

EXTRACTS FROM  
*The Story of the Negro, 1909*

There comes a time, I imagine, in the life of every boy and every girl, no matter to what race they belong, when they feel a desire to learn something about their ancestors; to know where and how they lived, what they suffered and what they achieved, how they dressed, what religion they professed and what position they occupied in the larger world about them. The girl who grows up in the slums of a large city, the Indian out in the wide prairie, the "poor white" boy in the mountains of the Southern states, and the ignorant Negro boy on a Southern plantation, no matter how obscure their origin, each will feel a special interest in the people whose fortunes he or she has shared, and a special sympathy with all that people have lived, and suffered and achieved.

The desire to know something of the country from which my race sprang and of the history of my mother and her people came to me when I was still a child. I can remember, as a slave, hearing snatches of conversation from the people at the "Big House" from which I learned that the great white race in America had come from a distant country, from which the white people and their forefathers had travelled in ships across a great water, called the ocean. As I grew older I used to hear them talk with pride about the history of their people, of the discovery of America, and of the struggles and heroism of the early days when they, or their ancestors, were fighting the Indians and settling up the country. All this helped to increase, as time went on, my desire to know what was back of me, where I came from, and

*The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery* (2 vols., New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1909), 1:4-28, 36-37; 2:5-6, 54-58, 115-16, 136-38.