

## The Definition of the Negro in 1910

*Excerpt from Odum, Howard W. "Social Traits of the Negro." Columbia University Studies In History, Economics and Public Law. 1910.*

Howard Odum's scientific study, published in 1910, was a trusted authority on the traits of the Negro race and was the basis of many racial policies of the time. This was the atmosphere into which Pauli Murray was born.

*"The Negro has few ideals and perhaps no lasting adherence to an aspiration of real manhood, integrity. He has little conception of the meaning of virtue, truth, honor, manhood, integrity. He is shiftless, untidy and indolent....He does not know the value of his word or the meaning of words in general.....lazy rather than industrious...lacks initiative ...is often dishonest and untruthful." "[Individual Negroes] however excellent they might be in character, are nevertheless of a race that cannot share the communal life of the whites."*<sup>i</sup>

Odum changed his stance in the 1930s and became a proponent of strong race relations. The damage, however, was insidious and long lasting. It could be said that damage is still among us. ". . . the racial ideology of Black people's inherent inferiority . . . dominated public opinion, disparaged their aspirations for advancement through education, and doomed the entire race to a permanently degraded Status." Pauli Murray in her Autobiography.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Murray, Pauli. *Autobiography*. P. 9

<sup>ii</sup> Murray, Pauli. *Autobiography*. P. 8.