

Excerpt from "Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People, Suffering from the Late Riots in the City of New York", 1863.

Driven by the Tear of death at the hands of the mob, who the week previous had, as you remember, brutally murdered, by hanging on trees and lamp posts several of their number, and cruelly beaten and robbed many others, burning and sacking their houses and driving nearly all from the streets, alleys and docks upon which they had previously obtained an honest though humble living ☐ these people had been forced to take refuge on Blackwell's Island, at Police Stations, on the out-skirts of the city, in the swamps and woods back of Bergen, New Jersey, at Weeksville and in the barns and out-houses of the farmers of Long Island and Morristania. At these places were scattered some 5,000 homeless and helpless men, women, and children.

The first great point to be gained was the restoring of the confidence of the colored people in the community, from which they had been driven. To do this a central depot was to be established to which they should be invited to come and receive aid with the fullest assurance that they should be protected. Temporary aid might be sent them to their residences, as was done through the hand of Rev. Mr. Dennison, and through the Society for improving the condition of the poor.

This plan met your approval, and that evening, Tuesday, July 21st, I was instructed to look up an office and announce in the morning papers the contemplated purpose, and I did so.

On Wednesday, the present office. No. 350 Fourth Street, was secured, vacated by its former occupants, cleansed and opened for business the following day, Thursday, July 23d, when 38 applicants received aid. On Friday, July 24th, the wants of 318 were attended to, and on Saturday, July 25th, the streets in the neighborhood were literally filled with applicants. The N.Y. Express thus describes the scene:

At ten o'clock. Fourth street, near Broadway, was filled with colored people of both sexes, and all ages. They presented an aspect of abject poverty; and many of them bore evidence (if the assaults made on them during the riots.

The building where relief was given to the applicants at No. 350 Fourth street, was soon surrounded by nearly three thousand negroes. Some of them had come into the city from from woods and fields in different parts of the State, where they took refuge. They appeared to be no strangers to hunger; for when the good soldiers of the Twelfth Regiment, who are quartered up stairs in the building. "Brushed" out their rations to the throng, there was a pitiable scramble to obtain them, and the lucky blacks retired to eat them.

The method of conducting business is thus described in the N.Y. Times:

The above institution, located at No. 350 Fourth street, is doing an immense amount of good in relieving the immediate wants of the colored people who suffered during the late riots. Yesterday the building was thronged with applicants, all of whom were provided for to some extent. The amount of money already collected for this fund amounts to over \$28,000, of which some \$7,000 has thus far been distributed.

Yesterday, males only were admitted to the apartments. Last Saturday was devoted exclusively to females. That order will be observed in future: the males having the privilege of the institution every other day, commencing from yesterday, and the females the alternate days. The hours of business are from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. From 8 to 9 A.M. and from 4 to 5 P.M. the use of the room is extended to the legal profession, members of which assemble to give their services gratuitously to such of the colored sufferers as may desire to avail themselves of their valuable assistance. Yesterday over 2,500 was distributed to 900 men. A considerable amount of clothing has been received by the Committee, but as yet none of it has been given out, the great want of the applicants being, at present, money. In the basement of the building a receptacle for clothing is being fitted up, so that, when the proper time arrives, it will be systematically and judiciously distributed.

It is well worth the attention of any one who takes an interest in the objects of the institution, to witness with what regularity and quietness business is conducted. The applicants enter the building by the basement, arranged with railings, so that, although full, only a single line can be formed, and in the order in which they enter. On the floor

above are the officers and clerks seated at desks inclosed with railing, and as applicants enter the room they are taken by police-men in attendance to them. By this means confusion is avoided, and each clerk has no more at one time than he can promptly give relief to. Policemen are on duty in and about the establishment, and they perform their duties well and kindly. Each clerk notes in a book the name of the applicant, his occupation and residence, the amount of loss sustained, and other particulars upon bearing his means and condition. If the person proves himself to be a worthy object of charity, he is furnished with a ticket which entitles him, on presenting the same to the Cashier, to receive a certain amount of money specified thereon. In no instance does the amount exceed \$5 unless the Committee are satisfied upon evidence adduced, that the party is actually in need of more. It is the intention of the Committee to send out missionaries next week for the express purpose of looking up special cases of destitution. Rev. H, Garnett (colored) is at present engaged at the institution in investigating the special case which offer themselves there, as his extensive acquaintance among the colored people entales him to decide upon the veracity of the statements made by many of them.

The first object of the Committee is to relieve the immediate wants of the colored people who have suffered by the riots. When that has been accomplished measures will be taken to increase the sphere of their usefulness.

The New York daily Tribune speaks as follows:

The rooms devoted to this charitable enterprise are easy of access, and centrally located on a quiet street not far from Police Headquarters, where protection can soon reach the sufferers in the event of a disturbance. These rooms have been temporarily fitted up with benches and tables for the accommodation of those who apply for assistance.

