

COMMENTARY

Blacks ask yourselves: When will the killing end?

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Just when we think maybe it's getting a little better, it seems we are confronted again with a horrible murder of a black child by other black children.

This time it was a little black 11-year-old girl killed by two little black boys, ages 7 and 8 in Chicago. The lives of three children and their families destroyed. And the African-American community is once again facing the reality that something drastic has gone wrong and wondering when will the killing end.

When will the killing end? The prophet Jeremiah warned thousands of years ago "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved."

Is our harvest past, is our summer ended and are we not yet saved?

When will the killing end? The harvest is past. Many of our families have seen financial successes they could never even have imagined. Many of our children attend the nation's best colleges, drive nice cars and spend vacations at the beach or skiing.

It has been a time when this generation is reaping the rewards of the sacrifices of

every previous generation of African Americans, from those who survived the Middle Passage and the slaver's whip to those who endured Jim Crow schools and jobs as domestics and porters.

The harvest is past, but many of our young people have little knowledge of those who planted the seeds and little desire to understand what those planters sacrificed so that generations later might flourish.

When will the killing end? The heat of the summer is over the heat of the summers of struggle when young and old, black and white, confronted the injustices of a segregated society. The summers when we marched and picketed and registered folks to vote and sought a better world. Those summers are over as we have become a people too comfortable with our own personal situations to be outraged at the injustices of others.

Even the heat of the summers when those in the cities burned their own communities in an act of spontaneous combustion and rage seem to be over. As self-destructive as those rebellions

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



were, they were a sign to the nation that something was terribly wrong and forced Americans to examine the discrepancy between what they said they believed and what they lived. Now the summer is ended and the rage seems to have turned inward.

The harvest is past, the summer is over and we are not saved. We are not saved when our children are still killing other children. Still throwing children out of windows, still beating children to death, still shooting innocent children in the wrong place at the wrong time, still shooting those whose shoes or jackets they covet, those they think have just looked at them wrong.

When will the killing end? When more of us take responsibility for all the children, not just our own biological children, but those

children whose mothers are children and whose fathers are in prison. When every church and mosque holds parenting classes for parents who haven't a clue about what it takes to be a mother or to be a father. When every civil rights and

community organization makes saving our children its number one priority for the 21st century. When neighbors become neighbors again, unafraid of reprimanding children as they once did and willing to become extended family to families broken by divorce or prison or abuse or death or geographical separation. When every teacher and school administrator re-commits to providing a good education for every child.

When every mayor and government official turns the rhetoric of being "education governors or mayors" into

reality and sets aside funds for computers, for books, for adequate school buildings and for the support services desperately needed by poor students. When more young parents take their responsibilities seriously and turn away from the streets and turn toward God. Until we do those things we will continue to mourn the deaths of our children, who were killed by other children. And until then, in the words of Jeremiah, "For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn and dismay has taken hold of me."

When will the killing end?

The state of black business can improve with cooperation

By Harry C. Alford
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Special to Sentinel-Voice

According to the 1992 census data, there are over 640,000 black owned businesses producing over \$32 billion dollars in annual sales. This represents about 1 percent of the total output. The growth rate of 46 percent (1992 vs. 1987) is the slowest amongst all ethnic groups.

1997 was the biggest economic growth period in the history of this nation. However, according to *Black Enterprise Magazine*, the BE 100 companies suffered a 9% loss in sales during the same year.

The Selig Center for Business at the University of Georgia states that black citizens have, after taxes, consumable dollars of over \$500 billion annually. This is 7.6 percent of the total. In other words, if we had our fair share (14 percent), it would total over a trillion dollars. But it does not really matter when over 98 percent of our dollars are spent outside of our communities. We could have over \$100 trillion and it still would go immediately out of the community and benefit other groups' net worth. We are, in effect, consumer slaves.

Consumer slaves indeed! Our net worth at the end of slavery in 1865 was approximately 1.2 percent of the total. Today, one hundred and thirty-eight years later, our net worth is approximately 1.5 percent of the total. Take away our home equity and it will not equate to .5 percent. Yes, we are spinning our wheels and much of this comes from a misunderstanding of Capitalism — the economic system this nation was founded on and thrives on.

