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EDITORIAL

## NEW YORK AND GEORGIA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HAT classic adage of an earlier civilization, “The law is no respecter of persons,” is coming daily to look more and more like the star full-back at the end of a hard season. Its ribs have been gently dislocated, its collar-bone broken a few times, and its shins have been pretty well battered ere now; but it remained for New York Supreme Court Justice Dugro and the Appellate Division in New York to do one whole side of it up in such a mass of black bruises as to make it flatly unrecognizable.

George W. Griffin, a Negro porter, having been falsely imprisoned on charges of theft, on which he was later acquitted, sued and recovered therefor a judgment of \$2,500. The case coming before Justice Dugro for review, he ordered a reduction of damages to \$300, which the wronged plaintiff indignantly refusing, the justice set aside the whole verdict. His reason was that the “plaintiff was a colored man” and that therefore “his humiliation by false arrest is not as great as a white man’s would have been.” On these grounds the Appellate Division upheld him.

Although Justice Dugro and the Appellate Division probably acted out of mere blind race prejudice, and with no ulterior thought of stamping upon labor’s mind the false idea of black labor’s inferiority to white—to the greater undoing of both—, that is just what such judicial misconduct does. Almost simultaneous with Justice Dugro’s decision comes the action of the white firemen of the Georgia Railroad, striking against the Negro firemen on the same line.

In this case, the Georgia Railroad wanted to economize, on wages, for the purpose of expanding on dividends. Its firemen were getting the enormous wage of \$1.75. The Georgia Railroad resolved to stop this ruinous waste of money by employing Negro firemen at \$1.25. Whereupon, instead of combining with their colored fellow slaves to help them get \$1.75 also, or even to raise the wages of both

to \$3.50, the white firemen went out on strike, not against the company, their common enemy, but against the Negroes.

Dugro decisions and Georgia firemen's race-strikes both grow on the same bush of carefully fostered race prejudices. By the very fact that the master class keeps this shrub so carefully fertilized by the compost of ever more such decisions and such strikes, the working class should recognize it for what it is, a deadly upas where should grow the Tree of Solidarity and Life; and having recognized it, resolutely pluck it out.

It is not as White or Black, but as Workingman, that labor shall break its chains.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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