

A BEAUTIFUL PAGEANT

ALSO BY DAVID KRASNER

African American Performance and Theatre History: A Critical Reader
(co-editor, 2001)

Method Acting Reconsidered (2000)

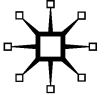
Resistance, Parody, and Double Consciousness in
African American Theatre, 1895–1910 (1997)

A BEAUTIFUL PAGEANT

African American Theatre, Drama, and
Performance in the Harlem Renaissance, 1910-1927

DAVID KRASNER

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Now the colored people in this country form what may be called the “submerged tenth.” From morning until night, week in week out, year in year out, until death ends us all, they never know what it means to draw one clean, deep breath free from the contamination of the poison of that enveloping force which we call race prejudice. Of necessity they react to it. Some are embittered, made resentful, belligerent, even dangerous; some again go to any extreme in a search for temporary pleasures to drown their memory and thought.

—Angelina Weld Grimké (1916)

The past seeks to damn him with its heritage and the present casts about him an environment which aims to restrict him much more than any other race is restricted. . . . Negroes are given inferior schools to meet equal tests; they are given inferior wages to pay equal prices; they are expected to work out their economic salvation with no political power, without even the ballot. . . . The Negro is constantly trying to manage the white man as “Br’er Rabbit” managed “Br’er Fox,” by his superior wits: by indirection, circumvention, and cunning.

—William Pickens (1916)

Don’t you see? We were colored! Therefore, we must not be permitted to act. . . . Apparently, colored folks were not supposed to be regular human beings, with knowledge of life. They were just human eccentricities, that did certain old tricks, wore certain kinds of queer clothes, and were funny, the way monkeys in a zoo are funny. . . . Well, you can’t blame me if I wanted to be something more than a monkey.

—Charles Gilpin (1921)

IN MEMORY OF
BERNARD L. PETERSON, JR.
1927-2000

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the highest achievements in our field. I hope someday he will be recognized for this work.



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