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PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 85

# THE RACES OF MANKIND

BY RUTH BENEDICT AND GENE WELTFISH



# THE RACES OF MANKIND

By PROFESSOR RUTH BENEDICT  
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Department of Anthropology  
Columbia University

## The World is Shrinking

The greatest fighting alliance of nations in history—the United Nations—has completed the military destruction of fascism. These United Nations include the most different physical types of men, the most unlike beliefs, the most varied ways of life. White men, yellow men, black men, and the so-called “red men” of America, peoples of the East and the West, of the tropics and the arctic, fought together against one enemy.

Every morning in the newspapers and on the bulletin boards we read of the battles in Russia, in China, in Italy, in the Solomon Islands, and in New Guinea. One day’s hop in a plane

This pamphlet was prepared under the supervision of a committee of the American Association of Scientific Workers. The committee includes the following members of the faculty of Columbia University: Prof. Ruth Benedict, Anthropology; Prof. L. C. Dunn, Zoology; Prof. Otto Klineberg, Psychology; Dr. Marion Smith, Anthropology; and Dr. Gene Weltfish, Anthropology.

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carried us across the oceans. Our supply ships went to every corner of the globe. On the radio we heard men reporting on the spot from Cairo and Australia. Burma came to be closer to us than New Orleans was to Washington at the time of the War of 1812. Distance then was a hard fact; it had not been sealed down by the triumphs of human invention.

The war, for the first time, brought home to Americans the fact that the whole world has been made one neighborhood. All races of man were shoulder to shoulder. Our armed forces were in North Africa with its Negro, Berber, and Near-East peoples. They were in India. They were in China. They were in the Solomons with its dark-skinned, "strong"-haired Melanesians. Peoples of all the races of the earth became our neighbors.

For Americans this was not so new an experience as it was to people of most nations. In our country men of different color, hair texture, and head shape have lived together since the founding of our nation. They are citizens of the United States. Negroes and whites, Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, and people from the European nations are all taxable, subject to the draft and to the other laws of the land. They are part of our great national community. History today is only bringing together on a world scale races which have been brought together on a smaller scale here in America.

Americans know better than most how much hard feeling there can be when people of different races and nationalities have to live together and be part of one community. They know that there is often conflict. When what we all wanted more than anything else was to win this war, most Americans were confident that, whatever our origins, we would be able to pull together to a final victory. Hitler, though, always believed we were wrong; he believed that hard feeling would break out and leave us defeated. He was quite sure that he could "divide and conquer." And he believed that he could convince nonwhite races in Asia and Africa that this was a "white man's war." He believed especially that America was a no man's land, where peoples of all origins were ready to fall to fighting among themselves. He

believed that this was a front on which we were doomed to lose the battle. It was certainly a front no less important in this war than the Production Front.

### Science and the Race Front

In any great issue that concerned the war we turned to science. When we needed new fuels, substitutes for rubber, lighter metals, or new plastics, we asked scientists to tell us what was possible and what was impossible. The chemists told us how to make the plastics we needed, and the physicists told us how to detect and locate an approaching airplane, and the engineers told us how to build a better fighting plane. When we were faced with war shortages, they told us what essential materials we had been throwing out on the dump heap.

We needed the scientist just as much on the race front. Scientists have studied race. Historians have studied the history of all nations and peoples. Sociologists have studied the way in which peoples band together. Biologists have studied how man's physical traits are passed down from one generation to the next. Anthropologists have studied man's bodily measurements and his cultural achievements. Psychologists have studied intelligence among different races. All that the scientists had learned became important to us at this crucial moment of history. They told us: "this is so," "this is not so," "this occurs under certain conditions," or "this occurs under opposite conditions."

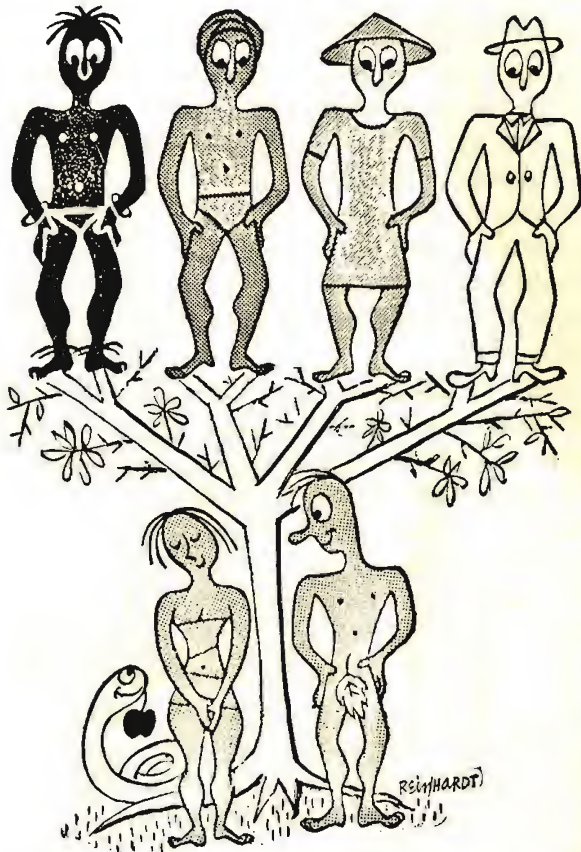
This booklet cannot tell you all that science has learned about the races of mankind, but it states facts that have been learned and verified. We need them.

