

Black History Month 1990 At The Heritage Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The lectures in this series mark The Heritage Foundation's observance of Black History Month 1990. They represent a new vibrancy within the conservative movement to understand better the concerns and perspectives of African Americans and to participate in the public policy debate within the black community. Just as a new generation of conservative leaders seeks new solutions to promote economic liberty and individual empowerment for all Americans, a new generation of black leaders is emerging to challenge the dominance of liberals who claim to speak for all African Americans.

The lectures here do not focus on the victimization of blacks or on the racism of whites. Instead, they explore the historic strengths of the black community, the tradition of entrepreneurship, work ethic, and strong moral values that held the community together even during the height of racism and segregation. The speakers, who are black, glean from black history the essential elements of a contemporary strategy for black political and economic empowerment. They offer new solutions grounded in conservative principles of individual liberty, limited government, and free competitive enterprise. These conservative principles, the speakers demonstrate, have deep roots in the black community.

Harvard Professor of Political Economy Glenn Loury calls on liberals and conservatives alike to renew Martin Luther King's quest for a society in which race is irrelevant. To conservatives, he advises: "Rather than simply incanting the 'personal responsibility' mantra, we must also be engaged in helping these people who so desperately need our help." And Loury chastises liberals who "require blacks to present ourselves to American society as permanent victims, incapable of advance without state-enforced philanthropy...." Loury challenges black Americans to reject "the role of the victim," and instead aggressively compete for opportunity: "There is a great, existential challenge facing black America today — the challenge of taking control of our own futures by exerting the requisite moral leadership, making the sacrifices of time and resources, and building the needed institutions so that black social and economic development may be advanced." As "consummate victims," concludes Loury, blacks will achieve "not the freedom so long sought by our ancestors, but, instead, a continuing serfdom."

Like Loury, J. Kenneth Blackwell, former Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, admonishes conservatives for their failure to communicate their positive message to the black community. Blackwell advises conservatives to "put our facts out front," and "help build black America." He suggests that conservatives work to understand better the plight of poor blacks: "For every welfare cheat," says Blackwell, "there are dozens who themselves have been cheated by misspent, misconceived, and mal-administered poverty programs. These people deserve our help in devising better alternatives — not the additional burden of being blamed by us for the disincentive effects of programs they didn't create, don't control, and can't get away from."

Robert Woodson, President of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, chronicles the rich history of public policy debate in the black community generated by such leaders as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey. Yet, Woodson says, that tradition of discussion in recent years has been choked off. "From the time of slavery up until the death of Martin Luther King, voices of many persuasions were heard as we sought to shape our destiny as black Americans. Since then there has been little or no substantive debate. We have allowed our dynamic diversity of thought to be muted in a predictable monolith." Woodson concludes that finding solutions to black poverty will require a revival of such diversity and debate within the black community.

The Reverend Buster Soaries describes how traditional moral values of the black community guaranteed the success of the civil rights struggle. He invokes Martin Luther King's plea that people be judged by the "content of their character" to demonstrate that black leaders historically emphasized individual moral character as the fundamental prerequisite to advancing civil rights. "There was a common understanding that we must reserve the right to inspect the personal integrity of the victim before we cry justice, even to the oppressors," says Soaries. Reverend Soaries asserts that to further advance, the black community must return to the tradition of "moral strength" that framed the views of such leaders as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Bishop J.W. Hood.

Paul Pryde's lecture on creating investment in the black community echoes Glenn Loury's message that real progress must come from within the black community. Pryde, a Howard University graduate and author of the 1989 book *Black Entrepreneurship in America*, says innovation within the black community is the key to black advancement. He cites black history to buttress his view, noting that such black leaders as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X., A. Philip Randolph, and Marcus Garvey were innovators who "recognized, essentially, that the African American community has got to use its own resources to solve its problems." These leaders, Pryde continues, "looked to government to create conditions under which African Americans, black Americans, themselves, could solve their problems. We need to return to that sort of innovative spirit."

Together, the five *Heritage Lectures* in this Black History Month series convey a message of pride in black history, and hope for building on that rich tradition. They offer a blueprint for progress, rooted in the conservative values that have shaped black history and progress. And more, the lectures outline the foundations of a new partnership between African Americans and conservative policy makers. A partnership that is consistent with history and essential for the future.

Mark B. Liedl
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Achieving the “Dream”: A Challenge to Liberals and to Conservatives in the Spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.

by Glenn C. Loury

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1, NIV)

The struggle for freedom and equality is the central theme in the black American historical experience. This struggle, in turn, has played a profound role in shaping the contemporary American social and political conscience. The trauma of slavery, the fratricide of the Civil War, the profound legal ramifications of the Reconstruction amendments, the long dark night of post-Reconstruction retreat from the moral and practical implications of black citizenship, the collective redemption of the Civil Rights Movement – these have worked to make us Americans the people we are. Only the massive westward migration and the still continuing flow of immigrants to our shores rival this history of race relations as factors defining the American character.

Beginning in the mid-1950s and culminating a decade later, the Civil Rights Movement wrought a profound change in American race relations. Its goal was to achieve equal citizenship for blacks; it was believed by many that social and economic equality would follow in the wake of this accomplishment. The civil rights revolution largely succeeded in its effort to eliminate legally enforced second class citizenship for blacks. The legislation and court rulings to which it led effected sweeping changes in the American institutions of education, employment, and electoral politics. So broad was the wake of this social upheaval that the rights of women, homosexuals, the elderly, the handicapped were redefined, in large part, as a consequence of it.

Forcing a Redefinition. This social transformation represents a remarkable, unparalleled experience, graphically illustrating the virtue and vitality of our free institutions. In barely the span of a generation, and with comparatively little violence, a despised and largely disenfranchised minority descendant from chattel slaves used the courts, the legislature, the press, and the rights of petition and assembly of our republic to force a redefinition of their citizenship. One can begin to grasp the magnitude of this accomplishment by comparison with the continuing turmoil which besets those many nations around the world suffering under longstanding conflicts among racial and religious groups.

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Unfulfilled Hope. Yet, despite this success, hope that the Movement would produce true social and economic equality between the races remains unfulfilled. No compendium of social statistics is needed to see the vast disparities in economic advantage which separate the inner-city black poor from the rest of the nation. No profound talents of social observation are required to notice the continuing tension, anger, and fear that shrouds our public discourse on matters concerning race. When in 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. declared his "dream" — that we Americans should one day become a society where a citizen's race would be an irrelevancy, where black and white children would walk hand-in-hand, where persons would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character — this seemed to many Americans both a noble and attainable goal. Today, even after having made his birth an occasion for national celebration, his "dream" seems naively utopian — no closer to realization than on that hot August afternoon when those inspiring words were first spoken.

Today black Americans, and the nation, face a crisis different in character though no less severe in degree than that which occasioned the civil rights revolution. It is not a crisis, however, which admits of treatment by use of the strategies that proved so successful in that earlier era. The bottom stratum of the black community has compelling problems which can no longer be blamed solely on white racism, which will not yield to protest marches or court orders, and which force us to confront fundamental failures in lower class black urban society. This crisis is particularly difficult for black leaders and the black middle class. For this profound alienation of the ghetto poor from mainstream American life has continued to grow worse in the years since the triumphs of the civil rights movement, even as the success of that movement has provided the basis for an impressive expansion of economic and political power for the black middle class.

Social Pathologies. There is no way to downplay the social pathologies that afflict the urban underclass, just as it cannot be denied that vast new opportunities have opened for blacks to enter into the mainstream of American life. In big city ghettos, the black youth unemployment rate often exceeds 40 percent. Over one quarter of young black men in the critical ages 20 to 24 years old, according to one recent study, have dropped out of the economy, in the sense that they are not in school, not working, and not actively seeking work. In the inner city, far more than half of all black babies are born out of wedlock. Black girls between the ages of 15 and 19 constitute the most fertile population of that age group in the industrialized world. The families which result are most often not self-supporting. The level of dependency on public assistance for basic economic survival has essentially doubled since 1964; almost one-half of all black children are supported in part by transfers from the state and federal governments. Over half of black children in public primary and secondary schools are concentrated in the nation's twelve largest central city school districts, where the quality of education is poor, and where whites constitute only about a quarter of total enrollment. Only about one black student in seven scores above the 50th percentile on standardized college admissions tests. Blacks, though little more than a tenth of the population, constitute approximately half of the imprisoned felons in the nation. Roughly 40 percent of those murdered in the U.S. are black men killed by other black men. In some big cities black women face a risk of rape which is five times as great as that faced by whites.

