

COMMENTARY

Globalization, cyberspace and racism

Part One

By Dr. Manning Marable
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The most powerful yet grossly misunderstood political term popularized in the decade of the 1990s is "Globalization."

Globalization refers to the massive revolution in information technology, economic production, markets and management which increasingly characterizes the development of the entire world. It is also, to a considerable extent, the consolidation of the technological cultures and the private market economic model of development represented by the United States, Western Europe and Japan since World War II.

The creation of cyberspace technology during the past decade has radically transformed the way people communicate and conduct business, from the level of our neighborhoods to the entire globe. These changes can be measured in literally every aspect of human endeavor and activity.

For example, technology is rapidly replacing the necessity for certain forms of labor. Workers who were trained to do manufacturing and labor intensive industry are being replaced by machines. Most businesses have radically transformed their entire procedures for producing, distributing and marketing products.

At the level of daily life, the new technology is expressed in the elimination of paper and currency as mediums of exchange. E-mail and the Internet are increasing the way millions of people communicate with each other. Books and newspapers are rapidly becoming anachronisms.

ATM and debit cards are replacing checks and cash. Access to cyberspace is becoming the entry way to educational advancement and economic development.

The real question we should ask ourselves about globalization is in whose interest does it serve?

Who will set the rules for globalization?

What nations, classes or political elites are potentially the biggest winners or losers?

And perhaps most importantly, from a humanistic perspective,

VOICE FROM THE HILL

Big business polluting air

By George Wilson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's a fact that most living beings need air in order to sustain life. With that thought in mind, Congress passed the Clean Air Act 27 years ago.

At the time of its passage, the legislation adequately addressed the nation's clean air needs. Unfortunately, increased industrial pollution has pushed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to call for tougher standards.

One would think everyone wants cleaner air. However, many polluters have launched a multi-million dollar campaign to fight the EPA.

"A lot of people are spending large amounts of money—the polluters, big business. It may not be their intent, but it certainly is the result," said John Lewis (D-Ga.).

Air pollution discriminates against minorities and the poor. Said Lewis, "In many of our large urban centers where there is a heavy concentration of minority and poor people, there is dirty air. Dirty air is not good for your health.

There are too many young people growing up in America with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Because of that, we must support the EPA standards and clean up our air."

The EPA estimates that over 40,000 people die each year from illnesses attributed to ozone and pollution, caused by particles of matter.

Urban-dwellers often hear weather reports

mentioning the amount of ozone in the air. Yet most fail to give careful consideration to what ozone pollution involves.

According to Physicians of Social Responsibility, "Ozone is a strong oxidant that is associated with lung inflammation, increased susceptibility to infection, increased illness, including asthma and increased emergency room visits and hospital admissions."

Those problems are reason enough to pay attention to information about air quality.

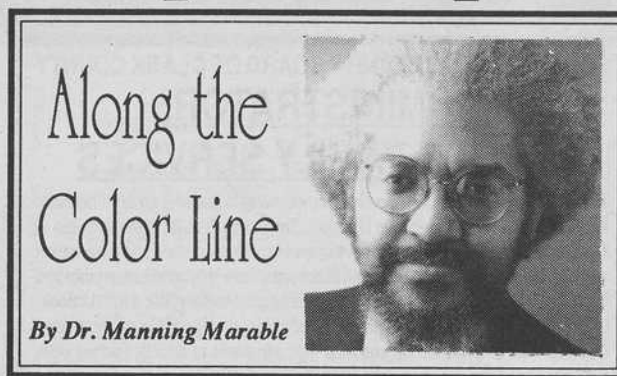
Big corporations work to keep the quality of the air poor.

The time is here for those without multi-million dollar advertising budgets to make it clear to the "powers that be" that American citizens have the right to live in an environment that is as clean as possible. Clean air should not be a political matter.

For those who don't want to take this matter seriously, consider what the vice president of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association has to say about pollution: "The effect of ozone (smog) is not that serious... What we're talking about is a temporary loss in lung function of 20 to 30 percent. That's not really a health effect."

I'm sure that if you examine political contributions, you will find a kinship between polluters and politicians.

George Wilson is a 16-year correspondent of the American Urban Radio Network.



can globalization serve a broader social justice purpose: the utilization of technology and the information revolution for the reduction of and even the elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance. Will globalization reinforce or retard the forces of race hatred, social intolerance and nationalism?

We may find that in the environment of globalized capitalism, racial divisions and hierarchies structured around social inequality may actually be strengthened and reinforced by the new innovations and developments in global technology. We may be confronting new forms of globalized racism as we enter the new millennium.