### One Human Race

The Bible story of Adam and Eve, father and mother of the whole human race, told centuries ago the same truth that science has shown today: that all the peoples of the earth are a single family and have a common origin. Science describes the intricate make-up of the human body: all its different organs cooperating in keeping us alive, its curious anatomy that couldn't possibly



have "just happened" to be the same in all men if they did not have a common origin. Take the structure of the human foot, for instance. When you list all the little bones and muscles and



THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH ARE ONE FAMILY.

the joints of the toes, it is impossible to imagine that that would all have happened twice. Or take our teeth: so many front teeth, so many canines, so many molars. Who can imagine finding the same arrangements in two human species if they weren't one family?

The fact of the unity of the human race is proved, therefore,

in its anatomy. It is proved also by the close similarity in what all races are physically fitted for. No difference among human races has affected limbs and teeth and relative strength so that one race is biologically outfitted like a lion and another biologically outfitted like a lamb. All races of men can either plow or fight, and all the racial differences among them are in nonessentials such as texture of head hair, amount of body hair, shape of the nose or head, or color of the eyes and the skin. The white race is the hairiest, but a white man's hair isn't thick enough to keep him warm in cold climates. The Negro's dark skin gives him some protection against strong sunlight in the tropics, and white men often have to take precautions against sunstroke. But the war has shown that white men can work and fight even in a tropical desert. Today white men in hot countries wear sun helmets and protect themselves with clothes and rub their skin with suntan oil. Very dark-skinned people in the north, too, can add cod-liver oil and orange juice to their diet, and, if they need to, take a vitamin pill or two. The shape of the head, too, is a racial trait; but whether it is round or long, it can house a good brain.

The races of mankind are what the Bible says they are—brothers. In their bodies is the record of their brotherhood.

### WHAT ARE RACE DIFFERENCES?

THE greatest adventure story in the history of the world is the spread of early man to all corners of the globe. With crude tools, without agriculture, without domesticated animals except the dog, he pressed on, from somewhere in Asia, to the tip of Africa, to the British Isles, across Bering Strait into America and down to Cape Horn. He occupied the islands of the Pacific and the continent of Australia. The world had a small population then, and many of these pioneers were for centuries as separated from other peoples as if they lived on another planet. Slowly they developed physical differences.

Those who settled nearer the equator, whether in Europe, Asia, or in the Americas, developed a darker skin color than



those who settled to the north of them. People's hair is often the same over great areas: frizzly hair, lank hair, wavy hair. Europeans remained quite hairy, but in some parts of the world body hair almost disappeared. Blue eyes appeared in the north. In some places in Asia a fold of skin developed over the inner corner of the eye and produced what we call a slant eye.

All these distinctive traits made it easy to recognize people as belonging to different parts of the world. In each place the people got used to looking at one another. They said, "Our men are really men. Our women are beautiful. This is the way people should look." Sometimes they liked the appearance of their close neighbors. But strangers seemed odd and queer. Strangers wore funny clothes and their manners were bad. Even more important, strangers did not look the way people should. Their noses were too flat or too pointed. Their skin was "a sickly white" or "a dirty black." They were too fat or too short. Everywhere in the world men and women used the standard of their own people to judge others and thought that people who differed from this standard looked funny or ugly.

### All Peoples Much the Same

After the discovery of America by Columbus, Europeans began traveling to every quarter of the globe, and all the new peoples they met were complete strangers to them. For one thing, the Europeans couldn't understand their languages. They looked and acted strange. Europeans thought they were different creatures and named a lot of different "races." Gradually the Europeans described each one as having a skin color, kind of hair, kind of lips, height, and head shape that was peculiar to that "race." Nowadays we know that this was a false impression.

### HEIGHT

Take height, for example. There are tall and short people almost everywhere in the world. Near the sources of the Nile, the Shilluk Negroes are 6 feet 2 inches; their neighbors, the brown pygmies, are 4 feet 8 inches. In Italy, a six-footer and a five-

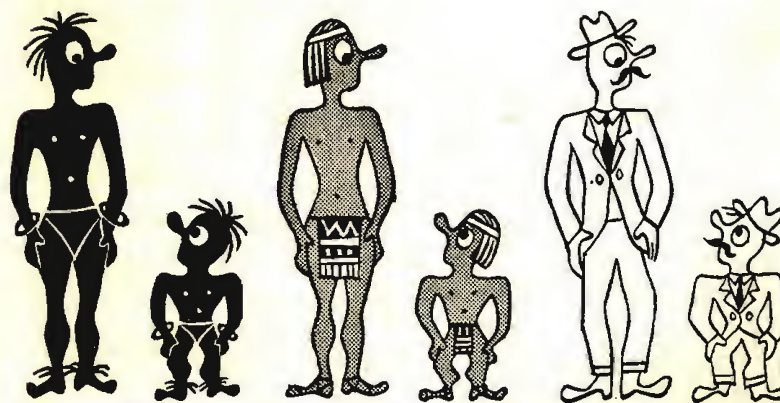
footer could both be native Italians for generations back. Among the Arizona Indians, the Hopi Pueblos are 5 feet 4 inches; their Mohave neighbors are nearly 6 feet.

