

"Kentucky's Idea of Education" Newspaper Article, February 22, 1904

KENTUCKY'S IDEA OF EDUCATION.

The Kentucky legislature has passed a "Jim Crow" education bill which forbids the co-education of whites and blacks within the state of Kentucky and divides the school population of the state as distinctly as the "Jim Crow" cars divide the traveling public, white and black, in Mississippi and other southern states. Should the governor affix his signature to the bill the colored children are barred from the public schools until schools are provided especially for them, and colored students from the colleges and universities. There is a sort of vicious appropriateness in the fact that the bill was introduced by the member from Breathitt county. The bill is born of prejudice and ignorance. It is the revolt of the ignorant white man content with his condition against the "educated nigger."

If the governor signs and the courts uphold the constitutionality of the act the famous Berea College will be seriously affected. Berea was founded six years before the civil war to remain "under an influence strictly Christian and as such opposed to sectarianism, slave holding, caste and every wrong institution and practice." Its teachers were dragged out by a mob to be flogged for teaching anti-slavery doctrines in the excitement of the political campaign which preceded the secession of the southern states. It was founded primarily for the benefit of the poor whites of Kentucky more than for the slaves and the present proportion of students in attendance is nearly eight whites to one negro. The bill is directed against the Berean idea which the state superintendent of education declares means social equality if carried to its logical conclusion. The practical effect of the proposed law is to shut off general education and so far as possibly deny opportunity to the negro.

Aside from the question of the right of a college to admit whoever it pleases to its class rooms, the closing of the public school to any class is an an outrage. The act is a greater disgrace to the state of Kentucky than even its barbarous feuds and the assassination of the governor in the open street as a logical result of its system of vendetta. Kentucky and the south are going the wrong way to a solution of the negro problem when they legislate race prejudice and white ignorance into their school laws.