

---

# “Nigger” Equality.

by Kate Richards O’Hare

First published in *The National Ripsaw* [St. Louis, MO].

Reprinted by the *Ripsaw* as a pamphlet in an edition of 30,000 copies on March 25, 1912.

There is a reason why the cry of “Negro Domination” strikes terror to the hearts of the Southerner and is such an effective weapon in the hands of the capitalist class and their tools, the politicians. My father was a Federal soldier and I was born and reared in Kansas, the abolition state of all states, **but my heart has bled and my blood boiled** as I have listened to the **frightful stories of those accursed days when the “Carpet Bagger” ruled the southland and added his damnable wrongs to a country already cursed by war’s devastation. To the man or woman who lived through those miserable days when the vile politicians from the north by their arrogant power forced the defeated Southerners not only to face the bitterness of war’s reverses, but the stinging disgrace of having ignorant blacks placed in positions of power and authority over them, “Negro Domination” means something more than words.** Naturally they revolt at any political movement which they can be induced to believe sanctions such a thing.

In the South the great bugbear used by the Democratic politicians to keep the voters in line behind the Democratic Party is the cry that Socialism would mean “Nigger Equality.” At every Socialist meeting some earnest seeker after the light gently whispers the question or some politician sneeringly hurls it at me, **“Don’t you Socialists believe in nigger equality?”**

Now listen, you white voters of the South; let us settle this question fairly and definitely and forever. It is absolutely true that the very basic principle of Socialism is EQUALITY and the very goal of the whole Socialist movement of the world is EQUALITY.

“There, I told you so, I knew you wanted nigger equality,” every Democratic politician in the South shouts.

Sure! But just wait a moment until we decide what kind of equality we want.

There are several kinds of Equality:

Social Equality.

Physical Equality.

Mental Equality.

Equality of opportunity, or economic equality.

“Do we want Social Equality?”

Certainly not; there will never be such a thing. Men and women always form social groups according to their various tastes and differences in social tastes and preferences will always remain and Social Equality is impossible and would be undesirable.

“Do we want Physical Equality?”

No. Socialists would like to see a condition that would enable every human being to be the best physical specimen possible, but there will always be tall men and short men, fat men and lean men, plain women and beautiful women, and such a thing as physical equality can never exist.

“Do we want Mental Equality?”

No. We want every man and woman to have the opportunity to develop their mentality to the highest point compatible with their personal wishes in the matter, but inequalities will always remain. Law can never make a bright man dull or a dull man brainy.

“Well, what kind of Equality do you Socialists want?” you ask.

“Why, just one kind, EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY.”

SOCIALISTS WANT TO PUT THE NEGRO WHERE HE CAN’T COMPETE WITH THE WHITE MAN.

The whole aim of Socialism is that every human being, white, black, red, or yellow, shall have equal

opportunity to have access to the natural resources which nature has supplied and to the machinery which man has created and then to have the full social product of his labor.

"And do you want the 'nigger' to have equal opportunity to use natural resources, and machinery of production and to let him have all the wealth he creates by his labor?" you ask.

Certainly — not because we love the "nigger," but because we know that every chain of economic servitude that is shackled on the ankle of the "nigger" is riveted on the wrists of the white workers. Just as long as a "nigger" can be robbed of the product of his labor by the capitalist class by being shut out from access to the means of life, just that long he can be made the club and chain that will drag and beat the white workers down into the mire of poverty. As long as the "nigger" can be forced to be a wage slave, so can the white man; as long as the "nigger" is a tenant farmer, so long will the white man be; as long as an idle capitalist can live off a "nigger's" labor, so can he live off a white man's labor.

No, we Socialists don't love the "nigger" any better than he loves us; we don't admire the shape of his nose or the color of his skin any more than he likes our insolence and intolerant attitude, but we have sense enough to know that capitalism chains us to the negro with iron chains of economic servitude and we would rather have the negro free from the chains. Because if the black man is chained it spells slavery for the white man and woman and girl — we must share it.