A report of the Selective Service System of November 10, 1941, showed that registrants examined for the U. S. Army varied in height from 4 feet 6 inches to 7 feet 4 inches. This represents the extremes of height anywhere in the world. The Army's limits for acceptance, from 5 feet to 6 feet 6 inches, would include most men the world over.

### SHAPE OF HEAD

Take the shape of the head as another example. In West Africa there are more long heads; in the Congo, more round. Among the American Indians, as well as in the population of Europe, both the longest and the roundest heads are to be found, and in Asia Minor long heads and round heads appear among very close relatives.

Or let us take the brain itself. Because the brain is the thinking organ, some scientists have tried to find differences in the size and structure of the brain among different groups of people. In spite of these efforts, using the finest microscopes, the best scientists cannot tell from examining a brain to what group of people



THERE ARE TALL ONES AND SHORT ONES IN ALL COLORS.



its owner belonged. The *average* size of the brain is different in different groups, but it has been proved over and over again that the size of the brain has nothing to do with intelligence. Some of the most brilliant men in the world have had very small brains. On the other hand, the world's largest brain belongs to an imbecile.

#### BLOOD THE SAME

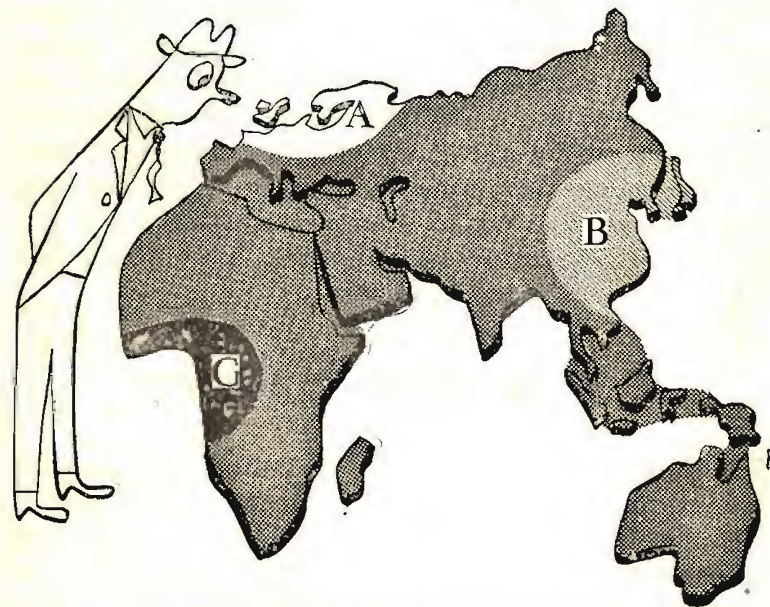
For ages men have spoken of "blood relations" as if different peoples had different blood. Some people have shouted that if we got into our veins the blood of someone with a different head shape, eye color, hair texture, or skin color, we should get some of that person's physical and mental characteristics.

Modern science has revealed this to be pure superstition. All human blood is the same, whether it is the blood of an Eskimo or a Frenchman, of the "purest" German "Aryan" or an African pygmy—except for one medically important difference. This medical difference was discovered when doctors first began to use blood transfusion in order to save life. In early attempts at transfusion it was discovered that "agglutination" or clumping together of the red cells sometimes occurred and caused death. Gradually investigators learned that there are four types of blood, called O, A, B, and AB, and that although blood typed O can be mixed successfully with the other three, none of these can be mixed with one another without clumping.

These four types of blood are inherited by each child from its forebears. But whites, Negroes, Mongols, and all races of man have all these blood types. The color of their skin does not tell at all which blood type they have. You and an Australian bushman may have the same blood type. Because you inherit your bodily traits from your many different ancestors, you may have a different blood type from your mother or your father or your brothers and sisters. You may have eyes like your mother's, teeth and hair like your father's, feet like your grandfather's, and a blood type like your great-grandmother's.

Today on the battle front doctors are giving blood "plasma"

infusions without regard to race or blood type. Plasma is what is left after the red and white cells or corpuscles are removed from the blood contributed to the Blood Bank. Plasma from several different persons is mixed together and is used to restore any wounded man whether he is white or black or yellow.



MOST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD HAVE IN-BETWEEN-COLOR SKIN.

#### COLOR

Finally, let us take skin color, the most noticeable of the differences between peoples. Few traits have been used as widely to classify people. We all talk about black, white, and yellow races of man.

In the world today the darkest people are in West Africa, the lightest people in northwest Europe, while in southeast Asia are men with yellowish-tan skins. Most people in the world, how-



ever, are not of these extremes but are in-betweens. These in-betweens probably have the skin shades that were once most common, the white, yellow, and dark brown or black being extreme varieties.

