

**Excerpt from “The South Speaks” by John Henry Hammond, Jr. (April 26, 1933)**

Decatur was quiet when the trial began. But it was not long before latent prejudices flared up. During the first day of the actual trial a menacing band of fifty came into the courthouse from Scottsboro "out of curiosity." Leibowitz's method of questioning pure Southern womanhood had aroused their resentment, and they made no bones about it. Organized mobs began to form outside of Decatur. Farmers from surrounding towns held protest meetings. Hadn't an outsider dared to call a black man "mister" in court and demanded that the Attorney-General do the same? Wasn't the defense advocating racial equality, and wasn't there danger of these Northerners arousing the niggers?

The effect of the trial on the three thousand Negroes of Decatur was enlightening. At first there was no appreciable difference in behavior. But after the most respectable members of their community--doctors, Sunday-school teachers, school principals, ministers, and storekeepers--got up in court to show that they were the equals of whites, the working Negro acquired confidence. Faces which had been expressionless in the courtroom took on smiles, and a few whispered exclamations were to be heard when Leibowitz made a point. Decatur whites took notice of this. In no time at all the local hardware stores were completely sold out of guns and ammunition, and they were not selling to Negroes. No one entered "niggertown" without some kind of weapon. The black folk were also taking due precautions. At first it was hard for these colored people to believe that a fight was being waged for them. But when they saw the defense treat Negroes as equals in court they were convinced.

Alabama's Negroes are not the only ones aroused. Colored people throughout the land who have been determinedly apathetic to the appeals of the I. L. D. and the Communists are thoroughly enraged by the verdict. In Harlem, Baltimore, Richmond, Virginia, Washington, Chicago, and scores of other cities real protest meetings are being held. The churches are stepping up as never before; collections are being taken for the defense of the prisoners. Theaters and dance halls are staging benefits; newspapers are formulating plans for a protest march of 50,000 to Washington. The South has only to repeat the verdicts in the cases of the other boys to find the Negroes organizing into militant groups.

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