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# CAY HCC Journal

## Journal of The Crispus Attucks York History and Culture Center

We will explore the history and culture of York's African American community to foster an open dialog about past, present, and future racial issues while promoting multicultural harmony.

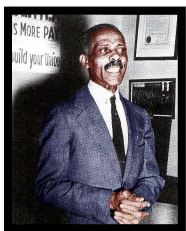


### THE PROBLEM OF THE COLORED PEOPLE

Rev. Dr. William Edward Williams was known for his strong beliefs in promoting civil rights and striving for African American equality. He was born in Pittsburg, PA in 1871. He graduated from Biddle University, eventually earning a Doctorate of Divinity. His career brought him to York, Pennsylvania where he became the pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church. On December 15, 1916, he electrified the York community with a powerful speech that condemned the bigotry of most of the White people of his time. He decried the dilapidated condition in which the African American community was forced to live and the lack of meaningful employment opportunities. He also spoke of the brutal violence of Jim Crow segregation that was pervasive in American society. Williams spoke at length of how White society had isolated

African Americans and the injustice of not granting them the same rights and privileges freely exercised by all other classes of citizens. He speaks the truth of the benevolent malevolence of White Northerners who think themselves enlightened to the problems faced by African Americans. Underneath their Christian veneers were vehemently racist views that did not allow Black people to enter into or worship in their churches and kept them apart with their written and unwritten rules. (see Williams on p. 5)

### CAY HISTORY SPOTLIGHT



In 1937 one of York's early Black leaders wrote a letter entitled "The Dawn of a New Day". In the

letter, the Rev. Thomas Montouth urged Blacks in York to "sit in conference (see Montouth on p. 2)

### THE FOUR CHAPLAINS - SERVICE AND SACRIFICE



In the May issue of the HCC Journal, we told you of the heroic and tragic story of four U.S. Army chaplains. (See Chaplains on p. 3)

### LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Charles Sexton was born at York Hospital in 1941 to Charles and Louise Sexton. His family was part



of the Great Migration, arriving in York from Bamberg, South Carolina in the 1920's. (See Sexton on p. 15)

**MONTOUTH (continued from p. 1)**

LtoR, Standing: Alma Montouth, Thomas Montouth Jr., wife Mary A. Montouth, seated Thomas E. Montouth Sr.

in an attempt to come to an agreement regarding major issues facing the Black community. And once that agreement is forged, this conference of concerned Blacks could begin instituting solutions to those issues”.

Well, here we are in 2024 and many of the same issues that Rev. Montouth, Chester Hayes, George Bowles and other Black leaders of the time faced continue to plague our community. I feel like our forefathers felt, that the solutions to our community problems have to come from within because it has been shown throughout the succeeding decades that the powers that be in this community have neither the will nor the ability to address these issues successfully.

The Reverend Thomas Montouth was a small, diminutive man in stature but was a giant of a man in the development of York’s Black History.

Rev. Thomas Montouth came to York from Georgetown, Cayman Islands, by way of New York where he lived for a while. He eventually attended Lincoln University which had been founded by the Presbyterian Church to provide advanced education to Black Americans. Lincoln University was the first, degree granting institution for Blacks in the country. It had a strong relationship with the Presbyterian church in York.

Rev. Montouth operated a newsstand at 298 West Princess Street where he distributed Black newspapers such as the Baltimore Afro-American and the Pittsburg Courier as well as other Black literature. He was an outspoken advocate for Negro Rights. He lived in York for over 72 years. He was one in a long line of Ministers at Faith Presbyterian who came through Lincoln University, one of the founders of the Community House, a model for the soon to be developed Crispus Attucks Association and the Lincoln University Alumni Club. He was a prolific writer and wrote almost weekly columns for the local newspaper. Most of his writings focused on uplifting York’s Black community. He wrote on such topics as; Black Unity, the Negroes and the Jews, Brotherliness, Non-Partisanship Politics, Keeping One’s Feet on the Ground, Colored Schools, and Racial Segregation, among other topics. Many of his writings are well worth going back to look at and read, as they remain relevant today.

Although he was not an attorney, Rev. Montouth’s reputation was such that his word wielded a lot of power within York’s legal system. And with that he helped to defend many Black persons in York with their legal cases.

