

Faggot, an authoritative study of lynching. *A Rising Wind* is a journalistic record of his experiences as a correspondent in the European, North African, and Italian theaters of war. The autobiography, *A Man Called White*, is not a good work artistically, but it is a fascinating work because the life of Walter White was that of a principal warrior in an important period of the American Negro's fight for decency and equality.

For comment on Walter White's literary place as an author and as an adviser to young black writers, see Edward E. Waldron's *Walter White and the Harlem Renaissance* (1978). For comment on White's overall career, see the excellent article by August Meier and Elliott Rudwick in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*. See also White's autobiography, *A Man Called White* (1948), and Walter C. Daniel's entry in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 51*.

The following selection comes from *Rope and Faggot*.

SEX AND LYNCHING

With the most intransigent Negrophobe it is possible to conduct a conversation on certain phases of the race question and do so with a measured calmness of manner. But when one approaches, however delicately or remotely, the question of sex or "social equality," reason and judicial calm promptly take flight. Berserk rage usually seizes one's conversational *vis-à-vis*. One can count with mathematical certainty upon the appearance of the fiercely challenging: "How should you like to have your daughter marry a nigger?" as the answer to any attempt at sane discussion of this phase of the race question. It is of no avail to point out that there is but a tenuous connexion between sex relations or intermarriages on the one hand and ordinary justice and decency on the other. Sex with all its connotations so muddies the waters of reason that it is impossible to bring the conversation back to its more unimpassioned state.

Of all the emotional determinants of lynching none is more potent in blocking approach to a solution than sex, and of all the factors, emotional or otherwise, none is less openly and honestly discussed. Even the most fair-minded Southerner keeps away from the topic, fearing the tempest which follows its introduction as a topic of discussion. As a result, this element in the race problem and specifically in lynching is distorted by the conspiracy of semi-silence into an importance infinitely greater than the actual facts concerning it would justify. From the time of its introduction as a defense of

From Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969.

Walter White

(1893-1955)

DYNAMIC CHIEF EXECUTIVE of the NAACP, literary counselor of young black writers, and authority on lynching, Walter Francis White too often has been overlooked as both a creative and a journalistic writer of the Harlem Renaissance. Because of the importance of his NAACP connection, this neglect is only natural. Nevertheless, as the author of two novels, an autobiography, many articles in the nation's leading journals, as a war correspondent, and as a columnist for the *Chicago Defender* and the *New York Herald-Tribune*, Walter White definitely deserves consideration of the "writing" side of his many-sided career.

A "volunteer Negro," blue-eyed and blond, Walter White could easily "pass" and did so often when his investigations called for this strategy. The son of middle-class parents, he was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1893. He was educated at Atlanta University, graduating in 1916. His great speaking and organizing ability in leading a fight against Atlanta's board of education attracted the attention of the NAACP. In 1918 he joined the staff of that organization as assistant to James Weldon Johnson. The two made an excellent team and they helped to make the NAACP the great organization it finally became. When Johnson stepped down in 1931, White became the chief executive and held this position through several changes in the association's purpose and structure until his death in 1955.

During the intervening years, he was, among many other things, delegate to the Second Pan-African Congress; consultant for the U. S. delegation at the organizing of the United Nations in 1945; war correspondent in the European, African, and Pacific war zones; and a participant in the Round the World Town Meeting of the Air, visiting India, Japan, and countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. In 1937 he was awarded the Spingarn Medal for his outstanding work in lobbying for the antilynching bill and investigating lynchings.

White published the following major works: *Rope and Faggot* (1920), *Fire in the Flint* (1924), *Flight* (1926), *A Rising Wind* (1945), and *A Man Called White* (1948). The second and third listed are novels, and like the fiction of Jesse Fauset, Nella Larsen, and others, they deal with three themes: the black middle class, passing for white, and lynching. *Fire in the Flint* is a lynching novel and *Flight* deals with the passing theme. Because he knew both subjects thoroughly, he gives a realistic picture in both works, but he is not a great novelist. His finest work is *Rope and*

lynching, which, as we shall see, was simultaneous with the elevation of cotton through inventions to one of the premier crops of the world, sex and alleged sex crimes have served as the great bulwark of the lyncher.

