

*The New York Times*

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## **THE MAYOR WON'T HELP TO FREE CAGED PYGMY**

**He Refers Negro Ministers to the Zoological Society.**

## **CROWD ANNOYS THE DWARF**

**Failing to Get Action from Other Sources the Committee Will Ask the Courts to Interfere.**

After having been refused an interview by the Mayor, the committee of colored Baptist ministers which wants to have Ota Benga, the African pygmy, relieved from what they regard as the degradation of appearing in a monkey cage at the Bronx Zoological Park, consulted a lawyer yesterday with a view to obtaining the dwarf's release by legal means. Supt. J. H. Gordon of the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum in Brooklyn, who is Chairman of the committee, said that the committee's chief desire was to prevent Ota Benga's appearance with the apes. They were also anxious to have the pygmy intrusted to their care, he said, to show that he could be educated. The committee later in the day visited Madison Grant, Secretary of the Zoological Society, in the hope of getting through him the custody of the dwarf.

The clergymen had a hard and unsuccessful day. The telephone bell summoned Supt. Gordon at an early hour yesterday. A negro woman who has a child in the Brooklyn asylum was at the other end of the wire.

"For the land's sake, Mr. Gordon," she said. "I read in the papers this morning that you are going to take the wild man over to your place. Why, he'll eat my Matilda alive!"

Before Mr. Gordon left the institution he received several messages to the same effect from anxious relatives of his charges.

The committee decided, before visiting the Mayor, to get a letter of introduction from the Rev. Dr. MacArthur. With this letter the committee went to the Mayor's office, at the City Hall. The Mayor declined to see the committee. He sent out word that he was too busy. The committee then sent in the letter of introduction from Dr. MacArthur, which elicited this reply, signed by Frank O'Brien, the Mayor's secretary:

The Rev. James H. Gordon, Brooklyn, N. Y.:

Dear Sir: The Mayor directs me to acknowledge your letter of this date and to say in reply that the conduct of the Bronx Zoological Park rests with the New York Zoological Society. His Honor suggests that you bring your complaint to the attention of the officers of the society.

The members of the committee were much offended by the Mayor's refusal to see them, and they said so to the City Hall reporters. They asked the Mayor's secretary which of the Zoological Society's officers they should see, and they were referred to Secretary Madison Grant of 11 Wall Street. The committee went to Mr. Grant's office.

Mr. Gordon told Mr. Grant that the committee would take care of the pigmy, and be responsible for him.

"Mr. Grant gave us no very satisfactory reply," Mr. Gordon said, "though he was pleasant enough. He told us that the pigmy was only at the Zoo for a short time, and that Dr. Verner

would then take him to Europe. He said that Ota Benga was stopping at the Zoo to help care for the animals.”

After this interview the committeemen visited Wilfred. H. Smith, a lawyer of 150 Nassau Street. They told him to look up the law bearing on such cases to see whether the courts would interfere to stop the exhibition to which they object.

Mr. Gordon, and later the Rev. Mr. Timms, then took another trip to the Zoölogical park. Mr. Gordon reached there at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He found the pigmy sitting in a cage with a guinea pig. The crowd before the cage consisted of several hundred persons, he said. A policeman and two keepers watch the pigmy when he is at large in the park, according to Mr. Gordon. The crowd seemed to annoy the dwarf yesterday. It was a free day, and many persons went to the park on purpose to see him. Mr. Gordon said last evening that an indignation meeting at which Dr. MacArthur will speak will be held soon to protest against the exhibition of the pigmy in a cage with monkeys.