One of the most infamous cases he was involved in was called the "Reckless Eyeballing Case" Where a young 18-year-old Black man was sent to prison for supposedly "staring too long" at a white woman. The woman's husband told the court that "she was in the car with him when the young Black man passed them in a truck and smiled and winked at her.....(the nerve of him)." Well, the young man was sent to Jail for 30 days until the Rev. Thomas Montouth, one of York's

most fearless leaders and fighters for justice, spoke up for him and had him released after paying a \$25 fine. The judge in the case, upon releasing the young Black man, told him to "stick strictly to your own race". This incident was reminiscent of the Emmitt Till case, although nowhere near as tragic. Young 16-year-old Emmitt was beaten terribly, hung and shot in a brutal affair that would shock the nation in 1955.

Montouth also defended Mr. Alphonso White, a close friend of his and an upstanding Black citizen in York, in a case involving disorderly conduct. The case involved Mr. White who was having a disagreement with a white man, Mr. Grayson Deardorf, who had run into Mr. Whites automobile. Police upon arriving at the scene of the accident instructed Mr. White to "go home" to which Mr. White responded "I do not have to go home". Upon hearing this the police officer, Officer Bohn, placed him under arrest for disorderly conduct. Rev. Montouth, who was a passenger in White's car, testified on White's behalf and the case was thrown out of court. Montouth also filed suit against the owners of the Dinner bell Restaurant at 155 South Queen Street at the time. Through a stroke of luck there were two policemen present at the time of the restaurants refusal to serve Montouth and even though they both testified on Montouth's behalf the court still ruled against him. Montouth had to pay fines and costs but he continued to defend those in need throughout his life.

Rev. Montouth was very politically active. In addition to being one of the founders of the Crispus Attucks Association with his friend Dr. George Bowles, Montouth served on the Board of Directors of Crispus Attucks, was a past President of the local NAACP, a member of the York County Council of Churches and also served in the powerful Black political group, the Citizens Club. Both his wife Mary and his daughter Alma were teachers. Montouth was 91 years old when he passed. He is interred at the historic Black Lebanon Cemetery.

- **By CAY HCC Lead Historian Jeffrey Kirkland**

### **CHAPLAINS (continued from p. 1)**

The Four Chaplains gave their lives so that others could have their life vests and places in the life boats. The U.S.A.T. Dorchester, an Army transport ship, was struck by a German torpedo and sank quickly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1943. The Four Chaplains, Lt. George L. Fox (Methodist), Lt. Alexander D. Goode (Jewish), Lt. John P. Washington (Roman Catholic), and Lt. Clark V. Poling (Dutch Reformed) exemplify the highest commitment to service and sacrifice.



**Lt. Alexander D. Goode served as the Rabbi at Temple Beth Israel in York prior to entering the Army during WWII.**

**Alexander started the first interracial Boy Scout Troop in York.**

His sacrifice is memorialized at the Alexander D. Goode Elementary School in York, PA and also at the Four Chaplains Breakfast, an annual event that was held this year on May 8, 2024. (see CHAPLAINS on p. 4)

### CHAPLAINS (continued from p. 3)

The keynote speaker for the breakfast, Vice Admiral Dr. Herman A. Shelanski, USN (ret.) spoke of honoring the Four Chaplains through service to the local community, not just through the armed forces, but as a firm commitment to making York, PA a better place to live through positive actions, service, and sacrifice. Admiral Shelanski, callsign "the Hermanator", was a Naval Aviator commanding Carrier Strike Group CSG-10 comprised of more than 15 warships including U.S.S. Harry S. Truman where his flag resided. At the conclusion of his inspiring message, Admiral Shelanski distributed his own challenge coins, collected over his many years in the Navy.

The atmosphere was one of serious reflection about the ultimate sacrifice made by the Four Chaplains. It was also one of celebration for the recipients of scholarships and other awards. The breakfast was geared towards youth from across York County with more than 350 students attending from many different schools including the Crispus Attucks Charter School.

The event has always been important to Barry Freeland, our CAY Director of Employment and Training because he is a Navy and Vietnam veteran. He knows firsthand what service to one's country means.

He served as the Four Chaplains Breakfast Master of Ceremonies and is the Vice President of the Four Chaplains Association of York County, Pennsylvania.



VADM Herman Shelanski



The event included the presentation of a \$2000 Alexander D. Goode Scholarship Award to Kelise Ford, a Crispus Attucks Charter School graduate (class of 2024). Ms. Ford is interested in becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant and eventually becoming a Registered Nurse. She is currently working for Wellspan Health. The CAY History and Culture Center congratulates Ms. Ford on her achievement and we wish her great success in her chosen career.