Some years ago in a novel I ventured to put into the mouth of one of my characters, a Southern white lawyer, what seemed to me a simple and truthful statement to the effect that not in all the lynchings where rape or attempted rape was alleged had such a crime actually occurred. Down upon me tumbled an amazing volume of abuse from small-town newspapers of the South. One of them, a Georgia daily, indignantly asserted that the South is the most law-abiding section of the United States, and, a few paragraphs later, invited me to visit Georgia and see what "Southern gentlemen do to those who slander the fair name of Southern womanhood."

This Southern excitability over so universal a fact as sex has many causes. It is impossible to trace them all to their source. But a few of them can be separated from the fabric of many patterns and weavings which is the race problem. Perhaps statement of these may serve to bring some light where there has been little but heat.

There are at least a half-dozen reasons why sex harasses the South, and especially the rural South and the anti-Negro South. The first is one that is common to most regions which are predominantly rural—the dullness of life and the lack of such diversions as theatres, moving-pictures, parties, concerts, shop-windows, and the like, which in the city leave less time for concupiscent desires and thoughts. The South has suffered more than other sections because of the fact noted in the preceding chapter—the preponderance of Methodists and Baptists to whom such diversions as card-playing, dancing, and theatre attendance are forbidden. In many parts of the South this circumstance has elevated attendance at church, sex escapades, and lynching into the principal escapes from the grim and sordid reality of work.

A second reason for over-emphasis on sex in the lynching states is that the creation of the bogey of sex crimes as a defence of lynching has made the South the terrified victim of the fears of its own conjuring. Despite the evidence of the figures showing that only a small percentage of lynched Negroes were even accused of rape, the vast majority of whites in the states where lynchings are most frequently staged really believe that most mob murders are the results of sex crimes. Having created the Frankenstein monster (and it is no less terrifying because it is largely illusory), the lyncher lives in constant fear of his own creation and, at the same time, has by means of his creation caused more crimes against the women of his race than there would have been in a more sane and normal environment.

The vast amount of advertising which lynchings have given to allegations of sex crimes has induced subnormal Negroes to attempt crimes of rape, the power of suggestion being as potent as it is. Such an aftermath to lynchings has been noted in certain instances—the idea of successfully consummating sex crimes having been implanted by the news of a lynching. The mentally deficient individual who would thus be impregnated with the thought of being able to escape punishment would obviously not be deterred by fear of a horrible death in expiation of his crime. Thus it is not at all improbable that lynching has added to sex crimes or attempts at such crimes. There is some foundation for such a surmise when one considers how infrequently Negroes are charged with such crimes in the states where lynchings have been very infrequent.

Third in the list of causes of sex-obsession in the South is the Southern white woman's proneness to hysteria where Negroes are concerned; and this is an aspect of the question of lynching which needs investigation by a competent psychologist. It is appropriate here only to report observations and conclusions based upon a fairly extensive experience with the statistics and literature of lynching. My own experience in investigating forty-one lynchings and the study of several thousand others reveals that in the great majority of cases where rape or attempted rape was alleged, the women can be divided into four classes: young girls ranging from the ages of twelve or thirteen to nineteen or twenty years of age, passing through the difficult period of adolescence; second (and this includes a considerable percentage of the alleged victims of attacks), women who range in age from the middle forties upwards; third, women who have been married for many years and usually to rather unattractive husbands; fourth, spinsters.

Fourth among the reasons is the intense religiosity of the lynching states and the primitiveness of their religion. Psychologists have long since established the intimate relation between the emotions of sex and of religion, and that the more primitive the religion, the greater is the part played by sex. Critics of the American scene from Frances Trollope to H. L. Mencken have observed in the frenzy of Methodist revivals what comes dangerously close to being a species of sex indulgence. Certainly one can find in many parts of the South numerous counterparts, male and female, white and Negro, of the woman William James describes in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* who could induce a state of rapture by dwelling upon the thought that "she could always cuddle up to God."

