

## Cultural Competition

*Mr. Alain Locke presents his rebuttal to Mr. Lothrop Stoddard after their debate in the October FORUM on the question, "Should the Negro Be Encouraged to Cultural Equality?"*

*Editor of THE FORUM:*

M. André Siegfried, looking at the same situation with none of Mr. Stoddard's Freudian obsessions, sees in the Young Negro point of view just the opposite attitude on the question of race relations. Describing "advanced Negro thought" in his book *America Comes of Age*, he credits "this American élite" with "strengthening the unity of the darker races all over the world". "Among these people," he continues, "a Negro who 'passes' is a traitor, a woman who marries white is criticized, and if she becomes a white man's mistress loses caste entirely." This reading is far nearer the truth than Mr. Stoddard's. Race fusion is in our minds too tainted with the assumptions of White dominance and aggression, too associated with the stigma of inferiority rather than equality, for race amalgamation to be the social ideal and objective of an intelligent and self-respecting race consciousness such as we are now developing. In brief, the progressive Negro of to-day wants cultural opportunity and cultural recognition, and wants it as a Negro.

It is Mr. Stoddard and the position he defends that are illogical. He says, "Let there be no mistake: White America will not abolish the color-line, will not admit the Negro to social equality, will not

open the door to racial amalgamation." Since when has the color-line become blood-tight? It is notoriously not a blood barrier but a culture barrier. It is a sign of the Negro's lapsing sense of inferiority that he recognizes this clearly, and that, to put it bluntly, he says to the America of Mr. Stoddard's persuasion, "Spare your blood, and share your civilization." I suspect that the real cause for frenzy and alarm among the advocates of White Supremacy is based upon this real threat of economic and cultural competition, unless it be the inner panic of having contradicted themselves biologically.

Like a modern Canute, with imperial condescension, Mr. Stoddard moves back the throne of White Supremacy a few paces before the "rising tide of color". He offers a "biracial" régime based not on caste discrimination and economic subordination but on fair and equitable separation, — "a vertical line drawn through society from top to bottom, permitting individuals to rise as high as their talents will take them, on their side of the line." To the extent that it is possible, American prejudice is already building this expensive sort of social structure. The Negro has everything to gain and little to lose by it. But I predict one or the other of two things: either the general costs will be so great that subsequent generations not afflicted with colorphobia will refuse to continue to pay them, or that the general relation of the white and the colored peoples in the world at large will have so altered that it will be actually dangerous for America thus to maintain a socially solid black minority. Of all persons, the author

*of The Rising Tide of Color and The Revolt  
Against Civilization* ought to appreciate  
the latter alternative.

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