Barry Freeland Presents an Alexander D. Goode Scholarship Award to CACS Graduate Kelise Ford

**WILLIAMS (continued from p. 1)**

Rev. Williams was also a founder of York Community House, the predecessor to Crispus Attucks Association of York, PA.

The speech, printed here in its entirety for the first time since 1916, is as powerful now as it was that cold December day.

**The Problem of the Colored People**

(Paper Read Before the Ministers Association of York by Rev. W. E. Williams, D. D., Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church)

“What is “The Problem of the Colored People?” The answer depends largely upon who answers the question. If a man with the sympathies, convictions and prejudices of the south answers, he would say in the language of one who has spoken for the south. The problem is “How can we best and most humanely keep the “n----r” in his place?” A servant in the lowest sense of that term, not even on equality with servant of other races. To them a good “n----r” is one who is willing to keep his place; a bad one is one who aspires to be like a white man. To them the colored people are endurable only in the capacity of servants, never on terms of equality and in order that they may be kept in their place, they are:

1. Never to be called Mr., Miss or Mrs.
2. Never, save as a servant, to sit or eat with a white person in public.
3. To be barred from all public places of accommodation, amusement, and even worship where white people gather, or else segregate therein.
4. They must not be allowed to live in the same block, in some places not on the same street, and in other places, not even in the same section of the city where white people live.
5. They must not be allowed to vote or hold public office nor in any sense be granted the rights and privileges of American citizens.
6. They are not to be educated beyond “their place,” so that in only [a] few states of the south [are] there any provision made on the part of the state to give the colored people education beyond the sixth grade in public schools. In most of the rural districts of the south he has but two and sometimes three months schooling in the year.
7. They must not have justice in the courts, nor protection before the law, and are lynched, hanged, shot or burned at the stake for any or no offense at the pleasure of a set of white criminals; as an illustration, this from a southern daily paper:

On October 21st, [1916,] Anthony Crawford, a[n African American] farmer near Abbeville, S. C., who owned 427 acres of the best cotton land, had raised a family of

sixteen children, was worth more than \$20,000, had always been a law abiding self-respecting citizen. He came to Abbeville to sell a load of cotton. He and the white storekeeper W. D. Barksdale quarreled about the price of cotton. No blows were struck but the colored man was "sassy". He was arrested by a local policeman. A crowd of idlers from the town square rushed up to give him a whipping for "talking back" to a white man. He knocked one of the mob down with a hammer; the policeman offering no protection. They beat him senseless after which the bleeding body was thrown into jail. A few hours later, fearing the sheriff would remove him secretly, the mob dragged his wounded body forth, jumped upon it, mutilated it, and finally hanged and shot it. Then, they warned his family to leave the county by November 15th.

This is the idea of the problem of the colored people and some of the methods and results of their efforts at its solution. Not every white person in the south so feels and acts but it is a correct statement of the attitude of the south as a whole, as well as that of many white people not in the south land.



If you ask another set of white people largely of the north, a very few of the south, as to the "Problem of the Colored People", they answer:

"The Problem of the Colored People" is "how can we educate, Christianize and make good moral citizens of the millions of people of African descent, brought here against their own will, enslaved

so many generations and so recently liberated and at least in name, made American citizens.

They say, with little firsthand knowledge and so little truth; these colored people are of an inferior race, largely ignorant, most lazy and shiftless; naturally immoral and carelessly happy, living only for the present.

Having thus stated their problem and estimated its component parts, they set about its solution, mostly from a distance. They have given largely of their means and churches, schools and college have multiplied in the south to the blessing of the race, and almost all educated colored persons, particularly of the south, are products of their benevolence.

Save for these benevolent denominations and individuals, mostly of the north. I know of no institution for higher learning in the south which would have been founded or which could be maintained, but a handful of schools which the colored people have founded and themselves support.

Again, I say this is not the idea of the problem, nor the estimate of the colored people maintained by all the northern people, nor by all the Christian denominations seeking their betterment, but it is the prevailing idea and estimate of the north and of the denominations of white Christians thereof.



