



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Show-Down vol. 2 no. 1**

Extracted on Mar-29-2024 10:02:01

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DARK GHETTO

An Interesting Panorama Harlem

In last month's issue, Neil Lawrence, brought to you his conception of the formation of the world's most talked of sector, Harlem, and in the following, Mr. Lawrence carries you through the streets and avenues of the Dark Ghetto, where its seething multitude of human beings make up this city within a city.

-EDITOR.

THE main thoroughfare and promenade of the Dark Ghetto is Seventh Avenue, extending several miles, from One Hundred and Tenth Street to McCombs Park.

Let us walk up this broad avenue, starting at One Hundred and Tenth Street.

We first pass through the Spanish and Latin quarters, with its inhabitants, Porto Ricans, Central Americans, Mexicans, Caribs, Haitians, South Americans and other Spanish groups.

We hear a language that is foreign to us, Spanish in the numerous dialects, in which it is spoken, from Castilian down to the lowed of the peon.

A black hair, olive skinned mother, her eyes flashing, chastises her bambino, in a jabbering, splutter of words, warning it to look out for passing automobiles. We wonder how the little child can understand what she is being told.

Further on, a lithe little, undernourished girl coos coquettly in Spanish to the dark haired lad beside her. Different from their fairer brothers and sisters further downtown, but primarily the same, love is love.

The sun begins to set in tranquility of evening.

From one of the many suuounding apartment houses, wafted by the gentle breeze which is blowing, can be heard the weird strains of the rumba. We hear the strumming of guitars and the clatter and the castanettes. For a moment we forget the motive of our journey, and our minds drift to some far off tropical isle in the Carribeans. We soon awaken and remember that we are still in New York.

We turn to look around, attracted by two voices. We are surprised to see a jet black youth conversing with a lad of a lighter hue. They are speaking in a pure Parisian French, Haitians, dark of skin by nature, essentially French by virtue.

Truly amazing this place called Harlem, one asks one self, how did they get here and why did they leave their homelands.

A window opens, a fat, ebony colored woman shoves her bulk out, calling to the Italian ice dealer, she speaks in Italian to him, North African. The window closes and we pass on.

According to census, the population of Harlem numbers some two hundred and fifty thousand souls, with an unknown, non-voting, unregistered and migratory group approximately, one hundred thousand more.

A brown lass passes accompanied by an almost white girl, who is so fair, she could easily be mistaken for a Caucasian. Years ago this would be cause for comment, not so today. One cannot tell the difference on many occasions. Amalgamation has produced thousands of these fair skinned people, who are neither white nor black.

A Chinese passes with a Hindu talking in pidgin English. Here comes a full-blooded Zulu, his tribal marks standing out clearly on his ebony black face.

We walk on, observing closely the passerby. Up this thorofare, lined on each side with five and six story apartment buildings, some modern and others antiquated.

In the side streets, private houses, at one time occupied by the former white inhabitants, are now occupied by this new element.

One Hundred and Twenty Fifth Street is the Broadway of Harlem. Shops

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We continue to walk.

A brown lass passes accompanied by an almost white girl, who is so fair, she could easily be mistaken for a Caucasian. Years ago this would be cause for comment, not so today. One cannot tell the difference on many occasions. Amalgamation has produced thousands of these fair skinned people, who are neither white nor black.

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We walk on, observing closely the passerby. Up this thorofare, lined on each side with five and six story apartment buildings, some modern and others antiquated.

In the side streets, private houses, at one time occupied by the former white inhabitants, are now occupied by this new element.

One Hundred and Twenty Fifth Street is the Broadway of Harlem. Shops lining all kinds of merchandise are on this thorofare.

Most of these are owned and operated by whites, but of late, because of the economic conditions in Harlem, they have been dependable on the Colored trade for patronage.

Due to the depression, the Colored citizen has become more conscious. Because of economic conditions, he has become more observant and thoughtful. The first to be fired and the last to be hired, he has suffered more than his fair skinned brother. In this battle of the survival of the fittest, like a savage who must cross a stream, but has not the means to do so, he is trying to solve his problem.

Around him there are positions in the stores, churches and business places in general, into the coffers of which he pours his hard earned, if meagre wages. His only return, the merchandise and service rendered.

He says to himself, "Why should they refuse to employ me because of my color, do they refuse my dollars?" No; no; they do not object to them; the color, given is desirable, but not the values, black, brown, yellow, etc. They are a disgrace. Well, we'll force them to employ us. Hence a boycott.

The boycott has opened many positions to the Harlem citizen that were formerly closed to him. Eighty per cent of the businesses in this territory, now employ men and women of color. This has done much to relieve the distress and poverty among the inhabitants.

Harlem has become work conscious. Go into stores, especially the department stores. Behind the counters, where once the color, white, dominated, one now becomes faced in a mass of color. How it relieves the monotony of life. Shopping takes on a fantastic coat. If one is a dresser, one can easily imagine they are in a bazaar in Cuba.

selling all kinds of merchandise are on this thoroughfare.

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Due to the depression, the Colored citizen has become race conscious. Because of economic conditions, he has become more observant and thoughtful. The first to be fired and the last to be hired, he has suffered more than his fair skinned brother. In this battle of the survival of the fittest, (like a savage who must cross a stream, but has not the means to do so) he is trying to solve his problem.

Around him there are positions in the stores, theatres and business places in general, into the coffers of which he pours his hard earned, if meagre wages. His only return, the merchandise and service rendered. He says to himself, "Why should they refuse to employ me because of my color, do they refuse my dollars -- no -- they do not object to them -- the color green is desirable, but not the colors, black, brown, yellow, etc. They are a disgrace. Well we'll force them to employ us. Hence a boycott."

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