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A Comparative Study of the Intelligence Quotient of the Negro

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT OF THE NECRO

A Term Paper
Presented to
Dr. Weldon Vogt
Ouachita Baptist University

In Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Special Studies

by
Patricia L. Greene
May 1970

Introduction

Extending beyond health, white supremacists maintain that Negroes are innately less intelligent than Caucasians. In a statement remarkably comparable to those made two centuries ago by advocates of the theory of American degeneration, one modern-day racist phrases the claim in these words:

Any man with two eyes in his head can observe a Negro settlement in the Congo, can study the pure-blooded African in his native habitat as he exists when left on his own resources, can compare this settlement with London or Paris, and can draw his own conclusions regarding relative levels of character and intelligence. . . Finally, he can inquire as to the number of pure-blooded blakes who have made their contributions to great literature or engineering or medicine or philosophy or abstract science.

Such claims assumed special importance among the opponents of the Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling in 1954. Interracial education simply will not work, contended many segregationists; Negro children are too retarded innately to benefit and will only act to drag down the standards of the white children.

Americans are far less receptive to such reasoning how than they were a generation ago. Public opinion poll data reveal that, while only two out of five white Americans regarded Negroes as their intellectual equals in 1942, almost four out of five did by 1956_including a substantial majority of white Southerners. 2 Much of this change is due to the thorough repudiation of racist assertions by the vast majority of modern psychologists and other behavioral scientists. The latest research in this area lends the strongest evidence yet available for this repudiation. This study takes a new look at this old controversy and presents a summary of the relevant research. 3

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The "Scientific Racist" Position

The dominant scientific position on this subject has been termed as "equalitarian dogma" and described as "the scientific hoax of the century" by one psychologist, Professor-Emeritus Henry Garrett. Henry Garrett. Henry Carrett. Hen

Garrett is publicly joined by two other psychologists, out of the roughly twenty-one thousand who belong to the American Psychological Association.

Frank McGurk, of Villanova University, has conducted research with an unvalidated intelligence test of his own design and concluded that "Negroes as a group do not possess as much (capacity for education) as whites as a group." 5

In 1956 this work gained wide attention when the U. S. News and World Report festured an article under the imposing title of "A Scientist's Report on Race Differences," in which McGurk surveyed six investigations that he claimed to be "the only existing studies that relate to the problem."

The crowning production of this small band is Audrey Shuey's <u>The Testing of Negro Intelligence</u>. Shuey, a psychologist at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia, provides a large, though carefully selected, review of over two hundred studies bearing on racial differences in intelligence. She ignores the newer conceptions of intelligence and instead relies heavily upon the earlier, less sophisticated investigations, with over half of her references dated prior to World War II. 7

In addition to this "sheer weight of uncontrolled data" argument, these three psychologists attempt to show that the impoverished environment of the typical Negro cannot account for the observed test differences.

The Modern Psychological Position

These arguments have not altered the dominant opinion of modern psychology on this topic. In the first place, the studies repeatedly cited by the "scientific racists" in defense of their position are not, upon closer scrutiny, critical tests of their contentions. As in investigations in the United States, the "social and economic conditions" of the two groups were not equal. 9

These difficulties point up the severely limiting methodological problems which confront this research realm. Any test of native intelligence must of necessity assume equivalent backgrounds of the individuals and groups under study. But until conditions entirely free from segregation and discrimination are achieved and the floor of Negro poverty is raised to the level of whites, the definitive research on racial differences in intelligence cannot be performed.

Empirical efforts are also hampered by the operation of selective factors in sampling. That is, Negroes and whites in the same situation such as those inducted into the armed forces may have been selected differently on intelligence, thus biasing the comparison of test scores between the two groups.

Despite these limitation, however, modern psychology has managed to achieve significant theoretical and empirical advances in this realm. These advances strongly favor a non-genetic interpretation of the typically lower intelligence test score averages of Negro groups. 10

Environment and Intelligence

In 1931, a study was made in the South of Negro and white infants in their first year of life. "Baby Tests" were administered to them, and it was found that the white infants did better on the tests than the Negro infants.

The investigator immediately concluded that the white infants were naturally superior in intelligence to the Negro infants. Upon inquiry, it turned out that the white infants came from a higher economic and social class than the Negro infants, and the conclusion of the investigator was then challenged.