These statistics depict an extent of deprivation, a degree of misery, a hopelessness and despair, an alienation which is difficult for most Americans, who do not have direct

experience with this social stratum, to comprehend. They pose an enormous challenge to the leadership of our nation, and to the black leadership. Yet, we seem increasingly unable to conduct a political dialogue out of which might develop a consensus about how to respond to this reality. There are two common, partisan themes which dominate the current debate. One is to blame it all on racism, to declare that this circumstance proves the continued existence of old-type American racial enmity, only in a more subtle, modernized and updated form. This is the view of many civil rights activists. From this perspective the tragedy of the urban underclass is a civil rights problem, curable by civil rights methods. Black youth unemployment represents the refusal of employers to hire competent and industrious young men because of their race. Black welfare dependency is the inescapable consequence of the absence of opportunity. Black academic underperformance reflects racial bias in the provision of public education. Black incarceration rates are the result of the bias of the police and judiciary.

The other theme, characterized by the posture of many on the right in our politics, is to blame it on the failures of "Great Society liberals," to chalk it up to the follies of big government and big spending, to see the problem as the legacy of a tragically misconceived welfare state. A key feature of this view is the apparent absence of any felt need to articulate a "policy" on this new race problem. It is as though those shaping the domestic agenda of this government do not see the explicitly racial character of this problem, as if they do not understand the historical experiences which link, symbolically and sociologically, the current urban underclass to our long, painful legacy of racial trauma. Their response, quite literally, has been to promulgate a de facto doctrine of "benign neglect" on the issue of continuing racial inequality.

Competing Visions. These responses feed on each other. The civil rights leaders, repelled by the Reagan and now Bush Administrations' public vision, see more social spending as the only solution to the problem. They characterize every question raised about the cost effectiveness or appropriateness of a welfare program as evidence of a lack of concern about the black poor; they identify every affirmative action effort, whether it is aimed at attaining skills training for the ghetto poor or securing a fat municipal procurement contract for a black millionaire, as necessary and just recompense in light of our history of racial oppression. Conservatives in and out of government, repelled by the public vision of civil rights advocates and convinced that the programs of the past have failed, when addressing racial issues at all talk in formalistic terms about the principle of "color blind state action." Its civil rights officials absurdly claim that *they* are the true heirs of Martin Luther King's moral legacy, for it is they who remain loyal to his "color blind" ideal — as if King's moral leadership consisted of this and nothing else. Its spokesmen point to the "trickling down" of the benefits of economic growth as the ultimate solution to these problems; it courts the support and responds to the influence of segregationist elements; it remains at this late date without a positive program of action aimed at narrowing the yawning chasm separating the black poor from the rest of the nation.

There is, many would now admit, merit in the conservative criticism of liberal social policy. It is clear that the Great Society approach to the problems of poor blacks has been inadequate. Intellectually honest persons must now concede that it is not nearly as easy to truly help people as the big spenders would suggest. The proper measure of "caring" ought not be the size of budget expenditures on poverty programs, if the result is that the

recipients remain dependent on such programs. Moreover, many Americans have become concerned about the neutrality toward values and behavior which was so characteristic of the Great Society thrust, the aversion to holding persons responsible for those actions which precipitated their own dependence, the feeling that "society" is to blame for all the misfortune in the world. Characterizing the problem of the ghetto poor as due to white racism is one variant of this argument that "society" has caused the problem. It overlooks the extent to which values and behaviors of inner-city black youth are implicated in the difficulty.

Many American, black and white, have also been disgusted with the way in which this dangerous circumstance is exploited for political gain by professional civil rights and poverty advocates. They have watched the minority youth unemployment rate be cited in defense of special admissions programs to elite law schools. They have seen public officials, caught in their illegal indiscretions, use the charge of racism as a cover for their personal failings of character. They have seen themselves pilloried as "racists" by civil rights lobbyists for taking the opposite side of legitimately arguable policy debates.

Ideological Barrier. Yet, none of this excuses (though it may help to explain) the fact that our national government has failed to engage this problem with the seriousness and energy which it requires. It has permitted ideology to stand in the way of the formulation of practical programs which might begin to chip away at this dangerous problem. It has permitted the worthy goals of reducing taxes and limiting growth in the size of government to crowd from the domestic policy agenda the creative reflection which will obviously be needed to formulate a new, non-welfare oriented approach to this problem.

Ironically, each party to this debate has helped to make viable the otherwise problematic posture of the other. The lack of a positive, high priority response from a series of Republican Administrations to what is now a longstanding, continuously worsening social problem has allowed politically marginal and intellectually moribund elements to retain a credibility and force in our political life far beyond that which their accomplishments would otherwise support. Many are reluctant to criticize them because they do not wish to be identified with a Republican Administration's policy on racial matters. Moreover, the shrill, vitriolic, self-serving, and obviously unfair attacks on Administration officials by the civil rights lobby has drained their criticism of much of its legitimacy. The "racist" epithet, like the little boy's cry of "wolf," is a charge so often invoked these days that it has lost its historic moral force.

Political Quagmire. The result of this symbiosis has been to impede the establishment of a political consensus sufficient to support sustained action on the country's most pressing domestic problem. Many whites, chastened by the apparent failures of 1960s-style social engineering but genuinely concerned about the tragedy unfolding in our inner cities, are reluctant to engage this issue. It seems to them a political quagmire in which one is forced to ally oneself with a civil rights establishment no longer able to command broad respect. Many blacks who have begun to have doubts about the effectiveness of liberal social policy are hindered in their articulation of an alternative vision by fear of being too closely linked in the public mind with a policy of indifference to racial concerns.

I can personally attest to the difficulties which this environment has created. I am an acknowledged critic of the civil rights leadership. There are highly partisan policy debates in

which I have gladly joined on the Republican side – on federal enterprise zones, on a youth opportunity wage, on educational vouchers for low-income students, on stimulating ownership among responsible public housing tenants, on requiring work from able-bodied welfare recipients, on dealing sternly with those who violently brutalize their neighbors. I am no enemy of right-to-work laws; I do not despise the institution of private property; I do not trust the capacity of public bureaucracies to substitute for the fruit of private initiative. I am, to my own continuing surprise, philosophically more conservative than the vast majority of my academic peers. And I love, and believe in, this democratic republic.

Needed Commitment. But I am also a black man, a product of Chicago's South Side, a veteran in spirit of the civil rights revolution. I am a partisan on behalf of the inner-city poor. I agonize at the extraordinary waste of human potential which the despair of ghetto America represents. I cannot help but lament, deeply and personally, how little progress we have made in relieving the suffering that goes on there. It is not enough, far from being enough, for me to fault liberals for much that has gone wrong. This is not, for me, a mere contest of ideologies or a competition for electoral votes. And it is because I see this problem as so far from solution, yet so central to my own sense of satisfaction with our public life, that I despair of our governments's lack of commitment to its resolution. I believe that such a commitment, coming from the highest levels of our government, without prejudice with respect to the specific methods to be employed in addressing the issue, but involving a public acknowledgement of the unacceptability of the current state of affairs, is now required. This is not a call for big spending. Nor is it an appeal for a slick public relations campaign to show that George Bush "cares" as much as Jesse Jackson. Rather, it is a plaintive cry for the need to actively engage this problem, for the elevation of concern for racial inequality to a position of priority on our government's domestic affairs agenda.

