

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 58.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE SUBMERGED “PERIL.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

OF the many clever things, said at the Universal Races Congress, recently held in London where members of fifty different races of the great human family were represented, there was none cleverer than the observation of Dr. Rubassano, the first black member of a South African Parliament. Dealing with what is called the “black peril,” the Doctor declared that it was non-existent except among the “submerged tenth.”

One can go far before he finds another generalization so pithy, keen and luminous as this,

“Black Peril,” “Yellow Peril,” “Green Peril,” “Peril” of whatever color or shade, is a term that casts a flashlight, not upon those to whom it is applied, but upon those who apply it. It is a term that reveals the appliers as submerged—a submerged element, some of whom belong to the class usually designated by the word “submerged,” physically submerged in slummary, and others of whom are not usually comprehended in the word “submerged,” but which are equally mired in mental and moral poverty and squalor.

A line or two, drawn on the canvas and vividly reproducing a landscape or marine, marks the artist of genius. The terse sentence uttered by the Black member of a South African Parliament marks the genius in the art of sketching sociologic profiles. One sees in those lines the mean eye-brow, the stupid forehead, the vile cheekbone, the sallow chest, the knock-knees, the pigeon-toes of the crew that in this country screeches the discordant note of the “Backward Races Peril”—all “submerged.” So true to nature is Dr. Rubassano’s sketch of this crew that one is able even to name by name the individuals that make up the sorry set as sketched by the South African colored geniuses.

There is nowhere, especially not in these United States of America, any “Peril”

that is a peril outside of the Submerged. Peril.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded June 2012

slpns@slp.org