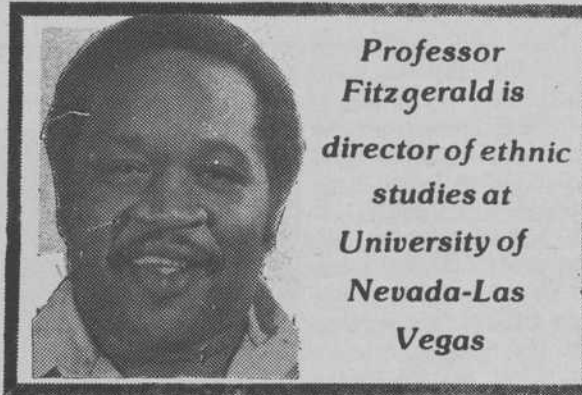


# THE USUAL SUSPECTS Part I

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald



Professor  
Fitzgerald is  
director of ethnic  
studies at  
University of  
Nevada-Las  
Vegas

Not many weeks ago an article, well hidden in the bowels of a local major newspaper, informed many of us that one out of every four young black men between the ages of 20-29 are in jail, on parole or on probation. While those figures may well be startling to many, to some of us they actually seem understated.

Somewhere in South America and in a few other places in the world, there are young men who disappear and their mothers gather outside churches and other cold, grey-stoned, formidable buildings and wail. They wail because their sons have been taken away by death squads and, more often than not, they're never seen alive again. When we see documentaries depicting those acts of savagery and barbarism it causes us to have feelings of sympathy, horror and anger. "How could they..." our minds scream out and when we've stood all we can stand, we wrench ourselves away and go in search of something serene to sooth us--to calm us--to help us rev down. We might look off into a star-studded night and select out a star and talk to it and ask it: "How can people be so cruel?" If we understood Morse Code we would be able to read the answer in the blinking of the star and the answer is always the same: "EASY." Kinda reminds you of a song, doesn't it?

Becoming heartless requires initial sanctioning by a large part of the population. That portion must be made to feel that it is safe, immune, on the same side as those who do such things. The lowest most despicable portion of that population doesn't even notice the carnage. The uppermost portion of that permost portion might comment: "Well, I'll be..." and somewhere in between there is an occasional tsk, tsk, tsk. What they do not recognize is that the heartless need fuel and as they grow, they need more and more. Once they've devoured those who are targeted they look around for other morsels and they find their delicacies first among those of the population who have not been themselves at risk, but have been nevertheless bothered and have spoken out. When they're exterminated the heartless go next to the "Well, I'll be's" and then the "tsk, tsk, tsks" and finally they look among themselves.

Frequently I refer to Owen Wister's comment that "A man's (peoples') sense of himself (themselves) is the most important thing that he (they) has." It is one of those statements which burns itself into your heart and mind and soul. Those with much can stand to have small bits and pieces whittled away by the eroding elements of an abrasive, op-

pressive, suppressive, repressive (you get the point) society's enforcers. Those with little seek to guard that little with their freedom and, sometimes, with their lives.

Let me illustrate how many of those 20-29 year olds end up in the justice system. Mind you, I'll not speak of gang members, drug pushers, pimps, thieves, strong-armers and such. We know about them even though we may not know that 25 percent of the targeted age group is not involved in such activity in spite of stereotypes. The causes of many of those incarcerations may well be traced back to the sentiments revealed in Wister's comment. Consider, a routine day with routine events. At about 12:42, Leroy Jackson, black male age 22 approached the intersection of Elm and Market Streets in Anytown, U.S.A. There was no on-coming traffic in sight so he proceeded across the intersection. He

had not gone far when he noticed, in his rear view mirror, that there was a police car rapidly approaching. Even though it is not generally done, he pulled over to the right in order to give free access to the road to an emergency vehicle. The police vehicle pulled over behind him. It was then that he realized that he was the objective of attention. Almost immediately he began to become upset because he had not done anything wrong. But he had. He had not come to a complete stop at the intersection. Still...The officer approached. "Get out of the vehicle, please." Jackson complied. "What did I do, officer?" "I'll ask all of the questions here, boy." Jackson thought: "Boy? Do I look like a boy?" "Your license, please." He gave it. "Is this your car?" "Yeah," he said and in a tone that did not conceal his growing anger. "Hmmm-

