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MY ANSWER TO GENOCIDE

Bitter comic prescribes big families as effective black protest

BY DICK GREGORY

MY ANSWER to genocide, quite simply, is eight black kids—and another baby on the way. Now I know that statement is going to upset a whole lot of white folks, and even some black folks. More and more white folks these days who are interested in ecology and overpopulation ask me why I have such a large family. Hell, I had six kids before white folks started getting concerned about ecology. Now planned parenthood groups are saying that a couple should have a maximum of 2½ children. I'm still trying to figure out that half-a-kid. I know my American history well enough to know what "three-fifths" of a man is, but half-a-kid?

I guess I never will understand white folks. Now they're trying to tell us how many babies we should have. But I'm one black cat who's going to have all the kids he wants. White folks can have their birth control. Personally, I've never trusted anything white folks tried to give us with the word "control" in it. Anything good with the word "control" in it, white folks don't want us to have. As soon as we started talking about *community control*, white folks went crazy.



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I guess it is just that "slave master" complex white folks have. For years they told us where to sit, where to eat, and where to live. Now they want to dictate our bedroom habits. First the white man tells me to sit in the back of the bus. Now it looks like he wants me to sleep under the bed. Back in the days of slavery, black folks couldn't grow kids fast enough for white folks to harvest. Now that we've got a little taste of power, white folks want us to call a moratorium on having babies.

Of course, I could never participate in birth control, because I'm against doing anything that goes against Nature. That's why I've changed my eating habits so drastically over the years and have become a vegetarian. And birth control is definitely against Nature. Can you believe that human beings are the only creatures who would ever consider developing birth control pills? You mention contraception to a gorilla and he will tear your head off.

Like most black folks, I come from a large family. There were so many of us kids sleeping in one bed that if I got up to go to the bathroom during the night I'd have to leave a book mark so I wouldn't lose my spot. Our family was so large that once a year my father would pack us up and take us all out to dinner and it would cost him \$125. And that was at a 10¢ hamburger stand.

And, of course, like all large black families we were poor. I remember one time I was up tight for money so I went to my father and said, "Dad, if you don't give me a nickel I'm going to run away from home." He looked at me and said, "I'm not going to give you one damn penny."



and take your brothers with you." Our family was so poor that one time we got gaminshed by the newspaper boy.

Being so poor, we never had enough food. I remember one Thanksgiving my Momma came home with a turkey foot. All of us kids gathered around the pot while Momma boiled the foot and we watched it shrink. Then we all sat around the table looking at that turkey foot and waiting to dive into it, and Momma insisted that we pray over it first. I said, "Momma, I don't have anything against prayers or anything like that. But if anyone should be praying, it should be the turkey that got away from that foot."

When I was a kid, Halloween was about the only holiday we could enjoy. Halloween was the one day we could wear our regular clothes and people thought we were dressed for the occasion. Folks would look at me and say, "Look at Richard wearing that old man's costume. And he's wearing shoes that look just like feet."

So I guess having a large family just comes natural to me. In fact, my wife had so many babies at the same hospital in Chicago that they put a revolving door on her room in the maternity ward. Some of the

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Before going on outing with family, Mrs. Gregory brushes hair of youngest child, Christian. Older children often assist her in taking care of smaller ones.



Gregory accompanies wife and eight children to local vegetable market. All of Gregory's family members are vegetarians and he was a fruitarian until going on his

MY ANSWER TO GENOCIDE continued

he asked me, "Please, Mr. Gregory. Before you go, please tell us how many is googobs?" So I said, "Have you ever been out in an open field and looked out over the horizon to where the sky meets the ground?" He said, "Yes." "Well," I said, "googobs means there's some black folks on the other side of that."

One thing I can't understand about black folks with large families is how so many seem to be embarrassed about being on relief. I could never be embarrassed about some free money. Even my Momma used to be embarrassed about the welfare check. I used to tell her, "Momma, you're not on welfare, we are. That money's Aid to Dependent Children. If you're embarrassed, just give me my little piece of change now."

And now I've got a cousin who's embarrassed about her welfare check. So I told her she ought to move to Canada, then let the government send me a welfare check up there and call it "Foreign Aid."

So, as I said before, my answer to genocide is my nigga black. And that is not at all a flippant statement. To understand the seriousness of my answer, you must first understand the word genocide and its insidious manifestations in the United States of America today.



Pamela and Stephanie (r.) watch as Michelle plays tune on her oboe. Gregory says children usually behave "but there are those other times when you can just forget it."



Recent fast which allows him only 2-3 minutes. Gregory says children are much healthier since they stopped eating meats and have considerably more energy.



Gregory gets assistance from father combing his Afro. Gregory, who is four years old, has never had a haircut, his father says. His first name is the same as his last.

The word *genocide* is rather new to the human vocabulary, although it has a long and inglorious history in human practice. Genocide is a word coined in the 1930s by a Polish scholar, Raphael Lemkin, who combined the Greek word *genos*—clan or religious group—with the Latin word *cide*—killing. *Genocide* has come to mean "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such; by killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; ~~deterredly inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."~~

So when Adolph Hitler sent 6 million Jews to the gas chambers and ovens, it was genocide. When the Turks slaughtered 1.2 million Armenians in 1915, it was genocide. When the ancient Romans fed Christians to the lions in a conscious effort to wipe out Christianity, it was genocide. Such open and deliberate acts of mass killing are easily recognized as genocide. But there are more subtle forms of genocide, as the above definition indicates, and these less-open acts of genocide occur in America every day.



