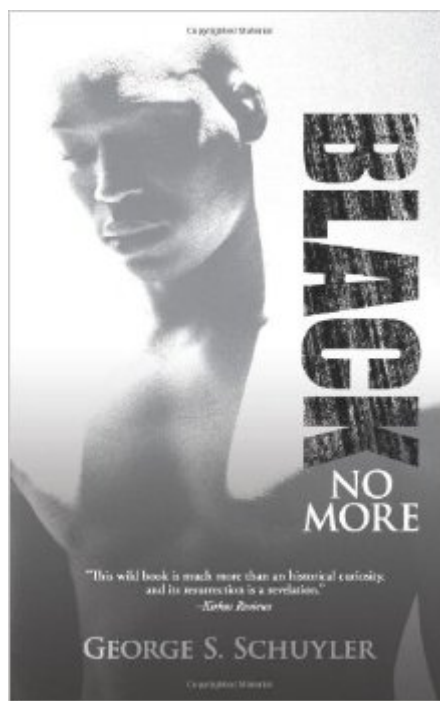


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Black No More



Synopsis

According to Max Disher, an ambitious young black man in 1930s New York, someone of his race has only three alternatives: "Get out, get white, or get along." Incapable of getting out and unhappy with getting along, Max leaps at the remaining possibility. Thanks to a certain Dr. Junius Crookman and his mysterious process, Max and other eager clients develop bleached skin that permits them to enter previously forbidden territory. What they discover in white society, however, gives them second thoughts. This humorous work of speculative fiction was written by an unsung hero of African-American literature. George S. Schuyler (1895-1977) wrote for black America's most influential newspaper, the Pittsburgh Courier, in addition to H. L. Mencken's The American Mercury, The Nation, and other publications. His biting satire not only debunks the myths of white supremacy and racial purity but also lampoons prominent leaders of the NAACP and the Harlem Renaissance. More than a historical curiosity, Schuyler's 1931 novel offers a hilarious take on the hypocrisy and demagoguery surrounding America's obsession with skin color.

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Customer Reviews

George Schuyler's (1895-1977) novel, *Black No More*, is a deliciously wicked satire on 1920s American racial mores. First published in 1931, it was initially reissued during the late 1980s as part of The Northeastern Library of Black Literature. Like many satires, *Black No More* takes a common, controversial idea, gives it form in flesh and blood, and plays it out to its logical conclusion: "What if white America didn't have any more negroes to kick around?" This idea is realized by "Dr. Junius Crookman" (most of the characters have similarly "subtle" names), who invents an operation for

turning black folks white. In lightning speed, the nation becomes monochromatic, as its entire black population "disappears." No lack of comic -- and dramatic -- complications ensue, when it becomes clear that the operation doesn't change the genetic program for the pigmentation of one's offspring. George Schuyler worked from a few basic premises: Most of humanity is a damned sight closer to the Devil than to the angels; most men are con artists; and the few who truly believe in anything are even worse! For Schuyler, W.E.B. DuBois' (1868-1963) "talented tenth" of bourgeois negro society was of no more help to the average black than were the leaders of the racist, white order. Indeed, Schuyler saw those who made a living railing against Jim Crow as having the strongest interest in its preservation: every lynching brought in more money from rich, white reformers. Thinly veiled caricatures portray DuBois ("Dr. Shakespeare Agamemnon Beard") as a hypocrite, and Marcus Garvey (1887-1940; "Santop Licorice"), the founder of the "Back-to-Africa" movement, as a common swindler (for which Garvey was, in fact, convicted in 1920, and deported in 1924).

Although largely forgotten today, George Schuyler was probably the foremost black journalist of the early 20th Century. No doubt much of his modern-day intellectual exile is due to Schuyler's politics. While the rest of black America lurched left, Schuyler published his autobiography, **BLACK AND CONSERVATIVE**, the title of which says it all. Combine that with Schuyler's noted attack on Malcolm X and, more infamously, his scathing criticism of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Schuyler's alienation became complete. Too bad for the rest of us, as his writing is often quite delicious. Schuyler occasionally ventured into fiction and **BLACK NO MORE** is probably the best known of such works. Although the book is often described as science fiction, that label is a tad misleading. It is an extremely entertaining social critique of the American obsession with race and skin color and is packed with the same race hustlers, con artists, demagogues and hypocrites we still see today. I guess the more things change, the more they really do stay the same. Dr. Junius Crookman (great name, huh?) develops the technology to turn black people white. The first to sign on, Max Disher, uses his new found whiteness to woo the white ladies who would have nothing to do with him before and, hilariously, climb the ladder of a white supremacist hate group. He does not do this out of any desire to pull a fast one on The Man, but rather sees it as the fast track to making a quick buck. White supremacists are not Schuyler's only target, however. The black advancement organization, clearly modeled on the NAACP, is deeply alarmed - deeply - that soon there will be no more oppressed negroes whose woes will fill the group's coffers and allow its leadership to dine on foie gras.

Schuyler's Dedication" This book is dedicated to all Caucasians in the great republic who can trace their ancestry back ten generations and confidentially assert that there are no black leaves, twigs, limbs or branches on their family tree." The book is hilarious and tells many truths. Here are some of the truths: Blacks being color struck: The two had in common a weakness rather prevalent among AfraAmerican bucks: they preferred yellow women. Both swore here were three things essential to the happiness of a colored gentleman: yellow money, yellow women, and yellow taxis. It was so hard to hold them. They were so sought after that one almost required a million dollars to keep them out of the clutches of one's rivals. Black Conservatives: Colonel Roberts was the acknowledged leader of the conservative Negroes (most of who had nothing to conserve) who felt at all times that the white folks were in the lead and that Negroes should be careful to guide themselves accordingly. Black folk supporting black businesses: Mr. Spelling had for many years been the leading advocate of the strange doctrine that an underpaid Negro worker should go out of his way to patronize a little dingy Negro store instead of going to a cheaper and cleaner store, all for the dubious satisfaction of helping Negro merchants grow wealthy. The Marcus Garvey character: Mr. Licorice for some fifteen years had been very profitable advocating the emigration of all the American Negroes to Africa. He had not, of course, gone there himself and had not the slightest intention of going so far from the fleshpots, but he told the other Negroes go.

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