

Point of View

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MINORITY REPORT

RIOTS AND FIRES IN LOS ANGELES CAUSED BY POLICES OF REAGAN AND BUSH; FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS DECLARE

By James E. Alsbrook

What do leaders of the various nations and newspapers around the world think of the riots and fires that on April 20 ravaged Los Angeles?

Statements from these leaders condemn the polices of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. The rioters were not mentioned in available sources as causes of the upheaval. Most world leaders and commentators said the jury decision was the match that ignited a pile of dynamite ready to explode. The videotape of the beating of Rodney King was shown all around the world.

From West Germany, the FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, a conservative newspaper:

"Two and a half decades ago,

the blacks of America's cities hoped that their protests would lead to political change. And in fact civil-rights laws were enacted under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

"But during the past 11 years, under Reagan and Bush, social policy on the federal level was almost totally neglected. Costly social programs were foisted on states and local communities, whose treasuries were already strapped. Instead of help, there were cuts."

From Tel Aviv Israel, the AL HAMISHMAR, a Socialist newspaper:

"There is no doubt the United States is paying the price of 'Reaganomics,' President Reagan's economic policies that focused the arms race while ignoring the social and infrastruc-

ture problems of the United States. Twelve years of conservative rule under Reagan and Bush, the blow to the Great Society programs of President Johnson, and the abandonment of care for the black population and other ethnic groups have contributed to a build-up of bitterness, anger and poverty. All that was necessary was a spark to blow up the barrel of gunpowder."

From China, THE HONG KONG STANDARD, an independent newspaper:

"In a capitalisteconomy there are winners and losers. It cannot be otherwise. But any advanced society that allows the development of a huge, violence-racked, drug-ridden slums is storing up for itself a sort of trouble that the United States is

now experiencing."

From the Tokyo's JAPAN TIMES:

"This Los Angeles jury could not have done more damage to their country's image abroad if they had tired."

From England's LONDON DAILY MAIL:

"God Help America," the headline screamed.

President Francois Mitterand of France said "President Bush is a generous man who is coming from an extremely conservative political philosophy. Now we see some of the results of that." The French leader said the jury verdict was "scandalous."

Mitterand and Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl can see that Europe's expensive welfare-state safety nets are well worth

the cost, despite frequent American criticism that they are unsuitable in the long run, said the London correspondent of the NEW YORK TIMES.

From France, the PARIS LE FIGARO, a conservative newspaper:

"The United States has not yet succeeded in economically integrating all its blacks or its Hispanics. That and nothing else is the problem. And what is happening today could explode here tomorrow."

From South Africa's THE CITIZEN, a conservative, white-oriented newspaper:

"Our advice to the United States is: 'sort out your own racial problems and leave us to sort out ours. As Los Angeles has shown, you are not a great example to us.'

From East Germany's HALLE MITTELDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG:

"In American cities a social time bomb is exploding. The boom of the 80's benefited only the rich. Over 33 million U.S. Citizens, 13 percent of the population, are considered impoverished.

From West Germany, Hanover's NEUE PRESSE:

"What has to happen is a radical attempt to correct fundamental American injustices. Whether U.S. politicians are prepared or able to do this remains to be seen."

In short, Europeans, Asians and white South Africans say American CONSERVATISM, the code word for raw greed and mean racism, caused the riots and fires.

Demand Rights-With Responsibility

By Clifton C. Maclin, Jr.

Like most Americans I was deeply shocked by the unfolding events in Los Angeles and the other American cities. Also like most Americans I have asked myself how could these sorts of tragedies still be plaguing the American social fabric.

Frankly, the answer is frighteningly simple.

The answer is exemplified in the Biblical story of Cain and Able. When God confronted Cain regarding where his brother, Able could be found, Cain responded, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We know Cain was responsible for his brother's death, which he was trying to hide from God by denying he knew anything about Able's whereabouts.

This story illustrates a major theme of human history where we victimize each other and then deny our responsibility for the consequences of the horrible things we do to each other, or that we tolerate being done to each other as passive bystanders.

In my lifetime (I am 48) I have observed a growing culture of deniability where we Americans as ethnic groups and as individuals have been encouraged

to demand our "rights." But very few of us are equally vocal about accepting the responsibilities that counter-balance our rights.

This is particularly true regarding our responsibility to our fellow Americans.

Few of our leaders on any level of American society set a consistent example of demanding that for each right and privilege we enjoy that we accept the corresponding obligations and responsibilities to the rest of society.

As it happens, I am a black American. As a young man I was active in the civil rights movement, I was troubled that few of our leaders, black and white, were as concerned about the responsibilities that would fall on all Americans as a consequence of the legal extension of civil rights from a few Americans to all Americans.

White leaders were never really honest with white people about the cost of sharing economic and political power with non-white American or white women. Part of that price has

been the need to accept increased competition for jobs by non-white males or white women during a period in American economic life when maintaining

a middle-class standard of living has become more and more difficult, when good jobs have been increasingly hard to find, when the cost of living has been getting higher and higher without an off-setting increase in real income.

White leaders also have not been honest with white people regarding the extent to which they have been the hereditary beneficiaries of institutionalized, racially discriminatory practices in work, education, political life, and legal institutions such as the criminal justice system.

The consequence is that a judicial decision such as occurred in the Rodney King case can happen and too many white Americans do not see the injustice that occurred, even assuming that Rodney King has not been a model citizen.

Nor have white Americans been encouraged to recognize how continuing institutionalized racial discrimination provides an ongoing excuse for socio-pathic behavior, such as the L.A. rioters exemplify.

Black leaders consistently failed to inform black Americans that equality meant accepting the responsibilities that all free people must accept. Some of

those responsibilities are being committed to preparing one's self for the economic opportunities that civil rights victories would make available.

This means committing one's self to mastering the skills available through different types of academic and trade educational programs.

Once the educational process has been completed, being committed to doing an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, accepting responsibility for personal failure and not using white racism as a catch-all excuse for under-performing.

Black leaders must insist that our children perform well in academic endeavors in school without compromising generally accepted performance standards by always saying that nationally standardized tests are culturally biased.

Black leaders must demand that black parents be responsible for their children's behavior and conduct, and in every way set the best possible example of good citizenship.

American leaders of all ethnic groups have failed to be examples of compassion for those who would suffer un-

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SOME SOLUTIONS FOR ACTOR LOU GOSSETT

The various talk shows have been airing the pros and cons as to what precipitated the riot in Los Angeles. I have heard the rhetoric since the 1920's as to the double standards that exist in these United States. It is just as brutal as it was at that time. Only a few short periods of hope, now in the 1990's it is the same old theme; the oppressed is still being oppressed by the oppres-

sors. Oprah Winfrey's show on May 13, 1992 had Lou Gossett as a guest. He impressed me with his statement, "Let's not leave here without some solutions." If I had been there I would have past on some of the solutions that are on my mind.

1. The Black churches should take a more positive approach such as more credit unions, just

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