

BLACK POWER VS. BLACK GENOCIDE

by NATHAN WRIGHT

ONE OF THE KEY RESOLUTIONS of the 1967 National Conference on Black Power in Newark, New Jersey, dealt with the issue of family planning. Family planning was labelled "black genocide," and was seen as one of the means—along with unfair housing practices (or the "containment" of black people in the ghettos) and welfare cutbacks—of bringing about the annihilation of black people.

Opposition by large numbers of particularly vocal black people to birth control and family planning has been one of the manifestations of black pride and of black efforts for survival and self-protection. That opposition to family planning should be widespread and vociferous is understandable for a number of deeply significant reasons. This same reasoning increasingly is being applied by black people to all forms of social planning.

Theodore Roosevelt, one of the ablest of American presidents, is said to have felt that his duty as chief executive of the land was to be just in all of his dealings with every citizen in the nation. Indeed, in his relations with black people, Roosevelt was

considered pre-eminently fair-minded. It is thus noteworthy that he was one of the few post-Civil War presidents with a well thought-out theory regarding race, a theory which states what has been the largely unexpressed yet prevailing American assumption concerning race survival.

Roosevelt's overarching concern was with the issue of power, as evidenced by his famous expression, "Walk softly but carry a big stick." He theorized that the white race had come to power in Europe—with its population overflow into the North and South American continents—primarily because of its numerical strength. For clearly, population pressures would lead the white Europeans to discover and conquer new places to which their excess from breeding could be transported. Indeed, the white Europeans had, by the time of Roosevelt's presidency, conquered most of the world either themselves or through their transported descendants.

The basis for Roosevelt's theory rested in the Malthusian doctrine. Malthus, a mathematical theorist, had conjectured that populations increase in a type of geometrical progression and that wars, famine, and pestilence were apparently necessary to keep populations in line with the powers to feed them. Roosevelt, rather than look upon the gloomy side of "excess" breeding as did Malthus, concluded instead that the breeding of large numbers of men in Europe had instilled in them the drive to survive and the determination to conquer in order to effect that survival.

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WHITE MEN from Europe, he reasoned, had not long controlled the world. There were scarcely any evidences of widespread or highly developed pre-historic civilizations in Europe. What marks of advanced civilization Europe had known earliest had been developed in Southern Europe, and these were sprung from roots to the East in the darker-skinned regions of Africa and Asia Minor. While the darker men of ancient Asia, Africa, and the Americas built great empires of order and highly civilized achievement, the white men of Europe roamed the earth as savages.

It seemed evident then that the new ascendancy of white men must be undergirded by an unfaltering commitment to the continued numerical and consequent geographical expansion of the white population by all who sensed the "manifest destiny" to which the white nations of the world were called. Roosevelt, in his desire to preserve and extend the far-flung holdings of white men, consequently advocated the persistence in and the increase of population production by white men.

Roosevelt's theory of white supremacy reflects both the conscious and the unconscious white orientation which has characterized America since its foundation. White self-interest brought the Europeans to America's shores. White self-interest determined that black men be considered as worth but a fraction of white men and wrote this into the United States Constitution, the most sacred law of the land. White self-interest has further mandated the production of large numbers of those who would share in the pride of belonging to "the world's most important race."

But the white purpose of keeping its population ahead in reproduction must work conversely to keep black population production down. And clearly, the attempt to curtail the population of another race may be seen as an attempt to limit the inherent blessings bestowed by members of that race upon the society as a whole. To neglect this curtailment would constitute an implicit denial of the white

race's "essential greatness" by white men themselves.

One who understood the principle of power through population production was Richard Cardinal Cushing, the intrepid and "outspokenly Irish" Archbishop of Boston. In a public address during the late 1940's, he raised the Boston telephone directory above his head, noting that the telephone company had unwittingly calculated the source of Irish Catholic power: its numbers. At that time, most of the names in the directory of once securely Protestant Boston were those of Irish Catholics. The Archbishop, Boston's staunchest advocate of Irish Power, had one word for his constituents: Procreate! To have power for the Church and for the Irish, large families must be produced.

