



BLACK EMPOWERMENT

By Dr. Nathaniel Wright, Jr.
Human Rights Activist

"GRANDFATHER CLAUSES"

The most sensitive issue facing black Americans today is not—as in the relatively recent past—jobs, voter registration, housing, school desegregation or "civil rights" in the sense of access to public places.

What blacks are faced with, in the most acute fashion today, is the direct or indirect imposition of a kind of "Grandfather Clause" which works to keep blacks from entering fully into the American mainstream.

This new development represents a major, if not monumental, challenge to all Americans who are committed to equity and peaceable growth within our nation's life.

"Grandfather Clauses" were legal and semi-legal stipulations in voting and in some categories of job opportunity in the past which allowed registration, access or privilege only to those whose grandfathers previously had met certain requirements.

The use of "Grandfather Clauses," while illegal on their past forms, represents a thoroughly understandable mechanism for maintaining social and economic stability; and in this sense it should come as no surprise when their spirit takes on new forms, especially under tremendous pressures for major social and economic adjustments.

The "Grandfather Clause" battle today takes on the cloak of protection against the evils of what has come to be called "reverse discrimination." Of late, black Americans and their allies, working for equitable or just opportunity for all, have sought fresh mechanisms for entry into the American mainstream. Meanwhile, what appears to be a vocal

majority of whites—who have been the long-standing and still unyielding beneficiaries of past and still continuing denials of opportunity to blacks (together with Hispanics and other minorities)—screamed to the high heavens that any rescinding of the "opportunity pie" implicitly denies white Americans their just inheritance.

Such, in brief, is the outward aspect of the problem.

The "Grandfather Clause" idea or spirit comes in the form of many or most whites, while readily admitting that blacks (together with Hispanics and other minorities) may have been discriminated against and disgracefully mistreated a long time ago (that is, by their grandparents, for example), still denying any present responsibility for past wrongs.

To them, it seems unfair on its face for "innocent whites" who have "done nothing wrong to blacks today" to have to pay the price of wrongs committed in some (to them) vague or generalized way in the past.

There are several difficulties here.

Perhaps the two most obvious are as follows:

1. All of us are products and beneficiaries of our past. White Americans enjoy—whether they like it or not—the benefits of a long-standing and grossly discriminatory pro-white opportunity. White Americans are faced with inherited and presently institutionalized opportunities over blacks from which they cannot at present escape.

2. Institutionalized pro-white opportunity or preferential treatment persists today. Most, if not all, black Americans live where they

live, work where they work and play where they play chiefly because of present day unfair limits set upon blacks which accrue, in our present day, to all white Americans both directly and indirectly.

So pervasive is white preferential treatment that practically all whites simply take it for granted. Hence many are deeply resentful at any suggestion of anything approaching an equitable rearrangement, which would inevitably involve a re-cutting of the pie which presently has disproportionately large slices for white Americans.

The argument that blacks are "unqualified" may be said to be an "argument of convenience" on its face.

1. Where blacks have been "qualified," unionism has imposed a fictitious seniority rule. Skilled black cement workers in many places in New York traditionally have mixed concrete for their friends and neighbors "for free," simply to celebrate the opportunity to perform a skilled trade, the exercise of which has been denied them by white trade unionism. The ruse of "qualifications" is a proven dodge to prevent social and economic change which is perceived as either threatening or otherwise undesirable.

2. In the early 1800's, most skilled craftsmen in the United States were blacks. As late as the 1920's, skilled blacks in the construction trades were beaten, harassed and even murdered when they sought to demonstrate and make use of their skills. In this sense, the last several generations of white Americans—and especially those who are of recent immigrant ancestry—have moved into an "opportunity vacuum"

created artificially and atrociously by the massive and thoroughgoing forced denials of opportunity to blacks.

3. Black Americans have been arbitrarily cowed into many low expectations and behavior patterns which seem to say defeat. In the small rural, poor white village in which I live, the effects of this "white chief dog" and of "black puppy dog" syndrome still prevail.

When I first went to a rather rough Saturday night beer hall—which was the only place within ten miles to buy hot pizza—I stood at the edge of the counter as though I were in the Deep South. The beer happy whites would, in no wise, have tolerated an "uppity black." On my second visit, fortunately our postman recognized me and shouted out loud, "Welcome, Dr. Wright!" Whereupon everyone in the tavern arose.

