



## Regrets He Has No Words Of Praise For 'Pinky'

**I** HAVE never in all my life wanted so much to like a moving picture as much as I did "Pinky." As I bought tickets at the Rivoli Theatre in New York I hoped fervently that the praise of most of the New York critics and friends of mine, both colored and white, would be justified.

I remembered the day when Darryl Zanuck had talked excitedly in his Hollywood office about the script, saying that he hoped to do as great a picture about the Negro as Twentieth Century-Fox had done about the Jewish question in "Gentlemen's Agreement."

I remembered also the long cable he had sent me in Paris last year about the criticisms several friends whose advice I had sought and I had made of the original script in which he told me of his eagerness to do the best possible non-propaganda picture which has ever been made on the Negro.

Unhappily for me, I have to say that, as far as my judgement is concerned, Mr. Zanuck has failed. Some new ground has been broken but they are mere scratches in the vast field of human relationships the picture sought to plow. Southern white police brutality and lechery are vividly and courageously exposed.

But one would never know, unless he had other sources of information, that Negroes, even in the most backward areas of Mississippi are not resigned to their "place" and are not only working but making progress against the kind of conditions portrayed in "Pinky."

One would not know from the film that the South itself is on the move and that the walls of segregation are crumbling faster than anyone would have believed possible when Cid Ricketts Sumner wrote the novel, "Quality," from which "Pinky" is made.

My chief criticism of the film is that it accepts without visible objection the philosophy that the Negro has his "place," that he accepts that place, that all white people are united in agreement that colored people must forever stay in a position of inferiority.

In saying this, I do not for a minute contend that "Pinky" or any other picture should be propaganda for any philosophy of any sort. I do contend, however, that makers of moving pictures have a responsibility to tell the truth. This, "Pinky" has not done.

Consider, for example, the roles played by those two great actresses, Ethel Barrymore and Ethel Waters. Because they are the artists they are, Misses Barrymore and Waters extract from the parts they play every last ounce of drama.

But the roles given them are absolutely nothing but wornout stereotypes of the domineering old mistress of the plantation and the blindly faithful servant. Let it be freely granted that there have been and are today counterparts in real life of such characters.

But when such representatives of an outmoded era carry the philosophy of the story it is my contention that the film is propaganda—and propaganda from a point of view which is not truly representative of either the Negro or the modern white South.

This is deeply to be regretted inasmuch as a great deal of time, effort and money have been put into the picture. It won't do too much harm, probably, but I seriously doubt it will do much good.

Here's hoping Mr. Zanuck—concerning whose deep and genuine interest in breaking the Hollywood stereotype of the Negro as menial or clown there cannot be the slightest doubt—will do what he hoped to do in "Pinky" in the new picture he has started shooting, "No Way Out."

Knowing and respecting him as I do ever since the days when Wendell Willkie and I went several times in the interest of more enlightened treatment of the Negro on the screen, I am sure that some day Mr. Zanuck will do the picture he so much wants to do.