Cora Taylor Editorial – 1896.

Editorial written by Cora E. Taylor, Oskaloosa, Iowa, and co-editor of The Negro Solicitor, on about 30 May 1896.

[No complete issue of the Negro Solicitor has survived. The only items from the paper are reprinted in other black newspapers or are contained in a scrapbook kept by George H. Woodson, a lawyer who lived in Buxton, Iowa. This editorial written by Cora Taylor was pasted into the scrapbook, but a portion of it was folded; that part has been lost. The edges of the paper also have disintegrated with age. Missing portions of words or words are designated with a question mark inside brackets “[?]”. George H. Woodson’s Scrapbook is now held by the Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa, and it is available on microfilm.]

The Negro Solicitor, 30 May 1896. “Woman’s Work.” Address and Communications for this department by Cora E. Taylor, Editor, Solicitor Office, Oskaloosa, Iowa.

THE FEMALE SIDE OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM. By Cora E. Taylor.

The American Negro is indeed a significant factor in the social body politic of the United States. For more than two hundred and fifty years he has assisted in the making of American history, and his labors, energy and efficient service stand out in numerous instances, as lasting monuments of its industry and individuality.

Many books have been written on the Negro problem, some by Negro authors and some by caucasians. Many special laws have been enacted by the general congress and the legislatures of numerous states, tending to elevate the Negro to the standard of the caucasian, and still, we are told by every Negro journal (and there are nearly three hundred in the United States) and every Negro politician and orator in the country that the “Negro Problem” is still unsolved.

Frederick Douglass, the great agitator, orator and statesman, industriously labored through a long course of years and grew to unusual proportions from a view of intellectual prominence, and though his years were full matured and his labors ripened, even as the autumn fruit, yet, he died, and this vexed problem, still unsolved, stares at the living and grins at the shades of the “Free Soilers,” the “Equal Rights” zealots, the “Civil Rights” promoters, the “Lincoln republicans; yes even brazenly pokes fun at the sons and daughters of this, the “anti-lynching” period.

When I review the history of the United States, and consider in[?] junction with this review the [?] hinted at above and the history of the Negro since 1865 to the present, and then, when I, with Bellamy leap into the future a hundred years and “look backwards”[?] then, right about, as Bellamy [?] and view the situation as I am [?] confronted (i.e. 100 years hence [?] are of the past) I am [?] to submit to the conclusion that something has been overdone [?] done, or everything that has been to solve this problem, has not been done properly.
By this conclusion I do not by any means desire to convey the idea that there has been nothing done in the right direction, for indeed, the marked progress of the race during the past thirty years is proof against such a conclusion.

But, let me suggest that, the fact of our achieved progress, is no proof that under different conditions and circumstances we might not have accomplished more.

Like the Egyptians of old, the American Negro is lacking in his estimation of the females of the race. So long as we find our so-called prominent men allowing their wives and daughters to drudge and toil over the wash-tub (and often away from home) and in consequence neglect the home and the children, just so long shall we find the Negro catalogued among the “back numbers.”

As a rule, we are not certain that woman is man’s superior, but, that the women of our race are more susceptible to mental culture, refinement and brain expansion than the men, is but a natural consequence when due consideration is given the conditions of the two sexes, under the diversified influences of the slavery period. For, while almost universally the men were kept in the fields among the cotton, cane and corn, in numerous instances the women were house-maids, cooks, family servants, or to the eternal shame of the slave owner, in many instances, held and kept as the master’s mistress. The reader will readily conclude that no matter how debasing the servitude of these women may have been, that while they were raised and kept about the “great house,” and under the direct influence and in conversant relation of the educated master and mistress, throughout [abruptly ends – remainder of editorial was not kept].

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1 This likely refers to Looking Backward, Edward Ballamy (1888), reprinted New York: New American Library, 1960. For Ballamy’s ideas of the role of women in an “industrial army” see Pittenger, American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 68-69. See also Shelton Stromquist, Re-inventing “The People”: The progressive movement, the class problem, and the origins of modern liberalism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 38-44, for a discussion of Bellamy and George and their opinions regarding utopian idealism.