Recently scientists found that skin color is determined by two special chemicals. One of these, *carotene*, gives a yellow tinge; the other, *melanin*, contributes the brown. These colors, along with the pinkish tinge that comes when the blood vessels show through, give various shades to the human skin. Every person, however light or dark his skin may appear, has some of each of these materials in his skin. The one exception is the albino, who lacks coloring substances—and albinos appear among dark- and light-skinned peoples alike. People of browner complexions simply have more *melanin* in their skin, people of yellowish color more *carotene*. It is not an all-or-nothing difference; it is a difference in proportion. Your skin color is due to the amount of these chemicals present in the skin.

## HOW ARE RACES CLASSIFIED?

THE three primary races of the world have their strongest developments in areas A, B, and C on the map on page 9. In these parts of the world most of the inhabitants not only have the same skin color but the same hair texture and noses. A is the area of the Caucasian Race, B of the Mongoloid Race, C of the Negroid Race.

The Caucasian Race inhabits Europe and a great part of the Near East and India. It is subdivided in broad bands that run east and west: Nordics (fair-skinned, blue-eyed, tall, and long-headed) are most common in the north; Alpines (in-between skin color, often stocky, broad-headed) in the middle; Mediterraneans (slenderer, often darker than Alpines, long-headed) in the south. The distribution of racial subtypes is just about the same in Germany and in France; both are mostly Alpine and both have Nordics in their northern districts. Racially, France

and Germany are made up of the same stocks in just about equal proportions.

American Indians are Mongoloid, though they differ physically both among themselves and from the Mongols of China.

The natives of Australia are sometimes called a fourth primary race. They are as hairy as Europeans, and yet they live in an area where other peoples have very little body hair.



THERE IS NO JEWISH "RACE."

Aryans, Jews, Italians are *not* races. Aryans are people who speak Indo-European, "Aryan" languages. Hitler used the term in many ways—sometimes for blond Europeans, including the Scandinavian; sometimes for Germans, whether blond or brunet; sometimes for all who agreed with him politically, including the Japanese. As Hitler used it, the term "Aryan" had no meaning, racial, linguistic, or otherwise.

Jews are people who acknowledge the Jewish religion. They are of all races, even Negro and Mongolian. European Jews are of many different biological types; physically they resemble the populations among whom they live. The so-called "Jewish type" is a Mediterranean type, and no more "Jewish" than the South Italian. Wherever Jews are persecuted or discriminated against, they cling to their old ways and keep apart from the rest of the population and develop so-called "Jewish" traits. But these are



not racial or "Jewish"; they disappear under conditions where assimilation is easy.

Italians are a nationality. Italians are of many different racial strains; the "typical" South Italian is a Mediterranean, more like the Spaniard or the Greek or the Levantine Jew than the blond North Italian. The Germans, the Russians, and all other nations of Europe are *nations*, not races. They are bound together, not by their head shape and their coloring, but by their national pride, their love of their farms, their local customs, their language, and the like.

### Racial Mixture

As far back in time as the scientist can go he finds proof that animals and men moved about in the world. There were different kinds of animals, and many of them went great distances. But wherever they went, the different kinds could not breed together. A tiger cannot mate with an elephant. Even a fox and a wolf cannot mate with each other. But whenever groups of people have traveled from one place to another and met other people, some of them have married and had children.

At first men had to travel by foot. It took them a long time but they got almost all over the world that way. Long ago when people knew only how to make tools out of stone, the Cro-Magnons lived in Europe. Waves of migration came in from the east and the southeast. These new people settled down, bred with the Cro-Magnons, and their children were the ancestors of modern Europeans. Since then there have been many migrations from Asia and northern Africa.

Later men tamed the horse. They built carts and rode horseback. They built great boats, which were rowed by hundreds of men. They could go faster and travel farther than ever before. The Phoenicians went on trading expeditions through the Mediterranean. The Romans went to Spain and up along the coast to the British Isles. Then the Huns swept in from Asia through central Europe and destroyed the Roman Empire. The Tartars came in from the east. They threatened to conquer all of Europe

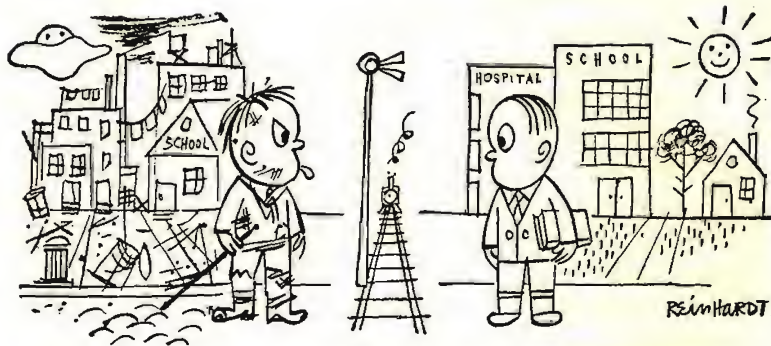
but were defeated in one of the greatest cavalry engagements of all time. The Mohammedans captured all of North Africa; they took Spain and went on up into France across the Pyrenees. Thousands of Negro slaves have been brought into Europe at various times. Where are they now? Peoples have come and gone in Europe for centuries. Wherever they went, some of them settled down and left children. Small groups were absorbed into the total population. Always the different races moved about and intermarried.

