

定期留学報告 第6回(英語) ①My Impression in the South

by Hajime Ohta

Last month (in December, '88) I got the chance to go on a trip from Georgia to Oklahoma, some part of the area which is generally called the "Sun Belt". After World War II the Sun Belt has been making a rapid and high economical growth supported by new technology; electronics, space technology, military industry and so on. But now what kind of influence has this economical growth given to the Sun Belt?

On December 13th at night I arrived at Hartsfield International

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Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. It is the second busiest airport in the United States, about twelve hundred airplanes land on and take off everyday. But the airport terminal is so large that a lot of passengers looked thin in it. The information announcement sounds in the lobby in mechanical voice like it is compounded by the computer. Motorless subways are going around the terminal all day long. Everything was going smooth and convenient, but I hardly have found any human touches in that place.

The next day I went to the downtown of Atlanta city. In the central business district many futuristic skyscrapers and a huge

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convention center have been constructed, but some of the old buildings and houses that people had been living in feel the long history of the city were destroyed easily. This redevelopment of the downtown has started in 1970's under the former black mayor, Maynard Jackson. He tried to make Atlanta as the business and convention center in the south of this country. For this sake mayor Jackson demolished the black people's slum close to the central district and forced the people to settle in public houses built in the suburbs of Atlanta. At that time they had not good transportation; a bus moved only twice a day in the morning and evening. It took about half an hour from their houses.

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to the downtown area. It was not good conditions. However, not only white people, but also many black people agreed to this plan. Because many black people thought, "If Atlanta become a big industrial city, the job opportunities and the level of our life would be better in the future." Actually Atlanta, once well known by the novel "Gone with the Wind", has become a large industrial city. Now the population including the suburban towns is over two million and many big enterprises like Coca Cola and Delta Airline place their headquarters in Atlanta.



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Skyscrapers and black people's home
(Atlanta)

Atlanta is also noted for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After going around the business district, I visited his birth home about thirty minutes' walk to the east from the downtown. It's a very beautiful two-story ~~Acadian~~ traditional English-style house and now opens to the public. According to the black female guide of this house, it was

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built in 1895 by a white man when almost only white people were living in this area. But after 1900's black people began settling down gradually; then made middle class black people's community about the time that Dr. King was born in 1929.

"Exactly his parents belonged to the top of middle class black people.", said the guide, "so he was able to have good education at Atlanta Univ., one of the first black people's universities in the United States."

In 1957 Dr. King and five black leaders founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) in Atlanta and the movement for civil right acts spread everywhere in this

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country.

Now about two
third of the city's
population is
black. Racial
discrimination has
already disappeared
in public. The
present mayor
is also a black
man, Andrew



Young, the former
U.S. ambassador to (S.C.L.C. in Atlanta)
the United Nations,
and many black people have become
company managers and high class
businessmen. But when looking
around the neighborhood of Dr. King's
birth home, I could find many
jobless black people and ~~abandoned~~

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houses like in Harlem, New York. Mr. Satoshi Akiba, a professor of political science of State University of Georgia, living in this state more than fifteen years, pointed out new problem in recent years. "Now many black people are coming to Atlanta from the north of this country for seeking their job opportunity. Although the Sun Belt has been making high economical growth, it is still difficult for them to get a job, because most of them are unskilled.", and he finally said, "I have sometimes seen such a situation that the established black people use the same black people as servants at their houses."

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Black Children



Black people's community (Atlanta)

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At night I went to the downtown again. All businessmen and officers had already gone back to their home in the suburb. The downtown was disconcertingly quiet. It was almost impossible to find even the black youths dancing on the streets with disco music, that are usually seen in New York. Perhaps the youths themselves do not think it's worthwhile, because nobody looks at them at night. Only skyscrapers were featuring the mechanical shape in the dark sky. At that time I felt that the city, once built for people's pleasure and convenience, has denied human beings.

I felt almost same impression in other cities downtown Houston, Dallas, Oklahoma City in the "Sun Belt."

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The high economical growth might have given to the cities not only the wealth, but also new segregation.

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