

PART II
RACIAL
ISSUES

ROUTINE CRUELTY

In a world where the media are ready to magnify innocuous remarks or a minor problem into a trauma or a disaster, there is remarkably little attention being paid to cruelties routinely inflicted on children by our laws and our courts. That cruelty is ripping children away from the only home they have ever known, to be sent away—often far away—to be raised by strangers.

Such drastic action may be necessary when children have been abused or neglected, but kids have been seized from loving homes where there has never even been an accusation of abuse or neglect. As with so many irrational acts, race and political correctness are involved.

One of the children who is currently being threatened with this fate is a little boy in California named Santos, who may be sent off to live on an Indian reservation in Minnesota, among people he has never known, speaking a language he does not understand. Moreover, the single woman who is trying to adopt him there has said that she plans to put him in day care, which he has never been in before. He has been cared for at home by a married couple since he was 3 months old. He will be soon be 3 years old.

How could such an insane situation have arisen? Easy. It is

called the Indian Child Welfare Act. And it began, like so many catastrophes, with good intentions.

Back in 1978, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act to prevent Indian children from being removed from their families and tribes by outside know-it-alls and social engineers. So far, so good. But, once a law is on the books, it means whatever the lawyers and the courts say it means. That is how little Santos got trapped in a nightmare.

Santos is part Indian, but neither he nor his biological parents has ever lived on a reservation or among an Indian tribe. When he was born and began suffering withdrawal because of his mother's cocaine addiction, the authorities took custody of him. He was put into a foster home with a Spanish-speaking couple whom he now regards as his parents and who want to adopt him.

Santos' biological mother has shown very little interest in him—and even that little bit of interest has not been reciprocated by Santos. He has hung up on her when she phoned and cried when she visited. The woman on an Indian reservation did not even know of Santos' existence until informed by the tribal council, which wants to claim him under the Indian Child Welfare Act. Six months later, she saw the little boy for the first time.

It gets worse. Two psychologists have become involved in the case. Shrink A has “spent approximately 10 minutes alone” with Santos, according to the California Court of Appeal in its ruling this past October 19th. She did not interview the couple with whom he has been living all this time, even though a Spanish-speaking social worker was available to enable her to converse with the boy's foster parents.

Nevertheless, Shrink A has decided that Santos would be better off being “moved to be with his tribe and his family” on a reservation in Minnesota. This strained definition of

“family” is based on the fact that the woman on the reservation is a distant relative of his mother. Incidentally, Shrink A has never interviewed this distant relative either. Undaunted, Shrink A has said that Santos would not be “catastrophically damaged” by the change because Santos has not “bonded” with his foster parents, but has “bonded to his birth mother, who is unable to care for him.” This strained definition of bonding is based on counting the time spent in his mother’s womb, as well as the 9 days he spent with her after birth.

A second psychologist based his conclusions on what he had actually seen, rather than on such speculations. What he saw was that little Santos clings to his foster mother and became distressed when his foster father was asked to leave the room, crying “papa, papa.” At another time, when Santos was with his foster father and Shrink B wanted to see the little boy alone, Santos became “clingy” with his foster father and “hugged him tightly while exclaiming ‘papa, papa.’”

Little Santos has not yet been sent to Minnesota. The appellate court said that the “matter is remanded for further proceedings,” which means a continuing cloud of uncertainty hanging over a little boy who has become a little pawn. How could anyone do this to him? Tragically, it has happened to many others.

LOSING THE RACE

Recently published studies have focused attention on the gap between the test scores of black and white school children. One study showed that the gap, which had been narrowing somewhat in years past, has now widened.

Gaps between racial or ethnic groups in academic performances are commonplace around the world, though some discussions of the black-white difference in America treat it as if it were something unique, requiring a unique explanation—whether that explanation is genes or discrimination. An entirely different explanation is offered by a black professor at the University of California at Berkeley, John H. McWhorter.

In a recently published book with the double-meaning title, *Losing the Race* (and the subtitle, “Self-Sabotage in Black America”), Professor McWhorter argues that most black students do not work as hard as white or Asian students, partly because the culture that they come from fails to give as high a priority to academic achievement and partly because many of their peers regard academic striving as “acting white.” McWhorter’s arguments are fuller and more subtle than this summary can be, but that is the gist of it.

Various other studies of time spent on homework, tough courses taken and other indicators of student effort support McWhorter’s thesis. The examples he gives from his own ex-

perience teaching black, white and Asian students will ring true to anyone else who has taught all three. Yet there are other black academics, activists and politicians who denounce such candor as McWhorter shows, seeing it as washing blacks' dirty laundry in front of white people.

McWhorter, however, clearly considers it less important to protect the image of blacks than to promote the education and advancement of blacks by facing reality and doing something about it. One of the things he wants done is putting an end to excuses and to the whole victimhood mentality which spawns excuses. To those who point to the poverty among blacks or to the inadequacies of ghetto schools, he replies by citing data which show that Asian American youngsters from low-income families have better academic records than black youngsters from affluent families—and that these Asian American youngsters do better even when attending the same inadequate schools as blacks.

Such brutal truths are of course anathema to those who reject any internal factors among the explanations of lagging black achievements in education or elsewhere. In the longer view of history, McWhorter acknowledges the negative effects of external factors such as slavery, discrimination and poverty. But he refuses to go along with the current use of these external factors to excuse their own lack of effort on the part of those blacks who have grown up in affluent middle-class communities that are racially integrated.