What may be the key components in the construction of a new global racism? One major factor to consider is global demographics. In the past thirty years, the world has witnessed the greatest mass migrations in human history. Hundreds of millions of people are today on the move. The two great waves of migration are, first, from rural to urban areas, and second, from the southern part of the hemisphere to the north.

The transformation of racial demographics we have seen inside the United States is also rapidly occurring across the globe. Experts in population growth point to three basic factors which will greatly change the size and racial/ethnic composition of the global population by the middle of the next century: First, declining birth rates and the use of birth control especially in

developed and industrialized societies; second, the increase in life expectancies in all countries, and falling rates of mortality; and third, the rapid increase in all populations above the age of 65.

What are the racial implications of these demographic trends? Today, the population of Africa is approximately the same as the population of Europe, the United States and Canada combined, roughly one to one. By the year 2060, the ratio of Africa's population to that of Europe and North America will be three to one.

Today, the population ratio between the developing world and the industrialized western world (United States, Japan, Europe, etc.) is roughly four to one. By 2066, this ratio will be seven to one.

People of European descent, who are already a numerical minority on this planet, will become by the end of the next century, a dwindling and fairly insignificant group in terms of size. The paradox of course is that this is also the group that controls a disproportionate share of power and resources.

Another factor which may contribute to the possibility of global racism is unequal access to technology.

A century ago, people of African descent in the United States, and African and Asian people throughout the world, were dominated by forms of political control called "Jim Crow segregation" and "colonialism." Their political domination was based in part on their racial and national identity. Technology was used to reinforce the rule of white supremacy and economic exploitation.

Now a century later, a new color line is emerging: the technologically advanced "haves" whose civilization is based on the latest technologies and the information revolution versus the miseducated, under-educated "have-nots" who are overwhelmingly non-European.

Will Africa and much of the Third World face, in the not-too-distant future, a new "high technology-based colonialism? Will the new Jim Crow of the twenty-first century be created in cyberspace?

Carl Rowan's Commentary

Clinton's welfare policy: Much ado about nothing

Special to Sentinel-Voice

For months President Clinton has boasted that events have vindicated his support for laws ending "welfare as we know it"—a stance that caused many Democrats to charge that he was a conscienceless politician seeking re-election on the backs of the most miserable people in the land.

Ever since he signed legislation that ended 61 years of a federal safety net for the poor and left welfare in the hands of state officials, whose bent ranges from cost-conscious compassion to cruelty, the president has crowded about the huge reductions in the number of people on the welfare rolls.

What happened to all those people who were bounced from the welfare rolls? Did they all get jobs?

The New York Times printed a very disturbing article by a great observer of the American social scene, Jason DeParle, about welfare reform in Mississippi.

He writes: "With unemployment rates hovering at 10 percent or more, many of those leaving the rolls are failing to find jobs. Indeed, during one recent period, the families dropped for violating the new work rules outnumbered those placed in jobs by a margin of nearly two to one."

A lot of us worried about what would happen in states like Mississippi, whose governor, Kirk Fordice, has a pre-slavery mentality regarding social services.

A woman on welfare in Mississippi who refuses to become part of a work program that



CARL ROWAN

she regards as indentured servitude is punished severely, as are her children.

Not only are the meager cash grants taken away, but so are the food stamps that enabled the children to eat at a survival level and the medical insurance for adults.

I have never opposed a work requirement for people on welfare as long as jobs are available which represent something better than a reimposition of slavery.

But a "reform" that consigns children to hunger and stark deprivation is a disgrace to any state and to the nation.

I wish that every able-bodied American had a job good enough to make welfare programs obsolete, but the latest report from the Labor Department tells us that this country still had 6.8 million unemployed persons in September. These are job-seekers.

The rules still ought to be that this wealthy society will never let these jobless people and their children fall below a certain level of degradation.

It galls me to see a Democratic president focus constantly on how many people are cut from welfare rolls while saying next to nothing about those who still desperately need the help of a caring government.

The federal government must have people, beginning with the president, who periodically take a hard look to see whether their "reforms" have produced something that in the long run will be more destructive than "welfare as we used to know it."

SPEAK OUT!

We accept letters to the editor

Send your letters to: LAS VEGAS SENTINEL-VOICE

900 E. Charleston • Las Vegas, NV 89104 or fax to 380-8102

All letters must be signed and contain a daytime phone to be verified for your protection.