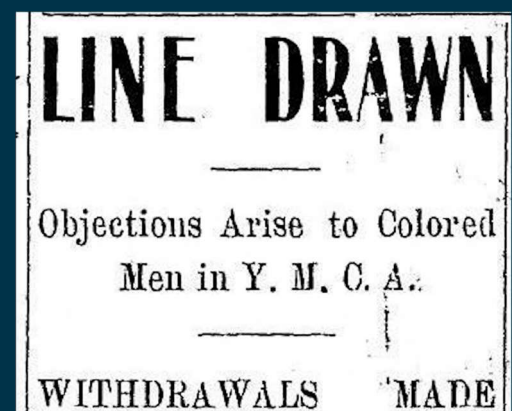
The colored people owe them much, for they have done much to uplift, educate and make prosperous the race. But alas, they do not really know the colored people. They have never put themselves in their place, cannot enter with real sympathies and the best help into their lives. They do know a few colored servants who may seem happy [and] indifferent to their own condition, improvident and careless of the future; they read of the colored criminal whose acts are always enlarged upon by the press, but they know almost nothing of the prosperous, educated colored people. Their home, life, their ambitions, their struggles and the mighty handicap with which they meet the forces of the progressive age and enlightened civilization, is a sealed book to these white people who are, at

times indifferently, almost always at a distance, trying to solve a problem which they do not correctly estimate and benefit a people whose ambitions and ideals, whose real self they do not know, nor even seek to know.

For though the individual white persons know ten or more individuals of the colored people of the domestic or servant class intimately, and most white people know no other class intimately, they do not know the race, but ten or more individuals like the same class of any race. To best know a people and most correctly estimate that people, you must know that people at their best, and understand their higher social life, the ambitions and aspirations of the most Intellectual and progressive class of that people. Thus, I am sure that even you gentlemen must acknowledge that you do not know the colored people in any really, true and adequate sense, possibly never having spent an hour in any close, personal contact with the best life of the colored people.

One evening in the home with the wife, children and friends of an educated, Christian colored man, would be an enlightening experience which would be profitable to most white people and would change their minds as to the real problem of the colored people as well as its solution.

This is not a plea for social equality, that might bug-a-bear, which is the excuse of the white man for so many of his sins against the colored people. One such evening or day would prove to the white man that such colored people are not seeking social equality with any save their own kind. That the colored man knows that social equality is not a thing of race, color or even of class, but of predilection, affinity and mutual choice, and that to grant a man all that belongs to him because he is a man, of opportunity, of civil and political rights does not mean any obnoxious or forced social contact in its nearer and personal relation. I am only saying that you cannot know the colored people or correctly judge them unless you know them in and at their best.



### BUT WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OF THE COLORED PEOPLE?

If you were to ask the very few white people, and the intelligent thoughtful, seriously aspiring colored people; they would give you the true answer.

The one great problem of the colored people involving all other problems of their life as a class of American citizens is:

How can the colored people measure up to the higher demands of this age and civilization, handicapped as they are by the injustice, cruelty and deadening discrimination which is the result of the colored prejudice of the white man?

How can the colored people, in majority, become the best citizens of their own community, intellectually, morally, civically, materially, when they are denied, shut off from, absolutely refused access to, or participation in, the best of the opportunity and life of their own land?

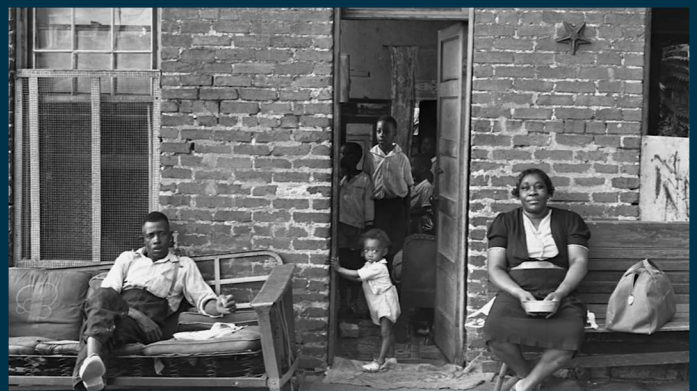
In other words, how can one-tenth of the population of this country overcome the color prejudice of the other nine-tenths of the population which insults and humiliates them, denying them opportunity, and retarding their higher progress at every step of their path which leads beyond the lowest places of menial service, and remuneration?

Thus, I have poorly stated what is the real problem of the colored people from the colored peoples' point of view.

If the colored people in this country have not made the progress many think they ought to have made; if they are behind the same class of white people in anything which is or makes for good in this nation, I maintain, and can prove that it is not because of any racial inferiority, or social depravity of this people, but that it is because color prejudice has barred the door after it has been viciously slammed in the face of the whole race.

Take our own beautiful city as an example of the best, and it is one of the very best cities in one of the best states of this union, for fairness, opportunity and justice in all things in relation to all of its citizens, and what do we find?

