals of Philadelphia.¹ Only such superficial study of the American Negro as dates his beginning with 1863 can neglect this past record of crime in studying the present. Crime is a phenomenon of organized social life, and is the open rebellion of an individual against his social environment. Naturally then, if men are suddenly transported from one environment to another, the result is lack of harmony with the new conditions, lack of harmony with the new physical surroundings leading to disease and death or modification of physique, lack of harmony with social surroundings, leading to crime. Thus very early in the history of the colony, characteristic complaints of the disorder of the Negro slaves is heard. In 1693, July 11, the Governor and Council approved an ordinance, "Upon the Request of some of the members of Council, that an order be made by the Court of Quarter Sessions for the Countie of Philadelphia, the 4th July instant (proceeding upon a presentment of the Grand Jurie for the bodie of the sd countie), agt the tumultuous gatherings of the Negroes of the towne of Philadelphia, on the first dayes of the weeke, ordering the Constables of Philadelphia, or anie other person whatsoever, to have power to take up Negroes, male or female, whom they should find gadding abroad on the said first dayes of the weeke, without a ticket from their Mr. or Mrs., or not in their Compa, or to carry them to gaole, there to remain that night, and that without meat or drink, and to Cause them to be publickly whipt next morning with 39 Lashes, well Laid

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on, on their bare backs, for which their sd. Mr. or Mrs. should pay 15d. to the whipper," etc.²

Penn himself introduced a law for the special trial and punishment of Negroes very early in the history of the colony, as has been noted before.³ The slave code finally adopted was mild compared with the legislation of the period, but it was severe enough to show the unruly character of many of the imported slaves.⁴

Especially in Philadelphia did the Negroes continue to give general trouble, not so much by serious crime as by disorder. In 1732, under Mayor Hasel, the City Council "taking under Consideration the frequent and tumultuous meetings of the Negro Slaves, especially on Sunday, Gaming, Cursing, Swearing, and committing many other Disorders, to the great Terror and Disquiet of the Inhabitants of this city," ordered an ordinance to be drawn up against such disturbance.⁵ Again, six years later, we hear of the draft of another city ordinance for "the more Effectual suppressing Tumultuous meetings and other disorderly doings of the Negroes, Mulattos and Indian servts. and slaves."⁶ And in 1741, August 17, "frequent complaints having been made to the Board that many disorderly persons meet every ev'g about the Court house of this city, and great numbers of Negroes and others sit there with milk pails and other things late at night, and many disorders are there committed against the peace and good government of this city." Council ordered the place to be cleared "in half an hour after sunset."⁷

Of the graver crimes by Negroes, we have only reports here and there which do not make it clear how frequently such crimes occurred. In 1706 a slave is arrested for setting fire to a dwelling; in 1738 three Negroes are hanged in neighboring parts of New Jersey for poisoning people, while at Rocky Hill a slave is burned alive for killing a child and burning a barn. Whipping of Negroes at the public whipping post was frequent, and so severe was the punishment that in 1743 a slave brought up to be whipped committed suicide. In 1763 two Philadelphia slaves were sentenced to death for felony and burglary; petitions were circulated in their behalf but Council was obdurate.⁸

Little special mention of Negro crime is again met with until the freedmen under the act of 1780 began to congregate in the city, and other free immigrants joined them. In 1809 the leading colored churches united in a society to suppress crime and were cordially endorsed by the public for this action. After the war, immigration to the city increased and the stress of hard times bore heavily on the lower classes. Complaints of petty thefts and murderous assaults on peaceable citizens now began to increase, and

TABLE 1
Commitments to Eastern Penitentiary by Race, 1829-1854

| Years | Total Commitments | Negroes | Percent of Negroes | Percent of Negroes of Total Population |
|---------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1829-34 | 339 | 99 | 29.0 | 8.27 (1830) |
| 1835-29 | 878 | 356 | 40.5 | 7.39 (1840) |
| 1840-44 | 701 | 209 | 29.8 | 7.39 (1840) |
| 1845-49 | 633 | 151 | 23.8 | 4.83 (1850) |
| 1850-54 | 664 | 106 | 16.0 | 4.83 (1850) |

in numbers of cases they were traced to Negroes. The better class of colored citizens felt the accusation and held a meeting to denounce crime and take a firm stand against their own criminal class. A little later, the Negro riots commenced, and they received their chief moral support from the increasing crime of Negroes. A Cuban slave brained his master with a hatchet, two other murders by Negroes followed, and gambling, drunkenness and debauchery were widespread wherever Negroes settled. The terribly vindictive insurrection of Nat Turner in a neighboring state frightened the citizens so thoroughly that when some black fugitives actually arrived at Chester from Southampton County, Virginia, the Legislature was hastily appealed to, and the whole matter came to a climax in the disfranchisement of the Negro in 1837 and the riots in the years 1830 to 1840.⁹