Even so, not all the white infants were sumerior on these tests to all the Negro infants. It is important to remember this fact for all such group tests. While these tests are made on individuals they are reported for the group as a whole. In other words, the tests report the average performance of the group. This means that there are still many individuals in each of the groups compared who are better than the average, but in reporting averages these individuals tend to be forgotten. But let us return to our infants. Tests carried out in New Haven in 1946 on Negro and white babies whose mothers had had a balanced diet during pregnancy, and whose parents' social and economic environments were much more alike than was the case in the Southern study, showed that the Negro babies, both in physical and psychological development, did as well as the white babies. There was no difference at all; the Negro babies were just as intelligent and as well developed as the white babies. The suggestion, therefore, is that where the environment is equalized for the groups compared, the performance, both physically and psychologically, of the members of each group will usually be equalized. Again, it must be emphasized that this does not mean that everyone will become alike, but that the average of each group, in terms of performance will tend to be similar.

In studies reported in 1949 and 1951 which were carried out in the Middle West on Negro and white infants, it was found that the Negro infants ranked slightly higher on the intelligence tests than the white infants. Professor A. R. Gilliland, under whose direction these studies were conducted, believes that the Negro infants did better on these tests because in the typical Negro

home, with more people living in small quarters, the child receives more social contacts and, therefore, his social-intellectual development more rapid than that of the white child. This is, of course a theory, but it is certainly a plausible one. For we know that when some children in any group do not receive adequate social contacts, they do not do as well on intelligence tests as those who have benefited from the social stimulation which seems necessary for healthy mental and physical development.

We know that in America there are a number of ethnic groups that do not live in an environment in which the social-intellectual experiences that they undergo are of a kind that foster an optimum development of mental and physical health. In this connection, one thinks especially of the American Negro. 11

The Influence of Culiure

The author turns to a brief statement on the influence of culture upon race. Beginning with agriculture and continuing at an ever-increasing rate, human customs have been interposed between the organism and the environment. The increase of our species from pe haps as few as five million before agriculture to three billion today is the result of new technology, not of biological evolution. The conditions under which the races evolved aremainly gone, and there are new causes of rutation, new kinds of selection, and vast migration. Today the numbers and distribution of the peoples of the world are due primarily to culture. Some people think the new conditions are so different that it is better no longer to use the word race or the word evolution, but the author personally thinks this confuses more than it clarifies.

All this does not mean that evolution has stopped, because the new conditions will change gene frequencies, but the conditions which produced the old races are gone. In this crowded world of civilization and science, the claim has been made repeatedly that one or another of the races is superior

to the others. Obviously, this argument cannot be based on the past; because something was useful in times past and was selected for under condition which are now gone, does not mean tht it will be useful in the present or in the future. 12

Racism is based on a profo nd misunderstanding of culture, of learning, and of the biology of the human species. The study of cultures should give a profound respect for the biology of man's capacity to learn. Much of the earlier discussion of racial inferiority centered on the discussion of intelligence; or, to put the matter more accurately, usually on that small part of biological intelligence which is measured by the IQ. In the earlier days of intelligence testing, there was a widespread belief that the tests revealed spomething which was genetically fixed within a rather narrow range. The whole climate of opinion that fostered this point of view has changed. At that time animals were regarded as primarily instinctive in their behavior, and the genes were supposed to exert their effects in an almost mechanical way, regardless of the environment. All this intellectual climate has changed. Learning has proved to be far more important in the behavior of many animal species, and the action of the complexes of genes is now knows to be affected by the environment, as is, to a great degree, the performance that results from them. For example, Harlow has shown that monkeys learn to learn. Monkeys, in other words, become test wise. They become skillful in the solution of tests_so monkeys in Dr. Harlow's laboratories are spoken of as naive or as experienced in the use of tests. To suppose that humans cannot learn to take tests is to suppose that humans are rather less intelligent than monekys.

Krech and Rosenzweig have shown that rats raised in an enriched environment are much more intelligent and efficient as maze-solvers than rats that have been given no oppurturity to learn and to practice before the testing. To suppose that man would not learn through education to take tests more efficiently, is to suppose that our learning capacities are rather less than those of rats.

