



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

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A CHILDREN'S BUREAU

So many requests for the formation of a Children's Department have been received by the National Association that a committee has been appointed to consider this matter and, if it seems feasible, to organize a juvenile auxiliary and to prepare a curriculum to be used in the work. In its struggle for equality of opportunity for colored people the Association has interested itself in a number of cases affecting children and young people.

SARAH RECTOR

One of these is the case of Sara Rector, a little colored girl living about eight miles from Muskogee, Okla., on whose land oil was discovered. Records of the Indian Office show that Sarah, a Negro child, when three years old, was enrolled as a Creek freedman. Under the law then in force, citizens of the Creek nation were allotted land by the government or were paid money in lieu of the land to which they were entitled. In this way this little girl came into possession of ninety acres which it later developed was valuable oil land and which, since October, 1913, has paid her royalties almost \$55,000. Sarah is now about eleven years old and one of a family of six children who, up to about a year ago, were living with their parents on land belonging to the mother in a shack with only one bed for the entire family.

Press accounts claim that the child's income, now estimated as high as fifteen thousand dollars a month, was being administered by a white guardian while Sarah herself lived in poverty and was not even received the benefit of good schools. The Association has taken the matter up with the Children's Bureau in Washington. Miss Julia C. Lathrop, the Chief of this Bureau, became interested and is giving the matter her personal attention, corresponding with various Oklahoma officials, including Miss Kate Barnard who, as Superintendent of Charities of that State, has made such a wonderful record for progressive reforms.

The governor of the State, the county judge and attorney all insist that the estate is being carefully administered, that anew home costing \$1,700 has been erected, and that Sarah is being sent to a local school because she is too young to be sent away. They claim that the \$50 a month allowed her is all that she needs at present.

No official report has as yet been received by this Association from the Children's Bureau or Miss Barnard.

The Association is indebted for much of this data to Mr. James C. Waters, an active member of the District of Columbia Branch, who carried on considerable correspondence with Oklahoma officials and the Children's Bureau and later turned over the matter to this office.

JUVENILE COURT

AS the result of another case which was brought to our attention, the National Association is making a study of the relation of the colored child to the Juvenile Courts of the United States. It is impossible to make an



exhaustive investigation, but enough representative cities will be included to give a fair idea of actual conditions. The work was suggested by an experience of Mrs. Florence Kelley, Secretary of the Consumers' League and a member of our Board of Directors, who recently visited the Ju-

[[image of young girl, lower right corner]]

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venile Courts of Memphis, Tenn. In the colored court she found a little boy of four and a half years hold on the charge of burglary and larceny. Gainer was a little waif, without father or mother; he had so coveted a pair of new shoes, a luxury which he had probably never possessed in his life, that he smashed the glass in a show window, helped himself, and was making off with the shoes when he was arrested.

When Mrs. Kelley found him he was hugging a Teddy bear while he waited for his sentence. Mrs. Kelley gives the full story of Gainer's case in the Survey for June 20, 1914, with pictures of the colored and white Juvenile Courts and a vivid account of their contrasting conditions.

The colored court is in an old six-room cottage, badly equipped, but kept clean through the efforts of Mrs. Julia Hook the matron in charge, who has been doing work for colored children since 1876. Mrs. Hook and her husband, both probation officers, have more than they can handle in caring for the boys and girls who are detained in this building night and day, since there is no place to send them. As the white judge has more than he can possibly do, there is no judge sitting in the colored court. Instead, a policeman is assigned to probation work. As Mrs. Kelley, this is a travesty of the juvenile court.

A COLLEGE GIRL

COMPLAINTS reach us now and then of the attempt of representative universities and colleges of discriminate against colored students. A most aggravating case was that of a refined young girl of cultured parents who had won a scholarship in one of the large colleges. She matriculated and was settled in her room on the campus when her roommate arrived. The roommate came from Nashville, Tenn. The colored girl was asked to leave and was unable to secure a room on the campus or anywhere in the college town. One of the teachers, who is her staunch friend, took her in but was unable to solve more than the room problem. Then began the weary search for board which was finally only secured on condition that the young lady would act as waitress. Though she had never done work of this kind she pluckily determined to stay on the ground and fight out her battle. Meantime, the Association was working hard to reach the proper authorities. Had the girl become discouraged and gone home we would have been able to do nothing. Fortunately, a friend of the colored people on the board of trustees of the college became interested and succeeded in getting the girl on the campus in a delightful room where she is entitled to all privileges of the college, including, of course, the dining room. Best of all, she is becoming popular with her classmates and through her charming personality is winning friends for her race.

No case that the Association has won has given more satisfaction than

this victory which would have been impossibly had it not been for the courage and character of the young girl.

[[image child at bottom of page]]

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