

PROJECT Negro Group

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Chandler Owen

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Negro Group

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Chandler Owen

(Mr. Owen is now ~~connected with the Chicago office of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters~~ ⁱⁿ. He is not listed in "Who's Who in Colored America," nor is there any material in the library about him. The following information was gleaned from the volumes of the Messenger which he edited with A Philip Randolph from 1923 until 1927.)

Like Randolph, Owens was a Socialist in his political outlook. He was not a "dyed in the wool" Socialist, however, because ~~as~~ ^{indicates} he ~~says~~ in one of his articles, "Even if it were against alleged Socialist faith to advocate what we regard just and right, we would still advocate no Bibles or creeds, even, Socialism...."

He believed the Garvey movement dangerous to the American people, in that it would remove the Negro from his homeland, would aggravate racial antagonism, was economically unsound, etc., and fought that movement tooth and nail, both on the platform and in the columns of the Messenger. In his fight against the Garveyites, he probably erred, like Randolph and other American Socialists of the time, in failing to differentiate sufficiently between West Indians generally, and West Indian followers of Garvey. And as a result, in this wise, contributed to the bad feelings between American and West Indian Negro, that had reached a new high during the post war period. For instance, in most of his polemics against the Garveyites, he makes statements of the order of, "...the West Indians are more emotional than the American Negro."

He seemed to have shared the routine role of his coeditorship with Randolph on the Messenger, because very few articles are signed by him whereas whenever an editorial attack is made on some person or movement, he generally assumed the responsibility for penning the tirade. He was a man of wide culture and education, as is indicated in the numerous articles he wrote under the general head, "Love and Marriage" ~~for the Messenger~~. Under his and Randolph's guidance, the Messenger was in the van for the recognition of the Soviet Union and carried numerous favorable articles on the experience of Negroes in Russia.

In 1920, with Randolph and other progressives, he organized the Friends of Negro Freedom which included in its platform protection for Negro tenants, the advancement of cooperation and the establishment of forums for publicly educating the masses. He also participated in the organization of the National Association for the Promotion of Labor Unions during the same year. His activities with the ~~the Pullman Porters~~ *Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* dates from 1924 when Randolph likewise began to concentrate on that problem. *He has never held any important position with that organization however.*

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