The distribution of funds has been reduced to such a perfect system, that in a few hours a dozen men can record the names, give out the tickets and disburse the money appropriated for that purpose, to three thousand persons. A set of books containing the name, occupation, residence, and necessities of each applicant is kept in the same exact and nice manner that a merchant or a banker would keep his accounts.

The funds are not filtered through many hands. The sufferer has not to wait until patience ceases to be a virtue before his case is considered. There are no harsh or unkind words uttered by the clerks - no impertinent quizzing in regard to irrelevant matters- no partisan or sectarian view, advanced. The business is transacted in a straightforward, practical manner, without chilling the charity into an offense by creating the impression that the recipient is humiliated by accepting the gift. To the credit of the colored sufferers they gratefully receive the small sums given to them without criticism or jealousy, knowing that they can call again in the hour of need without being "bluffed" away with an unpleasant reminder that they had been assisted before. Those who are prudent and honest need not be afraid to repeat their requests in the time of necessity. The object of the fund is to help the sufferers along over the slough during this low tide in their affairs, and as fast as they can take care of themselves, they are expected to cease their applications for help from the committee. Among the volunteers who have put their shoulders to the wheel in this work, are the Rev. S. H. Tyng. Jr., Rev. H. B. Barton and George Hancock, Esq., the Rev, H, H Garnett, the Rev. Mr. Ray, and others.

During the month ending August 21st there have been 3,942 women, and 2,450 men, making a total of 6,392 persons of mature age, relieved; full one-third being heads of families, whose children were included in the relief afforded by your committee, making a total of 12,782 persons relieved.

From these persons 8,121 visits were received and aid was given; to which add 4,000 applicants whose calls were not responded to, as they had previously been aided sufficiently, and you have 12,121 applicants whose cases were considered and acted upon at the office during the month. Add to this the work of the members of the legal profession, Messrs. Jas. S. Stearns and Cephas Brainerd, who have been indefatigable in their labors, assisted by several other gentlemen, by whom 1,000 notices of claims for damages against the city, have been made out, copied and duly presented to the Comptroller, while our clerks have recorded on the books over 2,000 claimants for a sum of over \$145,000, together with a considerable distribution of clothing by two colored clerks, and a fair idea of the work done in this office, during the month may be obtained and a reason for what might otherwise appear a large amount of expenditure.

Of the 2,450 men relieved, their occupations were as follows:

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1,267 Laborers and Longshoremen,	4 Tailors.
177 Whitewashers	3 Artists.
176 Drivers for Cartmen,	3 Music Teachers.

250 Waiters,
 124 Porters,
 97 Sailors and Boatmen,
 72 Coachmen,
 45 Cooks,
 37 Barbers,
 34 Chimney Sweepers,
 25 Tradesmen,
 20 Butchers,
 15 Bootblacks,
 11 Ministers or Preachers,
 11 Shoemakers,
 11 Tobacconists,
 11 Wood sawyers.
 8 Carpenters,
 7 Basket-makers,
 6 Scavengers
 5 Carpet shakers,

3 Coopers.
 2 Engravers.
 2 Janitors.
 2 Measurers.
 2 Oystermen.
 2 Undertakers.
 1 Landlord.
 1 Flour Inspector.
 1 Teacher.
 1 Copyist.
 1 Farmer.
 1 Botanist.
 1 Physician.
 1 Book-binder.
 1 Tin Smith.
 1 Upholsterer.
 1 Black Smith.

Of the 3,942 Women, were

2,924 Day's work women
 664 Servants hired by month
 163 Seamstresses,
 106 Cooks,
 19 Worked in Tobacco factory
 13 Nurses,

13 Hucksters.
 4 Teachers.
 1 Artist.
 1 Boarding-house keeper.
 1 Basket-maker.
 32 Infirm.

In the height of the crowd of applications it was found necessary to employ as many as ten clerks, and several special policemen. These last, together with one regular patrolman who is still with us, preserved excellent order and were kindly furnished by Mr. Acton, of the Metropolitan Police, free of charge.

As soon as the most pressing" necessities of the sufferers were relieved through the office, colored clergymen were employed by your direction as missionaries to visit the applicants for relief at their residences, four of the clerks were discharged and four clergymen employed in their places- The Rev. Mr. Ray, Rev. Mr. Leonard, Rev. Mr.

Carey and John Peterson in addition to the Rev. H. H. Garnett, who was with us, and whose services have been invaluable from the first. These missionaries made 3,000 visits, relieving the wants of 1000, and examining the cases of 3,000 persons, and nearly all the payments of the last week were made upon their representation.

I refer with pleasure to the valuable aid rendered the Committee by the City Tract Missionaries as Secretaries of the Association for improving the condition of the poor, not only in promptly supplying on our behalf, the pressing wants of the colored people in the different wards, but in giving such reports of applicants as facilitated our work at the office.

A good many applications for servants have been made, and as it seemed desirable that places should be provided for many of the sufferers as soon as possible, a book was kept open for employers needing servants and servants needing employment to register their names. Constant pressure of business, however, and the demand for servants in most cases far exceeding the supply, left this branch of useful mission work quite incomplete.