We are used to thinking of Americans as mixed. All of us have ancestors who came from regions far apart. But we think that the English are English and the French are French. This is true for their nationality, just as we are all Americans. But it is not true for their *race*. The Germans have claimed to be a pure German race, but no European is a pure anything. A country has a population. It does not have a race. If you go far enough back in the populations of Europe you are apt to find all kinds of ancestors: Cro-Magnons, Slavs, Mongols, Africans, Celts, Saxons, and Teutons.

It is true, though, that people who live closer together intermarry more frequently. This is why there are places like Alsace-Lorraine, where Germans and French have intermarried so much that the children cannot tell whether they are German or French and so call themselves Alsatians. Czechoslovakia included old Bohemia which had a population of Nordics and semi-Asiatics and Slavs. After World War I the Germans and the Czechs along the border between the two countries intermarried so often that the Germans of this section got to look like Czechs and the Czechs began to speak German. But this did not make the two countries love each other.

People of every European nation have racial brothers in other countries, often ones with which they are at war. If at any one moment you could sort into one camp all the people in the world who were most Mediterranean, no mystic sense of brotherhood would unite them. Neither camp would have language or nationality or mode of life to unite them. The old fights would break





WITH BETTER HOME, SCHOOL, MEDICAL CARE, JOHNNY COULD HAVE BEEN JIMMY.

out again unless social conditions were changed—the old hatred between national groups, the old antagonisms between ruler and ruled and between the exploiter and the exploited.

The movements of peoples over the face of the earth inevitably produce race mixture and have produced it since before history began. No one has been able to show that this is necessarily bad. It has sometimes been a social advantage, sometimes a running sore threatening the health of the whole society. It can obviously be made a social evil, and, where it is so, sensible people will avoid contributing to it by grieving if their children make such alliances. We must live in the world as it is. But, as far as we know, there are no immutable laws of nature that make racial intermixture harmful.

### Racial Superiorities and Inferiorities

When they study racial differences, scientists investigate the way by which particular traits are passed on from parents to children. They measure head form and identify skin color on a color chart. They map out the distribution of different kinds of hair or noses in the world. Scientists recognize that these differences do not themselves show better or worse qualities in peoples, any more than bay horses are better than black ones:

They know that to prove that a bay horse is superior to a black one you have to do more than identify its skin color on a color chart; you have to test its abilities.

Science therefore treats human racial differences as facts to be studied and mapped. It treats racial superiorities as a separate field of investigation; it looks for evidence. When a Nazi says "I am a blue-eyed Aryan and you are non-Aryan," he means "I am superior and you are inferior." The scientist says: "Of course. You are a fair-haired, long-headed, tall North European (the Anthropological term is Nordics, not Aryans), and I am a dark-haired, round-headed, less tall South European. But on what evidence do you base your claim to be superior? That is quite different."

Race prejudice turns on this point of inferiority and superiority. The man with race prejudice says of a man of another race, "No matter who he is, I don't have to compare myself with him. I'm superior anyway. I was born that way."



AN AMERICAN BROUGHT UP IN CHINA WILL SPEAK CHINESE.



housing and diet and income were far below average too. Since the vast majority of Negroes lived in the South, their score on the intelligence test was a score they got not only as Negroes, but as Americans who had grown up under poor conditions in the South. Scientists therefore compared the scores of Southern whites and Northern Negroes.

#### Median Scores on A.E.F. Intelligence Tests

##### *Southern Whites:*

Mississippi	41.25
Kentucky	41.50
Arkansas	41.55

##### *Northern Negroes:*

New York	45.02
Illinois	47.35
Ohio	49.50

Negroes with better luck after they were born got higher scores than whites with less luck. The white race did badly where economic conditions were bad and schooling was not provided, and Negroes living under better conditions surpassed them. *The differences did not arise because people were from the North or the South, or because they were white or black, but because of differences in income, education, cultural advantages, and other opportunities.*

Scientists then studied gifted children. They found that children with top scores turn up among Negroes, Mexicans, and Orientals. Then they went to European countries to study the intelligence of children in homelands from which our immigrants come. Children from some of these countries got poor scores in America, but in their homeland children got good scores. Evidently the poor scores here were due to being uprooted, speaking a foreign language, and living in tenements; the children were not unintelligent *by heredity.*

### Character Not Inborn

The second superiority which a man claims when he says, "I was born a member of a superior race," is that his race has better *character*. The Nazis boasted of their racial soul. But when they wanted to make a whole new generation into Nazis they didn't trust to "racial soul"; they made certain kinds of teaching com-



SUSIE BROWN KNOWS ALL THE ANSWERS.

pulsory in the schools, they broke up homes where the parents were anti-Nazi, they required boys to join certain Nazi youth organizations. By these means they got the kind of national character they wanted. But it was a planned and deliberately trained character, not an inborn "racial soul." In just the same way the Japanese have bred a generation of ruthless fighters. Fifty years ago Europeans who lived in Japan used to describe them as "butterflies flitting from flower to flower," incapable of "the stern drives" of Western civilization. Since 1900 the "butterflies" have fought six times overseas, and they are desperate and ruthless fighters. In a generation the butterflies have become game cocks. But their *race* has not changed. The same blood still flows





PEOPLE ARE GENTLE OR WARLIKE DEPENDING ON THEIR TRAINING.

in their veins. But spiritually they are more like the Germans than they are like their racial brothers, the peace-loving Chinese.

