

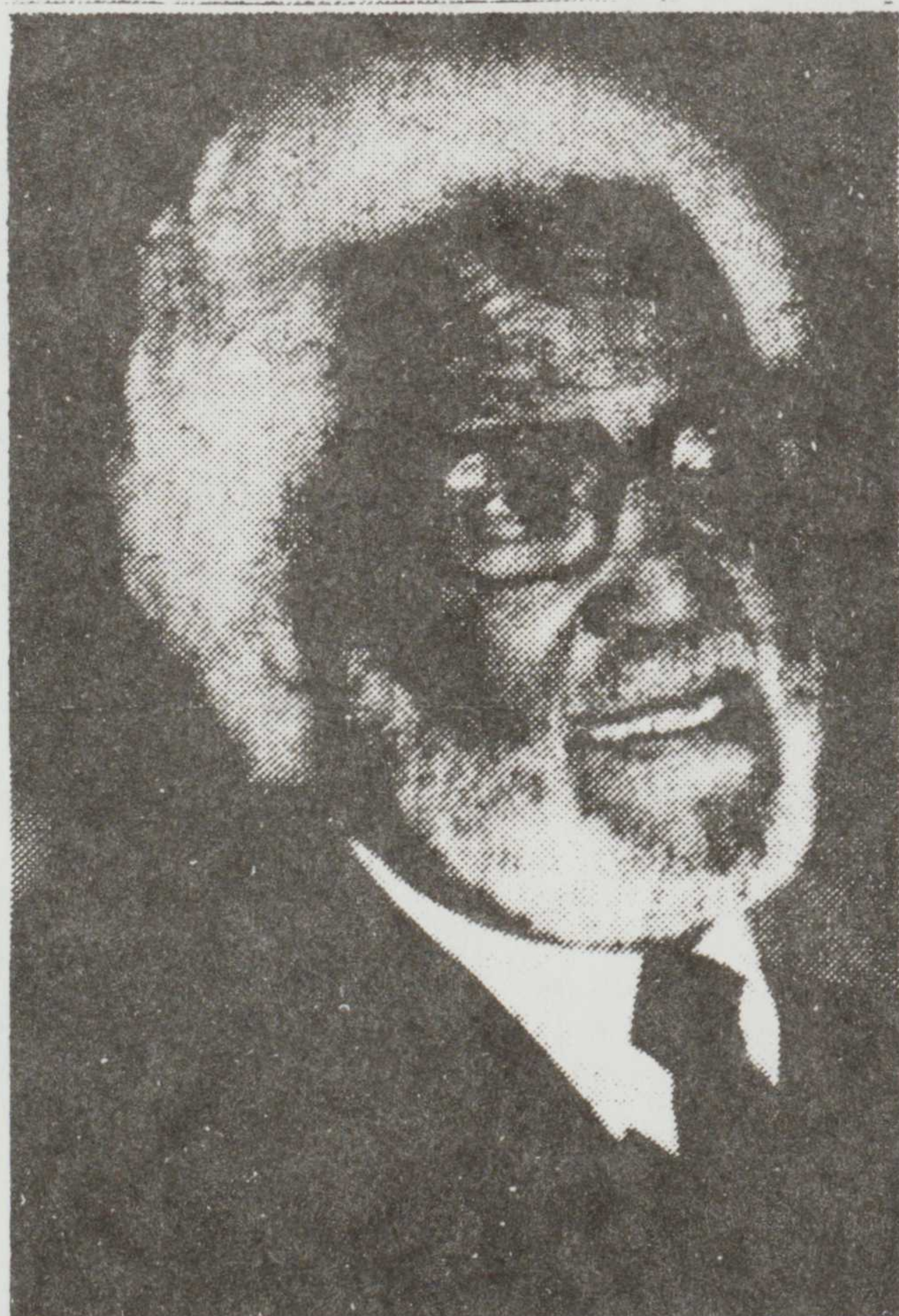
12-SPOTLIGHT May 23, 1983

U.S. Race Problem Answer

By The SPOTLIGHT Staff

A new coalition of Blacks and Whites has revived a movement, present throughout the history of this country, to ease tensions between the races, to foster cooperation, and to help redress the injustices suffered by the ancestors of today's American Blacks when they were enslaved in their homelands in Africa and brought to America.

This group is called the American Colonization Society (ACS), and its charter states that it is "dedicated to the voluntary migration of African-American people to their motherland." Its professed aim is to restore faith, hope and the dignity of self-determination to Blacks.



HASSAN JERU-AHMED
... Fosters cultural pride.

The ACS hopes to get a bill introduced in Congress that will authorize repatriation and the furnishing of development aid to Afro-Americans who choose to migrate. The bill is modeled after H.R. 8965, introduced to the 92nd Congress on March 1, 1971, by then-Rep. Robert N. C. Nix (D-Pa.).

Shortly after the bill's introduction, Mustafa Hashim, president of the African-American Repatriation Association (AARA), presented 10,000 signatures in support of the bill to the then-chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Thomas E. Morgan.

Many of the same people who figured in the AARA have joined together again in the ACS.

ROOTS GO WAY BACK

The ACS traces its historical roots back to the late 18th century.

Paul Coffee (Kofi), a free Black man born in 1758 who earned great wealth and renown as a ship owner, builder and philanthropist, traveled to Sierra Leone and founded the Friendly Society for the Emigration of Free Negroes from America. The War of 1812 interrupted his attempts at establishing an official migration program, though he did transport 38 Blacks to Sierra Leone at his own expense.

Coffee died in 1817 while the major portion of his efforts was still in the planning stages. But his cause was taken up by two other Black leaders, Martin R. Delaney and Henry Highland Garnet. Delaney, a Black doctor who graduated from Harvard University Medical School in 1852, and Garnet, a noted abolitionist minister, negotiated with the Abeokuta people of the Niger Valley for land grants for Black American immigrants. Again, war—in this case the Civil War, or War Between the States—interrupted their efforts.

One of the outcomes of this war, Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, is well known for having heralded the beginning of the end of traditional slavery in this nation. What is less well known, however, is the fact that it contained a passage which promised that the effort "to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon the (African) continent or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the governments existing there, will be continued." Lincoln also proposed a Constitutional amendment to appropriate money for this purpose.

One successful attempt at repatriation was made in the 19th century. This was the founding of the nation of Liberia. The National Colonization Society of America, founded in 1816 to return freed slaves to Africa, first attempted to start a colony in Sierra Leone, but the climate proved inhospitable. Negotiations were conducted with native rulers in the areas now comprising Liberia. The chieftains granted to the society a tract of land on Cape Mesurado on the Saint Paul River. Though the country has had its share of political and economic strife, it has existed intact to this day.

GREAT LEADER

One of the greatest leaders of the repatriation movement, Marcus Garvey, began his campaign to sponsor the return of Blacks to Africa in 1913. Garvey, originally from Jamaica, edited newspapers in Costa Rica, Panama and London. His movement, which brought him millions of followers around the world and established him as the most influential Black leader of the early 20th century, sought to establish a return of Blacks from around the world to Africa, where they would be free to live in their own culture, free from the influence of Whites.