Some actual figures will give us an idea of this, the worst period of Negro crime ever experienced in the city. The Eastern Penitentiary was opened in 1829 near the close of the year. The total number of persons received here for the most serious crimes is given in the next table. (See Table 1.) This includes prisoners from the Eastern counties of the State, but a large proportion were from Philadelphia.¹⁰

Or to put it differently, the problem of Negro crime in Philadelphia from 1830 to 1850 arose from the fact that less than one-fourteenth of the population was responsible for nearly a third of the serious crimes committed.

These figures however are apt to relate more especially to a criminal class. A better measure of the normal criminal tendencies of the group would perhaps be found in the statistics of Moyamensing, where ordinary

TABLE 2
Commitments to Moyamensing Prison by Race, 1836-1855

| Years | Total White Prisoners Received | Total Negro Prisoners Received | Percent of of Negroes of Total Prisoners | Percent of Negroes of Total Population |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1836-45 | 1164 | 1087 | 48.29 | 7.39 (1840) |
| 1846-55 | 1478 | 696 | 32.01 | 4.83 (1850) |

cases of crime and misdemeanor are confined and which contains only county prisoners. (See Table 2.)

Here we have even a worse showing than before; in 1896 the Negroes forming 4 percent of the population furnish 9 percent of the arrests, but in 1850 being 5 percent of the population, they furnished 32 percent of the prisoners received at the county prison. Of course there are some considerations which must not be overlooked in interpreting these figures for 1836-55. It must be remembered that the discrimination against the Negro was much greater then than now: he was arrested for less cause and given longer sentences than whites.¹¹ Great numbers of those arrested and committed for trial were never brought to trial, so that their guilt could not be proven or disproven. Of 737 Negroes committed for trial in six months of the year 1837, it is stated that only 123 were actually brought to trial; of the prisoners in the Eastern Penitentiary, 1829 to 1846, 14 percent of the whites were pardoned and 2 percent of the Negroes. All these considerations increase the statistics to the disfavor of the Negro.¹² Nevertheless, making all reasonable allowances, it is undoubtedly true that the crime of Negroes in this period reached its high tide for this city.

The character of the crimes committed by Negroes compared with whites is shown by the following table, which covers the offences of 1359 whites and 718 Negroes committed to the Eastern Penitentiary, 1829-1846. (See Table 3). If we take simply petty larceny, we find that 48.8 percent of the whites and 55 percent of the Negroes were committed for this offence.¹³

Negro Crime Since the War

Throughout the land there has been since the war a large increase in crime, especially in cities. This phenomenon would seem to have suffi-

TABLE 3
Offences of Prisoners in Eastern Penitentiary by Race, 1829-1846

| Kinds of Crimes | White | | Negroes | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Offences vs. the person | 166 | 11.4 | 89 | 12.4 |
| Offences v.s property with violence | 191 | 13.1 | 165 | 22.9 |
| Offences vs. property without violence | 873 | 59.8 | 432 | 60.2 |
| Malicious offences vs. property | 22 | 1.5 | 14 | 2.0 |
| Offences vs. Currency and forgery | 167 | 11.5 | 7 | 1.0 |
| Miscellaneous | 40 | 27.0 | 11 | 1.5 |

cient cause in the increased complexity of life, in industrial competition, and the rush of great numbers to the large cities. It would therefore be natural to suppose that the Negro would also show this increase in criminality and, as in the case of all lower classes, that he would show it in greater degree. His evolution has, however, been marked by some peculiarities. For nearly two decades after emancipation, he took little part in many of the great social movements about him for obvious reasons. His migration to city life, therefore, and his sharing in the competition of modern industrial life came later than was the case with the mass of his fellow citizens. The Negro began to rush to the cities in large numbers after 1880, and consequently the phenomena attendant on that momentous change of life are tardier in his case. His rate of criminality has in the last two decades risen rapidly, and this is a parallel phenomenon to the rapid rise of the white criminal record two or three decades ago. Moreover, in the case of the Negro there were special causes for the prevalence of crime: he had lately been freed from serfdom, he was the object of stinging oppression and ridicule, and paths of advancement open to many were closed to him. Consequently, the class of the shiftless, aimless, idle, discouraged and disappointed was proportionately larger.

