

[James W. Bawser]

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Jesse W. Bowser, (Negro Lawyer)

420 1/2 E. 2nd Street

Charlotte, N.C.

Cora L. Bennett, Writer

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser

No Names Changed [???

Jesse W. Bowser, Negro lawyer, occupies a small office on the second floor of an old brick building in the center of the most prominent and prosperous Negro quarters of Charlotte.

While he has a somewhat restricted field for the practice of law, he has apparently attained a station of economic security comparable with that of the average lawyer. As may be seen from the following story, he is a man whose convictions and aspirations are above the average men of his race.

"I have been in Charlotte in this law office since 1932. My early life was the life of an average farm boy. My father began as a tenant farmer and later bought a small farm in Chester County, South Carolina. I attended the county schools at my home for four or five years, just three months of the year. From there I went to Friendship College in Rock Hill, S. C., where I finished the elementary school. At Shaw University in Raleigh, N. C., I did my high school work and also received my A. B. degree from that institution in 1926.

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“In the summer of 1928 I studied at the University of Chicago. I held the Chair of Social Science at Allen University in South Carolina in 1928-29. But in the fall 2 of 1929 I decided to again go to study law and entered Howard Law School at Washington, graduating from that department in 1931. I passed the North Carolina State Bar in August of the same year.

“I did not go immediately into practicing law but went back to Friendship College to teach Social Science for one year. I was nevertheless anxious to get at my chosen work and decided to come to Charlotte. As senior counselor for the firm of Bowser and Harris, we handled cases in North and South Carolina. I was associate counselor in the Tommy Walls case which raised the question of Negro jury service in Mecklenburg County. That is perhaps the most outstanding case that we have been associated with in this section.

“I like to think about present day trends and wonder where we are going to end. We know that in education the trend is toward higher literary training as well as vocational training. In comparing the two I think that vocational training is the more important, yet is lagging farther behind. The resulting effect is a super abundance of college graduates with no jobs.

“Negro business is on the decline , I believe, due to the fact that the old negro business man has not kept pace with the ever changing conditions of society. He still believes that he is living in an individualistic age without any conception of cooperation. The resulting effect is that when he dies that business dies also. The present day Negro college fails woefully in stimulating the ambition of the younger Negro in business adventures.

“Property holders are decreasing because the love of property-ownership , that at one time was the highest ambition of the older Negroes life , has been lost. Property that has been bought and paid for by the group referred to has been lost by the younger generation.

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“The Negro is woefully lacking in interest in the ballot. Yet he has made some progress during the past few years. And still he has not made progress commensurate with the population.

“At the present, crime among Negroes in Mecklenburg County is definitely on the increase. I believe that this may be attributed to the following things: The lack of understanding of the Negro situation on the part of the white people; the lack of understanding of Negro problems on the part of Negroes themselves; slum conditions; low wages, that in below the living scale; the need of Negro policemen; failure to provide adequate recreational facilities; 4 a gross lack of social agencies such as the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., though these bodies function on a small scale. Day nurseries, Childrens Service Bureau, Mentel Hygiene Society, etc.

“I an a member of the church and attend regularly, but I believe that the trend is away from church attendance. I have been reliably informed that in Charlotte out of a population of some thirty thousand Negroes, less than five thousand attend church on Sunday. This has been caused by a number of things such as the radio; a lack of sympathy on the part of the church toward youth; too many churches, with the resulting effect that its followers are taxed far beyond their means to support these various churches; failure of the church to bring its program up to date , realizing the changing conditions; too few prepared ministers.

“I have one child and it is my earnest desire to see to it that she is educated in such a way that she will be best fitted to make her way in the world.”

Lawyer Bowser is connected with Elks Lodge as attorney for same. He is Worthy Chief of the True Reformers and also attorney for this organization. Other connections are Special Counsel for the Odd Fellows Lodge; Attorney for the Brothers and Sisters Aid;

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Vice President of the Negro State Bar Association and President of the Committee 5 on Negro affairs of Mecklenburg County.