A fine example of this ignorance happened nearly twenty years ago. The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell and the National Association of Black Manufacturers called a meeting between 300 black business owners and the Congressional Black Caucus. Each business owner was required to bring \$1,000 to contribute to a fund that would start an initiative to incubate black capitalism. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm immediately stood up and exclaimed "I don't care about black business, all I'm concerned with is jobs." Then came Congresswoman Cardiss Collins who said, "You are all a bunch of Republicans anyway!" The meeting was disrupted and the initiative never formed. Subsequently, the National Association of Black Manufacturers folded.

Today, the field is still in disarray and is certainly not level. Mack Davis, Detroit

entrepreneur, tells me that his "Pineway" furniture polish is so good that once he got it on the shelves of K-Mart stores it began outselling "Pinesol." K-Mart's reaction: it suddenly discontinued "Pineway." Isian Odum, South Carolina entrepreneur, informed his franchiser, Car Quest, that he landed a big contract with Westinghouse and sales are going to suddenly and consistently increase. Car Quest's response: The next day they gave notice that his franchise agreement would be canceled. Dr. Ted Adams has a patent on the most effective fire suppressant in the world — Pyrocap. However, very few fire departments and agencies will buy it even though it is less expensive than the competition. In the words of a Southern California procurement agent, "I would rather see women and children burn than to buy products from a black company." The sad part — he is!

What about ourselves? A self-hatred keeps us from supporting our own businesses. An ignorance forbids us from understanding that the key to economic sufficiency is an economic infrastructure that keeps our precious dollars circulating in our community. A jealousy taught during slavery still exists today. An example is the fact that the publishers of *Ebony Magazine* refused to mention the name of the great Reginald Lewis, owner of Beatrice International, in their magazine until after his death. The greatest black entrepreneur was not given recognition because he was considered "too successful."

As we approach the third millennium, we, through the National Black Chamber of Commerce, can make a change and begin moving forward. It is going to take the building of an economic infrastructure in every community we inhabit.

There must be thousands of dry cleaners, gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants, etc. At the same time we must begin to establish successful supermarkets, banks, utility companies, etc. The infrastructure will ensure that our dollars will circulate and, in effect, multiply their worth within our communities. Jobs are tied to business growth. Business ownership is tied to our net worth.

Race, and racism, is a fact of life. We must move on, march through it and succeed despite the opposition. Consider racism as "rain" and when it appears, use the "umbrella" of litigation, exposure, elections, demonstrations, etc. By all means continue to march!

The National Black Chamber of Commerce is launching its Collegiate Chapter program to

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Carl Rowan's Commentary

Embassies troublesome but are worth the hassle

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Well, now we've got a great national buzz going on over the fact that the U.S. ambassador to Kenya expressed fears of a terrorist attack and had her request for a new embassy denied months before the blast that took 250 lives, including 12 Americans.

I literally shudder to recall that when I was the ambassador to Finland in 1963-64, one lone Finnish policeman guarded the outside of the chancery and my residence, which sat smack-dab on the sidewalks of two busy streets. but he was there only at night. My wife drove herself and our children everywhere, and she personally shopped the street markets. At the height of the Cold War, in a country bordering Russia, I most often drove myself to the golf course and bowling allies.

Such conduct would be folly today in even the least contentious post in the world.

We can spend billions to make embassies and consulates highly-guarded fortresses, and provide armored cars for our personnel who have to leave the compound, but even that would not totally erase the threat of terrorism.

That raises the question whether embassies and foreign envoys are worth the trouble, the risk and the cost anymore. Especially when the widespread use of shuttle diplomacy,

roving ambassadors and the United Nations forum have usurped so many of the duties of plain old ambassadors.

Actually, the posting of representing in other countries is just as important today as it was in the time of Benjamin Franklin. An embassy staff doesn't just deal with bilateral political disputes, or argue the U.S. case on such things as sanctions against Iraq, or what to do about Kosovo. That staff does vital work in international trade.

Personnel to grant visas are vital to tourism or for family relationships. An embassy is a place where foreigners learn about the people and principles of the United States, or exchange scientific and technological information. It is necessary for the proper dispensation of American economic assistance and for many kinds of international cooperation.

So we ought not try to make State Department administrators scapegoats in the Kenya-Tanzania atrocities. We must simply recognize that similar bombings could take place at a lot of our posts, and then appreciate more the hazards faced by those who represent us abroad.

The sad reality is that giving them even the maximum feasible protection is going to take a long, risky time.



CARL ROWAN