In some of my speeches and writing on this subject in the past I have placed great weight on the crucial importance to blacks of "self-help." Some may see this current posture as at variance with those arguments. It is not. I have also written critically of blacks' continued reliance on civil rights era protest and legal strategies, and of the propagation of affirmative action throughout our employment and educational institutions. I have urged blacks to move "Beyond Civil Rights." I have spoken of the difference between the "enemy without" – racism – and the "enemy within" the black community – those dysfunctional behaviors of young blacks which perpetuate poverty and dependency. I have spoken of the need for blacks to face squarely the political reality that we now live in the "post-civil rights era"; that claims based on racial justice carry now much less force in American public life than they once did; that it is no longer acceptable to seek benefits for our people in the name of justice, while revealing indifference or hostility to the rights of others. Nothing I have said here should be construed as a retraction of these views. But selling these positions within the black community is made infinitely more difficult when my black critics are able to say: "But your argument plays into the hands of those who are looking for an excuse to abandon the black poor"; and when I am unable credibly to contradict them.

It is for this reason that the deteriorating quality of our public debate about civil rights matters has come to impede the internal realignment of black political strivings which is now so crucial to the interest of the inner-city poor, and the political health of the nation. There is a great, existential challenge facing black America today – the challenge of taking control of our own futures by exerting the requisite moral leadership, making the sacrifices

of time and resources, and building the needed institutions so that black social and economic development may be advanced. No matter how windy the debate becomes among white liberals and conservatives as to what should be done in the public sphere, meeting this self-creating challenge ultimately depends upon black action. It is to make a mockery of the ideal of freedom to hold that, as free men and women, blacks ought nonetheless passively to wait for white Americans, of whatever political persuasion, to come to the rescue. A people who languish in dependency, while the means through which they might work toward their own advancement exist, have surrendered their claim to dignity, and to the respect of their fellow citizens. A truly free people must accept responsibility for their fate, even when it does not lie wholly in their hands.

One Ingredient for Progress. But to say this, which is crucial for blacks to consider at this late date, is not to say that there is not public responsibility. It is obvious that in the areas of education, employment training, enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, and the provision of minimal subsistence to the impoverished, the government must be involved. There are programs — preschool education for one — which cost money, but which seem to pay even greater dividends. It is a tragic error that those of us who make the “self-help” argument in internal dialogue concerning alternative development strategies for black Americans are often construed by the political right as making a public argument for a policy of “benign neglect.” Expanded self-reliance is but one ingredient in the recipe for black progress, distinguished by the fact that it is essential for black dignity, which in turn is a precondition for true equality of the races in this country.

It makes sense to call for greater self-reliance at this time because some of what needs to be done cannot in the nature of the case be undertaken by government. Dealing with behavioral problems, with community values, with the attitudes and beliefs of black youngsters about responsibility, work, family, and schooling is not something government is well suited to do. The teaching of “oughts” properly belongs in the hands of private, voluntary associations — churches, families, neighborhood groups. It is also reasonable to ask those blacks who have benefited from the special minority programs — such as the set-asides for black businesses — to contribute to the alleviation of the suffering of poor blacks, for without the visible ghetto poor, such programs would lack the political support needed for their continuation. Yet, and obviously, such internal efforts cannot be a panacea for the problems of the inner-city. This is truly an American problem; we all have a stake in its alleviation; we all have a responsibility to address it forthrightly.

Permanent Victims. Thus, to begin to make progress on this extremely difficult matter will require enhanced private and public commitment. Yet, to the extent that blacks place too much focus on the public responsibility, we place in danger the attainment of true equality for black Americans. By “true equality” I mean more than an approximately equal material provision to members of the groups. Also crucial, I maintain, is an equality of respect and standing in the eyes of one’s fellow citizens. Yet much of the current advocacy of blacks’ interests seems inconsistent with achieving equal respect for black Americans. Leaders, in the civil rights organizations as well as in the halls of Congress, remain wedded to a conception of the black condition, and a method of appealing to the rest of the polity which undermines the dignity of our people. There is too much the story of discrimination, repression, hopelessness, and frustration; and too little the saga of uplift and the march forward to genuine empowerment whether others cooperate or not. They seek to make

blacks into the conscience of America, even if the price is the loss of our souls. They require blacks to present ourselves to American society as permanent victims, incapable of advance without the state-enforced philanthropy of possibly resentful whites. By evolving past suffering and current deprivations experienced by the ghetto poor, some black leaders seek to feed the guilt, and worse, the pity of the white establishment. But I hold that we blacks ought not to allow ourselves to become ever-ready doomsayers, always alert to exploit black suffering by offering it up to more or less sympathetic whites as a justification for incremental monetary transfers. Such a posture seems to evidence a fundamental lack of confidence in the ability of blacks to make it American, as so many millions of immigrants have done and continue to do. Even if this method were to succeed in gaining the money, it is impossible that true equality of status in American society could lie at the end of such a road.

Much of the current, quite heated, debate over affirmative action reveals a similar lack of confidence in the capabilities of blacks to compete in American society. My concern is with the inconsistency between the broad reliance on quotas by blacks, and the attainment of "true equality." There is a sense in which the demand for quotas, which many see as the only path to equality for blacks, concedes at the outset the impossibility that blacks could ever be truly equal citizens. For, aside from those instances in which hiring goals are ordered by a court subsequent to a finding of illegal discrimination, and with the purpose of providing relief for those discriminated against, the use of differential standards for the hiring of blacks and whites acknowledges the inability of blacks to perform up to the white standard.

Double Standards. So widespread has such practice become that, especially in the elite levels of employment, all blacks must now deal with the perception that without a quota, they would not have their jobs. All blacks, some of our "leaders" seem proud to say, owe their accomplishments to political pressures for diversity. And the effects of such thinking may be seen in our response to almost every instance of racially differential performance. When blacks cannot pass a high school proficiency test as a condition of obtaining a diploma — throw out the test. When black teachers cannot exhibit skills at the same level as whites, the very idea of testing teachers' skills is attacked. If black athletes less frequently achieve the minimal academic standard set for those participating in inter-collegiate sports, then let us promulgate for them a separate, lower standard, even as we accuse of racism those suggesting the need for a standard in the first place. If young black men are arrested more frequently than whites for some criminal offense, then let us decry the probability that police are disproportionately concerned about the crimes which blacks commit. If black suspension rates are higher than whites in a given school district — well, let's investigate that district for racist administrative practice. When black students are unable to gain admission at the same rate as whites to the elite public exam school in Boston, let's ask a federal judge to mandate black excellence.

The inescapable truth of the matter is that no judge can mandate excellence. No selection committee can create distinction in black scholars. No amount of circuitous legal maneuvering can obviate the social reality of inner-city black crime, or of whites' and blacks' fear of that crime. No degree of double standard-setting can make black students competitive or comfortable in the academically exclusive colleges and universities. No amount of political gerrymandering can create genuine sympathy among whites for the

interests and strivings of black people. Yet it is to such double standard- setting, such gerrymandering, such maneuvering that many feel compelled to turn.

Wrongs of the Past. Signs of the intellectual exhaustion, and of the increasing political ineffectiveness of this type of leadership are now evident. Yet we cling to this method because of the way in which the claims of blacks have been most successfully pressed during the civil rights era. These claims have been based, above all else, on the status of blacks as America's historical victims. Maintenance of this claiming status requires constant emphasis on the wrongs of the past and exaggeration of present tribulations. He who leads a group of historical victims, as victims, must never let "them" forget what "they" have done: he must renew the indictment and keep alive the moral asymmetry implicit in the respective positions of victim and victimizer. He is the preeminent architect of what philosopher G.K. Minogue has called "suffering situations." The circumstance of his group as "underdog" becomes his most valuable political asset. Such a posture, especially in the political realm, militates against an emphasis on personal responsibility within the group, and induces those who have been successful to attribute their accomplishments to fortuitous circumstance, and not to their own abilities and character.