Wake up, you Southern voters. You have let the scarecrow of "Nigger Equality" keep you ignorant of the Socialist movement and what it means to you without understanding that you endure the very thing you dread. You have Jim Crow laws that keep the negroes out of your railroad coaches, but where is the Jim Crow law for the factory, workshop, mine, or cotton-field? A negro can't ride in a white streetcar in Memphis, but I saw a hundred men digging in a sewer ditch. Half of them were blacks and half white Democrats; there was no Jim Crow law there; it was a "nigger" and a white man, a "nigger" and a white man, as nicely placed as the stripes in a calico apron. When the water boy came along with the water pail and one dipper a "nigger" took a drink and then a white man, another

"nigger" and another white man, and not a politician shouted "nigger equality." In the laundries of that aristocratic Southern city the daughters of white Democrats work side by side with big, black negro men; in the cotton mills, the white children compete with negro children. In the cotton fields the white daughters of white voters drag the cotton sacks down the cotton row next to "nigger bucks" and the **Democratic politician of the chivalrous South where womanhood is placed on a pedestal and worshipped, where it would degrade women to have a vote, raise no voice in protest.**

No, we Socialists don't want that kind of "Nigger Equality" in the North or South. God knows we have had enough of it. Negro and white alike have the equality of white slavery, tenant servitude, capitalist exploitation, illiteracy, and bitter poverty. Socialism would replace that "equality" with equality of opportunity for black and white to have access to the means of life and the opportunity to develop the best there is in both races instead of the worst.

"Nigger Equality!" Good Heavens; If the tenant farmers of the South had equality with the niggers they would be lots better off than they are. **All over the South wherever I have traveled I find the good land, down in the bottoms where cotton grows shoulder high and the soil is rich and fertile, is rented to the blacks.** Every landlord in the South rents every acre of land he can to negroes and **the poor land up in the hills, the worn out land, the land that produces least, he allows the Great American Sovereign Voting King, the white Democrat of the South, to till;** and then those same white Democrats shy at Socialism like a frisky colt because Socialism would mean "Nigger equality." Well, nigger equality would be better than the Democratic "equality" which you have now, with the nigger getting the best of it all around, which best, God knows is bad enough.

The "Negro Equality" which Capitalism forces on us today is not peculiar to the South alone; we have it in the north as well. In Kansas City black men have replaced white men in the packinghouses wherever possible, and the white daughters of both Republican and Democratic voters are forced to associate with them in terms of shocking intimacy. In the coal mines of the whole United States black men have been used to replace white miners until there is not a shred of

race distinction left.

Remember there is a vast distinction between the economic equality of opportunity for the black man along with his white neighbor to have access to the means of production and the product of his labor and the revolting equality of degradation which capitalism forces on us. We Socialists simply want the negro to have his opportunity to have access to the means of life, so he can quit competing with the white man, not because we love or hate him, but in order that he may not be used to keep down our wages. I neither love nor hate a negro. I am no more anxious to associate with him than he is to associate with me. I don't want to associate on terms of social equality with him and I know he is just as willing to dispense with my society as I am with his, but capitalism forces us into a social, economic, and physical relation which is just as revolting to the negro as it is to me, and as both the negro and I want to escape, the only way we can do so is by Socialism giving us both an equal opportunity to have access to the means of life and the product of our labor; then we can dump the capitalists off our back and work out our own problems, freed from the curse of race antagonism.

But you ask what is the solution of the race question?

There can be but one. Segregation. If you ask me what I am going to work and speak and write and vote for on the race question, when it is to be settle under a Socialist form of government, I can tell you very quickly. Let us give the blacks one section in the country where every condition is best fitted for them.

Free them from capitalist exploitation; give them access to the soil, the ownership of their machines and let them work out their own salvation. If the negro rises to such an opportunity, and develops his own civilization, well and good; if not, and he prefers to hunt and fish and live idly, no one will be injured but him and that will be his business.

Be sensible men, you white voters of the South, and refuse to be frightened by an empty scarecrow. "Nigger Equality" has served the politicians and the capitalist class for a long time to keep you in blind servitude; demolish it and think for yourself.

You are yoked up as a tenant farmer or wage slaves with the negro today. Vote for Socialism and be free.

Be wise, you black men of the South. While Abe Lincoln and the boys in blue were smashing your shackles of chattel slavery the capitalist class of the North was forging the shackles of economic slavery on both you and the men who fought to free you. Now you are both slaves of the same master, you are bound together by the same chains of economic servitude. Socialism is the only force on earth that can free you both, free us all, black and white, man, woman, and child. White men of the United States, black men of our country, use your ballots to sever the chain that binds you together and binds you to slavery. Black men, vote to free your wives and daughters from the despoliation of your white masters; white men, vote to free your womenkind from debasement of wage slavery yoked to Negro Equality.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.*