In the city of Philadelphia, the increasing number of bold and daring crimes committed by Negroes in the last ten years has focused the attention of the city on this subject. There is a widespread feeling that something is wrong with a race that is responsible for so much crime and that

strong remedies are called for. One has but to visit the corridors of the public buildings when the courts are in session to realize the part played in law breaking by the Negro population. The various slum centres of the colored criminal population have lately been the objects of much philanthropic effort, and the work there has aroused discussion. Judges on the bench have discussed the matter. Indeed, to the minds of many, this is the real Negro problem.¹⁴

That it is a vast problem a glance at statistics will show;¹⁵ and since 1880 it has been steadily growing. At the same time, crime is a difficult subject to study, more difficult to analyze into its sociological elements, and most difficult to cure or suppress. It is a phenomenon that stands not alone, but rather as a symptom of countless wrong social conditions.

The simplest, but crudest, measure of crime is found in the total arrests for a period of years. The value of such figures is lessened by the varying efficiency and diligence of the police, by discrimination in the administration of law, and by unwarranted arrests. And yet the figures roughly measure crime. The total arrests and the number of Negroes is given in the next table (See Table 4) for thirty-two years, with a few omissions.

We find that the total arrests in the city per annum have risen from 34,221 in 1864 to 61,478 in 1894, an increase of 80% in crime, parallel to an increase of 85% in population. The Negroes arrested have increased from 3114 in 1864 to 4805 in 1894, an increase of 54% in crime, parallel to an increase of 77 percent in the Negro population of the city. So, too, the percentage of Negroes in the total arrests is less in 1894 than in 1864. If, however, we follow the years between these two dates, we see an important development: 1864 was the date bounding the antebellum period of crime; thereafter the proportion of Negro arrests fell steadily until, in 1874, the Negroes came as nearly as ever furnishing their normal quota of arrests, 3.9 percent from 3.28 percent (1870) of the population. Then slowly there came a change. With the centennial exposition in 1876 came a stream of immigrants, and once started, the stream increased in speed by its own momentum. With this immigration, the proportion of Negro arrests arose rapidly at first as a result of the exposition—falling off a little in the early eighties, but with 1885 rising again steadily and quickly to over 6% in 1888, 6.4% in 1890, 7% in 1893, 8.5% in 1895, 9% in 1896. This is, as has been said before, but a rough indication of the amount of crime for which the Negro is responsible; it must not be relied on too closely, for the number of arrests cannot in any city accurately measure wrongdoing save in a very general way; probably increased efficiency in the police force since 1864 has had large effect, and yet we can draw the legitimate

TABLE 4
Arrests in Philadelphia, 1864-96

| Date | Total Number Arrested | Total Negroes Arrested | Percentage of Negroes |
|------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1864 | 34,221 | 3,114 | 9.1 |
| 1865 | 43,226 | 2,772 | 6.3 |
| 1869 | 38,749 | 2,907 | 7.5 |
| 1870 | 31,717 | 2,070 | 6.5 |
| 1873 | 30,400 | 1,380 | 4.5 |
| 1874 | 32,114 | 1,257 | 3.9 |
| 1875 | 34,553 | 1,539 | 4.5 |
| 1876 | | | |
| 1877 | 44,220 | 2,524 | 5.7 |
| 1879 | 40,714 | 2,360 | 5.8 |
| 1880 | 44,097 | 2,204 | 4.98 |
| 1881 | 45,129 | 2,327 | 5.11 |
| 1882 | 46,130 | 2,183 | 4.73 |
| 1883 | 45,295 | 2,022 | 4.46 |
| 1884 | 49,468 | 2,134 | 4.31 |
| 1885 | 51,418 | 2,662 | 5.11 |
| 1886 | | | |
| 1887 | 57,951 | 3,256 | 5.61 |
| 1888 | 46,899 | 2,910 | 6.20 |
| 1889 | 42,673 | 2,614 | 6.10 |
| 1890 | 49,148 | 3,167 | 6.44 |
| 1891 | 53,184 | 3,544 | 6.66 |
| 1892 | 52,944 | 3,431 | 6.48 |
| 1893 | 53,297 | 4,078 | 7.11 |
| 1894 | 61,478 | 4,805 | 7.81 |
| 1895 | 60,347 | 5,137 | 8.5 |
| 1896 | 58,072 | 5,302 | 9.1 |

