

An Eastern Shoreman Asks Ralph Matthews to Give the Shoremen the Constructive Program He Would Use if Among Them.

To the Editor of the AFRO:

The white folk have had their flare-up over caustic criticism of the denizens of this section of the State by paragons of the Western Shore. Is there something infectious in the atmosphere or do we instinctively ape the antics of our neighbors?

The comments of Mr. Ralph Matthews in a recent AFRO are surprising inept. The characteristics with which he would stigmatize us, so far as they are correctly portrayed, are not localized at all but are common to colored people wherever similar conditions exist.

His reference to a careful study of the residents would lead one to suppose that in his opinion he was making a valuable contribution to sociologic lore, and must coin a word to define it.

We know that the average colored man lacks his fine sense of equity, his forensic skill, his splendid courage; else he would not be average. But is he therefore "swine," "excellent lynching fodder" and so void of the elements of manliness as to be undeserving of sympathy and beneath contempt?

I assure you there are in this section many who share his sentiments in large measure yet do not condemn mercilessly others who are timid and silent in the presence of gigantic wrong.

He could perform a real service by outlining a constructive program, and suggesting a practical policy, the following of which would elevate us in his esteem.

In our situation I know of three courses open: Fight, run, or stand and take it. We may have to fight. Personally I fear that will be the inevitable. When we do it will not be because we have ceased to fear but because we fear worse if we do not fight.

But we cannot fight now. It is folly even to think of fighting when there is no possible chance to win. Few of us are so hopeless as to court disaster thus. And even the bravest must think of consequences to others than themselves.

We cannot run. Desolate as it may seem in his eyes, we have no other home. Our loved ones and our few possessions are here. Even if we could migrate, where on earth could we go in hope of better things? Baltimore may be paradise, but how would "farm hands, day laborers, oystermen" live in Baltimore? How would he live there if we or others did not follow these humble but honorable pursuits to sustain him?

Those whose stock in trade is ideas and words to garb them can ill afford to hurl insulting epithets at those who feed and clothe them; as well might the parasitic tick reproach the fawning dog with sycophancy. The anvil and the hammer are both needed to shape the iron of our circumstance. If he elects to be the hammer, hurling denunciation and invective—from a safe distance—allow us without undue blame to be the anvil, absorbing the shock. The hammer wears out but the anvil lasts.

I regret his loss of faith in our redemption. I yet hope. I am sorry, to, for his slurring reference to Dr. Kiah. I happen to know him well. I know also the other Eastern Shore minister whose alleged pacifism has elicited unfavorable comment.

Neither of them is lacking in physical courage. Whatever counsel they may give in sober thoughtfulness, in accordance with the precepts of their Lord, I would not choose to be the white man to offer either a personal insult. Figuratively or literally, the blow on the cheek or the spit in the eye would be answered by a jab on the jaw.

No, sir, I wager there is little difference between him and us, and we look to him for sympathy, co-operation and help. If we have uncle-tomitis we don't know it. If he thinks we have, he should not try to rub it in.

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