It can go the other way, too. In 1520 the ancient Mexicans were like the Germans. They talked like Nazis, thought like them, in many ways felt like them. They, too, believed war to be man's highest mission. They, too, trained their children for it, placing their boys in great state schools where they learned little else but the glories of battle and the rituals of their caste. They, too, believed themselves invincible, and against small, defenseless villages, they were. But they were defeated in battle by the Spaniards with the help of the peoples whom the Aztecs had oppressed; their leaders were killed, their temples destroyed, their wealth pillaged, and their power broken. The Mexican peasant, who still speaks the Aztec language and in whose veins still runs the blood of Aztec conquerors, no longer dreams of glorious death in battle and eternal life in an Indian Valhalla. He no longer goes on the warpath, no longer provokes war with peaceful villages. He is a humble peon, wishing only to be left

in peace to cultivate his little field, go to church, dance, sing, and make love. These simple things endure.

Americans deny that the Nazis have produced a national character superior to that of Goethe's and Schiller's day, and that the ruthless Japanese of today are finer human beings than in those generations when they preferred to write poetry and paint pictures. Race prejudice is, after all, a determination to keep a people down, and it misuses the label "inferior" to justify unfairness and injustice. Race prejudice makes people ruthless; it invites violence. It is the opposite of "good character" as it is defined in the Christian religion—or in the Confucian religion, or in the Buddhist religion, or the Hindu religion, for that matter.

### Civilization Not Caused by Race

History proves that progress in civilization is not the monopoly of one race or subrace. When our white forebears in Europe were rude stone-age primitives, the civilizations of the Babylonians and the Egyptians had already flourished and been eclipsed. There were great Negro states in Africa when Europe was a sparsely settled forest. Negroes made iron tools and wove fine cloth for their clothing when fair-skinned Europeans wore skins and knew nothing of iron.

When Europe was just emerging from the Middle Ages, Marco Polo visited China and found there a great civilization, the like of which he had never imagined. Europe was a frontier country in those days compared with China.

Since the beginning of history an unusual collection of fortunate circumstances have been present among one race, sometimes among another. Up to now, every great center of civilization has had its day and has given place to others. The proud rulers of yesterday become the simple peasants of another era. The crude people who once threatened the great cities become later the kings and emperors in the same country. The peoples change, but the old arts of life are, for the most part, not permanently lost. They pass into the common heritage of mankind.



Inventions pass, too, from one continent to another when people trade with each other. This has happened since the dawn of history. About 5,000 years ago, when Europe was on the frontiers of the civilized world, Asiatics came to trade in Europe



THERE HAVE BEEN GREAT "EDISONS" IN ALL TIMES AND PLACES.

and North Africa in great caravans. They followed the main rivers—the Nile into North Africa, the Danube into Europe, and the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers out of Asia. People from all over came in contact with one another and compared notes on what they knew. In this way they pooled their knowledge, and

out of this combined knowledge came the great inventions of civilization—massive building and the arts of metallurgy, chemistry, writing, medicine, and mathematics; transportation on wheels. The idea of printing and the use of movable type are old Chinese inventions, and our power engines depend upon a knowledge of explosives that the Chinese worked out with fire-crackers.

When Columbus discovered America, corn, "Irish" potatoes, tobacco, and "Boston" beans were unknown in Europe. They had been developed by American Indians. Within ten years corn was being planted in Central Asia and in the interior of Africa, and African tribes today think that corn was given them by their own gods "in the beginning."

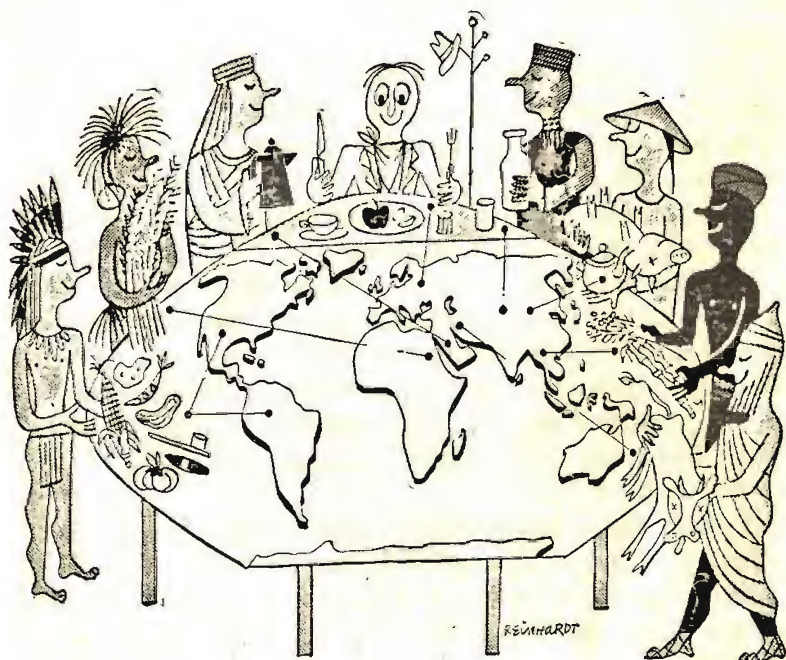
All races have made their contributions to human knowledge. Those who have lived at the crossroads of the world have invented most; those who have lived isolated on islands or at the tip ends of continents have been content to earn their livelihoods by old traditional methods. There was, for them, no "necessity" to be "the mother of invention" after they had devised a way to live on the land.

