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## The Community Chest

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# THE COMMUNITY CHEST

Jan 23 ————— 1931  
By Anna J. Cooper

To my mind Unity is the last word in the Chest idea. I can't say whether it is the egg or the hen that laid the egg, but sure I am that the Chest was spoken of and wished for years ago by forward thinking people at the Nation's Capital; but the knowing ones felt the time was not ripe because of the stubborn lines of demarcation in feeling even more than in fact that existed at the time among the people themselves.

I don't know if the fundamentals of my loyalty may be called in question when I say that this growing sense of unity so essential in the drive for the Chest, is a matter of slower attainment in our city, perhaps, than in others which, presumably can boast no higher ideals or purer purposes, by and large, and this backwardness, it seems to me, is due to those very isolating and disintegrating forces that keep alive the individualistic interests and strive to build up group by group from within instead of by a common circulatory system directed and nourished by one heart and one head.

Nor are color lines and race lines, complicated and all-pervasive as they are, from whatever angle you view them, the only barriers walling in petty prejudice and provincialism, and walling out a finer community interest. The "Home Towner" feels the importance of looking after the Oldest Inhabitants, the "Transients" feel snubbed when confronted with a stand-off look that says as plainly as words: "Who are you to tell us what to do?" And so the Alabamians have their stimulating "get-togethers," the Bostonians enjoy their little fling at the brand of "cultua" they behold, New Yorkers broadcast that the narrow gauge way of running things "down heah" is horribly antiquated, and westerners are sure (with a tremendous roll of the "R") that the capital should be more centrally located, and there you are. A sort of God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, which is as disastrous for unity of sentiment or purpose,—not to speak of a common money box—as an early frost on sweet peas.

For my poor part I like to feel that my little dollar, which I give of my own volition, quite as surely as the taxes I am forced to give, will possibly reach in its travels

even as far as those who may ignore or dislike me and, as drop by drop water wears stone, so these voluntary and cherry littles will eventually batter down mighty strongholds.

I say then that the Community Chest, here and now,—having passed safely both the scylla and charlbdis of its teething year with its manifold critical dangers of infancy, has triumphantly proved its vitality and is here to stay. That it is at once the efficient cause and the hoped-for effect of a wholesome development of unity in the Community and is the very best school master our divided, stratified and segregated National City could have to bring our group-mindedness into harmonious articulation with cosmopolitan philanthropy. Having weathered the storms of hyper-critical prejudices of all sorts and from all sources, and having battered down the obstructions of selfish narrowness and hide bound preferences, it is worthy—emiently worthy, to receive the whole-hearted support and unqualified cooperation of every public spirited citizen of our Washington, because it means not giving, but sharing, not cold charity but warm brotherliness, and because it stands for and believes in that oneness of Fatherhood and brotherhood without which all our efforts at lifting or climbing will be but spasms and spurts of a galvanized corpse, not the effective power and wholesome vitality of a living, growing, and healthy organism.