

New South



Freedom Rides

*... their impact on one rider,
the Deep South, national unity,
and world opinion*

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Strictly Subjective

By MARGARET LONG

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THE ADMIRABLE EFFORTS of the Atlanta School Board to "prepare the community" for desegregation of two high school grades this fall and the neighborhood discussions and persuasions of OASIS (a commendable catch-all for save-the-schools groups) to dissuade students and adult passers-by from violent expression of their displeasure speak well for the civilized if somewhat divided Atlanta community.

Mayor Hartsfield's fierce warnings to professional flying squadrons of fanatic outsiders, due to swarm to Atlanta to rescue the white race, seem a great deal more partisan and pointed than the mild exhortations of School Superintendent John W. Letson and the temperate counsels of OASIS. Mr. Hartsfield has not always exhibited a consistent bias for Negro students and their desegregation doings, but he is most colorfully and cholericly against white imports and their less gentle demonstrations. He calls these knights-errant "the outhouse crowd" and warns that "they'll get their heads knocked together." This vigorous figure of speech has not offended me as it has some Atlantans, because it does not imply to me that the mayor will personally crack together the heads of all vocal segregationists or order the police to fracture skulls of all who protest desegregation. It surely means, nevertheless, that police will at least stop disorders at the point of law violation—arresting native street messiahs and imported race saviors when they commence to throw things, beat the law-abiding and indulge in such disorderly conduct as obscene insults, or what the police call "opprobrious terms." If the mayor chooses to call this "knocking their heads together," then I can only

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THE NEGRO must also evidence a sense of responsibility. America was born with a race problem and the Negro is charged by history with part of the responsibility to eliminate that social cancer. The Negro discharges this responsibility by adopting the liberal view, by acting in every way to eliminate all artificial limitations upon the minds and hearts of all men. The white man and the Negro are not enemies; to the contrary, they are fellow warriors against provincialism—the tendency of a few frightened and insecure men to take up squatters' rights on a claggy bit of land and around a few dogmas and then sally forth to conquer the world in the name of their apotheosized myopia. And it is precisely here that America's role in the skein of social history is realized.

“The world took America seriously; she got what she asked for—the tired, the poor, the huddled masses. And that is what we all are—refugees from some teeming shore. Now is the hour of determination. The refugee in the gray flannel suit, Negro and white, must decide whether freedom is merely the right to establish religious and ethnic ghettos or whether it is the inescapable imperative to remove every boundry that separates one human being from another. Time is the great integrator. Humans have a knack of finding their way toward one another. And they do it, sometimes to their own amazement, without giving up any of the essential freedoms of the mind or identities of the spirit. For the essential truths continue to evolve, imperishably so.

The most essential of these truths seems to be that man thinks; and because he thinks, he is restless. There is always the gnawing suspicion that he can be better than he is, that things can be better than they are. When you ask man what he means by ‘better’, the answer comes ringing back, ‘better means that I can share in the pleasures and learning of an ever widening circle of humanity. That is why continuing provincialism is the arch enemy of progress.’ . . .”
From Louis Lomax's "The Act and Art of Being a Negro" in The Urbanite.