1. That it is almost impossible for a colored man, no matter how intelligent, wealthy or moral, or what not he may be, to rent or purchase a home on a good street, and in a respectable neighborhood. He is not denied because he is immoral, dishonest, unruly, unclean or materially unable to meet the demands, but solely, simply and only because he is a colored man. So, he must herd in the alleys, live in a poorer neighborhood, less convenient, less sanitary than he would choose.



2. There is no restaurant, hotel or boarding house in this city operated by white people where a colored person can eat a meal, nor even a shoe shining parlor where he can have his shoes cleaned, be he ever so financially able or respectable. He is a colored man; and that alone bars him out.





3. Would he be a mason, mechanic, a clerk or salesman, he is colored and though ever so proficient, cannot be employed. What stores would employ his daughter, save to cook, sweep or scrub? What business firm or house would open its doors to his son, though he graduated at the head of his class of a college where he was the only colored student, as more than one has done?

4. Do these colored youths, graduates of our own high schools and of the best colleges of the land, want the advantages, even of our so-called Christian institutions, such as our Y. M. and Y. W. C. A's? Though they too are Christians, they are denied. They may be in the same Christ with the white people, but they must not be in the same Christian institution. They are colored and to be colored outweighs all progress, all attainments, all other possessions.

This in York, Pa., the best; then we know it must be infinitely worse in less fair and just cities, character, prosperity and even life is not protected because it is the character, prosperity and life of a colored person in many other states of the union. Only that and nothing more.

You say, the colored people must provide all these things for themselves. Is it right? Is it fair? Would such a demand be made of any other race variety?

Do you say to the German, Irish, Greek or any other, you can be entertained, employed by and live on the same street with only those of your own race or class? Had you so said, I ask would that race or class have excelled the colored people in all that is good in our national life?



Why should the colored people be so discriminated against? Why so handicapped and discouraged in the race of life?

1. Is it because they have been slaves? The white races too were slaves.

2. Is it because they are ignorant? The white man too is yet ignorant, many of them, individuals and whole classes of them, and the colored

people have reduced their illiteracy to less than 30 percent since slavery.

3. Is it because they are poor? White men are poor too. Many beggars and tramps; colored beggars are few and tramps of any race seldom found. When they were made free as a colored man said, 'We didn't have nothing, and didn't have nothing to put nothing in,' and yet the colored people own more than \$700,000,000, though free but 50 years.

4. Is it because the colored people are criminal and immoral? The colored man does steal a chicken sometimes. The white man robs banks, and steals an isthmus, and carries off whole nations at will; Panama and Africa for instances. And when one reads the records of divorce trials and doings of high society in the daily papers, one feels that the lies the white man says of immorality, the cleaner and sweeter is the atmosphere.

5. Is it because the colored people are inferior racially? I would ask in what and how is it shown?

a. Surely not physically. Jack Johnson, Howard Drew (champion sprinter), Brown University's great halfback Pollard and a host of others, say no.



b. Certainly not intellectually. Did you ever know a negro to graduate at the foot of his class in a white college? And many have carried off the honors, where there were no black faces save their own. The colored people have authors, poets and artists, and even scientists, who rank with their white fellows.

c. Is it that he lacks courage [or] patriotism; love of and loyalty to his country? Let

Toussaint Le Overture, the Immortal black of San Domingo, Crispus Attucks of Boston Commons, Peter Salem of Bunker Hill; the black sailors with Perry on Lake Erie; the five thousand in the continental army, the Black Legions of the Civil war and the heroes of San Juan hill and Mexico speak, and when the white historian dips his pen in the fountain of truth, the colored soldier will take his place,

**“On fame’s eternal camping ground  
Where silent tents are spread,  
And glory guards with solemn round  
The bivouac of the dead.”**



No, the only honest, true reason which can be given for the treatment of the colored people along the lines mentioned is that they are colored people, and white Americans are prejudiced along the colored line.

And so, the great problem of the colored people is either to get rid of their color, or else find some way to get the white people rid of their color prejudice.

I maintain that the colored people are a miracle in the American nation today, in that they have lived, smiled, developed along all lines and are loyal to their country and are

worshippers of the white man's God, in the face of the discrimination, lack of material opportunity, and the civil and political injustice, to which they are subjected.



He foments no strikes, hurls no bombs, shoots no presidents, and rallies to his country's call of arms, though denied representation and official recognition in governmental affairs.

He has accepted the white peoples' religion and is fairly true to the teachings of Christ, and the only reason one can readily see why he believes in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is that he is able to distinguish between the white man's preaching and his practice. He accepts the one and deplores the other.