I was a "big Negro (or black). Hence I was "the one exception," a black to which whites could look up, thus compensating (in their minds) for the demeaning done to all the others who were not "big blacks." Incidentally, in the anti-black area in which I live—which may be seen as but a caricature of the partially hidden attitudes of the nation as a whole—I always keep a snap-on bow tie in my shirt pocket whenever I wear an open-necked shirt. The "big Negro (or black)" get-up can never be too far removed, if I expect not to be demeaned—or even arrested—in some entirely unjustified way.

From what is said or suggested here, it should be abundantly clear that blacks have been—and still are—the subjects of grossly unfair discrimination. The obverse side of this picture is that all

whites unconsciously benefit from this institutionalized American pattern of discrimination against blacks.

For those hard to hear but immensely well intentioned souls who would argue that blacks have been getting all kinds of advantages of late, two telling facts may be offered in refutation.

One is that the historically long-standing "unclosed and unclosing gap" between white and black Americans has not budged in the past 25 years. Indeed, it has widened a bit over a thirty year period.

The other fact is that the fresh opportunities attendant upon the creation of a highly technological world have not been enjoyed proportionately by blacks. Thus when even a "new pie" was created recently, it was "divided up" in a traditionally American pro-white way.

The major problem for blacks (together with Hispanics and other minorities) has been a too great dependence upon "the law" and other supposedly automatic processes designed to bring some semblance of equity, restitution for past wrongs and fair play.

But human societies simply do not function that way. As U.S. Representative Barbara Jordan noted not long ago, only "public outrage and pressure" will guarantee a just society. Thus blacks, Hispanics and other minorities—along with all seeking fair play—must doubtless become far more amenable to fresh expressions of outrage and unyielding pressure before any equitable readjustments may come about.



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osing of those who have not proved to be "friends" America is at a crossroads in the history of social change, he said.

Poor Americans who need to organize to work effectively for social change lack many of the skills necessary for a successful organization, Dr. Dina Titus said during the "Cities in Crisis" program at UNLV.

Titus, a political science professor at the university cited leadership as a necessary factor of a successful organization which often is hard to find in a group of poor people.

Other components she listed as imperative in forming a viable action group include cohesiveness of purpose among the members, money, time to devote to the group, access to information, and access to the public.

NEWS OF SAFETY

Tire Maintenance Tips

Do you know how to keep your car on the right road to safety and economy? Experts at the Tire Retread Information Bureau have a round of suggestions to help you.



- Check your tire tread by watching for the small indicator wear bars—the "bald" stripes—that appear horizontally across the tire's tread.

- Check tread depth by sticking a Lincoln head penny upside down into the tread. If the top of Lincoln's head shows, you don't have enough rubber left to get you around safely.

- If there is still 1/16th of an inch of tread left and the tire isn't damaged, it should be turned over to a tire dealer who can have it recycled into a quality retreaded tire that meets Federal standards at about 50 percent the cost of a new tire.

- Be sure to keep your tires at their proper inflation pressure. Road checks have found that at least one out of four cars is driving on one or more seriously underinflated—4 or more psi below the auto manufacturer's recommendation. For every 10° drop in temperature, tire air pressure drops 1 psi. If the temperature drops 40°, your tires will probably become seriously underinflated.

- Underinflation shortens tire life by as much as 50 percent and reduces gas mileage as well.

- Help save energy by recycling your tires. It takes seven gallons of oil to produce the average new automobile tire, but only two and a half gallons to retread one.

If you have the drive to follow these suggestions, you may be more likely than ever to be driving safely.

Barry White Presents

Mr. Danny Pearson



Unlimited Gold recording artist, Mr. Danny Pearson recently made a special guest appearance on the nationally syndicated television program, Soul Train. Danny whose first single entitled "What's Your Sign Girl" is riding high on the R&B charts was introduced to television viewers by Unlimited Gold Records President, Barry White.

Shown during a break in the taping of the show are (L to R) Danny Pearson, Barry White and Soul Train host Don Cornelius.

The vocalist's debut album is appropriately titled "Barry White Presents Mr. Danny Pearson," distributed by CBS Records.

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