It is difficult to overemphasize the self-defeating dynamic at work here. The dictates of political advocacy require that personal inadequacies among blacks be attributed to "the system," and that emphasis by black leaders on self-improvement be denounced as irrelevant, self-serving, dishonest. Individual black men and women simply cannot fail on their own, they must be seen as never having had a chance. But where failure at the personal level is impossible, there can also be no personal successes. For a black to embrace the Horatio Alger myth, to assert as a guide to *personal* action that "there is opportunity in America," becomes a *politically* repugnant act. For each would-be black Horatio Alger indicts as inadequate, or incomplete, the deeply entrenched (and quite useful) notion that individual effort can never overcome the "inheritance of race." Yet where there can be no black Horatio Algers to celebrate, sustaining an ethos of responsibility which might serve to extract minimal effort from the individual in the face of hardship becomes impossible as well.

James Baldwin spoke to this problem with great insight long ago. In his 1949 essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin said of the protagonist of Richard Wright's celebrated novel *Native Son*:

Bigger Thomas stands on a Chicago street corner watching air planes flown by white men racing against the sun and 'Goddamn' he says, the bitterness bubbling up like blood, remembering a million indignities, the terrible, rat-infested house, the humiliation of home-relief, the intense, aimless, ugly bickering, hating it; hatred smolders through these pages like sulfur fire. All of Biggers's life is controlled, defined by his hatred and his fear. And later, his fear drives him to murder and his hatred to rape; he dies, having come, through this violence, and we are told, for the first time, to a kind of life, having for the first time redeemed his manhood.

But Baldwin rejected this "redemption through rebellion" thesis as untrue to life and unworthy of art. "Bigger's tragedy," he concluded,

is not that he is cold or black or hungry, not even that he is American, black; but that *he has accepted a theology that denies him life, that he admits the possibility of his being sub-human and feels constrained, therefore, to battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth.* But our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only to do what is infinitely more difficult — that is, accept it. The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended (emphasis added).

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. While Baldwin's interest was essentially literary, mine is political. In either case, however, our struggle is against the deadening effect which emanates from the belief that, for the black man, "it is his categorization alone which is real and cannot be transcended." The spheres of politics and of culture intersect in this understanding of what the existence of systemic constraint implies for the possibilities of individual personality. For too many blacks, dedication to the cause of reform has been allowed to supplant the demand for individual accountability; race, and the historic crimes associated with it, has become the single lens through which to view social experience; the infinite potential of real human beings has been surrendered on the altar of protest. In this way does the prophecy of failure, evoked by those who take the fact of racism as barring forever blacks' access to the rich possibilities of American life, fulfill itself: "Loyalty to the race" in the struggle to be free of oppression requires the sacrifice of a primary instrument through which genuine freedom might be attained.

Moreover, the fact that there has been in the U.S. such a tenuous commitment to social provision to the indigent, independently of race, reinforces the ideological trap. Blacks think we must cling to victim status because it provides the only secure basis upon which to press for attention from the rest of the polity to the problems of our most disadvantaged fellows. It is important to distinguish here between the socio-economic consequences of the claims which are advanced on the basis of the victim status of blacks (such as the pressure for racially preferential treatment), and their symbolic, ideological role. For even though the results of this claiming often accrue to the advantage of better-off blacks, and in no way constitute a solution to the problems of the poor, the desperate plight of the poorest makes it unthinkable that whites could ever be "let off the hook" by relinquishing the historically based claims — that is, by a broad acceptance within the black community of the notion that individual blacks bear personal responsibility for their fate.

Societal Paradox. The dilemmas of the black underclass pose in stark terms the most pressing, unresolved problem of the social and moral sciences: how to reconcile individual and social responsibility. The problem goes back to Kant. The moral and social paradox of society is this: we are on the one hand determined and constrained by social, cultural, not to mention biological, forces. Yet, on the other hand, if society is to work we must believe and behave as if we do indeed determine our actions. Neither of the pat political formulas for dealing with this paradox is adequate by itself. The mother of a homeless family is not simply a victim of forces acting on her; she is, in part, responsible for her plight and that of

her children. But she is also being acted on by forces — social, economic, cultural, political — larger than herself. She is impacted by an environment; she is not an island; she does not have complete freedom to determine her future. It is callous nonsense to insist that she does, just as it is mindlessness to insist that she can do nothing for herself and her children until “society” reforms. In fact, she is responsible for her condition; but we also must help her — that is our responsibility.

“Responsibility Coin.” Now blacks have, in fact, been constrained by a history of racism and limited opportunity. Some of these effects continue to manifest themselves into the current day. Yet, now that greater opportunity exists, taking advantage of it requires that we accept personal responsibility for our own fate, even though the effects of this past remain with us, in part. But emphasis on this personal responsibility of blacks takes the political pressure off of those outside the black community, who also have a responsibility, as citizens of this republic, to be actively engaged in trying to change the structures that constrain all of the poor, including the black poor, in such a way that they can more effectively assume responsibility for themselves and exercise their inherent and morally required capacity to choose. That is, there is an intrinsic link between these two sides of the “responsibility coin” — between acceptance among blacks of personal responsibility for their actions, and acceptance among all Americans of their social responsibilities as citizens. My point to conservatives should be plain. Rather than simply incanting the “personal responsibility” mantra, we must also be engaged in helping these people who so desperately need our help. We are not relieved of our responsibility to do so by the fact that Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson are promoting legislation aimed at helping this same population with which we disagree.

My point to blacks should also be plain. What may seem to be an unacceptable political risk is also an absolute moral necessity. This is a dilemma from which I believe blacks can only escape by an act of faith — faith in ourselves, faith in our nation, and ultimately, faith in the God of our forefathers. He has not brought us this far only to abandon us now. As suggested by the citation from the book of Hebrews with which I began, we are indeed “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses” — the spirits of our forebears who, under much more difficult and hostile conditions, made it possible for us to enjoy the enormous opportunities which we have today. It would be a profound desecration of their memory were we to preach despair to our children when we are in fact so much closer than were our fathers to the cherished goal of full equality. We must believe that our fellow citizens are now truly ready to allow us an equal place in this society. We must believe that we have within ourselves the ability to succeed on a level playing field, if we give it our all. We must be prepared to put the past to rest; to forgive if not forget; to retire the outmoded and inhibiting role of “the victim.”

Profound Tragedy. Embrace of the role of “the victim” has unacceptable costs. It is undignified and demeaning. It leads to a situation where the celebration among blacks of individual success and of the personal traits associated with it comes to be seen, quite literally, as a betrayal of the black poor, because such celebration undermines the legitimacy of their most valuable political asset — their supposed helplessness. There is, hidden in this desperate assertion of victim status by blacks to an increasingly skeptical white polity, an unfolding tragedy of profound proportion. Black leaders, confronting their people’s need and their own impotency, believe they must continue to portray blacks, as

“the conscience of the nation.” Yet the price extracted for playing the role, in incompletely fulfilled lives and unrealized personal potential, amounts to a “loss of our own souls.” As consummate victims we lay ourselves at the feet of our fellows, exhibiting *our* lack of achievement as evidence of *their* failure, hoping to wring from their sense of conscience what we must assume, by the very logic of our claiming, lies beyond our individual capacities to attain, all the while bemoaning how limited that sense of conscience seems to be. This way lies not the “freedom” so long sought by our ancestors, but, instead, a continuing serfdom.



Strengthening the Social Pillars of the Black Community

By J. Kenneth Blackwell

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before The Heritage Foundation during this unique celebration of Black History Month. As many of you may know, I recently resigned my appointment at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and announced my candidacy for the Congress. Over the weekend, I've been back in the district in Ohio, starting what will be a long – and we hope successful – campaign.

As I turn my thoughts from government to campaigning, the matter of building a bridge between the conservative movement and the black community takes on new importance.

I am conservative. I am black. That makes me a member of two minority groups.

What saddens me is that while conservatives, as a subset of our society, are growing; and blacks, as a subset of our society, are growing; the subset made up of black conservatives isn't growing – at least fast enough!

This forum is a good start toward discovering why that is the case. I believe there are two principal reasons for the failure of conservatism to attract a greater black intellectual following and a greater black popular following.

The first reason has to do with something that people love to talk about here in Washington – appearances. We talk about the appearance of impropriety when it comes to something that might not be unethical, but could be made to seem unethical. We talk about spin when we discuss matters with the media, so that what appears in a television report or newspaper account reflects what we want it to. We talk about perception being reality, in wise voices steeped in the lore of Washington's mysterious rules of power and politics.