conclusion here that Negro crime in the city is far less, according to population, than before the war; that after the war it decreased until the middle of the seventies and then, coincident with the beginning of the new Negro immigration to cities,¹⁶ it has risen pretty steadily.

The Causes of Crime and Poverty

A study of statistics seem to show that the crime and pauperism of the Negroes exceeds that of the whites; that in the main, nevertheless, it

follows in its rise and fall the fluctuations shown in the records of the whites (*i.e.*, if crime increases among the whites, it increases among Negroes, and *vice versa*, with this peculiarity: that among the Negroes the change is always exaggerated—the increase greater, the decrease more marked in nearly all cases). This is what we would naturally expect: we have here the record of a low social class, and as the condition of a lower class is by its very definition worse than that of a higher, so the situation of the Negroes is worse as respects crime and poverty than that of the mass of whites. Moreover, any change in social conditions is bound to affect the poor and unfortunate more than the rich and prosperous. We have in all probability an example of this in the increase of crime since 1890; we have had a period of financial stress and industrial depression. The ones who have felt this most are the poor, the unskilled laborers, the inefficient and unfortunate, and those with small social and economic advantages. The Negroes are in this class, and the result has been an increase in Negro crime and pauperism; there has also been an increase in the crime of the whites, though less rapid by reason of their richer and more fortunate upper classes.

So far, then, we have no phenomena which are new or exceptional or which present more than the ordinary social problems of crime and poverty—although these, to be sure, are difficult enough. Beyond these, however, there are problems which can rightly be called Negro problems: they arise from the peculiar history and condition of the American Negro. The first peculiarity is, of course, the slavery and emancipation of the Negroes. That their emancipation has raised them economically and morally is proven by the increase of wealth and co-operation and the decrease of poverty and crime between the period before the war and the period since; nevertheless, this was manifestly no simple process. The first effect of emancipation was that of any sudden social revolution: a strain upon the strength and resources of the Negro, moral, economic and physical, which drove many to the wall. For this reason, the rise of the Negro in this city is a series of rushes and backslidings rather than a continuous growth. The second great peculiarity of the situation of the Negroes is the fact of immigration. The great numbers of raw recruits who have from time to time precipitated themselves upon the Negroes of the city and shared their small industrial opportunities, have made reputations, which, whether good or bad, all their race must share; and finally whether they failed or succeeded in the strong competition, they themselves must soon prepare to face a new immigration.

Here then we have two great causes for the present condition of the

Negro: slavery and emancipation with their attendant phenomena of ignorance, lack of discipline, and moral weakness; immigration with its increased competition and moral influence. To this must be added a third as great—possibly greater in influence than the other two, namely the environment in which a Negro finds himself—the world of custom and thought in which he must live and work, the physical surrounding of house and home and ward, the moral encouragements and discouragements which he encounters. We dimly seek to define this social environment partially when we talk of color prejudice—but this is but a vague characterization, what we want to study is not a vague thought or feeling but its concrete manifestations. We know pretty well what the surroundings are of a young white lad or a foreign immigrant who comes to this great city to join in its organic life. We know what influences and limitations surround him, to what he may attain, what his companionships are, what his encouragements are, what his drawbacks.

This we must know in regard to the Negro if we would study his social condition. His strange social environment must have immense effect on his thought and life, his work and crime, his wealth and pauperism. That this environment differs and differs broadly from the environment of his fellows, we all know, but we do not know just how it differs. The real foundation of the difference is the widespread feeling all over the land, in Philadelphia as well as in Boston and New Orleans, that the Negro is something less than an American and ought not to be much more than what he is. Argue as we may for or against this idea, we must as students recognize its presence and its vast effects.