Registration?" He gave it. "You're a stranger in this town, huh?" "I'm a stranger in most towns." "What are you, one of them smart ones?" "What smart ones?" "Hm... Empty your pockets." "Why should I empty my pockets? What did I do?" "I told you already that I'll ask the ..... questions. Now empty your ..... pockets." "I'm not emptying my ..... pockets unless you tell me what it is that you think I've done." "In the ..... position ..... " "What ..... position?" The gun is drawn. "In the ..... position ..... " "You don't have to point that gun at me. I haven't done anything. What's wrong with you?" "I'll blow your ..... brains out if you don't get your ..... on that ..... hood and get in the ..... position." "What did I do? Just tell me that." Jackson is snatched and yanked and pushed and pulled and jerked around with an arm pushed up behind his back and the cuffs are applied and on the back seat he's thrown. The charge--reckless driving, refusing to cooperate, resisting arrest, assault on an officer, changing lanes without using signal light, parking on the shoulder and reckless endangerment. His car is towed and impounded and he gets

\$500 fine, 60 days probation and his name in the computer.

Who cares when such things happen? If you believe what media tells you, only "the black community." That's what it has been telling us about a charge of police brutality registered by a 16 year old Valley High School student, who just happened to be walking down a sidewalk and therefore was a "suspect" in a robbery. What such headlines and television news broadcasts suggest is that not a single non-black person is concerned about what happens to black people and especially to black youth and that just isn't so. I wonder what kinds of responses would media get from non-black citizens if asked: "What do you think about black charges of police brutality?" There are things that media does and doesn't do which contribute to the illusion that only people of the same color are concerned about people of that color. It would be great to see more cross-over interviews, even on routine matters.

TO BE CONTINUED

**Keep Hope  
Alive!**  
STOP THE VIOLENCE!

## COPING

From Page 2

have wanted to strike back, physically, at their white tormentor in America. The biased laws made that impossible. "I would kick his behind if I could, but I know that the cops will arrest me and protect him."

Most blacks know this to be true. So the only outlet for these frustrations has been to allow your anger and frustration to kill you with stress, strokes and heart attacks. Or, attack any available victim. In other words, the potential for gross violence has been welling up within the black psyche for decades. What you see now, with Blacks murdering other Blacks is a natural outgrowth of the sociological condition of Black people in American society.

I am surprised that it has taken so many years to

manifest itself. The factors that stimulated the killings are:

1) The advertisements on TV and elsewhere that tell black males what a *real man* is like and the expensive accessories that they must buy in order to *play the role*.

2) The bias in this society that does not allow the young black male the opportunity to get a job sufficient to buy the basic things that other young men buy.

3) The availability of drug sales as a money-making endeavor for otherwise unemployable young black males.

4) The readily available frustration of the young black male in this society.

5) The opportunity to, finally, buy a gun and play the role of *mafioso*, *hired gun*, *C.I.A. agent* and *big shot* rolled into one.

THIS WOULD HAVE OCCURRED WHETHER THE BLACK FAMILY WAS WEAK OR STRONG.

## AARP Offers Program on Long Term Care

A program discussing Long Term Care will be presented by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) on Saturday, March 24 at 2:15 p.m. The presentation will be made in the First Interstate Bank Building, 1501 E. Charleston.

The program is co-sponsored by AARP and the First Interstate Bank of Nevada.

"Nevada has one of the fastest-growing seniors population in the country," said Donald D. Synder, chairman and chief executive officer of First Interstate Bank of Nevada. "We are proud to co-sponsor a program which should prove valuable to those seniors who are seeking in-depth information on the subject of long term care."

## JACOB

From Page 2

It's also adjusted each year for inflation, so the value of the credit does not erode the way other income support benefits do.

The credit also spurs local economies -- last year over \$5 billion was distributed through the credit.

Because it is so effective, Congress is considering expansion of the program -- a long overdue step that would reduce poverty, improve work incentives, and, especially in the absence of an adequate minimum wage, improve the living standards of the working poor.

The program is open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

**Rancho Florist & Gifts**

*"For the Elegant Touch in Floral Design"*

**Plants • Balloons**

**Weddings • Birthdays • Funerals**

**Fruit & Gourmet Baskets**

Wire Service Available



Citywide Delivery

24 Hour Phone Service

648-0098

Major Credit Cards Accepted

2401 W. Bonanza Rd. & Rancho  
(in the Rancho Circle Shopping Center, Suite D)