The human is born with less than a third of the adult brain capacity, and there is tremendous growth of the cortex after birth. There is possibly no mammalian species in which the environment has a longer and more direct effect on the central nervous system than man. We should expect, then, that test results are going to be more affected by the environment of man than in the case of any other animal. Decrivation studies of monkeys and chimpan zees and clinical investigations of man show that the lack of a normal interpers mal environment may be devastating to the developing individual. 13

The Mediators of Intellectual Underdevelopment

Within this new perspective on intelligence as a relatively plastic quality, a series of environmental mediators of the individual Negro child's intellectual underdevelopment has been determined. In fact, these mediators exert their effects even upon the Negro fetus. One study found that dietary supplementation by witamins supplied during the last half of pregnancy had directly beneficial effects on I. Q. scores of the children later. In a sample of mothers from the lowest socio-economic level, 80 per cent of whom were Negro, the group fortified with iron and vitamin B complex had children whose mean I. Q. at three years of age averaged five full points above the children of the unfortified control group, 103.4 to 98.4. One year later, the mean difference had enlarged to eight points, 101.7 to 93.6. The same researchers failed to find a similar effect among white mothers and their children from a mountain area. Fresumably, the largely Negro sample was even

poorer and more malnourished than the white sample from the mountains. Dire poverty, through the mother's inadequate diet, can thus impair intelligence before the lower-class Negro child is born.

Economic problems also hamper intelligence through the mediation of premature births. Premature children of all races reveal not only a heightened incidence of neurologic abnormalities and greatee susceptibility to disease, but also a considerably larger percentageof mental defectives. A further organic factor in intelligence is brain injury in the rewborn. And both of these conditions have higher incidences among Negroes because of their greater frequency in the most economically depressed sectors of the population.

Later complications are introduced by the impoverished environments in which most Negro children grow up. At the youngest, preschool ages, race differences in I.Q. means are minimal. Repeated research shows that in the first two years of life there are no significant racial differences in either psychomotor development or intelligence. Racist theorists discount these findings on two conflicting grounds. They either claim that infant tests have no predictive value whatsoever for later I.Q. scores, or cite an older study by McGraw that found Negro infants retarded in comparison with white infants. Neither argument is adequate. Three recent investigations provide convincing evidence that properly administered in fant tests do predict later scores. And the 1931 McGraw study is no longer regarded as a decisive experiment_not even by Myrtle McGraw herself. It was a pioneer effort that compred white infants with Negro infants of markedly smaller stature on an unvalidated adaptation of a European test. Furthermore, later Northern investigations show little or no Negro lag in intellectual development through kindergarten and five years of age when thorough socio-economic controls are applied.

It is only after a few years of inferior schooling have passed that many Negro children drop noticeably in measured I.Q. Part of this drop is due to

the heavier reliance placed by intelligence tests at these ages upon verbal skills, skills that are particularly influenced by a constricte environment. One Southern study of "verbal destitution" discovered that those Negro college students most retarded in a reading clinic came from small, segregated high schools and exhibited language patterns typical of the only adult models they had encountered poorly educated parents, teachers, and ministers.

Another factor in the declining test averages over the school years is simply the nature of the schools themselves. Deutsch gives the example of an assignment to write a page on 'The Trip I Took;' iven to lower-class youngsters in a ghetto school who had never been more than twenty-five city blocks from home. Psychologist Deutsch maintains: "The school represents a foreign outpost in an encapsulated community which is surrounded by what, for the child, is unknown and foreign." 14

The middle-class bias of intelligence testing situations operates to hinder a disproportionate share of Negro examinees. Children perform best in situations familiar to them, but the conditions best suited for lower-status children are seldom attained. Most I.Q. tests are strictly urban middle-class instruments, with numerous references to objects and situations unfamiliar to rural and lower-class people. Haggard whosed that a less middle-class-oriented test led to significant increases in the performances of lower-class children.