Appearances Over Reality. We love appearances. We have embraced and accepted appearances, and transported them to a level of conscious importance on a par with – if not above – reality itself.

Yet though we live and die by appearances in Washington, we seem as conservatives to have a tough time facing up to the way we appear to America's blacks.

There is a line by Ralph Waldo Emerson which I think epitomizes our dilemma. "There is always a certain meanness in the argument of conservatism," Emerson said, "joined with a certain superiority in its fact."

How can we be so right, and still not have any bridge to black America? In a decade in which the conservative ideal of individual liberty, individual opportunity, and individual choice have triumphed over totalitarianism – from Czechoslovakia to Nicaragua – why doesn't its light shine more brightly in America's inner cities?

Let us accept for the moment that Emerson's superiority of fact is on our side.

Perhaps the problem is a "certain meanness," to repeat Emerson's phrase.

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Reality — the superiority of facts — might be on conservatism's side, but we will not succeed as conservatives in building bridges to America's blacks until appearances are also on our side.

Unity of a Dream. Let me mention just one example from the early 1980s — conservative opposition to a national holiday in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King. Whether you believe that civil disobedience is ever justified or not, whether you believe that contemporaries should be honored in the same manner as Founding Fathers or Lincoln, whether you believe that too many holidays cost the economy too much in lost productivity isn't the issue.

To blacks and to many Americans of many other colors, Dr. King symbolizes the unity of a dream we all embrace: the dream of equal opportunity, a chance to rise to the limits our initiative will take us.

When Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and told a watching world he had a dream, he was giving voice to the idealism that makes America a beacon to the world. What he offered were profoundly conservative values in the deepest meaning of the word.

Yet in a few weeks of misguided conservative opposition to a holiday commemorating the ideals he died for, we pulled down a lot of bridges that might have spanned the gulf between us as conservatives and black America.

Words of Despair. Let us come to the end of the decade. A senator I admire much for his principled conservatism, Barry Goldwater, pens his memoirs. They are, as he put it in his foreword, "straight from the shoulder."

Yet when he comes to a discussion of the future of the Republican Party, in what he calls a major challenge to the party, he minimizes the GOP's opportunities with blacks.

"Blacks," he writes, "seem rockbound to the Democrats." That will only change, he says, as blacks begin to perceive, in his words, "that their disadvantaged place in society was partly caused by the Big Brother syndrome of the Democrats."

These are the words of one of conservatism's 20th-century spiritual fathers. They are words of despair, written in a passive voice.

It is not enough for us as conservatives to sit back and await a black awakening, a disenchantment with the dependency-producing policies of the Democrats.

Yes, that disenchantment might come. Some would say we've already seen its glimmerings in the work of a new generation of black intellectuals like Glenn Loury, Robert Woodson, Thomas Sowell, and others.

But let us not forget that although the Democratic social policies intended to foster black economic and social progress have not worked as planned, they nonetheless represented a positive, active agenda for black America.

That is the difference between Goldwater's resignation when it comes to Republicans and blacks, and the Democrats' tenacity.

We may wait a very long time for disenchantment to result in bridges being built from the black community to conservatism. We will wait far less time if we as conservatives build bridges to the black community.

We suffer some from the sins of our conservative forebears of the 1980s, who first alienated and then wrote off blacks.

That is the past.

Now let us look at what can be accomplished by making appearances and reality work together.

If we really want conservatism to have greater appeal to blacks, then we need a conservative agenda for black progress.

“The Other America.” This is the 26th anniversary of Michael Harrington’s landmark study, **“The Other America.”** Harrington looked at the economic prosperity of the 1950s and asked how so many were left out. It is a fitting question to ask now as we look back on the 1980s – the longest peacetime economic expansion, with record numbers of jobs created, a non-inflationary economy, a general – but uneven – prosperity.

According to the Census Bureau, in 1987 10 percent of whites lived in poverty – compared to 33 percent of blacks. And that is only one measure of the other America. We could look at infant mortality rates, intact households, incarceration rates for males, the likelihood of suffering violence, the incidence of illnesses like cancer or heart disease that could be treated with early diagnosis, and they will tell us the same thing. The other America – black America and Hispanic America – is hurting.

Black America’s political fate has been hitched to the Democratic ship of state, and now black America is sinking. At a time like that, do you wait for the drowning man to swim to you – or do you throw him a lifeline?

At the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Jack Kemp, with whom I am proud to have served, knows that you throw a lifeline.

Economic empowerment is one agenda item for black America. And don’t fool yourselves about anyone with a good business plan and a good entrepreneurial spirit being able to find capital.

Seeking A Fair Hearing. One of my favorite success stories from the 1980s comes from Dr. Ernest Bates. He’s the founder of one of the country’s largest leasing firms for medical diagnostic services. Dr. Bates was typical of many blacks in the 1950s. He worked hard in school and in the Army to become a neurosurgeon. He developed a successful practice in California, earning \$500,000 a year by the 1970s.

But he knew that many hospitals couldn’t afford to purchase expensive new diagnostic technologies like CAT-Scan machinery, so he invested in a business to lease mobile diagnostics to hospitals.

Like many start-up companies, his firm ran into difficulty. But Dr. Bates says that one of the greatest difficulties he had was getting a fair hearing when he went to the Small Business Administration, to venture capitalists, and to investment bankers on Wall Street. Once they saw he was black, interest in his business plan simply evaporated; until he met Michael Milken, then at Drexel Burnham Lambert, who provided American Diagnostic Services with capital to expand. It’s now one of the most successful medical leasing services in America.

If a successful, black neurosurgeon can’t get a fair hearing when he looks for support for a business proposition at this point in 20th century America, where is an undereducated, twenty-year-old black male supposed to turn?

Programs That Work. Economic empowerment has to begin in the black community. Strengthening the black middle class is important but broadening the black middle class is more important. And that will only come about as we determinedly seek new ways to lift people from poverty.

It's not enough to say the Democrats' programs have failed. It's incumbent on us to develop programs that will work.

And that requires a little soul-searching on our part. I don't know whether you consider Thomas Hobbes to be a conservative, but his concept of human nature — life as “nasty, brutish, and short,” — is, I think, a sordid view of humanity.

Yet too many seem to share that view when it comes to analyzing poverty. We look for the disincentive that keeps the recipients of poverty aid from working, instead of the incentive we could provide to help them work.

The myth of rugged individualism often blinds us to the reality of social support that has always been so vital in our history. Whether we're talking about barn raisings, field clearings, or quilting bees, Americans have banded together to help one another since frontier days.

We have to recognize that a welfare mother struggling to earn her G.E.D. needs a network of support. We have to recognize that there is no stigma in that need.

In much conservative discussion of the welfare class, we seem to want to make villains out of poverty programs' victims. For every welfare cheat, there are dozens who themselves have been cheated by misspent, misconceived, and mal-administered poverty programs. These people deserve our help in devising better alternatives — not the additional burden of being blamed by us for the disincentive effects of programs they didn't create, don't control, and can't get away from.

In short, we as conservatives need to decide we are more interested in lifting people from poverty instead of blaming them for their circumstances.

Capacity-Building. Conservatism has to move away from anecdotes about welfare chiselers and toward alternatives so we can create entrepreneurs. Let's get that “certain meanness” out of our rhetoric, and put our facts up front.

Capacity-building, helping black Americans develop the skills to take advantage of opportunity, is critical. As conservatives, we need to be fiscal realists. We must acknowledge that an agenda for black progress is going to cost money.

In addition to empowerment through capacity building, there are things we can do now to increase economic empowerment and limit dependency. Tenant management in public housing is one such action item for our agenda. So also is expanding the equity stake through home ownership of public housing.

It is time for the second great civil rights movement. Our Constitution guarantees equal rights, but not equal results. If we wish, as conservatives, to build inroads into black America, we can do so by delivering results. By concentrating on business development, business ownership, and home ownership, we can help build black America.

The question for us today is whether we wish to be relevant to black America.

It is a question we must answer soon.

Time is running out on us.