It is also a familiar phenomenon that the sex instinct figures in religious ecstasy in somewhat the same proportions that illiteracy and ignorance afflict the religious-minded. Given an elaborate system

of taboos that label as "sinful" even relatively innocent diversions, which would absorb at least a part of the time otherwise given to erotic thoughts and desires, subjected to the explosive experiences attendant upon religious experiences, deprived by ignorance, geographical isolation, and poverty from books and other intellectual releases, and victims of a bogy of the Negro as a *bête noire*—all these handicaps reveal vividly the state of mind which turns devout Christians into lynchers, especially when sex enters the equation.

Maynard Shipley, in his *The War on Modern Science*, quotes the observations of a Southern observer on the connexion between illiteracy among native-born whites and the preponderance of Baptists in the total church population of certain Southern states. "The U.S. Census report for 1920 shows that the percentage of illiteracy is highest in those states where Baptists are more numerous. Among the native-born whites alone the percentage of illiteracy runs as follows; Alabama, 6.3; Georgia, 5.4; Kentucky, 7; Louisiana, 11.4; Mississippi, 3.6; North Carolina, 6.8; South Carolina, 6.5; Tennessee, 7.3; Texas, 3; Virginia, 5.9; West Virginia, 4.6." Cochran compares these figures with those of such states as Connecticut, New York, the Dakotas, and others in the North and West where there are fewer communicants of the evangelical churches and where also the illiteracy rate of native-born whites is one-half of one per cent. He paints a depressing picture of the relations between the poverty of ministers and their congregations, the ignorance of the clergy, the extent of Fundamentalism and opposition of scientific advancement among them, which seem amply to justify the pessimistic declaration of J. R. King of South Carolina that the common people of his state are "fast losing their thinking faculty for lack of use. Generations of religion have produced a generation of religious fanatics. . . . Unless there is help from the outside, the South is headed for a darker period than the Dark Ages."

When the student of human behaviour views the Southern scene and especially the rural sections of the South and sees the extent of religious bigotry of which the Ku Klux Klan, the Bible Crusaders, and the Supreme Kingdom are the organized forms; when he sees such catch-phrases as "Back to the Rock of Ages and forget the ages of Rocks" raised to the dignity of a supreme rallying-cry of fanaticism; when he watches the resolute efforts of the embattled Fundamentalists "who are making dogma into a statute and are driving out all who preach and teach the modern view of the Bible and religion" and thereby make even more primitive the religion of the South; when he sees all these and other forms of religious intolerance gripping the lynching states, then he can understand one of the most potent reasons for the enormous emphasis on sex in these states.

Even a superficial knowledge of the history of early and primitive religions will cause him to understand the insane fury of the residents of rural Mississippi and Georgia and Texas and the extent of their sadism when real or alleged sex crimes are perpetrated.

Dr. A. A. Brill, the distinguished psychiatrist, even more definitely links propensity to mob violence to abnormal sex instincts. "The torture which is an accompaniment of modern lynching," he declares, "shows that it is an act of perversion only found in those suffering from extreme forms of sexual perversion. Of course, not all lynchings are conducted in this fashion, but it is not uncommon to read accounts telling that the victim was tortured with hot irons, that his eyes were burned out, and that other monstrous cruelties were inflicted upon him. Such bestiality can be recognized only as a form of perversion. Lynching is a distinct menace to the community. It allows primitive brutality to assert itself and thus destroys the strongest fabric of civilization. Anyone taking part in or witnessing a lynching cannot remain a civilized person," (quoted from *Tenth Annual Report of the NAACP*).