Tests are only one aspect of class bias, however. Middle-class students have generally internalized their need to excel at such tasks; a high test score is itself a reward. Moreover, they perform most competently in silent testing atmospheres that place heavy relizance upon reading skills. By contrast, lower-class students frequently require tangible, external rewards for motivation. And their typically restricted home environments are overwhelmingly dominated by the spoken, rather than the written, word. It is not

surprising, then, that Haggard discovered notable increments in intelligence test scores of lower-class children when there was extra motivation for doing well and when the questions were read aloud as well as written. Sophisticated testing in ghetto schools should follow such guidelines for more adequate estimates of the abilities of disadvantaged children. 15

Intelligence Testing

Today one approaches the study of intelligence expecting to find that environment is important. The intellectual background is very different from that of the '20's. The general results on testing may be briefly summarized as follows:

The average IQ of large groups is raised by education. I believe the most important data on this are the comparisons of the soldiers of World War I and of World War II. More than 80 per cent of the soldiers tested in World War II were above the mean of these tested in World War I.

In the states where the least educational effort is made, the IQ is the lowest. In fact, as one looks at the review in Anastasi's book it is exceedingly difficult to see why anyone ever thought that the IQ measured innate intelligence, and not the genetic constitution as modified in the family, in the schools, and by general intellectual environment.

The author suggests that if the intelligence quotients of Negroes and Whites in this country are compared, the same rules be used for these comparisons as would be used for comparisons of the data between two groups of Whites. This may not seem a very extreme thing to suggest, but if you look at the literature, you will find that when two groups of Whites differ in their IQ's, the explanation of the difference is immediately sought in schooling, environment, economic positions of parents, and so on, but that when Negroes and Whites differ in precisely the same way the difference is said to be genetic.

There is no way of telling what the IQ would be if equal opportunity were given to all racial and social groups. The group which is sociologically classified

as Negro in the United States, about one-third of whose genes are of European origin, might well test ahead of the Whites. The author sometimes surprised to hear it stated that if Negroes were given an equal opportunity, their IQ would be the same as the Whites. If one looks at the degree of social discrimination against Negroes and their lack of education, and also takes into account the tremendous amount of overlapping between the observed IQ's of both, one can make an equally good case that, given a comparable chance to that of the Whites, their 'Q's would test out ahead. Of course, it would be absolutely unimportant in a democratic society if this were to be true, because the vast majority of individuals of both groups would be of comparable intelligence, whatever the mean of these intelligence tests would show.

A generalization can be made at this point. All kinds of human performance whether social, athletic, intellectual_are built on genetic and environmental elements. The level of all kinds of performance can be increased by improving the environmental situation so that every genetic constitution may be developed to its full capacity. Any kind of social discrimination against groups of people, whether ghese are races, castes, or classes, reduces the achievements of our species, of mankind. 16

Comparative Studies of Intelligence by Testing

Among studies of the preschool years is that of Klaus and Gray (1968), who reported the results of their early training project designed to improve the personal adjustment and intellectual functioning of culturally deprived children by giving them special experiences during the fifteen to twenty-four months preceding ecntrance into the first grade, and during the first year in school. All of the S_S were Negro children born in 1958. They were divided into four groups with twenty to twnety-seven S_S in each group: three summer school sessions, two summer school sessions, in-town control, and out-

of-town control. All four groups were tested in May and August of 1962 and 1963, August of 1964 and 1965, and June of 1966.

This demonstration project was an attempt to test the feasibility of a program very similar to Operation Head Start. In effect, it tested both the short-term, total-push summer program just before kindergarten, and a much more prolonged, detailed program with follow-up. In essence, they found that three-month program seemed to have a significant effect in improving the intellectual and social functioning of children from a deprived background, but the follow-up with a continuing program added to its effectiveness.

This program and the program by Deutsch and Brown (1964) presented constructive alternatives to waiting until children have already demonstrated severe retardation (academic) and have been put into a "track system" from which they can never escape. This early identification and early treatment holds the most promise, it would appear, of making any significant improvemets in the intellectual standing of children.