Not because black America will explode, but because we may soon become irrelevant to it.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, America is on its way to a work force crisis. In a study last year, a commission chartered by Secretary Ann McLaughlin to explore America's preparedness for economic competition in the coming decade confirmed that due to demographic trends we are on the way to a labor shortage and a skill shortage in our work force.

Such a skill and worker shortage will force a response. Business and employers will demand it, and government will provide it. But will it be a conservative, Republican response?

Or will it be another Democratic response?

If we choose the way of Senator Goldwater, with all respect, I submit we'll be waiting for the awakening while the Democrats lay some pontoon bridges and race right past us as we stare across the gulf separating us from black Americans and wonder what happened.

I'd like to conclude with some thoughts provoked by a recent interview with James Fallows. Fallows was President Carter's senior speechwriter. He recently returned from living several years in Asia, including Japan, and was interviewed by Ken Adelman for the *Washingtonian*.

What struck me in Fallows's words were his remarks about the naive uniqueness of the American social vision – the concept that many different peoples from all over the world can come together in one country and build a vigorous, successful society.

Alien Idea. Fallows notes how alien that idea is to most of the world, especially to Asia. He says that racism in many other societies blinds them to the concept that we take for granted, the notion that men are equal, that people of different heritages can not only live together harmoniously, productively, but in fact with greater accumulated energies and vibrancy of spirit than would be conceivable in a homogenous society.

Fallows has returned to America worried about the fragility of this unique vision. And, befitting a speechwriter who worked for a President who delivered the "Malaise" speech, he is worried about our ability to live up to that unique promise that is America.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is no secret that some in Japan believe their racial homogeneity to be a virtue, and our diversity to be a hindrance. Japanese leaders have said, and apologized for, as much.

The fact is the rest of the world does look on the state of black America with bewilderment about what that says about the soul of this great county, which promises so much, but leaves out so many.

Essential Premise. We as conservatives must put at risk our national prestige, our national heritage, and our national competitiveness. With an agenda for black progress, we can not only build bridges that will be to our own political benefit, but we can restore to the world the essential premise of America:

That free people, with economic freedom and limited government,
will always thrive;

That the human spirit breathes with the same yearning no matter what one's skin color;

That ability and talent deserve nurturing wherever they are found, and not just in the privileged classes, whether defined by party label as with Djilas, or social and economic power.



Is the Black Community a Casualty of the War on Poverty?

By Robert L. Woodson, Sr.

About four days ago I was the guest of a group of black legislators in Milwaukee. When I got off the plane, a gentleman about my age greeted me. After a ten-minute search for his car, he finally acknowledged that he couldn't find it because he had left his glasses at home. "I guess you could say I'm blind and vain," he confessed.

And that's true with far too many of us who have been engaged in the civil rights movement. We have been blind, but we have also been vain. We must now discard the vanity induced by the nobility of our struggle and find the courage to embrace a new honesty in assessing its legacy. So what I have been trying to do within the black community is to stimulate a return to our rich tradition of debate as to the nature and course of post-civil rights change.

Historically, there were always active currents of debate within the black community. From the time of slavery up until the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., voices of many persuasions were heard as we sought to shape our destiny as black Americans. Since then there has been little or no substantive debate. We have allowed our dynamic diversity of thought to be muted into a predictable monolith.

A brief historic review of major currents of debate among blacks will provide an appropriate perspective. During the period of slavery, there were "insurrectionists," who believed that we should use violence as a means of achieving our rights. Then there were the "accommodationists," who felt just as strongly that we should try to seek justice and rights within the American context.

In the decades preceding the Civil War, many enslaved blacks thought the road from bondage to dignity led back to their African homeland and became "re-colonizationists," championing a return to meccas of resettlement such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. At the same time, other blacks vigorously protested against the idea of leaving a country being built on the backs of their free labor and cast their lot with the "abolitionists" and others working to dismantle the system of slavery.

Working Within the System. Following Emancipation, the turn-of-the-century years were characterized by vigorous dialogue between pre-eminent black leaders of the day such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. While the militant Douglass and the younger, more conservative Washington both promoted economic self-sufficiency for newly-freed blacks, they differed on the extent to which their goals could be achieved within the existing system.

As the century progressed, Washington's gospel of black entrepreneurship and industrial training was challenged by yet another outstanding black thinker, W. E. B. DuBois, who espoused the concept of the "Talented Tenth," an intellectual elite of social scientists and humanists who would create a black technocracy. DuBois thus set forth for generations of

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black Americans educational achievement as a vehicle for integration and acceptance into the mainstream of American society.

But it was not until the emergence of Marcus Garvey that dialogue within the black community generated a mass movement. Tapping into the disillusionment of urban blacks following the first World War, Harlem-based Garvey glorified the African past as a source of pride and self-respect, and by the mid-'20s, the "Back-to-Africa" rallying cry of his Universal Negro Improvement Association had attracted nearly a million followers.

While there were many black voices of dissent during this period, Garvey succeeded in putting together one of the most effective national grass roots movements in the history of this country — an accomplishment unparalleled even today.

Rich Debates. What clearly emerges from an examination of our past, however cursory, is that there were indeed rich debates within the black community about the course of change. They took many forms and produced varying results. But monumental figures like Douglass, Washington, DuBois and Garvey offer compelling evidence that true leadership is not defined by one's ability to reflect popular opinion, or the consensus of the most vocal majority. Rather, leadership is and should be defined as a willingness to challenge popular opinion and the consensus in order to shape a new future.

In more recent times, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated repeatedly that he was a man who believed in challenging the traditional wisdom. While Dr. King is best known for his stirring "I Have a Dream" speech, I remember him for his earlier "Letter from Birmingham Jail," an insightful document in which he warned that the greatest stumbling block to black progress was not the white Citizens Council or the Ku Klux Klan, but the white moderate. He said that lukewarm acceptance and understanding from people of goodwill was more difficult to tolerate than outright rejection from those of ill will.

It is no secret that many of those in the (civil rights) leadership of the day were very critical of Dr. King. After all, the impact of his statements and actions could shut off some of their financial support. So they preferred to keep quiet about such things.

Thirty years ago today, four college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, challenged the traditional civil rights approach of seeking legal redress when they went to a segregated lunch counter in Woolworth's and engaged in the first sit-in. This incident subsequently drew the entire movement into the use of civil disobedience as a tactic.

Now Dr. King was not an advocate of civil disobedience in the early years. But the students said to him, "Dr. King, you must either lead, follow, or get out of the way." Like the born leader that he was, he took his place at the front of the pack and directed that phase of the movement as well.

Tension with the Leadership. But there was always tension between Dr. King and the civil rights leadership in Atlanta because they believed we should seek only legal redress for our ills. So when he came to Birmingham and was jailed for his defiance of a state court injunction against further demonstrations, it was the young people who came to him and supported civil disobedience. Not the elders. Not the established religious leaders of the time.

We must not forget that Dr. King also displayed another great hallmark of a leader: his positions on the issues were always morally consistent. While he opposed the violence of the Klan, he also opposed the retaliatory violence of militant elements such as the Black Panther Party. He realized that it was essential that the movement maintain a consistent posture.

When Dr. King took his stand against the war in Vietnam, I remember being on a podium with Roy Wilkins (then head of the NAACP), who soundly castigated Dr. King for bringing the peace movement together with the civil rights movement. But Dr. King prevailed and the entire nation was led.

Permanent Underclass. Since the death of Dr. King, however, there has been no creative tension to spark open and honest debate within the black community. As a consequence, we have seen a trillion dollars expended over the last 25 years on programs to aid those who were left behind by the civil rights movement. And yet we are told that one-third of black America is in danger of becoming a permanent underclass.

Blacks now have political control of eight of the twelve major cities in the United States. But even in those cities, poor blacks are no better off than they were under white control. So if political empowerment, the passage of civil rights laws, and a proliferation of high price-tag poverty programs have not yielded the promised benefits, what should we do? Has the black community, in truth, been a casualty of the war on poverty?

And that is the subject that I would like to address this afternoon. But let's re-phrase the question. How do we achieve victory in a war that we have won? Let me repeat that — how do we achieve victory in a war that we have won?