At the Eastern Penitentiary where they seek so far as possible to attribute to definite causes the criminal record of each prisoner, the vast influence of environment is shown. This estimate is naturally liable to error, but the peculiar system of this institution and the long service and wide experience of the warden and his subordinates gives it a peculiar and unusual value. Of the 541 Negro prisoners previously studied, 191 were catalogued as criminals by reason of “natural and inherent depravity.” The others were divided as shown in Table 5.

This rough judgment of men who have come into daily contact with five hundred Negro criminals but emphasizes the fact alluded to—the immense influence of his peculiar environment on the black Philadelphian; the influence of homes badly situated and badly managed, with parents untrained for their responsibilities; the influence of social surroundings which by poor laws and inefficient administration leave the bad to be made worse; the influence of economic exclusion which admits

TABLE 5
Causes of Crime Among Negroes at Eastern Penitentiary

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| (a) Defects of the Law | |
| Laxity in administration..... | 33 |
| Unsuitable laws for minor offenses..... | 48 |
| Inefficient police..... | 22 |
| License given to the young..... | 16 |
| Inefficient laws in regard to saloons..... | 11 |
| Poor institutions and lack of institutions..... | 12 |
| | 142 |
| (b) Immediate environment: | |
| Association..... | 53 |
| Amusements | 16 |
| Home and family influences..... | 25 |
| | 94 |
| (c) Lack of training, lack of opportunity, lack of desire to work..... | 56 |
| (d) General environment..... | 6 |
| (e) Disease..... | 16 |
| (f) Moral weakness and unknown..... | 36 |
| | 114 |

Negroes only to those parts of the economic world where it is hardest to retain ambition and self-respect; and finally that indefinable, but real and mighty, moral influence that causes men to have a real sense of manhood or leads them to lose aspiration and self-respect.

For the last ten or fifteen years, young Negroes have been pouring into this city at the rate of a thousand a year; the question is then what homes they find or make, what neighbors they have, how they amuse themselves, and what work they engage in. Again, into what sort of homes are the hundreds of Negro babies of each year born? Under what social influences do they come, what is the tendency of their training, and what places in life can they fill? To answer all these questions is to go far toward finding the real causes of crime and pauperism among this race.

Color Prejudice

Incidentally, throughout this study, the prejudice against the Negro has been again and again mentioned. It is time now to reduce this somewhat

indefinite term to something tangible. Everybody speaks of the matter, everybody knows that it exists, but in just what form it shows itself or how influential it is few agree. In the Negro's mind, color prejudice in Philadelphia is that widespread feeling of dislike for his blood, which keeps him and his children out of decent employment, from certain public conveniences and amusements, from hiring houses in many sections, and in general, from being recognized as a man. Negroes regard this prejudice as the chief cause of their present unfortunate condition. On the other hand, most white people are quite unconscious of any such powerful and vindictive feeling; they regard color prejudice as the easily explicable feeling that intimate social intercourse with a lower race is not only undesirable but impracticable if our present standards of culture are to be maintained; and although they are aware that some people feel the aversion more intensely than others, they cannot see how such a feeling has much influence on the real situation or alters the social condition of the mass of Negroes.

As a matter of fact, color prejudice in this city is something between these two extreme views. It is not today responsible for all or perhaps the greater part of the Negro problems, or of the disabilities under which the race labors. On the other hand, it is a far more powerful social force than most Philadelphians realize. The practical results of the attitude of most of the inhabitants of Philadelphia toward persons of Negro descent are as follows.

As to getting work: No matter how well trained a Negro may be or how fitted for work of any kind, he cannot in the ordinary course of competition hope to be much more than a menial servant. He cannot get clerical or supervisory work to do, save in exceptional cases. He cannot teach, save in a few of the remaining Negro schools. He cannot become a mechanic, except for small transient jobs, and cannot join a trades union. A Negro woman has but three careers open to her in this city: domestic service, sewing, or married life.

As to keeping work: The Negro suffers in competition more severely than white men. Change in fashion is causing him to be replaced by whites in the better paid positions of domestic service. Whim and accident will cause him to lose a hard earned place more quickly than the same things would affect a white man. Being few in number compared with the whites, the crime or carelessness of a few of his race is easily imputed to all, and the reputation of the good, industrious, and reliable suffer thereby. Because Negro workmen may not often work side by side with white workmen, the individual black workman is rated not by his

own efficiency but by the efficiency of a whole group of black fellow workmen which may often be low. Because of these difficulties which virtually increase competition in his case, he is forced to take lower wages for the same work than white workmen.