I think his opinion of God and of the religion of the white people was well expressed by an old man in a prayer meeting in South Carolina, in

testifying he said,

"God done gib de white folks a heap of things, but He ain't forgotten we, cause He gib we religion, and we hab a right to show it out to all us would da B---a (white people) dey's got de knowings of de ways and de hows of religion but dey ain't nebber got de feel of it yet."

When they get the feel of it", the brotherhood of man will become a practice, not a preachment, and the problem will be solved.

It is a miracle that colored people live, and sing, and grow along all good lines in face of his economic disadvantages and his social and political injustices. Many have thought he could not maintain himself.



The Rev. Beverly Warner, D. D., of New Orleans, said in an address in Richmond, Va., 'In the south, the negro will never be allowed political power or social consideration. I do not stop to explain or defend this, but state a simple fact. This is ever before the negro race. It must have an effect upon the mind and soul which in time will react upon the body.'

He acknowledges "that the degenerating tendencies of the colored race, revealed by statistics, are due essentially to the influence of unfavorable hygienic surroundings; to

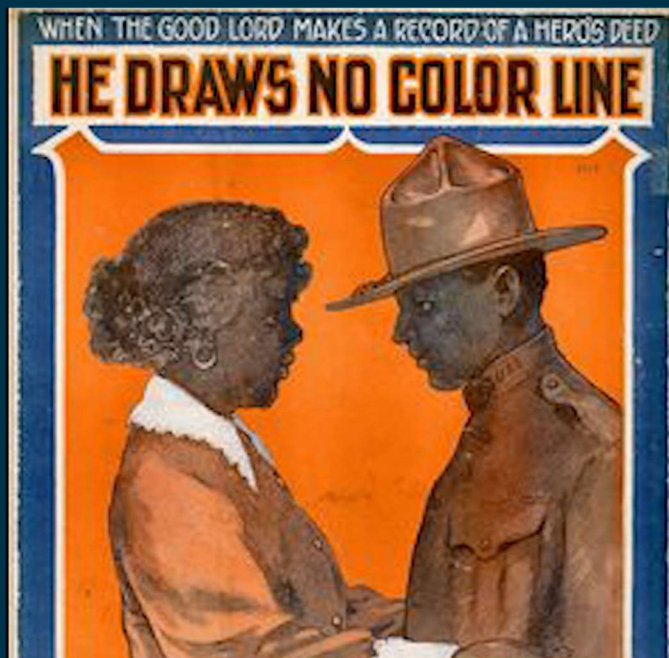
unfavorable social and moral environments, acting upon an ethnologically inferior and passive race, which is struggling for existence with a superior aggressive and dominant population.

He weeps crocodile tears, therefore, because he feels sure the colored people will decay and die out.

Dr. W. B. Smith, president of Tulane university goes farther and solemnly declares in his book called 'The Color Line', "that the negro problem will solve itself by the dying out of the negro race."

I think they judge the colored people by what might happen in their own case were they so situated, and they satisfy their Christian (?) conscience, with this comforting conclusion.

But despite the deadening effects of this segregation, Jim Crowism. social and political injustice on mind and soul, and this herding in alleys and unsanitary surroundings, the colored people have lived and increased from four to more than ten million since their emancipation.



guaranteed of citizens under the constitution, that they be given these rights and privileges in fact.

3. That they be judged; not by the worst of their race, and all classes alike because of their color, but if it be too much to ask that they be judged by the best of their race, then that they be judged by their Individual character, conduct and attainments.

These three things would solve for the colored people as they see it, "The Problem of the Colored People."

"That the negro cannot assimilate the white man's civilization, and live in this white man's age" will be consigned to the limbo of untruths with that other figment of a prejudiced mind "that a negro could not learn the ancient languages", of which we hear no more, since the white students of Harvard university have studied a negro's Greek grammar.