A fifth reason for preoccupation with sex in the lynching states is the traditional attitude towards coloured women and the price now being paid for that attitude. For two and a half centuries of slavery slave women had no control over or defence of their bodies. As chattels, their bodies were their own only in so far as their owners were men of moral integrity. In codes and practices these owners ranged from those who permitted neither themselves, their overseers, nor male members of their families to tamper with the persons of their female slaves, down to owners who deliberately used slave women as breeders of half-white slaves—combining, as it were, pleasure with business. Midway between these poles of conduct were those who permitted and even urged their sons to take Negro mistresses and thus protect the chastity of white women, a somewhat analogous practice to that of ancient Rome when Solon caused female slaves "to be brought to the city and exposed to save other women from assaults on their virtue."

Whatever may be the current interpretation of virtue, it is axiomatic that an individual or society cannot maintain for any great length of time dual standards of personal conduct which are diametrically opposed to each other. The man who attempts to maintain a fixed respect towards one group of women and indulges meanwhile in all manner of immoralities with another group may seek ever so hard to maintain such a balanced dual standard. Inevitably and imperceptibly he finds it impossible, to the detriment of his respect for the first group. And that is precisely what has happened to the South, the white South, both male and female. For more than two

hundred years this moral deterioration has affected the Southern states, and from that decay arises the most terrifying of all the aspects of the race problem to the white man.

As far back as 1691 the number of children born of slave fathers and white women had increased so alarmingly that Virginia, which seems to have been usually the state to legislate against what appeared to be evils arising from slavery, sought to end this intermixture by means of a law which prohibited *marriage* between a white man or woman with "a Negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman, bond or free," on pain of banishment; and which prohibited *sexual relations* between a white woman and a Negro or mulatto. The care exercised not to interfere with sexual relations between white men and Negro or mulatto women will be noted. Any white woman who bore a Negro's child was liable to be fined or, in default of payment of that fine, to be sold into service for five years; the child was "bound in servitude to the Church wardens until thirty years of age."

Maryland even earlier (in 1663), faced with the same problem, passed a law declaring that any free-born (i.e., white) woman marrying a Negro slave should serve the slave's owner as long as her husband lived; children born of the union should also be slaves, the property of the owner of the father of those children. The effect of this law was dismaying to its framers. Slave-owners, with eyes solely upon profits, utilized the measure to secure slaves free of all cost and urged their Negro male slaves to marry white women—thus securing the wives as slaves and the children they bore to their husbands free of all cost.

Even a later law, passed in 1715, making any free Negro and white woman who married each other servants for seven years and their children servants until thirty-one years of age did not put a stop to this type of marriage. North and South—wherever there was slavery—the loose conduct of white men towards coloured women was finding its counterpart in relations between white women and coloured men. Neither legislation nor public condemnation seemed appreciably to check intermixture of this sort. As the Northern states for economic reasons abandoned slavery, the practice and the problem seemed to dwindle in extent, but upon the states of the South, which, also for economic reasons clung to and extended slavery, there was placed a social heritage—and a fear—which have not yet been shaken off.

That the white women involved in this intermixture were not always of the humbler sort is revealed in an interesting decision of the South Carolina Supreme Court rendered in 1831 (*The State v. Thos. D. Davis* and *The State v. William Hanna*; 2 *Bailey*, 558). These cases are to this day the leading ones in South Carolina on the question

involved and have been subsequently cited and followed in such cases as *Blake v. Tisdale* (14 *Rich Equity*, 100); *State v. Cantey* (2 *Hill*, 615); *Johnson v. Boon* (1 *Speers*, 270); *Waite v. Tax Col. of Kenshaw District* (3 *Rich.*, 140); and *Davenport v. Caldwell* (10 *S. C.*, 335). The issue involved in the two cases first cited was the credibility as a witness of a mulatto and the Supreme Court decision defined a mulatto, quadroon, person of colour, and a person with so little Negro blood as to be deemed in law a white person. In the course of its opinion the South Carolina Supreme Court made two interesting statements bearing upon the nature of intermixture in that state, which read: "In each case the jury found the mother to be a white woman and she was accordingly admitted to be sworn as a witness. . . . It is certainly true, as laid down by the presiding judge, that 'every admixture of African blood with the European, or white, is not to be referred to the degraded class.'"