Leaders at that time in the Planned Parenthood Association of Massachusetts thus found in the courageous Cardinal their most formidable foe. Whether or not Theodore Roosevelt was correct in his theory of European empire-building, at least the Archbishop of Boston had both ready statistics and rough realities on his side: the Boston Irish, largely by dint of majority production, eventually effected majority rule. They came to dominate and control not only the Boston City Hall and Boston's Public (not Parochial) School Committee but also the House and Senate on Boston's Beacon Hill. That an Irishman, or at least a Roman Catholic, should most frequently occupy the Massachusetts Governor's chair became by the mid-twentieth century an acknowledged and unchallenged circumstance.

TO HAVE large numbers on one's side symbolizes both pride and power. "What better thing could there be than to have the world populated by folks like me!" Such is the self-image of those who reflect an aggressive pride and who also will for power.

This, significantly, was the theme of the ultra-racist "classic," *Mein Kampf*, by Adolph Hitler. Hitler, our century's foremost "white supremacist" believed that the

Germans constituted a master race. In *Mein Kampf* he set forth the idea that the so-called pure Nordics by the genius inherent in their blood were best suited to become rulers of the world.

As with all who believe in and strive for the ultimate superiority of their race, Hitler was not content in merely constructing a positive case for the allegedly pure German strain. He realized the importance of contrasting the superiority of his race with the impurity of another. Thus, by establishing a case against the Jewish people as the embodiment of this impurity, he could ascribe the cause of the Germans' past failure to come into their own to the Jewish presence in their midst.

There was precedent for much of Hitler's thought in many historical, philosophical, economic, and sociological works produced in the pre-Civil War American South. And that the South largely characterized the latent sentiments of America as a whole was evidenced by the "compromise" (of black people) which ended the Reconstruction Era. Hence Hitler, in developing his case for pure German-Nordic supremacy and against the Jewish people, echoed the low-keyed yet evident American theme that black men are a curse to the earth.

THE CRUDENESS of Hitler's attack against the Jewish people proved to be at the same time embarrassing and disarming to the democratic nations of the world. He set into focus the feelings of the British, for example, as expressed by their immortal poet, Rudyard Kipling. Kipling rationalized the 19th century imperialistic ransacking and rape of darker peoples by placing this process under the moral and religious banner of bearing "the white man's burden." Of the expansionist European and American nations he exhorted:

Take up the white man's burden —
Send forth the best ye breed —
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captain's need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild —
Your new-caught sudden peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.¹

Kipling personally sent a copy of "The White Man's Burden" to Theodore Roosevelt, who is said to have received it enthusiastically as a statement of a white nation's obligation to civilize newly conquered peoples.

Woodrow Wilson expressed sentiments similar to those of Kipling and Roosevelt in his open contempt for black Americans. He dismissed a distinguished group of black Americans who were known as the Black Cabinet and served as the President's advisors. Wilson, the white American Apostle of World Democracy, performed this act with the reprimand that no black man has the right to make demands which a white man is bound to honor. Indeed, it was this same distinguished president who sealed the work of the post-Reconstruction Era by segregating the government's toilet facilities in Washington, D. C.

Thus, while there were rumbles of resentment occasioned by Hitler's crudeness, the fact remained that powerful white nations stood on embarrassingly common ground with him regarding racism. The supremacist attitudes and practices of white nations were merely developed to the ultimate stage of genocide in Hitler's crude and devastating work.

Hitler realized that power and pride go together, for without pride or a lofty estimate of oneself, there can be no development of real power. Thus, to weld the German-Nordics into a sufficiently proud people with the determined will to conquer, he needed a cause or undertaking which would focus upon racial pride, power, and survival. That cause became Jewish genocide, sanctioned by the logic that impurity must be expunged if the pure are to survive.

1. Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," from *Poetry of the Victorian Period*, ed. by Jerome H. Buckley and George Benjamin Woods, Glenview, Ill.; Scott, Foresman and Co., 1965, p. 905.

Genocide always remains a live option when those in power hold contempt for those who are powerless in their midst. Thus it is that *Mein Kampf*, after more than three decades, has remained a revelation—which the oppressed still examine with an eye to survival—of the minds of those whose cultural inheritance instills in their controlling sub-conscious convictions the philosophy that “white makes right.”

It is in the historical context which we have briefly described that black men committed to the survival of their race have come to view every aspect of their self-interest.