As to entering new lines of work: Men are used to seeing Negroes in inferior positions; when, therefore, by any chance a Negro gets in a better position, most men immediately conclude that he is not fitted for it, even before he has a chance to show his fitness. If, therefore, he set up a store, men will not patronize him. If he is put into public position, men will complain. If he gain a position in the commercial world, men will quietly secure his dismissal or see that a white man succeeds him.

As to his expenditure: The comparative smallness of the patronage of the Negro and the dislike of other customers makes it usual to increase the charges or difficulties in certain directions in which a Negro must spend money. He must pay more house rent for worse houses than most white people pay. He is sometimes liable to insult or reluctant service in some restaurants, hotels and stores, at public resorts, theatres and places of recreation, and at nearly all barbershops.

As to his children: The Negro finds it extremely difficult to rear children in such an atmosphere and not have them either cringing or impudent. If he impresses upon them patience with their lot, they may grow up satisfied with their condition; if he inspires them with ambition to rise, they may grow to despise their own people, hate the whites, and become embittered with the world. His children are discriminated against, often in public schools. They are advised when seeking employment to become waiters and maids. They are liable to species of insult and temptation particularly trying to children.

As to social intercourse: In all walks of life, the Negro is liable to meet some objection to his presence or some discourteous treatment, and the ties of friendship or memory seldom are strong enough to hold across the color line. If an invitation is issued to the public for any occasion, the Negro can never know whether he would be welcomed or not. If he goes he is liable to have his feelings hurt and get into unpleasant altercation; if he stays away, he is blamed for indifference. If he meet a lifelong white friend on the street, he is in a dilemma. If he does not greet the friend, he is put down as boorish and impolite; if he does greet the friend, he is liable to be flatly snubbed. If by chance he is introduced to a white woman or man, he expects to be ignored on the next meeting, and usually is. White friends may call on him, but he is scarcely expected to call on them, save for strictly business matters. If he gain the affections of a white woman

and marry her, he may invariably expect that slurs will be thrown on her reputation and on his and that both his and her race will shun their company.¹⁷ When he dies he cannot be buried beside white corpses.

The result: Any one of these things happening now and then would not be remarkable or call for especial comment, but when one group of people suffer all these little differences of treatment and discriminations and insults continually, the result is either discouragement or bitterness or over-sensitiveness or recklessness. And a people feeling thus cannot do their best.

Presumably the first impulse of the average Philadelphian would be emphatically to deny any such marked and blighting discrimination as the above against a group of citizens in this metropolis. Every one knows that in the past color prejudice in the city was deep and passionate; living men can remember when a Negro could not sit in a street car or walk many streets in peace. These times have passed, however, and many imagine that active discrimination against the Negro has passed with them. Careful inquiry will convince any such one of his error. To be sure, a colored man today can walk the streets of Philadelphia without personal insult. He can go to theatres, parks, and some places of amusement without meeting more than stares and discourtesy; he can be accommodated at most hotels and restaurants, although his treatment in some would not be pleasant. All this is a vast advance and augurs much for the future. And yet all that has been said of the remaining discrimination is but too true.

It goes without saying that most private schools, music schools, etc., will not admit Negroes and in some cases have insulted applicants.

Such is the tangible form of Negro prejudice in Philadelphia. No one who has with any diligence studied the situation of the Negro in the city can long doubt but that his opportunities are limited and his ambition circumscribed about as has been shown. There are of course numerous exceptions, but the mass of the Negroes have been so often refused openings and discouraged in efforts to better their condition that many of them say, as one said, "I never apply—I know it is useless." Beside these tangible and measurable forms, there are deeper and less easily described results of the attitude of the white population toward the Negroes: a certain manifestation of a real or assumed aversion, a spirit of ridicule or patronage, a vindictive hatred in some, absolute indifference in others. All this of course does not make much difference to the mass of the race, but it deeply wounds the better classes, the very classes who are attaining to that to which we wish the mass to attain. Notwithstanding all this, most Negroes would patiently await the effect of time and commonsense on

such prejudice did it not today touch them in matters of life and death, threaten their homes, their food, their children, their hopes. And the result of this is bound to be increased crime, inefficiency, and bitterness.

