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Rev. King On Justice

MANY AMERICANS are aware of the fact that on the crooked scales of "Southern Justice," the life, liberty and human worth of a black man weigh precious little. It is this blighted pattern of segregated justice which, by Nov. of 1965, had led to the murders of at least 26 Negroes, as well as white civil rights workers at the hands of racists in a five-year stretch. Only one conviction and sentence of the murderous assailants involved was obtained.

In similar vein, Federal Bureau of Prison statistics show that despite the fact that more than half of all convicted rapists are white, 87 per cent of all the persons executed for rape between 1930 and 1963 were Negroes convicted and sentenced by southern courts. The double standard of justice is equally applicable to lesser crimes.

Such is the brand of justice impinging upon the Negro unfortunate enough to find himself caught in the web of southern law enforcement that once he is arrested he knows the cards are stacked against him, for he has then to confront a world which is practically as totally prejudiced as it is totally white.

The all-white complexion of southern justice has been graphically depicted by Charles Morgan, a white southern attorney and personal friend of mine. His portrayal has been published in the Southern Regional Council Report: "Southern Justice: An Indictment."

ATTORNEY MORGAN, defending a Negro charged with murder in 1963 filed a motion to squash the indictment in which he outlined his client's prospects. He wrote of the defendant's being arrested by white policemen, carried off in a segregated paddy wagon driven by white chauffeur, locked up in a segregated jail staffed solely by whites. He was to be brought to trial in a courthouse inhabited by whites, in a segregated courtroom run by white officials, before a jury that almost certainly would be solidly white.

"If he receives the death penalty," Morgan wrote, "He will then be given a last meal by his white guards, visited by a white chaplain, shaved by a white barber and taken by white guards to a yellow electric chair in Kilby prison . . . The chair being the only facility in Alabama justice

which is and has always been desegregated. "A button or switch will be pressed or pulled by a white man, before white witnesses, and the condemned will die. Being in indigent circumstances, he will thereafter be buried in a potter's grave in a racially segregated cemetery, provided by the state of Alabama."

THE SEGREGATED character that pervades southern justice runs all the way through the judicial system, extending from the lowest municipal courts all the way up to the federal bench. The Southern Regional Council Report On Justice states: "The clerks and the 109 jury commissioners attached to the federal courts of the 11 states of the Old Confederacy are all white—all appointed by the 65 white district judges. Through these appointments, the judges build higher the walls of segregated justice."

It is obvious, then, that what is needed is a reforming of that racist legal system of the South in such a way as to effectuate substantive (See KING, page 15)

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