What is the solution of the problem of the colored people? Toward its solution the colored people ask but this,

1. That they be dealt with, not as colored people, but simply as people.

2. That as they are natives of this country of more than 300 years ancestry, and are granted all the rights and privileges

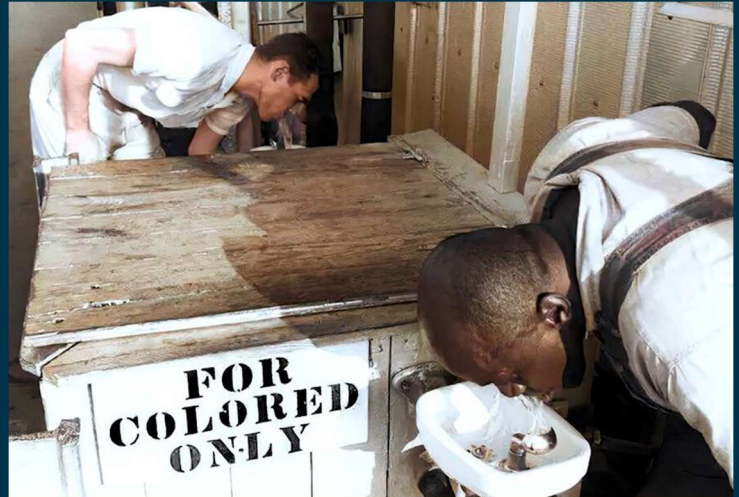
I think that you Christian ministers here this morning will grant that this is only right and our just due.

Personally, I want to say that you have given me all I expect or ask. I bring no charge against you as brother ministers in the Gospel of Christ. I have simply tried to bring before you this nationwide problem, from the viewpoint of a colored man.

I now ask, what I feel you will give your hearty and public co-operation in its solution.

Some months ago, at the close of an address on "How to promote a more sympathetic cooperation between the ministers of Baltimore, separated by the color line", delivered by a white Episcopal clergyman to the Colored Ministers alliance of that city. Dr. Bragg, a colored Episcopal minister arose and said,

"The two greatest enemies to the progress of the colored people of America are, the white press, and the white ministry. The white press, because it seeks out and publishes in flaring headlines all the evil it can find of the race and makes no note at all of the things which speak for the character and progress of the race.



The white ministry because it is silent on lynching, disfranchisement, segregation and all other social evils, when if they would speak out as their Bible teaches and their Christianity declares on the race question they could do more than any other agency in the world to really better the condition of the colored people and honor the Christ.

It made me sad when I saw and heard that every one of the 90 or 100 colored ministers present felt as he did in that.

Brothers in Christ, this silence of the white ministry and the Christian church is an awful handicap to the colored minister in his own spiritual life and in his preaching and holding

to Christ and the church, the educated young colored men of today.

They must judge religion, the church and the Christ, by the members of the church and especially the ministers thereof.

It is hard for a thoughtful colored man to believe in the church, or the Christ, of the Christian minister, who cries out against the wrong done every other man and nation

and remains silent when his fellow Christian of the colored people, his so-called brother in Christ, is segregated, Jim Crowed, disfranchised and lynched by the hundreds.

I have learned to respect and believe in the white ministers of York; may I urge you that:

**“No matter how fierce the battle,  
Nor how deep entrenched the wrong,”  
You "speak out and bravely in God's name,  
For the cause that needs assistance and  
The wrong that needs resistance.”**

The Rev. Dr. Williams was a powerful voice.

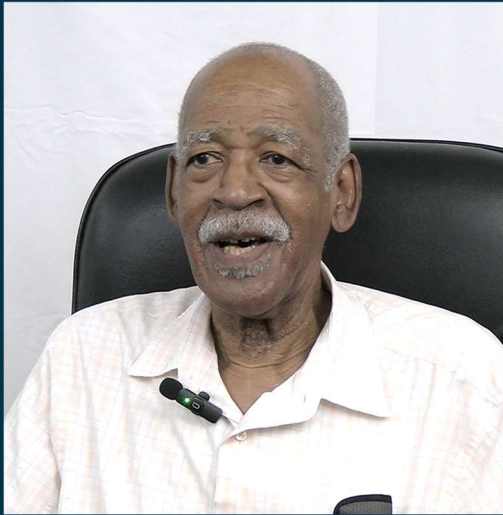
In an age before the Civil Rights movement, his speech was a powerful rebuke of the injustices suffered by African Americans, both here in York and elsewhere in the country. It was a strong call to action issued directly to White church leaders in the hope of enlisting them into the fight for Black equality.



### **BUILDING THE HCC**

The steel wall framing has been installed on most of the exterior. Stewart & Tate will pour concrete for the roof lobby and the third floor on the 28th of June, 2024 as long as the weather cooperates.