In some states the idea of a child of a white woman being a slave was so repugnant that laws were passed defining such a child born of a Negro father as "Free Issue" and decreeing that such offspring should be free. In brief, the type of Southern white who was not above taking a Negro mistress was saddling upon himself and others a fear which to this day is the most serious menace to peace and amicable settlement of the race problems. Tannenbaum in *Darker Phases of the South* says of this class: "You cannot indulge in certain relations toward colored women and expect to escape free from influence in your attitude toward white women. The idealization of the white women in the South is thus partly the unconscious self-protection on the part of the white man from their own bad habits, notions, beliefs, attitudes, and practices. This helps to give the facts of sex in the South their peculiar quality of sensitiveness. It is not insinuated that all white men in the South are habituated to practices suggested here, but there are enough of these men to give the atmosphere its requisite tensity."

This defensive mechanism of which Tannenbaum speaks finds expression as well in the derogatory attitude towards coloured women of which a classic example was a Southern office-holder who declared that there was no such thing as a virtuous coloured girl of more than fourteen years of age; and who at the time possessed a considerable family by a Negro mistress as well as one by his white wife. In truth, there would be considerable amusement in the attitude thus expressed if it were not so tragic—a member of a supposedly "superior" race explaining and excusing his own moral derelictions by emphasizing the "immorality" of the women of the "inferior" race.

This type of Southerner is largely responsible for the sixth and by

far most vexing cause of sensitiveness on the subject of sex in the lynching states. There is probably no single statement more frequently or more vehemently made in the South than that there is an ineradicable repulsion between the races which will keep the two races eternally separated. Even if there were not the evidence of possession of white blood by so large a percentage of Negroes, the very violence of this assertion and the frequency with which it is repeated would cause an unbiased observer to wonder why the statement is worthy of being made at all if those who make it believe it. Professor André Siegfried, of the Paris École des Sciences Politiques, in *America Comes of Age* gives the reason for the vehemence of the assertions. He says that "although the whites declare that the Negro is physically repulsive to them, you know that it simply is not true."

Though Professor Siegfried refers particularly to lack of physical repulsion of white men towards coloured women, much more disturbing is the suspicion that the absence of repulsion applies to both sexes of both races. There is no doubt that most of the intermixture has come from relations between white men and coloured women. But the suspicion that it is not confined to that class motivates to a large extent the sadistic features of many lynchings and burnings. It has caused the enactment in twenty-nine states of anti-intermarriage laws—legislation which would be most unnecessary if the boasted repulsion were really true. It has led—human curiosity overriding as it does laws, conventions, customs, and edicts of all sorts—to experimentation, most of which might not have been thought of had there not been the challenge of a barrier. It has caused the surreptitious spreading of stories of Negro superiority in sex relations and it did not matter whether or not that rumoured superiority existed in fact or fancy—the very violence of opposition by the mobbist seemed to lend credence to the truth of the assertion. Once again the lyncher brought into being a condition diametrically opposite to that which he sought to attain.

Though this terrifying thought is kept as a sort of racial secret, there are those who occasionally commit the indiscretion of saying what they think. There is, for example, the Rev. C. A. Owens, an eminent white Baptist minister of North Carolina, who, according to the *Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Journal*, preached a sermon in that city in 1925 in which he gave his reasons for believing in and supporting the Ku Klux Klan. The *Journal* quoted Mr. Owens in part as follows: "With the present movement northward of Negroes and in the absence of a race prejudice that has protected the Southerners, there is the greatest possible danger of the mingling of the races, so that in the future it may come to pass that you will send your

daughter to the North for culture and she will come back with a little Negro."

Seldom if ever has there been a greater "slur upon the fair name of Southern womanhood" than this intimation by the Reverend Mr. Owens that only Southern race prejudice is keeping white women from sex affairs with Negroes. Perhaps it is fortunate for Mr. Owens that he is neither a Northerner nor a Negro—he most certainly would have been threatened with violence if not with lynching for such a statement had he not been a Southerner and a Klansman.