Studies of achievement growth and of scores for verbal abilities and intelligence all emphasize differences between white and Negro S_s and between middle and lower socioeconomic levels. Over a four-year period, Osborne (1960) studied patterns of achievement growth, with the California Reading and Arithmetic Test, and intellectual growth, with the California Test of Mental Maturity of 815 white and 446 Negro children, who were tested in grades six, eight, and ten. For the Negro children, he found hot only initial differences from the white group at grades six and eight, but a pronounced leveling out of performance between grades eight and ten, which greatly accentuated the original differences. Reading and arithmetic achievement differences between white and Negro groups increased progressively from sixth to tenth grade, with the greatest difference found on noncultural test questions. For the Negro group achievement and mental maturity growth became negatively accelerated or Eveled

off in the age range of fourteen to sixteen. There was a tendency also for the variability within both samples to be reduced sharply with age progression.

Osborne clearly demonstrated that under existing school systems, using standard tests as criteria, the Negro child's performance becomes increasingly lower than the normative sample. There is a marked, early, plateau effect, when Negro education seems to stall at a crucial time, and thus early differences are greatly magnified.

John, studying the intellectual development of 174 Negro slum children (69 in the first grade, 105 in the fifth) as part of a New York City program, made an analysis of the verbal and classificatory behavior of young Negro children. The middle-class children surpassed the hower -class children in obtained vocabulary scores on the WISC, had a higher non-verbal IQ on the Lorge-Thorndike, and demonstrated greater ability to produce best-fit responses and greater ability in their conceptual sorting and verbalization behavior. In the relational level of language, the differences were less striking. Although there were differences in the same direction in the first grade, it was not until the fifth grade that the differences between the socioeconomic levels became significant. 17

As a part of a larger developmental study of learning and intelligence in white and Negro children, Iscoe and Pierce-Jones (1964) studied ideational—fluency and ideational—flexibility scores of 267 Texas Negro and white children between the ages of five and nine. The Unusual Uses Test involves asking the S to give different uses for each common object presented to him, with the emphasis on divergency and novelty rather than conformity and unanimity. The four objects employed were a newspaper, a table kmife, an alarm clock, and a pottery cup. The effect of chronological age upon divergent thinking was assessed independently and in interaction with race. Using the WISC, excluding the co prehension and picture arrangement subtests, the interaction between divergent thinking and intelligence was studied.

All of the schoold ildren came from segregated but uniformly good schools; the white preschoolers came from kindergartens, and the Negro preschoolers came from day-care centers. All of the white children were from lower-class neighborhoods, but even so there was a significant difference, favoring the whites, in socioeconomic level between the white and Negro children. There was also a difference in mean IQ scores for the two groups: 91.6 for the Negroes, 103.37 for the whites.

The study results indicated that Negro and white children tend to differ in divergent thinking as measured by the Unusual Uses Test, with a statistical superiority obtained by the Negro children in spite of the white children's aignificantly higher IQ's. Yet the findings of this study agreed, for both white and Negro children, with previous studies of creativity in children which have found low, but consistent, significant, positive correlations between conventional intelligence test scores and divergent thinking measures.

Race and chronological age exerted interacting influence upon the measured divergent thinking: white c'ildren excelled Negro children only at the five-year level. The authors suggest that this might possibly have been a function of the fact that the Negro five-year-olds, taken from crowded day-care centers, were in the lowest socioeconomic level of the entire sample, whereas the other Negro children came from excellent schools.

The decade of the 1960's has seen the energence of new trends in the consideration of Negro intelligence. Although recognizing the limitations of intellectual and achievement tests, sychologists and educators revertheless are able to accept the fact that some national standard of intelligence and achievement must be accepted and that Negro children have in the past started school in a grossly inferior position. It is from this position that they must be raised. The problem is not now restricted to Negro children, and the battle cry is environmental manipulation, environmental stimulation, and cultural innoculation.

The Current Conclusion

Intelligence is a plastic product of inherited structure developed by environmental stimulation and opportunity, an alloy of endowment and experience. It can be measured and studied only by inference, through observing behavior defined as "intelligent" in terms of particular cultural content and values. Thus, the severely deprived surrounding of the average Negro child can lower his measured I.Q, in two basic ways, First, it can act to deter his actual intellectual development by presenting him with such a constricted encounter with the world that his innate potential is barely tapped. And, second, it can act to mask his actual functioning intelligence in the test situation by not preparing him culturally and motivationally for such a middle-class task. "Only a very uncritical psychologist would offer sweeping generalizations about the intellectual superiority or inferiority of particular racial or ethnic groups," comments Tuddenham, "despite the not very surprising fact that members of the dominant racial and cultural group in our society ordinarily score higher than others on tests of socially relevant accomplishments invented by and for members of that group."