In order for those of us in the black community to answer this question, we must first understand that it is most important to be self-critical. As Dr. King said, the highest expression of the maturity of any people, or an individual, is the ability to be self-critical.

As a person who went to jail and fought hard in the civil rights movement, I unequivocally affirm my commitment to that movement. But I must also affirm my commitment to the truth: many of those who sacrificed most in the struggle for civil rights did not benefit from the change. More specifically, poor blacks did not benefit substantially from the civil rights movement.

When I recently appeared on a national television panel following the release of the "State of Black America" report by the National Urban League, I called it "a litany of despair about how bad off we are." I was then asked for my perspective on the state of black America. For the blacks on this show, I pointed out, life ain't been too bad. And it has never been too bad for those of us who were prepared to walk through the doors of opportunity when they were opened. Regardless of who is in the White House, our incomes have improved every year for the past twenty years.

Equipped Differently. In order to move in new directions, we must disaggregate this problem and stop attempting to apply a single solution. We are insulted when whites say that all blacks think, look, and act alike. So why should we impose this on ourselves?

Black Americans must recognize that even though all of us might have been caught in the storm of racism and discrimination together, we were equipped differently to address that condition. Some of us had overcoats, boots, and hats on our heads while others were naked. And that's why there cannot be a consistent response from the black community.

We must, first of all, understand why the civil rights movement, political empowerment, and the passage of civil rights laws have all failed to address the needs of low income blacks. The answer to that question is critical not only to the future of black America, but to the future of this nation.

If we are to remain competitive as a country, we will have to rely upon a work force drawn up primarily of blacks and Hispanics. According to current demographic trends, the number of whites being born is declining as the number of black and Hispanic people is increasing. With a projected 15 million new jobs in the economy in the next twenty years, corporate America will have to look increasingly to those groups.

But if 800,000 young black and Hispanic kids are dropping out of school each year and another 800,000 are graduating as functional illiterates with poor work skills, America is headed for trouble.

Better in Bangladesh. The shocking fact is that a black man's chances of survival in Harlem are less than they would be if he was a resident of Bangladesh, the poorest country on the face of this earth. More than 10,000 blacks are killing one another each year, more than the total number of blacks killed in the nine years of the Vietnam war. Thousands of blacks and Hispanics are dying each year because of the choices that they take and the choices that they make in lifestyles characterized by violence, disease, poor health habits and other life-threatening behavior.

These issues must be addressed, not only for reasons of compassion, but for our national survival. When you consider that our military forces will also be drawn from among these minority groups, our national security is also strategically involved.

And so we have got to be absolutely self-critical in acknowledging the mistakes we made as a community in the single minded pursuit of civil rights. What we fail to understand is that while the Supreme Court removed social segregation, it left economic Jim Crow laws in place.

Intense Competition. Clint Bolick is one of the few scholars who has gone back and traced the origins of this economic discrimination. In Clint's book, *Changing Course*, he talks about the manpower shortage which existed following the Civil War in 1865. Thus the blacks who were freed from slavery at the time entered the work force. Those who had gained skills as craftsmen began to set up small businesses. And others began to contract their labor to plantation owners. There was intense competition, so for a very brief period, wages began to soar in a free market environment.

But plantation owners, seeking to exercise control, came together informally to form a cartel. As with most cartels, people began to break the rules, so that the competition remained intense. The white plantation owners then asked the state to impose laws limiting the economic activities of blacks. The result was a repressive spate of vagrancy laws, licensing laws, and entry fees. Business licenses could be withdrawn if it was believed that the proprietor was of ill repute. In fact, the state imposed all kinds of restrictions – many of them arbitrary.

Fourteenth Amendment Protections. In 1866, Congress responded by passing the first Civil Rights Act, which granted citizenship to slaves, and stipulated that cases against them were to be tried in federal court. But President Andrew Johnson vetoed it because he said it was unconstitutional for the federal government to impose its will on the states. But in 1868, the 14th Amendment was passed, guaranteeing equal protection and due process and the privilege of immunity, which meant that there were certain rights that the states could not take away from individuals.

However, in 1872, there was a case in Louisiana that is rarely referenced by civil rights advocates. And that is the now infamous *Slaughterhouse* case. In the parishes of Louisiana,

slaughterhouses were consolidated into a monopoly for legitimate health reasons, and many people were driven out of business. As in any monopoly, corruption and high entry fees prevailed. Subsequently, some of the butchers that were forced out of business filed a lawsuit.

“Jim Crow” Laws. The case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled that the states could not restrict the individual’s right to participate in economic activities. Thus the slaughterhouse law opened way for the reinstatement of the “Black Codes” that were later called “Jim Crow” laws.

There were four principal features of the Jim Crow laws. First, they limited the ability of black laborers to change employers. Second, they made it unlawful to be unemployed, even for a temporary period of time. Third, they restricted the labor recruiters coming in from the North and other places to recruit blacks. They were arrested on the streets by the police for trying to sign up blacks for jobs that were available in other cities or other regions. So if a black quit his job in order to take a job in another place and went home to pack his bags, he could be arrested as a vagrant. Fourth, they allowed blacks who were in prison for their debts to be turned over to employers to work off their obligation.

As a consequence of *Slaughterhouse*, these laws quickly extended to the social agenda. One result was rampant segregation in public accommodations.

Strength from Adversity. Yet even in the face of these tremendous barriers, between 1889 and 1920, blacks persevered and many prospered. For example, there was segregation in public transportation. So in 24 towns and cities in the South, blacks engaged in the first bus boycott. Later, they set up their own alternative transit systems, which became thriving enterprises owned and operated by blacks. The state responded by imposing arbitrary licensing laws which drove those companies out of business.

But the black community gained strength from this adversity. When whites refused to lend us money, blacks established over 103 banks and savings and loans associations. When whites refused to treat us in hospitals or to train us in medical schools, blacks established 230 hospitals and medical schools around the country.

When a thousand blacks were fired on the docks of Baltimore for striking, they did not march on Washington and demand jobs, peace, and freedom. What they did was establish the Chesapeake Main Dry Dock and Railroad Company and successfully operated their own railroad for 18 years.

There were over 1,021 inns and hotels operated in black communities. As late as 1958, I can remember the Carver and Calvert Hotels in Miami – first-class hotels where blacks could go and enjoy outstanding accommodations.

Entrepreneurial Tradition. So there was indeed a rich tradition of entrepreneurship and business development in the pre-integration black community that has been very carefully documented by a young man named John Sibley Butler at the University of Texas in Austin. And I encourage The Heritage Foundation to invite John Butler here because he has spent five years of his life going back down South and collecting this valuable data.

A focus of his research has been on Durham, North Carolina, known as the “Black Wall Street” in the 1920s. During the Depression, blacks did not suffer in Durham the way they did in other parts of the country because their rich entrepreneurial experience enabled them to establish many self-help organizations, including political groups.

Today, Durham's 50-year-old political organization has as its chairperson a Republican, with the vice chair a Democrat. Why? Because they want both Democrats and Republicans to come to them solely on the issues. Then they will throw their support behind the candidate who brings the most compelling case to the table. Compare this to the kind of trap that blacks have gotten themselves into by voting for Democrats whether the party delivers anything or not. In Durham, such blindness does not exist.

John Butler's research also revealed that there is an intrinsic value in entrepreneurial behavior that transcends gross business receipts. He found that 63 percent of blacks that are third-generation college graduates come from this group of entrepreneurs. He found that even in running a grocery store or a mom-and-pop shop, certain values are communicated to the children so that they tend to go on to college.

Every time I speak to a group of professional blacks and ask how many are third-generation college graduates, they raise their hands. Then I ask how many of their parents owned businesses and the same group raises its hands. Not all blacks come from poverty.

Social Benefits. John Butler himself, who is a third generation Ph.D., comes from a family that owned a lot of land in Louisiana. They had servants at the turn of the century. When John was on a panel down South, he appeared with a white mayor and a white president of the city council, and they were all asked about their backgrounds. The white mayor said that he came from a family of sharecroppers and told his hard luck story. And the white president of the city council said he came from a farm family, and it was tough growing up. And John looked at both of them and said, "Well, Mother wouldn't have let me play with y'all because we were always doing well." The point is that a rich entrepreneurial tradition reaps measurable social benefits.