All of these reasons for the dominance of sex as a factor in lynching, with all their other complications, centre in one objective—the economic ascendancy over Negro labour. William Pickens, the brilliant Negro scholar, rightly terms it "simply the shrewdest battle cry of the forces seeking the economic domination of the Negro. . . . The average man, even the most brainless, may be moved by it," and thus sex is used as "a red herring . . . whenever one discusses the economic, political or civic advancement of the Negro." In an address before the Sunrise Club of New York in 1926 Mr. Pickens laid down four propositions in the relation of "the sex-bogey to the real interests of society." They are (1) that the sex cry is always associated with economic greed and is loudest wherever the oppression and robbery are the worst; (2) that race or colour antagonism is not "instinctive," as is evidenced by little children and by unspoiled races, and as is often amusingly shown by the relationships of the dominant race to its servants from among the dominated race; (3) that there are no biological barriers between any two of the so-called human "races" and that pseudo-scientific demonstrations of the subject could be used in one direction as well as in another, and could be made to prove anything; and (4) that while sex, or "racial integrity" is very convenient publicity material for the leaders of American lynchings, sex-attachment is in fact one of the smallest causes, among even the alleged causes of this most barbarous form of repression. In these four concise statements is included as complete a statement as is possible within such limits of the relationship between sex and lynching.

If those who commit and defend lynchings on the score of its necessity as protection of womanhood were sincere and intelligent, there are certain immediate steps possible for them which would do more towards ending racial intermixture than ten thousand burnings.

The first of these would be the repeal of the laws forbidding intermarriage which today are on the statute books of twenty-nine states.* To dispose of the disadvantages of such laws to Negroes they deprive coloured women of legal protection of their persons or reduce should a white man seduce one of them; they place upon coloured people the implication of inferiority which self-respecting Negroes resent; they give legal sanction to belief by a certain type of white man that despoilment of a coloured girl is not so reprehensible as a similar offense against a white girl. Such laws severely handicap the struggle which Negroes are making—it is they more than anything else that is checking intermixture. In many smaller towns of the South protection of women of their race from the unwelcome advances of white men can and sometimes does mean lynching for the protectors. Governor Hugh M. Dorsey of Georgia in 1921 gave an example of such conditions which is not unusual. He had called together a group of prominent citizens of that state to place before them a hundred and thirty-five cases of mistreatment of Negroes within the state which had come to him unsolicited during the preceding two years. Case No. 1 reads:

"July, 1919, two white men, drunk, went to the Negro section of a town in this county at night. An elderly Negro got his gun and went into the streets, it is claimed, to protect the women of his race. In the shooting, which followed, one of the white men was killed.

"The Negro was placed in the jail. The sheriff left him there, *with no guard*, to go to another place to get a prisoner. A county commissioner hearing that a mob was coming went to the jail to remove the prisoner, but could find no key to unlock the door. *The mob had the key. They lynched the Negro.*" (Italics ours.)

So much for the disadvantages to Negroes of anti-intermarriage laws. For whites there are many harmful aspects. It obviously is not best for the moral stamina of any race to grant legal immunity to its men when they commit sex crimes against the members of another group. It is especially bad to grant such immunity to the men of a section that has had so bad a moral career as has the South. It is true beyond all doubt that there are many men and women in the South who not only are bitterly opposed to the victimization of coloured women, but are themselves morally clean. It is likewise true

*These states, according to the 1927 *World Almanac* are: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia.

that their number is infinitely small when compared with white Southerners who, while innocent of such offences, do not feel that there is as great turpitude attached to seduction or rape of a coloured girl as of a white girl. Double standards of this sort have a most vicious effect upon morals, and anti-intermarriage laws perpetuate and protect such double standards.

