Negro Surgeon, World Plasma Expert Derides Red Cross Blood Segregation

JOEL FRANCIS

WASHINGTON—No Negro blood accepted but...

When the terrible blitz raids in London in September, 1940, killed and wounded thousands and an emergency call went out to America for dried blood or transfusions, it was an American Negro surgeon who was called upon to organize and send U.S. blood plasma overseas.

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When the American Red Cross set up its own blood collection and transportation project and expanded the system to every city in the U.S., no Negro blood was accepted.

Dr. Joel Francis, head of Howard University's blood bank, which is the largest in the world and the only one in the nation of its kind, was asked by the American Red Cross to help set up the army's blood bank project, which he did. But when he asked that Negro blood be accepted, the Red Cross refused.

Dr. Francis, a Negro, has been called the world's leading expert in plasma and blood transfusion. He is called by many of the world's greatest authorities in the collection and preservation of blood, and is considered an authority on plasma collection and the treatment of blood plasma.

Called To War Duty

Dr. Drew, a quiet, unassuming man, was called from the university to serve on active duty and was sent to Britain to help establish a British blood bank. He was sent because he was an expert in plasma collection and preservation.

When the Blood Transfusion Betterment association started looking for help in the British, it was Dr. Drew they selected to head the work. The association was looking for someone who knew the latest techniques in plasma collection and preservation.

The association sent Drew to Britain at that time. "I am pleased to offer this position and all that goes with it to you as the most qualified man to know how to act in this important development," the association's letter stated.

Today Drew looks back on the work he did for the British and smiles ironically at the changes that have taken place in blood-collecting under the supervision of the Red Cross.

Dr. Drew pointed out that even before Pearl Harbor neither the British project nor the Red Cross differentiated the blood of various races. But the British did begin to study the characteristics of various races in the blood plasma field. When the Blood Transfusion Betterment association was established, it was known that the British were studying the characteristics of various races in the blood plasma field.

No Differences

"No, there are no humorous questions to some people. They are important not only for white people who fear that they or their offspring will get Negro characteristics, but by good people who fear they may get the blood of bad people or the blood of animals that are not of their own. By healthy people who may have the blood of the less healthy people infused in their veins," Dr. Drew continued.

"One cannot say that there are no differences in blood of different races," Dr. Drew pointed out. "But one can say without any hesitation that there are no differences in the blood of different races which would in any way counter-indicate the use of the blood, from an individual of one race for the purpose of transfusion to an individual of another race providing bloods were of the same group."

"May I quote from a recent book by Alexander S. Wiener, serologist and assistant medical examiner of New York City. He has this to say: "By means of serological tests, the proteins and cells of any species can be differentiated, and the bloods belonging to other species. On the other hand, attempts to produce sera which would serve to differentiate the bloods of different races particularly in the human species have been unsuccessful."

"There are many theories on the origin of blood groups. Two of the outstanding authorities, Landstini and Levine, attempted to study the racial distribution of factors in the blood necessary for agglutination. One of these factors is known as the agglutinogen (an inherited substance in the blood cells which makes possible agglutination or clumping). Most of the races that have been examined have the same or a similar distribution of this blood factor."

"Weiner concluded that the importance of blood grouping for anthropology has probably been overestimated, however, and its limitations should be recognized. Thus certain of morphological traits, such as the slanting eyes of the Mongoloids, the black skin and curly hair of the Negro, clearly indicate racial derivation of an individual, the presence of a particular blood group or type is not peculiar to any race."

"Therefore this still leaves the problem a social one, and like all other social problems where pre-judice between races is concerned, great difficulties face anyone who attempts to analyze the problem away. There are many white people who simply do not like Negroes and their nearest relative for no reason, other than they are colored. There are many who really don't like Negroes or their fathers before them. They have been taught from infancy that Negroes are an inferior race, a race that is socially unacceptable. There are many who have a real fear born of ignorance that the blood of a Negro carries with it the possibility of their offspring having dark skin and other characteristics of the Negro race."

"Only extensive education, continued and consistent, and a ceaseless fight on our part to disseminate the scientific facts and raise our levels of achievement can overcome this prejudice which so large extent is founded on ignorance."

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