The principal mechanisms for mediating these environmental effects vary from the poor nutrition of the pregnant mother to meeting the expectations of the social role of "Negro." Some of these mechanisms, like fetal brain injuries, can leave permanent intellectual impairments. Consequently, the permanency and irreversibility of these effects are not, as some claim, certain indicators of tenetically low capacity. Fortunately, many of these effects are correctable. Moving North to better schools, taking part in special programs of environmental enrichment, and benefiting from challenging new situations of educational desegregation can all stimulate Negro children to raise their I.Q levels dramatically.

From this array of data, the overwhelming opinion of modern psychology concludes that the mean differences often observed between Negro and white children are largely the result of environmental, rather than genetic, factors. This is not to asset that psychologists deny altogether the possibility of inherited racial differences in intellectual structure. There may be a small residual mean difference small not only because of the demonstrably sweeping influence of experience, but also because the two "races" are by no means genetically "pure" and separate.

Psychology is joined in this concusion by its sister behavioral sciences: sociology and anthropology. Witness the following professional statements.

The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, a division of the American Psychological Association, concluded in 1961:

There are differences in intelligence test scores when one compares a random sample of whites and Negroes. What is equally clear is that no evidence exists that leads to the conclusion that such differences are innate. Quite to the contrary, the evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that when one compares Negroes and whites of comparable cultural and educational background, differences in intelligence diminish markedly; the more comparable the background, the less the difference. There is no direct evidence that supports the view that there is an innate difference between members of different racial groups. . . We regret that Professor Garrett feels that his colleagues are foisting an "equalitarian dogma" on the public. There is no question of dogma involved. Evidence speaks for itself and it casts serious doubt on the conclusion that there is an innate inequality in intelligence in different racial groups . . .

The Society for the Study of Social Problems, a section of the American Sociological Association, concurred in the same year:

. . . the great preponderance of scientific opinion has favored the conclusion that there is little or no ground on which to assume that the racial groups in question are immately different in any important human capacity. . . the conclusion of scientists is that the differences in test performance by members of so-called racial groups are due not racial but to environmental factors. This is the operating assumption today of the vest majority of the competent scientists in the field. . . .

The American Anthropological Association passed a resolution by an unanimous vote (192 to 0) in 1961:

The American Anthropological Association repudiates statements now appearing in the United States that Negroes are biologically and in innate mental ability inferior to whites, and reaffirms the fact that there is no scientifically established evidence to justify the exclusion of any race from the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The basic principles of equality of opportunity and equality before the law are compatible with all that is known about human biology. All races possess the abilities needed to participate fully in the democratic way of life and in modern technological civilization.

The final, definitive research must await a racially integrated America in which opportunities are the same for both races. But, ironically, by that future time the question of racial differences in intelligence will have lost its salience; scholars will wonder why we generated so much heat over such an irrelevant topic. Yet the results of this belated research should prove interesting. Even if small inherent differences are found, their direction cannot be taken for granted. Racists have never considered the possibility that the "true" Negro capacity might actually average somewhat above that of the white. Certainly, there are enough environmental barriers operating in the present situation to mask any such Negro superiority. If this possibility should actually be demonstrated, one wonders if white racists would be thoroughly consistent and insist that white children be given separate and inferior education.

The important conclusion for the present, hower, is that if there are any inherent distinctions they are inconsequential. Even now, differences in I.Q. within any one race greatly exceed differences between races.

Race as such is simply not an accurate way to judge an individual's intelligence. The real problems in this area concern ways to overcome the many serious environmental deprivations that handicap Negro youth. To return to the analogy with longevity, the problem is akin to that which faced medicine in the nineteenth century. Automatized America needs to expand the intelligence level of its underprivileged citizens in much the same way it has expanded the life potential of its citizens in the past one hundred years. The

success of such programs as "the Banneker groupW in St. Louis demonstrates this job can be accomplished when American society decides to put enough of its resources into it. "The U. S. must learn," writes Charles Silberman in <u>Fortune</u>, "to look upon the Negro community as if it were an undeveloped country. 20

Footnotes

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