Black men — along with the nation as a whole — are becoming increasingly aware that both subtle and brightly colored strands of exaggerated pro-white sentiments are woven securely into the warp and woof of what we know as American life. For clearly, American self-interest always has been, and still is, primarily white self-interest. Even the Great Emancipator put the seeming interest of white America above the welfare of the slaves. Hence, on July 17, 1858, he could declare: “What I would most desire would be the separation of the white and black races.” Lincoln neither in that remark at Springfield, Illinois, nor at any other time, expressed a primary concern for human equity. At his noblest, Lincoln tempered his passionate primary concerns for the welfare of white America with humane sentiments for others. In this sense, Lincoln is understandably honored as perhaps the greatest or most representative American of us all.

“White America first, humanity second” has been and still is the unofficial watchword of our land. This has been so much a part of American patriotic tradition that most black-skinned people, even today, recognize its traces within themselves. After all, who have tried to be more loyal to this nation and to be more thoroughly American than our black-skinned brothers? Yet to be American means to absorb into our life-pattern, both for good and for evil, the nation’s values.

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The black mind in America, it is thus felt, must look first to survival, remaining sensitive to what is seen as the latest American *Mein Kampf* mentality of the larger society. It must become increasingly vigilant concerning the need to alter the most evident American cultural deficiencies. Such vigilance is seen as an absolute necessity in the black urban and rural heartlands of America. It calls for the most severe scrutiny of potentially disastrous effects upon black Americans of any white-originated or white-imposed social planning in the black community. For black men in America are perceived to be living at a pre-genocidal level.

THAT they are trapped on the periphery of genocide is, in fact, evidenced in a number of ways, despite the myth of black economic and social progress. Their experience is one of growing desperation, a fact particularly evident and indisputable if one assumes, as do most black Americans, that they are first and not second-class citizens in our nation. If one assumes that black people are second class citizens, then any additional semblance or token advantage to their plight will be seen as “progress.” Hence, Sylvia Parker, in an article dubiously entitled, “Negro Women’s Progress,” analyzes black economic progress as amounting to next to nothing:

Statistics on pay and job level always can be tailored to mislead, if not to lie. That’s one of the first lessons a serious reporter of economics-like-it-is must learn. I’ve just relearned it in a new Census Bureau study tracing the progress of Negro women and of Negro men since 1960.

The figures seem to show that the Negro woman, for decades at the very bottom of the U. S. economic ladder, is finally moving rapidly ahead and that she is even pulling ahead of the Negro man.

She concludes:

In sum, from next to nothing to a little may be a giant statistical step. But in real life, it’s a baby’s crawl.

Sadly, both black men and women still must eat the crumbs from the nation’s

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economic table. And despite the recent variety of programs and proposals, black people remain in what amounts to a pre-genocidal state.

The proposals for a guaranteed annual wage—however much of a quantitative improvement they may afford—would keep the black masses powerless by concentrating them on one payroll. As observed at a black economic development conference, “All that would then be necessary is the convening of just one reactive white, solemn assembly, and the black people could with one quick and capricious vote be consigned to genocide by starvation.” Yet as a short term measure few other, if any, alternatives seem politically possible.

Furthermore, the so-called anti-poverty programs are seen to provide black people with only marginal skills of highly dubious worth. As far as housing is concerned, the Model Cities Programs largely make “happier” renters of black people while a still white-oriented FHA provides at far less cost to the general public what is tantamount to “free ownership” of homes. And while black families pay proportionately more for living quarters than do white families, government programs—with the naive cooperation of civic, social, and religious groups—facilitate the consignment of blacks to the lot of renters, even as white family home ownership increases.

Home ownership is the foundation of self-determination. As the Honorable Elijah Muhammed explains: “For survival we must own our own territories, beginning with our homes. The second step is the control of the local economic resources.”

The white would-be benefactors of the black community, even where the noblest purposes are expressed, are increasingly called upon by black men to first authenticate themselves by showing how deeply involved they are in destroying the “cultural lynch ropes” which hang from their own trees and from those of their neighbors and associates.

“What are you doing to de-honkify your own mind?” This is the question raised by

those concerned with black survival. White people are, in effect, being asked to recognize their own culturally-produced limitations and hence their inherent inability to “plan for” the survival, let alone fulfillment, needs of those in the black community. To offer resources to an authentic black-originated agenda for survival, it is held, is one thing. To attempt to tell black people what is good for them is seen as gratuitous on its face.

