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Topic

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Opinion
Programming

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MR. LAMB;

Believe it or not the attached commentary started as a letter. What virtually became an essay grew out of watching C-Span's projection of political pundits and media types on its cameras pontificating about the virtues of criminal and welfare reform calling for what became a rallying cry of hard nose rightists, "three strikes and you're out" and touting the need for a two year limit for welfare recipients who were feeding at the public trough, which caused me to pause. The tone and intent of their remarks pandering to white prejudices alerted my socially calibrated antenna which signaled to me that whites were scapegoating black people again. (My racially calibrated antenna is an evolutionary contingency induced by the racist environment found in America).

Hence the attached essay.

What I have written, you may or may not be savvy to. Tinged with hysteria the current debate on the "Anti Crime Bill" epitomizes in an unparallel way the face of America dealing with its dilemma of race relations. The verbal storm centering around the need and value of prevention, called social pork, reflects an unspoken belief that tax money used to support programs favoring black people that don't work is tax money wasted. Yet there is no objection to use the same tax dollar to build more jails, to incarcerate black males. Yes, race matters and this country's racist proclivities cost the nation an unconscionable 30 billion dollars. Anti crime equates to anti-black.

The Congressional Debaters play a game of word association; by condemning "Midnight Basketball" they are denying primarily black youth not white youth this safety valve alternative; a "Welfare

"Queen" is a young black woman birthing out-of-wedlock babies and defrauding the government; "street criminals" are young black males, not white; taking back the street means the streets of black communities, not white communities. President Clinton never misses a chance to speak of the importance to give young people something to say "yes" to. But he is not talking about white kids since white kids have plenty to say "yes" to.

These Debaters, resorting to sophistic tactics, persist in conducting their arguments in non racial terms dismissing the fact that a different race exists in this nation, the black race; invisible it was, invisible it remains. When they say they are tired of crime, they mean they are tired of black people running wild. The call for more police and prisons is aimed to control and circumscribed the violent and predatory behavior of some black youth, not the overall population. Meanwhile, more jail space could be gained without additional spending by placing non violent drug abusers in drug rehab programs instead of jails. Since the race of these criminals are rarely mentioned, the strategem of pretend is employed which conjures belief that the anti crime bill is dealing with an American problem when in fact the problem impacts primarily on the black community, the white community being hardly touched to any degree in their communities. Everyone knows that the overwhelming number of victims of "street crime" are blacks, not whites.

Paranoia and endemic American hypocrisy reigns unfettered. The thrust of my essay is that the denigrating attitudes of whites toward blacks negates positive social progress. When whites deal with each other their relations are on a different plane then when whites relate to blacks. The tenor of white/black relationship debases black identity and diminishes their humanity. Despite the prevalence of the above deleterious connections there do exist genuine friendships between blacks and whites.

Other than providing for more police and jails the bill does, however, contain some redeeming features including programs to engage young people in positive activities, a ban on a number of assault weapons, a program to provide support services for violently abused women, and increased monies for drug rehabilitation to name a few high spots that give the bill some justification. Yet, additional offences subject to the death penalty were added to a judicial process already overladen with the bane of death sentencing; a racial justice provision which would have brought a measure of fairness to the application of the death penalty against black criminals was defeated, totally ignoring the incongruity of ten men waiting on death row in the Federal system who are all black.

Despite all the existing programs designed to provide job training and hope generating youth activities, crime persists and is growing. A change in the racist feeling of whites against blacks could go a long way to lessen the surge of criminal and anti-social behavior exhibited among too many young people of color. I could go on but then it would become another dissertation.

Having said all this, the irony is that if the bill becomes law and achieve its stated goal, the reduction of crime, and fosters a climate of even handedness, black people will be the major beneficiaries, and by extension America. Racial diversity is a reality in America, a reality that is anathema to most white Americans; they either accept diversity or suffer adversity. White people would be wise to abide by Pogo's admonition, "we have seen the enemy and the enemy is us".

At this writing the anti-crime bill was passed and is on its way to become law. Its proponents state that the law will only impact on about 20% of the crime problem. The passage of this bill points up the racial blinders worn by an American society that will spend \$30 billion to incarcerate a relatively few hard core violent criminals who happen to be black to long terms and to unfairly execute them, and concomitantly placing black people in America under the gun. Does this make sense to you?

Cordially Yours,

P.S Love your closing piano theme. To my jazz conditioned ears it sounds Bachman to me who by the way was one of Duke Ellington's favorite composer