

Point of View

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MINORITY REPORT

DOES BLACK BEHAVIOR CONTRIBUTE TO WHITE MIND SET THAT CONDONES POLICE BEATING OF BLACK PEOPLE?

By James E. Alsbrook

What possibly could have happened to the minds of the twelve jurors in the Rodney King case? Although they repeatedly saw the televised beating of King with police night sticks, they agreed with the police defense argument that King was "in charge" of the situation while lying defenseless on the ground receiving about 70 blows to the head and body.

Several psychologists have called the jurors reaction a "psychic denial." Other terms applied to this jury action are "transfer," "avoidance," "cogni-

tive dissonance" and more. But the mere arrival at the verdict of "innocent" by ostensibly rational beings raises questions concerning the fragility and pliability of the human mind.

Wondering whether Black people themselves could have contributed to a white mindset that indicated Blacks needs White physical discipline, I asked twelve white professors and staff personnel:

"What have you noticed black people do or say that sends you a wrong or negative message?"

Here are the answers:

1. Black students "segre-

gate themselves on campus, talk too loud, and conform with the traditional stereotype. "This man added that sometimes certain Blacks "put on a show" of exaggerated swagger and bluster. Also, "They seem to think we're going to reject them, so they want to reject us first."

2. "When Blacks use so called 'Black English' by saying 'ax' instead of 'ask' I get the message that they want to separate themselves from whites. Probably, when they use jive talk and related body movements with music, they convey the same message intentionally or

unintentionally."

He continued, "Many Whites want to except Blacks and befriend them as individuals. Yet, they read cues as indicating Blacks want to stress their separateness."

3. Blacks want equality in jobs, education and other ways, this professor and others said, but the only way to get equality is through integration. He asked, "How can we be integrated if the words and body language Blacks use say they want to be separate?"

4. Two teachers said that they had not focused the race

problem because it had been dropped from the national agenda since 1980, when Reagan was elected.

5. Another mentioned loudness: "I suspect that many of us are turned off by what we perceive as excessively loud carryings-on by young Black people—even those attending college. Many seem to have to shout and screech when they meet."

On "sluriness," this teacher said "Young Black college students often refuse to smile or converse openly with Whites, at least until they size all us up and get more comfortable. I realize this may be an understandable defense mechanism. But it can still be disturbing."

On rap music: "I understand many lyrics are not only vulgar, but bitterly racist. I also find it offensive artistically; rap music is an oxymoron—it's not music; it's recitation."

On "reverse racism": "Some Black people, confronting any criticism of any blacks or black agendas (no matter how logical or reasonable the criticism)

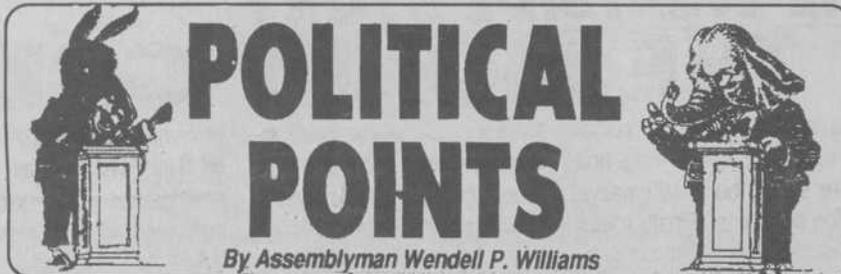
accuse the offending whites of racism. This automatic, knee-jerk reaction can be a major turn-off. Some Jews are guilty of this, too, reading anti-semitism into any criticism of Israel.

On language: "It can be annoying to hear young Black people who seem to view "correct" English as "White English".

On slavery: One teacher said he wishes Blacks would not consider him responsible for slavery. "My ancestors sided with the union."

On religion: "Some Blacks use the church for entertainment rather than for worship. Their choirs dress in robes and do the boogie-woggie or the funky chicken or anything for television cameras. They are clowning. They remind me of our long gone White holy rollers and snake handlers."

Are these criticisms justified? Sampling about 30 Whites produced repetition of the same items listed above. Do they suggest that Blacks need corporal punishment from police officers? I don't think so.



LABOR SUPPORT

In political campaigns, the only poll that really means anything, is the poll that takes place on election day. When the voters cast their ballots and the count is taken, then we all will know who is their choice.

At this stage of the game however, there are constant attempts by most candidates to convince the voters that they are the best choice to represent them. In most cases the candidate that is able to get his or her message across the most effectively has the greatest chance of going to the top. Of course one of the strongest points that a candidate can score, is to win the endorsement and support of various respected and influential groups and organizations. Not only can some of these groups provide much needed financial support, but they sometimes influence their members to vote in unified blocks. Often these numbers can reach in the hundreds and even thousands, who in turn can make or break the results of an election. Quite frankly, one could more than likely count on one

hand the number of candidates that won elections without the support of any major interest groups; which make the endorsements very valuable commodities.

If you follow local politics at all, you could not help but notice the scrambling that has occurred by candidates to win a favorable nod organized labor. For instance, in the County Commission race for district C, we clearly saw how important that the candidates viewed the labor endorsement.

We must forget that the endorsement process should be a two-way street. When a candidate accepts an invitation to seek an endorsement from labor, he or she is in reality saying that they will support the platform of labor as they have identified it. And the candidates agenda, if elected should reflect that support in a practical sense as well as in principle. A support for labor is a very serious responsibility. A support for labor is a support of families and the basic rights of humans.

It must be remembered that these same basic rights are

under attack everyday in America.

As a result, the basic rights that workers deserve is at a crossroad. Due mainly because since 1981 when Ronald Reagan entered the White House, the rights of workers to form unions and bargain contracts with their companies are under attack everywhere. The ongoing corporate practice of firing legal strikers by giving their jobs to "Permanent replacement" workers have undermined the collective bargaining system and gutted the right to organize.

Seeking the support of labor should not be taken lightly. The political outcome for labor should never depend on the results of political battles between democrats and republicans. The political outcome for labor should never depend on the far-right or the far-left; instead it should depend on the moral center. The moral center is the only place that we can address the fact that if a man or woman who works everyday in a Nevada casino for up to 25 years or more, after giving his life to that job, may still come to work one day, only to



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

find that he is laid off, fired or "permanently replaced."

Combining work and family in the 1990's is a stressful endeavor. Low income families find that the everyday effort for survival is exhausting, for middle-income families, everyday is spent fending off downward mobility while upward mobility is just a mere mirage.

It must be remembered that the fastest growing segment of those in poverty are working people.

Workers have the right to expect a job with decent pay, safe conditions, and a sense of self-respect and dignity. If you accept labor support, then also accept the responsibility to help to give workers the voice they need and the respect they deserve on the job.

Whenever there is a conflict between human rights and property rights, human rights must always prevail. If not, seek support somewhere else because the labor movement is no place for games

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I wish to thank the Sentinel for giving me fair coverage when I was assaulted by Metro Officers in District Court Jan. 18, 1991. After being falsely arrested on four different charges and a long legal battle I was found not guilty on all charges by District Court Judge Lee Gates.

Judge Gates' wise decision was based on the preponderance of credible evidence as presented by my Attorney Robert Kossack. People who speak out against atrocities committed by certain Metro Police Officers should not have to live in fear of their very life. This is not Nazi Germany, or is it?

I agree with Dr. Tate, the time for action is now, the citizens of Clark County have to get this Police Dept. under control. We have become a community that lives in fear of its own police force.

— Larry Kepler

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