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Mr. Lamb - I'm sending this letter again in response to your interview with Prof. Brown, author of The Long Affair, which I haven't

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yet read, and his provocative remarks about T. Jefferson. I don't claim to be any stretch any sort of scholar but I was intrigued by the similarity of our views on Jefferson.

C-Span TV
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Sirs:

Caught your screening, January 2, 1996 of Thomas Jefferson, the Third President, the American icon, author of the Declaration of Independence, exemplar of the Age of Enlightenment, an heir of Western Civilization, beneficiary of European Hegemony, but an opponent of Autocratic rule and an exponent of limited government, and 'states rights'. In a symbolic and irrefutable way Mr. Jefferson personifies the endemic hypocrisy that is a millstone holding down the American quest for greatness. Professor Brown remarked about Jefferson's preference for a society of free independent small subsistence farmers - a blatant contrast to the lifestyle into which he was born and bred - unencumbered by any government intrusion into their way of life.

As is known, but hardly publicized, Jefferson owned and operated a plantation that provided him with a comfortable standard of living gained from the free labor of slaves. He enjoyed special benefits as a slave owner, as did others of the dominant slave owning 'Squireocracy', as described by Professor Brown. This 'Squireocracy', an oligarchy of Planters, deprived people of African stock of their liberty, and by the time of the Civil War numbered approximately 225,000 families. Imbued with this background, Jefferson had to experience a metamorphosis, that inspired him to such a degree as to enable him to compose that famous clarion call for freedom, "We hold these Truths to be Self Evident that All Men are Created Equal...", a phrase that is a bane to a racially troubled hypocritical America, that painfully mocks the denigrating reality experienced particularly by African Americans, being stigmatized as grotesquely different, shamelessly parasitic, and unequal.

In an early draft of the Declaration, Jefferson denounced the slave trade which was then controlled by England. (Winds of Revolution, Time Frame, AD 1700-1800, Time-Life Books Inc., 1990) Yet, he never freed his slaves, as did George Washington at his demise, or even his diversely mixed offspring he sired with his slave mistress Sally Hemming. He must have viewed his slaves as

O. BK

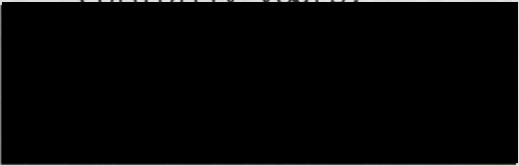
non-persons bereft of any human attributes whose posterity are viewed not much differently today, a people who are excluded from the social political and economic centers of power, and rendered virtually invisible, enduring a marginalized circumstance in which African Americans unhappily find themselves. (Paradoxically, the Urban Civil Disorders of the Revolutionary Sixties and the Million Man March made black people very visible).

Jefferson is known as a strong advocate of 'states rights', a position he upheld in defense of those independent yeoman farmers he championed. Coincidentally, or purposefully, depending on your perspective, his stand on 'state rights' provided the same shield for his fellow slave owners, the ruling agrarian class, from the possibility of government meddling into the conduct of their 'peculiar institution', a state of affairs that was not settled until the horrific ordeal of the Civil War; or did it?

P.S. [Many of Jefferson's yeoman farmers, particularly those that lived in the mountainous regions of the South, revolted against the South's 'Squireocracy', not to abolish slavery, since many fought for the Confederacy, but to preserve their way of life, (Eric Foner, Reconstruction, America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, 1988).

It is also interesting that the old 'states rights' vs centralized government imbroglio that engaged the 'Founding Fathers' has resurfaced in the form of the current wrangle over balancing the budget. For those who don't know or who ignore the facts, the proponents of 'state rights' supported the institution of slavery and established a segregated apartheid society, under law. African American political civic and economic advances were not made under the aegis of 'states rights'. As a matter of fact the inherent aim of most states rights legislation, vis-a-vis black people, i.e., Black Codes, Grandfather Clause, etc., was to nullify the Civil Rights protections granted to black Americans by the Federal government. Deja Vu!?

Cordially yours,



CC: My Adult Children and Their Peers
Ed Gordon, BET, Lead Story
Wilbert Tatum, NY Amsterdam News
Gary Impotep Byrd, WLIB Radio

Your broad appeal to the majority population seems to contradict the racial reality that exists in America. You appear to have garnered more white support, according to the polls, than either Dr. King or Reverend Jackson, both who were controversial figures who had their share of white support. Though you have impressive powers of persuasion you have yet to be touched with controversy. Alan Keyes, the republican presidential candidate, however, had a similar appeal, to a lesser degree, propagating the Conservative party message to white Republican voters who, by the way, gave him only 3% of their vote despite all the messianic fervor he could muster in his speeches. He preached the party line but he obviously was not their man; do you think you could have been their man? Reverend Jackson received about 7 million Democratic votes during his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, I wonder what percentage were white? Democratic Mayor David Dinkins barely, by the skin of his teeth, became Mayor of New York City, after dropping from a twenty-point lead to scarcely a two-point lead, in a predominantly democratic town. Can it be that those folks who laud you as a good man and prospective presidential candidate for the Republican Party speak with a forked tongue? (I'm aware of your mixed support among African Americans which I won't pursue here. I am, as Alma, a Democrat, if you're curious.)

The wide popular white support you presently enjoy, brings to mind the substantial white support accorded Booker T. Washington a hundred years ago. His times and circumstances were not that much different from today except that racist feelings and behavior were more pronounced and overt --- during the decade of the "Gay Nineties" over 100 black men were lynched, yearly ---, it was expected that he, Booker T., would lead and influence the bulk of the black population to accept and abide by the prevailing segregation laws and become reconciled to their subordinate status in America. I wonder what is expected of you, General Powell?

Yes, America has made great strides since 1619, the year Africans were dropped off on North American soil, and during the time of Colonial legislatures, dominated by relatively wealthy white landowners, assigned them, by law, to the condition of slaves. But, America, could not, in the eyes of world opinion, continue not to live up to its credo, "All Men Are Created Equal". You stated that Thomas Jefferson was one of your heros. Jefferson symbolizes the endemic hypocrisy that permeates American society today because as the author of the "Declaration", he was unable to disconnect from his role as a slave owner; he could have at least freed his slaves on his demise, as Washington did at his passing. He could have become an unequivocal model as a redeemer of America's abomination instead of leaving an unresolved legacy of racist turmoil. Jefferson, by the way was a strong champion of states rights; no central government telling him how to run his plantation.

Getting ahead and realizing ones dreams in the womb-like security of the military has its appeal, but most Americans, black or otherwise, are civilians. You praised highly the values and benefits of private enterprise, but one must be cognizant of the fact that the bulk of black middle class workers are employed by government, Federal, which employs about 35% black Americans, as well as state and local jurisdictions - there's still a lot of discrimination out there in the private sector. The strident calls for the down sizing of government can have a devastating impact on the viability of black employment, generally, and could decimate the black middle class. Just recently a book has been released, The Federal Plantation, Affirmative Inaction, - I don't know who published - which tell of