John Butler has also examined the implications of this emphasis on entrepreneurship and economic development on the plight of blacks today. He went back to Durham and compared the wealth of blacks there with the wealth of blacks in Chicago. He found that 40 thousand blacks in Durham today control more wealth than a million blacks in Chicago. Now this is not because white folks are fairer to blacks in Durham than they are in Chicago. It has more to do with their relative economic standing.

We must understand that the issue today is less a matter of race than economic development. Of course racism continues to be a problem, but it is certainly not the most important issue that we are facing as a people.

Response to Racism. As a child, I remember reading about how Jewish folks responded to signs on Miami Beach which read: "No Jews or dogs allowed." There was no picketing. Jews simply bought the beach. The same is true with the Trainmore Hotel, a large hotel in Atlantic City where we used to go in the summer. They didn't permit Jews and blacks in there either. No picketing. In less than three years, Jews owned the hotel. There is no need to worry about access to accommodations or equal employment opportunity when you own it.

Black America took important first steps toward this level of economic independence with the Eldorado Hotel, one of the largest hotels situated in the middle of Manhattan. In the early 1950s it was owned by the United House of Prayer, a black church. (Even though blacks couldn't go there, they benefited through the revenues generated.)

Similarly, a hosiery manufacturing company in Durham became so prosperous that they hired white sales persons and had wide national distribution. It was a black-owned and

-operated company, yet they had to use white sales personnel because they knew they couldn't send blacks into the white stores. In fact, many of these black-run businesses catered exclusively to whites. But it was purely an economic decision dictated by the times.

Although the Supreme Court struck down social barriers in the 1950s and 1960s, it left in place the restrictive legacy of the old licensing and *Slaughterhouse* laws that continue to this day to deny blacks an opportunity to participate freely in the market economy. So it is important to understand that there were other problems key to our survival that we never addressed in the civil rights movement.

It is essential that we distinguish between segregation, integration and desegregation. As an active participant in the civil rights movement, I fought against segregation. I fought against laws and policies legally limiting my activities, or my access to any place I wanted to live or to work.

Schizophrenic Thinking. But what I fought for was pluralism; I did not fight for integration. And that is where we made a fundamental mistake. By using the terms "integration" and "desegregation" synonymously, we sowed the seeds of a pattern of schizophrenic thinking that continues to exist in the black community today.

At the same time some blacks are saying that whites are conspiring to eliminate blacks genocidally, other groups of blacks are filing lawsuits in the courts demanding that those same whites teach their children. Now there is something wrong and schizophrenic about that. But I say it is more of a class issue than a race issue.

In 1974, Judge W. Arthur Garrity was faced with the question of what he should do about the problems of segregation in the Boston school system, and he did a very informed thing. Judge Garrity went to the black community, whose children were being directly affected, and asked them what they wanted. After community meetings were held, the parents concluded that their priority was quality education, not integration by busing. They wanted their children to learn and to be first-rate citizens. Well, the civil rights lawyers, both black and white, arrogantly advised Judge Garrity to set aside the views, opinions, and desires of those low-income blacks and ordered the schools to bus anyway. Not one of the attorneys, black or white, had his children on the buses. But they insisted that children be bused. And when the stones were thrown, their children were not around.

The children in Boston were bused from Roxbury High to the south Boston area that had a lower number of white graduates going on to college. In some places, the light fixtures were hanging from the wall. One white parent said to a black correspondent for CBS news, "Sure, bring your kids into this school and they will graduate just as dumb as our children." And yet the leadership of the time persisted in pressing the whole issue of busing.

Funding the Poverty Industry. It is the same with the poverty programs. Seventy cents of every dollar spent 25 years ago went directly to poor people. Today, seventy cents of every dollar goes not to poor people, but to those who serve poor people — the poverty industry. Who makes up the poverty industry? They are middle-income blacks and middle-income whites.

And so what you have today is a situation in which there is a group of people who benefit from the existence of an underclass. And as long as there are such perverse incentives for the maintenance of an underclass, you will have one.

The new consensus that we are trying to forge in this country is to bring together people who have compatible interests. The corporate community desperately needs well-trained

people for its businesses in order to be competitive in the future. The black community at the grass roots level desperately needs to engage in enterprise formation because 80 percent of all new jobs in the American economy are generated by the start up of small businesses. What is important is the creation of wealth by people at this level.

Therefore, what we are trying to do is bring about a marriage between the interests of American business and the folks here in those low-income communities who have demonstrated that they can improve the civil environment, throw the drug pushers out, reduce teenage pregnancy, and motivate young people to stay in school. They are doing this without elaborate budgets or programs because they understand that they have to engage young people at the spiritual, ethical, and moral level, and challenge them to be more than they are.

Moral and Spiritual Challenge. But you never hear urban policy analysts talking about the moral and spiritual dimension of social change. As I look around the country, the people who are making a difference in the lives of these young people, who get the needles out of their arms, who get the young women not to have babies — don't do so because they have better programs. They do so because they challenge young people morally and spiritually become what they can, and what God intended them to be.

But too many of our policy analysts look down on these innocent efforts. Both conservatives and liberals tend to do the same thing. And I am here to tell you that there is new movement afoot, a grass roots movement of people who understand fully the moral and spiritual dimension of their condition. And are willing to take responsibility for their own lives.

You can have all the fancy treatment programs in the world, but the only way things are going to change is when you convert the hearts of people. And those who are best able to do that are the people that have a proprietary commitment to doing it, not because they are being paid by some program. Now I am not against programs. I am merely saying programs should come at the end of a process of self-liberation that comes from within one's own moral and spiritual value system.

But it cannot happen when we tell young black kids every day that if they are aggregated in any group which is all black, then that's a pathogenic environment. Again, it is a class issue. We refer to low-income blacks coming together as a segregated circumstance. But when middle-income blacks come together in their all black sororities and fraternities or churches, both the perception and the language change.

Spirit of Candor. You see, we play games with poor people. I never hear anybody refer to the Alphas, the Omegas, and the Deltas or AKAs as segregated institutions. I never hear people referring to black churches as segregated institutions. No, we say they are simply organizations or congregations of black people.

And in this spirit of candor and self-criticism, we must not allow our leadership to lose its moral conscience as well. When a black United States Congressman accosts a young black female Peace Corps volunteer on the back seat of a limousine and then defends his actions in the House of Representatives by charging his accusers of racism, our civil rights legacy is intolerably dishonored. And those who are silent in the face of this offense are guilty by complicity.

We can have but one standard of accountability, and that must transcend race. If we don't want whites to hold us accountable for our actions, then what mechanism do we have inter-

nally to hold ourselves accountable? These are the messages that we need to bring to our people.

And these are some of the solutions that we are pursuing at the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise by working with grass roots people, by looking at the glass that is half full. We believe in studying inventories of capacity because you learn nothing from studying failure except how to create it.

We are visiting low-income communities all across America to find out what works and why. We are giving people in these communities the capital and the information they need to empower themselves, as well as the moral and spiritual support. And then we can bring them together with those who share that common destiny.

Empowering Those on the Bottom. Our work has political implications, too. I will not permit the Republican Party to extend its influence among blacks by merely reaching out to the same entrenched civil rights leadership that created the problems in the first place. I will not let them get away with that. The worst thing in the world is for the Republicans to reach out to that leadership and give the impression of being more open to blacks, and getting the votes, and then leaving poor blacks and poor whites behind in the wake of their victories. And poor whites are almost worse off than poor blacks because no one advocates for them.

In concluding, let me repeat that the issue today is not race, but class. The insistence on applying race-specific solutions to economic problems has snatched defeat from the jaws of our civil rights victories. We need to come together as a nation and address the problems of poverty by empowering those at the bottom. We must give them the opportunity to excel and participate in the free enterprise system because their destiny and the destiny of this nation depend upon what we do today.