In kitchen of their apartment located in Hyde Park section of Chicago, Michelle (L) and Lynn slice plums while their father places them in machine to make juice.

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Consider, for example, the police moving in to raid the headquarters of militant black groups. The police know in advance that the group is armed. So the police arm themselves with heavy weaponry and conduct the raid in such a manner as to be sure to provoke the black militants to open fire in self-defense. Then the police, who outnumber and are better armed than the militants, use the gunfire as an excuse to wipe them out. That is an act of conscious genocide just as surely as throwing the Christians to the lions or herding the Jews into the gas chambers. Especially when you consider that the police never use such tactics when conducting raids on non-black groups—the Mafia, the Minutemen, the Ku Klux Klan or the American Nazi party. What does the definition of genocide say? "... acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part."

Or consider the portion of the genocide definition which speaks of "deliberately inflicting on the group [black folks] conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." You could hardly find a better definition of the pattern of segregated housing in this country. Black people are herded into small overcrowded areas called ghettos, made to live in sub-standard housing where heat, water and plumbing facilities are lacking and adequate public services such as garbage removal are withheld, making the ghetto areas breeding grounds for rats, disease and death. Add to this the poor food found in ghetto supermarkets, the absence of health services, and the fires which consume the run-down houses and the little kids who live in them.

What is the result? Black folks die six years earlier than white folks. The infant mortality rate is at least twice as high for black folks. Death for blacks is the result of the segregated housing patterns in the United States, and the Nixon Administration has made it very clear that the pattern is "deliberate."

What is true for black folks is also true for the American Indians.

Whereas the majority of blacks are confined to ghettos, Indians are confined to reservations. Certainly that pattern of "segregated housing" is also quite deliberate, officially backed by the United States government. On some Indian reservations the infant mortality rate reaches a staggering 100 deaths per 1,000 births. That's about twice the infant mortality rate in the worst black ghettos in America and four times the death rate among white babies. Indians on the reservations have a death rate from influenza and pneumonia twice that of the national average. There is more hunger and malnutrition on the Indian reservations than anywhere else in America. There is one doctor for every 900 Indians, and one dentist for every 2,900. The average Indian on the reservation dies twenty-five years before other Americans.

The word *genocide* is new enough in our vocabulary that many people are not fully aware of its true meaning. Some folks, for example, mistakenly say it means "racial suicide." It is an interesting mistake. The difference between *suicide* and *genocide* is in the conscious choice of the victim. A person chooses to commit suicide. The victim of genocide has no choice in the matter. But it is an act of genocide for a government to create the conditions of hopelessness, frustration and despair among a group of people so that they choose suicide as the only available means of escape.

The black suicide rate has always been higher than that of whites. The suicide rate among Indian teenagers is ten times the national average. And the terrible reality of suicide as a way out begins at age seven on the Indian reservations. Can the genocidal "conditions of life" forced upon the American Indians be more tragically illustrated?

Of course, one of the definitions of genocide is "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group"—that is, forcing birth control measures upon black folks. There is ample evidence that government programs designed for poor black folks emphasize birth control and abortion availability, both measures obviously designed to limit the black population. Such obvious

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To celebrate end of 100th day of fasting, Gregory runs 15 miles (right) in Chicago's Washington Park. He has vowed to fast until Vietnam war ends.



MY ANSWER TO GENOCIDE *Continued*

Not long ago a series of tests was conducted in the ghettos of the nation in which five-year-old black kids were asked to draw a picture of themselves. In an alarming number of instances the kids would end up drawing a picture of an animal. Such is the mental abuse of a genocidal system that young black minds think of themselves as animals. It is not hard to understand, however, when you realize that the American system keeps some black folks so poor that they are forced to consume dog food. It is a small step from that economic abuse to the mental identification with an animal.

A walk through the ghetto supermarket is a study in such mental abuse. At the baby food counter you will find jars of fruits and vegetables with pictures of white babies on the outside rather than pictures of the food on the inside. What is being sold? White babies or mashed turnips? At that very tender and impressionable age the black baby has to go through the white baby's picture just to get his food.

When black pictures do appear on boxes, the mental abuse continues. The products are Aunt Jemima, Beulah and Uncle Ben. Picture them in your mind. Uncle Ben is the best looking of the three. Uncle Ben is clean, he wears a tuxedo, and he is not fat. Do you think it is an accident that advertisers make the black male more attractive than the black female? You have never seen them use a fat, out-of-shape hillbilly white woman to advertise anything.

So the mental abuse of black folks is subtly, insidiously and deeply woven into the fabric of the America system. It is seen in more open manifestations in the condition of ghetto schools and the quality of public education in black communities. It is little wonder, then, that the United States still has not ratified the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention which made the crime of genocide a part of international law. Russia, China and 73 other countries have done so but not the United States. Critics of the Genocide Convention in the United States cite the "mental harm" part of the definition as being too vague, while at the same time insisting that this nation would never consider participating in acts of genocide.

I say that it is easily proved. All it would take for the United States to ratify the United Nations Genocide Agreement, thereby exposing this nation to the full weight of international opinion on the matter. Even President Nixon has recommended such action. But obviously the Senate has profound reservations, knowing of the other "reservations" this nation perpetuates.

In the meantime, my answer to genocide remains eight black kids. And that means eight black minds in preparation. If they are ever asked to draw a picture of themselves and they draw pictures of animals, it will only mean they can't draw!