**SEXTON (continued from p. 1)****Charlie Sexton**

Mr. Sexton was one of nine children. As a child he remembers growing up on S. Cherry Alley (now Cherry Lane) behind the old Post Office between Princess St. and Hope Alley (now Hope Avenue). That part of Princess St. was referred to as Black Wall Street because of all of the African American owned businesses on that block. All of the businesses dating from that time have since been torn down. He remembers that York's African Americans were concentrated in the alleys; Cherry Alley, Hope Alley, Church Alley, Court Alley, Howard Alley and many more. They were known collectively as the Red District. He mentioned that African Americans didn't have the choice to live in other areas of the city because of housing discrimination practiced by the White people. The process is also called Red Lining.

Like many of York's African Americans, he was forced to attend a segregated school, in his case, Smallwood Elementary School on Pershing Avenue. When asked about his time at Smallwood, Mr. Sexton remarked "That was the segregation days...It was all Black...Black teachers and Black students." As a child he did not reflect on his segregated education, he simply said "I didn't know any different at the time... All I know is, that's where they had me going to school and I went. That's just the way it was." He described the quality of his education at Smallwood by saying "To me it was great, I learned a lot...I loved the teachers, they were all nice." He particularly remembers Ms. Michell, his first-grade teacher; Ms. Felton, his second-grade teacher; and Mr. Hopewell, the Principal of Smallwood Elementary. He remembers the liberal use of corporal punishment to correct wayward students. The school made a point about teaching the students the history of their Black ancestors, sailing the Middle Passage to America from Africa on boats under horrific and deadly conditions.

While he was growing up he became interested in the court system and wanted to be an attorney. His first job was stocking shelves at grocery stores around town. He also had a morning paper route when he was in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. He collected soda and milk bottles for extra money. One of his chores around the house was to get up early to start up the furnace, shoveling in coal to warm up the house. At night, he would "bank" the coal in the furnace so it would burn slowly at night. He ran countless errands for his parents which he believes taught him how to communicate with people of different backgrounds and ages. His parents also taught him financial discipline. He remembers his father as "My Rock", the foundation upon which he built his life and character. Like many of the young people of his time, he was raised by many of the adults in the neighborhood. He loved to play "Fox and Hounds".



He went to Crispus Attucks when it was on Maple Street a lot when he was growing up. Ms. Chapman and Mr. Simmons did a great job managing the Center, he said. He liked playing pool. He believes that CAY had a good impact on him and on the community over the years.

Racial tensions were evident to Mr. Sexton when he left Smallwood to attend desegregated Hannah Penn Junior High on the corner of College Avenue and Beaver St. He compared going from Smallwood to Hannah Penn to going from Pennsylvania to a foreign country like Russia. Most of the staff and teachers were White. He was a well-known basketball player at this time.

Mr. Sexton talked about the complicated topology of the time; you couldn't go into this restaurant, you couldn't go into that store. You could go to the outdoor window of Sam's Bar but you couldn't go inside. "You could go into Charlie Meyer's Grocery Store", he said.



He joined the U.S. Air Force after high school, serving in Turkey, right up against the border with Russia. He was serving there when Francis Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane was shot down. He spent many nights after that sleeping out in the fields away from the barracks in case of attack. He recalls a great deal of racial animosity while he served. He remembers that when he first got to Turkey he worked in "Cold Storage" composed of reefer vans (refrigerated trailers).

By the late sixties he was living in his own house on Princess St. and working at Allis-Chalmers after serving honorably in the U.S.

Air Force. When the '68-'69 riots happened, he said he was not surprised. When he started working at Allis-Chalmers he said that the white men (who were members of the Newberry Street Boys) would speak as if he wasn't there. They would speak in a very derogatory manner. Mr. Sexton remembers one night during the riots when "the tanks were rolling through" while he was sitting on his front porch with his wife and two-year-old baby daughter. "That scared me!" he said. He believes that the 1970 York Charrette had a neutral to positive effect. "I think it helped, I don't think it hurt anything by having it." Mr. Sexton said.

He was an official at basketball games. One time he was hit in the back with a bottle while officiating at Eastern-York Catholic game. He told a policeman who threatened to throw everyone out of the game until one of the men in the crowd owned up to the assault and was removed. The man's friends then threatened Charlie saying "That's OK, you got to go out to your car to leave...". Charlie officiated for 11 or 12 years. After that, he began coaching the girls' basketball team at Hannah Penn. He also worked as the Attendance Officer for the York School District.

Mr. Sexton misses the sense of community from his youth. "Everyone helped each other", he said. "Every Saturday was clean-up day, everybody had their hoses out" hosing everything down.

When asked about the new HCC, Charlie said "We all came from somewhere", the HCC will help people get in touch with their roots.

**Thank you, Mr. Charlie Sexton, it is an honor to hear about your life.**