Peoples who came into contact with strangers, however, gave what arts of life they had and took what the strangers had. These contributions to civilization accumulated over the centuries and on this accumulation new discoveries are based. We are all the gainers.

The United States is the greatest crossroads of the world in all history. People have come here from every race and nation, and almost every race in the world is represented among our citizens. They have brought with them their own ways of cooking food, so that our "American" diet is indebted to a dozen peoples. Our turkey, corn, and cranberries come from the Indians. Our salads we borrowed from the French and Italians. Increasingly in recent years we have enriched our tables with soups from Russia, vegetables from Italy, appetizers from the Scandinavian countries, seafoods from the Mediterranean lands, chile and tortillas from Mexico, and so on almost endlessly. At



the same time, everywhere we have gone in the world, we have popularized ice cream, beefsteak, breakfast cereals, corn on the cob, and other foods that are called "American."



OUR FOOD COMES FROM MANY PEOPLES.

Industry in the United States has taken the hand-skills of our immigrants and made machines to do the work; without their skills we should not have known how. Our music, our buildings have developed from patterns brought to our shores or learned from every quarter of the world. Our country would be poorer in every phase of its culture if different cultures had not come together here, sharing and learning the special contributions each had to offer.

## THE FUTURE OF RACE PREJUDICE

NEVERTHELESS there is race prejudice in America and in the world. Race prejudice isn't an old universal "instinct." It is hardly a hundred years old. Before that, people persecuted Jews because of their religion—not their "blood"; they enslaved Negroes because they were pagans—not for being black.

Looking back now, moderns are horrified at all the blood that was shed for centuries in religious conflicts. It is not our custom any more to torture and kill a man because he has a different religion. The twenty-first century may well look back on our generation and be just as horrified. If that century builds its way of life on the Atlantic Charter—for the whole world—our era will seem a nightmare from which they have awakened. They will think we were crazy. "Why should race prejudice have swept the western world," they will say, "where no nation was anything but a mixture of all kinds of racial groups? Why did nations just at that moment begin talking about 'the racial purity' of their blood? Why did they talk of their wars as racial wars? Why did they make people suffer, not because they were criminals or double-crossers, but because they were Jews or Negroes or non-Nordic?"

We who are living in these troubled times can tell them why. Today weak nations are afraid of the strong nations; the poor are afraid of the rich; the rich are afraid they will lose their riches. People are afraid of one another's political or economic power, they are afraid of revenge for past injuries, they are afraid of social rejection. Conflict grows fat on fear. And the slogans against "inferior races" lead us to pick on them as scapegoats. We pin on them the reason for all our fears.

### Race Prejudice Not Inevitable

Freedom from fear is the way to cure race prejudice. When aggressions like those of the Axis are made impossible by guarantees of collective security, those guarantees must cover countries of all races. Then Nazi race tactics will be outmoded. In any



country every legal decision that upholds equal citizenship rights without regard to race or color, every labor decision that lessens the terror of being "laid off" and gives a man self-respect in his employment, every arrangement that secures the little farmer against losing his acres to the bank—all these and many more can free people from fear. They need not look for scapegoats.

The Russian nation has for a generation shown what can be done to outlaw race prejudice in a country with many kinds of people. They did not wait for people's minds to change. They made racial discrimination and persecution illegal. They welcomed and honored the different dress, different customs, different arts of the many tribes and countries that live as part of their nation. The more backward groups were given special aid to help them catch up with the more advanced. Each people was helped to develop its own cultural forms, its own written language, theater, music, dance, and so on. At the same time that each people was encouraged in its national self-development, the greatest possible interchange of customs was fostered, so that each group became more distinctively itself and at the same time more a part of the whole.

The Russians have welcomed cultural *differences* and they have refused to treat them as *inferiorities*. No part of the Russian program has had greater success than their racial program.

### What Is Being Done?

In the United States a considerable number of organizations are working for democratic race equality. To mention only a few: The East-West Association has done some splendid work in emphasizing the importance of racial understanding, especially between Asiatic and Western peoples. The China Institute is active in promoting the work of Chinese students in America, and the Phelps-Stokes Foundation has brought many African students here, cementing the relation between the two continents.

The Council Against Intolerance in America has a continuous program in the schools. The Council on Intercultural Relations has done much to emphasize the Negro's contribution to American

culture. The Bureau for Intercultural Education interprets the contributions made to America by many different races and nationalities. The Rosenwald Foundation has sponsored southern



FREEDOM FROM FEAR BRINGS FREEDOM FROM PREJUDICE.

Negro schools, elementary, high school, and college, in order to make up for the deficiencies of southern Negro education. They have also pressed for Negro housing and health projects in the North. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People arranges publicity and fosters public education through periodicals, the radio, and special publications. It fights cases of



discrimination in the courts and tries to get effective laws passed for the protection of Negro rights. The National Urban League helps Negroes who move from rural districts to the cities to find industrial work and proper living conditions.

