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We Must Either Take a Step Forward Now or Kill Our Hope

Fellow-Men of the Negro Race, Greeting:

The Negro stands at the cross-roads of human destiny. He is at the place where he must either step forward or backward. If he goes backward, he dies; if he goes forward, it will be with the hope of a greater life. Those of us who have developed our minds are compelled, by duty, to step out among the millions of the unthinking masses and convince them of the seriousness of the age in which we live.

We are on the way either to a higher racial existence or racial extermination. This much is known and realized by every thoughtful race and nation; hence, we have the death struggle of the different races of Europe and Asia in the scramble for the survival of the fittest race.

The world today is not growing larger, but the human race is multiplying year by year, decade by decade, century by century. Where we once had two people to occupy the world, and they have multiplied into 1,500,000,000, it is to be expected that in another 500 years these 1,500,000,000 will have multiplied into about three or four billions. What will become of the weaker races of the world when the world becomes over-populated with the different strong races of humanity? Is it to be expected that the stronger races of the world will inconvenience themselves by tolerating the existence of the weaker and incapable races? This is not to be expected.

When the Colonists of America desired possession of the land, they saw that a weak aboriginal race was in their way. What did they do? They got hold of them, killed them, and buried them underground. This is a fair indication of what will happen to the weaker peoples of the world in another two or three or five hundred years when the stronger races will have developed themselves to the position of complete mastery of all things material. They will not then, as they have not in the past, allow a weak and defenseless race to stand in their way, especially if in their doing so they will endanger their happiness, their comforts and their pleasures. These are the things that strike the thoughtful Negro as being dangerous, and these are the things that cause us who make up the Universal Negro Improvement Association to be fighting tenaciously for the purpose of building up a strong Negro race, so as to make it impossible for us to be exterminated in the future to make room for the stronger races, even as the North American Indian has been exterminated to make room for the great white man on this North American Continent.

The illiterate and shallow-minded Negro who can see no farther than his nose is now the greatest stumbling-block in the way of the race. He tells us that we must be satisfied with our condition; that we must not think of building up a nation of our own; that we must not seek to organize ourselves racially, but that we must depend upon the good feeling of the other fellow for the solution of the problem that now confronts us. This is a dangerous policy, and it is my duty to warn the four hundred million Negroes of the world against this kind of a leadership, a leadership that will try to make Negroes believe that all will be well without Negroes taking upon their own initiative the task of bettering their condition politically, industrially, educationally and otherwise.

The time has come for those of us who have the vision of the future to inspire our people to a closer kinship, to a closer love of self, because it is only through this appreciation of self will we be able to rise to that higher life that will make us, not an extinct race in the future, but a race of men fit to survive.

Those of us who are blazing the way in this effort of the Universal Negro Improvement Association to enlighten our people everywhere are at times very much annoyed and discouraged by the act of our own people in that, consciously or unconsciously, they do so many things to hurt our deeper feeling of loyalty and love for the race. But what can we do? Can we forsake them because they hurt our feelings? Surely not. Painful though it may be to be interfered with and handicapped in the performance of the higher sense of duty, yet we must, martyrlike, make up our minds and our hearts to pay the price of leadership. We must be sympathetic; we must be forgiving; we must really have forbearance, so that when the ignorant and illiterate and traitorous fellow who happens to be a member of your own race stands up to block the passage of some cause that you know to be to his benefit and to yours as a people you will be able to overlook him.

The race to which I have the honor to belong will, I am confident, some day be in a position to mete out punishment according to law to those who conspire against its well-being.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,



Founder and President-General,
Universal Negro Improvement Association.