It would, of course, be idle to assert that most of the Negro crime was caused by prejudice; the violent economic and social changes which the last fifty years have brought to the American Negro, the sad social history that preceded these changes, have all contributed to unsettle morals and pervert talents. Nevertheless, it is certain that Negro prejudice in cities like Philadelphia has been a vast factor in aiding and abetting all other causes which impel a half-developed race to recklessness and excess. Certainly a great amount of crime can be without doubt traced to the discrimination against Negro boys and girls in the matter of employment. Or to put it differently, Negro prejudice costs the city something.

The connection of crime and prejudice is, on the other hand, neither simple nor direct. The boy who is refused promotion in his job as porter does not go out and snatch somebody's pocketbook. Conversely, the loafers at Twelfth and Kater streets and the thugs in the county prison are not usually graduates of high schools who have been refused work. The connections are much more subtle and dangerous; it is the atmosphere of rebellion and discontent that unrewarded merit and reasonable but unsatisfied ambition make. The social environment of excuse, listless despair, careless indulgence, and lack of inspiration to work is the growing force that turns black boys and girls into gamblers, prostitutes, and rascals. And this social environment has been built up slowly out of the disappointments of deserving men and the sloth of the unawakened. How long can a city say to a part of its citizens, "It is useless to work; it is fruitless to deserve well of men; education will gain you nothing but disappointment and humiliation?" How long can a city teach its black children that the road to success is to have a white face? How long can a city do this and escape the inevitable penalty?

For thirty years and more, Philadelphia has said to its black children: "Honesty, efficiency and talent have little to do with your success; if you work hard, spend little, and are good you may earn your bread and butter at those sorts of work which we frankly confess we despise; if you are dishonest and lazy, the State will furnish your bread free." Thus the class of Negroes which the prejudices of the city have distinctly encouraged is that of the criminal, the lazy and the shiftless; for them the city teems with institutions and charities; for them there is succor and sympathy; for them Philadelphians are thinking and planning; but for the educated and industrious young colored man who wants work and not platitudes, wages and

not alms, just rewards and not sermons—for such colored men Philadelphia apparently has no use.

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter, the basis of induction is the number of prisoners received at different institutions and *not* the prison population at particular times. This avoids the mistakes and distortions of the latter method. (Cf. Falkner: "Crime and the Census;" Publications of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, No. 190.) Many writers on crime among Negroes (e.g., F.L. Hoffman, and all who use the Eleventh Census uncritically) have fallen into numerous mistakes and exaggerations by carelessness on this point.

2. Pennsylvania Colonial Records, I, 380-91.

3. See Chapter III and Appendix B.

4. Cf. "Pennsylvania Statutes at Large," Ch. 36.

5. "Watson's Annals," I. 62.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

8. "Pennsylvania Colonial Records," II, 275; IX, 6; "Watson's Annals," I, 309.

9. Cf. Chapter IV.

10. Reports Eastern Penitentiary.

11. Average length of sentences for whites in Eastern Penitentiary during nineteen years, 2 years 8 months 2 days; for Negroes, 3 years 7 months 14 days. Cf. "Health of Convicts" (pam.), pp. 7,8.

12. *Ibid.*, "Condition of Negroes," 1838, pp. 15-18; "Condition of Negroes," 1848, pp. 26, 27.

13. "Condition of Negroes," 1849, pp. 28, 29. "Condition of Negroes" 1838, pp. 15-18.

14. "The large proportion of colored men who, in April, had been before the criminal court, led Judge Gordon to make a suggestion when he yesterday discharged the jurors for the term. 'It would certainly seem,' said the Court, 'that the philanthropic colored people of the community, of whom there are a great many excellent and intelligent citizens sincerely interested in the welfare of their race, ought to see what is radically wrong that produces this state of affairs and correct it, if possible. There is nothing in history that indicates that the colored race has a propensity to acts of violent crime; on the contrary, their tendencies are most gentle, and they submit with grace to subordination.'" Philadelphia *Record*, April 29, 1893; Cf. *Record*, May 10 and 12; *Ledger*, May 10, and *Times*, May 22, 1893.

15. Except as otherwise noted, the statistics of this section are from the official reports of the police department.

16. Cf. Chapters IV and VII.

17. Cf. Section 49.