#### THE CHURCHES

Many church bodies have done much to help people realize that ideas of race superiority or inferiority are un-Christian. The Department of Race Relations of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the National Conference of Christians and Jews have encouraged collaboration among church leaders interested in interracial cooperation. During World War II, the Executive Committee of the Council called on all local churches to eliminate racial discrimination in their own practices. Church bodies of all faiths have encouraged education for tolerance.

#### COMMISSION ON INTERRACIAL COOPERATION

For some twenty years white and Negro leaders of the South have cooperated actively through the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in establishing local committees of both whites and Negroes. This commission has promoted mutual respect and understanding. In many local areas, small groups have worked patiently to increase interracial cooperation.

#### BY UNIONS

Among the unions we find that the National Maritime Union has fought and won the right of Negroes to serve as skilled workers instead of in menial jobs only. Today mixed crews on freighters, tankers, and merchant ships are doing a magnificent job without friction. The *Booker T. Washington* with its Negro captain, Hugh Mulzac, is a notable example. The United Auto Workers has an interracial committee with Walter Hardin, a veteran Negro official, as its chairman. At first white workers resisted the right of Negroes to do more skilled kinds of work. For example, when Negroes were first placed on machines previously manned by white operators, a work stoppage shut down a whole section of the Packard plant. R. J. Thomas, the presi-

dent of the union, ordered the white strikers to return to work or suffer loss of union membership and employment. Within a few hours the strikers were back, with the recently promoted Negroes still at their machines.

Besides the National Maritime Union and the Auto Workers, a number of other unions have taken the lead in promoting interracial understanding. They include the International Ladies Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers, the Marine Shipbuilding Workers, and the United Rubber Workers. In the Birmingham, Alabama, area there are more than a hundred union locals with both white and Negro members, and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union has a mixed membership.

#### THE GOVERNMENT

From the time of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to the present day, the national and state governments have passed laws to carry forward the principles of our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution. In June, 1941, President Roosevelt took direct action in his Executive Order No. 8802 toward eliminating discrimination in employment in plants with war contracts. The Fair Employment Practices Committee was set up and held public hearings in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Birmingham. When an individual applied for a job in a plant doing war work and was refused for reasons of prejudice—because he was a Negro, a Jew, or a naturalized citizen—he could bring his case before the committee, who then called the company to a public hearing. This committee is now part of the War Manpower Commission.

The Negro Manpower Commission of this same body is headed by an able Negro economist and maintains a staff of Negro field representatives attached to the U. S. Employment Service. They also work through the regional offices of the Social Security Board to detect cases of racial discrimination.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs under Commissioner Collier should be mentioned here as a government bureau with a long



record of successful effort for the adjustment of a racial minority.

But at best the government can act only as a policeman, finding a wrongdoer here and there. Only the people themselves can really end racial discrimination, through understanding, sympathy, and public action. But there is evidence that the American people as individuals are beginning to think and to act. One hundred thousand Americans petitioned the War Department to have at least one division in the Army containing both Negroes and whites. A separate petition was signed by American white men of draft age who asked to be assigned to such a division—and many of whom were Southerners.

#### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

In Houston, Texas, the mayor and a group of prominent citizens advertised in the local papers that no disturbance would be tolerated that would blacken the reputation of Houston when the Negroes of that city celebrated Juneteenth Day in honor of the emancipation of the slaves. It began with the statement, "Don't do Hitler's work," and warned citizens not to repeat rumors. The celebration was peacefully carried out. It is unfortunate that in Beaumont, Texas, similar effective action was not undertaken and a serious riot occurred.

#### JUST FOLKS

In the most disastrous of recent riots in Detroit, a number of obscure bystanders performed heroic actions.

A white passenger on a street car spoke to the mob and dissuaded them from searching the car.

Two women, a mother and daughter, realizing that the Negro passenger was in danger, sheltered him so that when the rioters looked into the car he was effectively hidden.

In a bus going south recently the white passengers all remained standing rather than occupy the "white" seats of a Jim Crow bus.

During the recent disturbances in New York's Harlem, a group of Negroes stood in front of the restaurant of a white proprietor who had been their friend and in this way protected it from being broken into and destroyed by the mob.

In the last analysis these homely incidents tell the real story. They tell us that the conscience of America is aroused, that there is work to be done, and that some of us are already trying to do it.

#### The Challenge

With America's great tradition of democracy, the United States should clean its own house and get ready for a better twenty-first century. Then it could stand unashamed before the Nazis and condemn, without confusion, their doctrines of a Master Race. Then it could put its hand to the building of the United Nations Organization, sure of support from all the yellow and the black races where the war was fought, sure that victory in this war is to be in the name, not of one race or of another, but of the universal Human Race.

#### FOR FURTHER READING

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- The Negro in American Life Series. Five-volume study prepared under the general direction of Dr. Gunnar Myrdal and sponsored by The Carnegie Corporation. New York, Harper & Bros. 1941-44
- Stewart, Maxwell S. *The Negro in America.* Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 95. 1944. 10¢