“It is absurd, if not ridiculous,” one eminent black scholar observed at the third International Conference of Black Power in Philadelphia in 1968, “for those who have mongrelized us, barbarized us, brutalized us, and bastardized us, to turn around now and seek to moralize us.” Such is the emerging view coming rapidly to be held by black scholars and black street leaders alike. There is also an increasingly widespread recognition that racism is a culturally and historically produced phenomenon, largely independent of individual good will or purpose.

THE TERM “honky,” as popularized by H. Rap Brown, has been modified in what is seen to be a significantly strategic way. The out-for-the-kicks white liberal revelled at being called a “honky” as it served two self-centered purposes. It flagellated him or gave his need to feel guilty a boost through experiencing a kind of symbolic and masochistic public whipping. At the same time, it exonerated him by enabling him to lay the blame for his behavior upon the fact that, after all, he was a “honky.”

“Honkified,” the adjectival version of the term, denotes a pathologically pro-white orientation or outlook, according to the new black view. It reflects the lack of self-awareness on the part of those white skinned and black-skinned Americans who do not recognize the awesomely limiting perspectives which our pathologically pro-white cultural conditioning in America inevitably imposes upon all of us. Those who recognize and accept the fact of these limitations can do something about them. Those who do not are seen to be in serious

trouble, since they are in no position to control the sinister effects of that which they do not recognize.

"Honkified" refers to one's ways rather than one's basic nature. A man may have no control over his basic nature, but he may always amend his ways.

As the two of us write, we exchange experiences about the culturally-imposed blinders which tend to limit each of us to some degree. We both recognize, for example, that because of the "wall of partition" placed between white and black America, persons of one race tend only to see those of the other race with whom our white-oriented society will allow us to deal in easy and agreeable ways. Each day a white person may see black maids and male laborers but will tend to be oblivious of the presence of black persons with whom they might associate as social equals. To see another as fully human and then not be allowed by our society to deal with him in the fullest and least fettered way presents ethical problems which would plague us as being almost impossible to resolve.

Black people develop counter devices. They, too, are caught in a bind where honest dealings in a full and free fashion cannot be initiated readily across race lines. All men will to believe that they are fair and honest and that they treat all men alike. We do so in effect. This is accomplished by the elementary mechanism of willing those whom we cannot treat fairly and fully out of our mental horizons. Those Americans, both black and white, who play this game without knowing its name, or even without knowing that it is a game, are said to have "honkified" minds.

The "honkified mind" is simply an honest and possibly even idealistic American mind which does not know that to be uncritical of seeming realities makes of an individual a far less humane person than he would like to be.

The new black mood of self-awareness and self-acceptance does not reject white people. Rather, it rejects the alleged usefulness of an unself-aware mind. It recognizes that all men, to be their best selves,

must know who and what they are. This mood is also self-critical. It accepts the fact of its own culturally-produced honkified mind and then sets out to control it. It recognizes that perhaps the most honkified minds in America are those of unself-aware black-skinned people, often referred to as "negroes" with a lower case "n."

In this view, such black-skinned persons would tend to be much more pro-white than many white persons, since the "outsider" seeking desperately to get on the "inside" most often exaggerates the insider's superficial ways in an attempt to gain acceptance. It is this type of mind which is seen to help most in unconsciously fostering black genocide. It accepts, on the seemingly sublime basis that "white-makes-right," white-originated programs as good for black people.

When approached by white people with a program "for the good of *your* people," such black-skinned persons with honkified minds ask only, "How can I help?" When the answer is coupled with the offer of an attractive monetary reward for anticipated services, the honkified mind is "locked and bagged" beyond the realm of any rational debate.

The fact that these "rewards for services" often go to the college-trained persons of color has served the black community in an especially disadvantageous way. The suspicion continues to arise that "middle-class" blacks are selling black folks out, that they are the primary cause of black persistence in a pre-genocidal state.

The internal warfare is encouraged in some degree by the white ghetto workers and specialists — most often with strategic white money behind them — who befriend and co-opt the disaffected. It is in this context of being inappropriate, unself-aware, presumptuous, and honkified interlopers that the white family planners or their black-skinned agents are viewed as they "sell their wares" in many black communities today.

Simple candor should decree that we both understand this context and seek to probe where possible its deeper meaning.