

# Point of View

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## MINORITY REPORT

# NUMBER OF JAILED BLACK MEN CAN BE REDUCED BY ELIMINATING EFFECTS OF SLAVERY, RACISM

by James E. Alsbrook

Now that millions of dollars and thousands of jobs have been designated for the rebuilding of Los Angeles, many questions are being asked of reconstruction chief Uberoff, Los Angeles Mayor Bradley and California Governor Wilson.

People want to know more about details of rebuilding and plans for preventing similar

upheavals in Los Angeles and other cities with similar problems. Many of these cities have Black mayors whose budgets were severely crippled by cuts in federal support by the Reagan and Bush administrations.

Proposals have been made to help the unemployed Black people by reviving burned-out businesses and establishing new ones in distressed areas. These

would provide jobs for nearby residents and tax revenues for the cash-short city. Other proposals include work-study programs, on-the-job-training programs and various types of investment incentives and employment projects. But Los Angeles is only part of the problem.

With more young black men in prisons and jails than in colleges and universities, what can

be done to redirect and restructure the lives of teenage and younger black males before they get arrested? Before prescribing remedies, however, we must understand two basic things.

1. The extent of the black males success in America today is dependant upon (1) his rejection of widespread, degrading culture of slavery, and (2) his discovery of himself as an equal

among men.

2. Just as the self-will and independent behavior of horses and other animals disappear when these creatures are "broken" by brutality and intimidation, also "broken" by similar violence were the self-will and independent behavior of White slaves in Europe and Black slaves in America. Slaves become victims of mindset in which complete obedience and complete dependence were enforced as correct and proper.

The so-called "Black Underclass" in America is the "unreconstructed human wreckage" cast upon this nation following the Civil War.

What can be done to redeem these maladjusted Blacks who live in the shabbiness, hopelessness, and the danger of the ghetto? They need safety, proper food and housing, a new set of values, good work habits and marketable skills enabling them to compete successfully for jobs.

One program designed to help less-fortunate Blacks generally and teenage Black males particularly is this:

1. Welfare checks and food stamps would be available to those who live in a community of regulated, government-sponsored housing with standard facilities and strict upkeep and performance rules.

2. Each housing unit would be supervised by a "transition specialist" or counselor. The role of the transition specialist



JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D. would be to demonstrate, teach or reinforce standard home-making procedures and values.

3. Each housing unit would contain an education counselor assigned to help students with home work and teach parents whenever possible in order to achieve student-parent participation and increasing interest in education.

4. Discussion or lectures on etiquette, goal setting, personal hygiene, community action and social responsibility would be encouraged and supervised.

5. In addition to the basic reading, writing and arithmetic, courses such as Black history would be provided. Discussion would be focused on the positive attainments of positive role models such as Gen. Colin Powell, chief of staff of the U.S. Armed Forces; Matthew Henson, who led the Peary expedition to the North Pole; Dr. Martin Luther King, civil rights leader; Dr. Charles Drew, physician and scientist whose use of blood plasma saved many lives; and many others famous in scholarship, athletics and politics.

The nation must recover the "lost assets" of these underperforming, wounded blacks by helping them recover their independence, self-confidence, social responsibility and personal dignity.

## TO BE EQUAL

# BLACK ECONOMY IN DEPRESSION

By John E. Jacob

The experts tell us that the recession is ending, but the black economy remains mired in a Depression.

As always, we are the first to be hit hard when recession comes and the last to climb back to where we were before the recession, another business downturn hits and drives us deeper into the hole.

To hear the experts tell it, the current recession was fairly mild, since unemployment never got into the double digits.

That may be true for the majority community, but African-American workers experience double-digit unemployment even in good times, and they were major losers in this recession.

Last year the black discouraged worker rate rose by 28 percent. While we made up 10.1 percent of the workforce, we were 27 percent of all discouraged workers — people who want to work but have given up trying to look for a job in despair of finding one.

If you take the official unemployment rate, which counts as unemployed only people out of work and actively looking for a job, and add to it the discouraged workers and involuntary part-time workers who want full-time jobs, the true black unemployment rate is a shocking 25.5 percent.

That's about double the official rate, and it gives us a much clearer picture of the job crisis in the black community.

Not that work automatically ensures an escape from pov-

erty.

Over two million African-Americans — one out of seven black workers — earned poverty wages last year.

In general, America seems to be becoming a low wage economy, failing to generate enough good jobs while creating lots of lousy ones. And we have failed to provide enough of our people with the skills to hold those good jobs.

Meanwhile, we drive down wages in low-skill jobs and export the rest to Asia and Mexico, where workers earn perhaps a tenth of our lowest pay scales.

It is disheartening to hear the candidates talk about everything under the sun except the need to help low wage workers reach a decent standard of living.

The government defines low earnings at \$12,195 a year, or \$6.10 an hour for forty hours of work per week, fifty weeks a year. But the minimum wage is well below that — only \$4.25 per hour.

So we should raise the minimum to guarantee that work results in above-poverty wages.

Some will say that would cost jobs and push wages to the point where some employers could not compete with low wage competitors overseas.

If that's the case, let's be honest about it: federal subsidies to the working poor such as food stamps and earned income credit are actually subsidies to low-wage employers, helping them to stay in business by supporting a pool of underpaid workers.

Subsidizing employers rather than workers means removing the welfare stigma from people who work as hard and as long as others but aren't paid a living wage.

But that's only part of the solution. We'll also need to pump capital into poverty neighborhoods to start up new businesses, build and repair homes, and create decent jobs.

That means cracking down

on lenders who discriminate, and creating public-private partnership investment funds in impacted poverty areas.

Most of all, we'll need to assure jobs to all who want them. There is plenty of work to be done, and government can hire and train the jobless and the underemployed to do it, just as it helped other Americans weather the Great Depression of the 1930s through public works and youth employment programs.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

On July 17, 1992, a small group of concerned citizens met with Charles Hunsberger. Hunsberger is the Director of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District. We wanted to discuss our concerns regarding the West Las Vegas Library.

We were insulted by Hunsberger's ignorant and racist statements. His excuse for not having certain books in that particular library was that "Black people don't read." Hunsberger went further to make extremely negative and derogatory remarks about the Black people who work at the West Las Vegas Library.

This is an outrage! For the head of this Library District to have such a blatantly racist attitude is intolerable. One needs little imagination to figure out why there have never been any Blacks in departments such as the Business Office and Community Relations. There is only one Black on an administrative level. I'm sure that Hunsberger's attitudes must cause a 'trickle down' effect within the district. If he unashamedly voices such opinions to a group of Black taxpayers, he surely doesn't hesitate to express his views to his employees.

No one who demonstrates such ignorance and bigotry should have this position. Hunsberger should be replaced with someone who is sensitive to ALL people.

Marzette Lewis  
President, WAAK-UP

★★★★★★  
A SPECIAL THANKS!

To councilman Frank Hawkins and Mayor Jan Jones for responding to a request made by Mr. Eddie Watson at the City Council (See Letters to the Editor, Page 17)

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