

Readers Digest - Page 75 June 1944 Atlantic Monthly.  
"How the South Feels about the Race Problem."

I do not like his approach because it is negative - no one is seriously trying to solve a question of deep rooted prejudice overnight. The phase of the problem with which we are dealing must, as Cohn says, above all avoid social issues. The Negro has his pride; he knows his place socially in the South; he does not wish to intermarry; he does not wish to penetrate into the Southern White society. This whole idea of social intermingling is a bogeyman created in the minds of the Southern white extremists and existing nowhere else. It is a block to all the other directions which progress logically should follow. To ~~mind~~ my mind, the problem is guaranteeing to the Negro his economic and his ~~social~~ political rights (not his social ~~rights~~.) And this is primarily an educational problem - education for both the white and the black. There is nothing insoluble about giving the Negro "his civic rights, security of person and property, fair share of public benefits, right to earn his living and his pay by worth not by color, protection in all of these," to quote Cohn. All this must be done gradually through education and practice; the Army is going to be a big factor in that. We can not return to the old days and we cannot ignore the problem. The south has tremendous economic problems - but if the lot of the Negro improves, the lot of the entire South will improve. Progress will come slowly, but it will come. What must be avoided and counteracted are the extreme abolitionists on the one hand and the slavery extremists on the other - the one ignores the basic sociology of the South, the other ignores basic democratic progress. People like Cohn are dragging red herrings through otherwise sound appreciations of the problem at hand. True the social balance of the South can not be disturbed with a rush of non-effective compulsory rules, but equally true <sup>THE FACT</sup> is that if the political and economic phase of Southern Negro rights does not improve the storm will break violently from the other side. There is a safe middle ground that comes with gradualism and education and understanding, with the breakdown of fascistic prejudices and hates that are deep rooted but not irrevocably so. It will be a process of progress requiring patience and ~~to dare, but it must come; it is not a question of "solubility"~~ - it a question of a realistic and democratic national approach.