There is no scientifically exact method of determining precisely the effect of anti-intermarriage laws upon the number of mixed bloods born in states where there are such laws and in states where there are not. The figures of the United States Census Bureau are not taken seriously by careful students because the term "mulatto" as used by that bureau is not a biological classification, but only a convenience for the use of the enumerators. There is also the factor of interstate migration, which plays a considerable part in nullifying the value of the census figures.

For lack, however, of more accurate figures, the decennial reports of the Census Bureau offer interesting data on the effect of laws prohibiting intermarriage between whites and Negroes. Even after most liberal allowances are made for the interpretations given by the individual enumerators to the departmental definition of mulattos, whites, and pure-blooded Negroes; even after making further allowance for interstate migration; even with due allowance for the reluctance of some Negroes to admit the possession of white blood, a significant circumstance emerges from these reports. The increase of mixed bloods in relation to the total of unmixed Negroes is considerably higher in those states which forbid intermarriage by law between whites and Negroes than in the other states, where no such prohibition exists. "Shot-gun weddings" or seduction and bastardy prosecutions have an extraordinarily salutary and moral effect upon certain types of men. On the score of efficiency anti-intermarriage laws have been a failure.

Such laws also actually compel and increase bastards. Powell, in his story of the girl and man into whose hearts "God put love," is not the only one who knows of such cases. These states, by banning marriage in such instances, force sordid, clandestine affairs and the bearing of illegitimate children with all the disadvantages which such offspring suffer in modern society. The only humane, sensible, and decent thing to do is to remove the barriers to marriage, and thus insure proper care of the children born of such unions.

Over and above all these immediate results is the psychology which such laws induce. There will never be any lasting solution of the race problem so long as laws and custom permit and sanction notions of superiority and inferiority which exist only in the imagi-

nations of the self-elected "superior" group. To these states one feels inclined to give unsolicited advice—that instead of fuming and fretting over sex they should cast aside petty fears, realize that neither laws nor customs are of much avail where two individuals are drawn to each other, and that their frantic efforts to prevent intermixture, usually are doing more than any other thing to cause intermixture, usually upon the lowest plane.

James Weldon Johnson

(1871–1938)

EDUCATOR, SONG WRITER, POET and novelist, diplomat, and distinguished executive secretary of the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson was a rare combination of creative artist and man of affairs. Born of middle-class African American and West Indian parents in Jacksonville, Florida, he attended Atlanta University's Preparatory School and College, graduating in 1894. He became principal of a Negro public school in Jacksonville, founded and published the short-lived *Daily American* in 1895, studied law and passed the Florida bar in 1897.

In the summers from 1899 to 1901 Johnson went to New York and there collaborated with his brother, Rosamond, in writing light operas, musical comedies, and such popular songs as "Under the Bamboo Tree," "Oh Didn't He Ramble," and others. The two also wrote at this time "Lift Every Voice and Sing," now known as the Negro national anthem. In 1900 the brothers joined the famous Bob Cole in a very successful vaudeville act. By 1901 James Weldon Johnson had moved to New York to do two things: to devote more time to show business and to study literature at Columbia University. In 1904 Johnson was American consul at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela; from 1909 to 1912 he was consul at Corinto, Nicaragua. During these years as consul he wrote and published anonymously *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912). Leaving the consular service in 1913, he returned to New York, became contributing editor to the *New York Age*, and in 1915 wrote the libretto for the Spanish opera *Goyescas*, which was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House that same year.

From 1916 to 1931 Johnson was associated with the NAACP, first as field secretary and subsequently as executive secretary. During his tenure with the NAACP he lobbied for the Dyer antilynching bill, which the Senate defeated; he also investigated America's intervention in Haiti. Resigning from the NAACP in 1931, he became the Adam K. Spence Professor of Creative Literature at Fisk University, and after 1934 he gave an annual series of lectures at New York University—a pioneer effort in opening the doors of American white colleges and universities to black professors. James Weldon Johnson was killed in an automobile accident in Massachusetts in 1938.

Johnson's major literary works are *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912); *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917); (ed.) *The Book of American*