Although initially a supporter of affirmative action, Professor McWhorter now regards it as having outlived its usefulness and become counter-productive. Its main harm to blacks is in reducing incentives to do their best. Here McWhorter uses himself as one of many examples, admitting that he never went all-out to do his best work in high school, because he knew that this would not be necessary in order for him to be

admitted to a first-rate college. Similar effects of affirmative action have been found in other countries around the world.

One of the chilling chapters in *Losing the Race* covers the controversy over teaching “black English” in the Oakland schools. Because McWhorter publicly opposed this practice as educationally harmful—“depriving many black children of a ticket out of the ghetto”—he found himself denounced by many other blacks to whom “presenting a united front outweighs acknowledging fact.” Worse, those preoccupied with this united front against whites assume that a black person who goes against the party line “could only be doing so as either a mistake or as active treachery.”

It would of course never occur to such people that it is they who are betraying the interests of the race by being willing to sacrifice a whole generation of black children, rather than let themselves be embarrassed in the eyes of whites. Among those publicly denouncing McWhorter were individuals who privately agreed with him that “black English” was a bad idea.

This is one of a small but growing number of books which discuss racial issues honestly. It is about time.

REPARATIONS FOR SLAVERY?

The first thing to understand about the issue of reparations for slavery is that no money is going to be paid. The very people who are demanding reparations know that it is not going to happen.

Why then are they demanding something that they know they are not going to get? Because the demagogues themselves will benefit, even if nobody else does. Stirring up historic grievances pays off in publicity and votes.

Some are saying that Congress should at least issue an official apology for slavery. But slavery is not something you can apologize for, any more than you can apologize for murder. You apologize for accidentally stepping on someone's toes or for playing your TV too loud at night. But, if you have ever enslaved anybody, an apology is not going to cut it. And if you never enslaved anybody, then what are you apologizing for?

The very idea of apologizing for what somebody else did is meaningless, however fashionable it has become. A scholar once said that the great economist David Ricardo "was above the unctuous phrases that cost so little and yield such ample returns." Apparently many others are not.

The only thing that would give the idea of reparations for slavery even the appearance of rationality is an assumption of

collective guilt, passed down from generation to generation. But, if we start operating on the principle that people alive today are responsible for what their ancestors did in centuries past, we will be adopting a principle that can tear any society apart, especially a multi-ethnic society like the United States.

Even if we were willing to go down that dangerous road, the facts of history do not square with the demand for reparations. Millions of immigrants arrived in this country from Europe, Asia and Latin America after slavery was over. Are their descendants guilty too and expected to pay out hard cash to redeem themselves?

Even during the era of slavery, most white people owned no slaves. Are their descendants supposed to pay for the descendants of those who did?

What about the effect of all this on today's black population? Is anyone made better off by being supplied with resentments and distractions from the task of developing the capabilities that pay off in a booming economy and a high-tech world? Whites may experience a passing annoyance over the reparations issue, but blacks—especially young blacks—can sustain more lasting damage from misallocating their time, attention and efforts.

Does anyone seriously suggest that blacks in America today would be better off if they were in Africa? If not, then what is the compensation for?

Sometimes it is claimed that slavery made a great contribution to the development of the American economy, from which other Americans benefitted, so that reparations would be like back pay. Although slaveowners benefitted from slavery, it is by no means obvious that there were net benefits to the economy as a whole, especially when you subtract the staggering costs of the Civil War.

Should the immoral gains of dead people be repaid by liv-

ing people who are no better off than if slavery had never existed? The poorest region of the United States has long been the region in which slavery was concentrated. The same is true of Brazil—and was true of 18th century Europe. The worldwide track record of slavery as an economic system is bad. Slaveowners benefitted, but that is not saying that the economy as a whole benefitted.

The last desperate argument for reparations is that blacks have lower incomes and occupations than whites today because of the legacy of slavery. Do the people who say this seriously believe that black and white incomes and occupations would be the same if Africans had immigrated voluntarily to this country?

Scholars who have spent years studying racial and ethnic groups in countries around the world have yet to come up with a single country where all the different groups have the same incomes and occupations. Why would people from Africa be the lone exception on this planet? Groups everywhere differ too much in too many ways to have the same outcomes.

Slavery itself was not unique to Africans. The very word “slave” derives from the name of a European people—the Slavs, who were enslaved for centuries before the first African was brought to the Western Hemisphere. The tragic fact is that slavery existed all over the world, for thousands of years. Unfortunately, irresponsible demagogues have also existed for thousands of years.

THE LESSONS OF INDONESIA

Tragic as the lethal rioting in Indonesia has been, what is an additional tragedy for Americans is how few of us seem to have understood what went wrong there—and what could go wrong here.

While the media depict the riots as being directed against Indonesia's corrupt and despotic President Suharto, the biggest victims are in fact members of the Chinese minority in that country. It is their stores that are being looted and burned, and it is they who are being assaulted and killed.

One TV journalist on the scene referred to the Indonesian rioters as "the dispossessed." Yet the very pictures his cameraman was taking showed the rioters looking far less like an enraged proletariat rising up against oppression than like happy looters toting home television sets and other goodies stolen from shopping malls.

There are many legitimate grievances against the Suharto regime and that may be what set off the riots in the first place. But that is no reason to romanticize the ugly envy and resentment that Indonesians have long felt against the Chinese, who have not dispossessed them of anything.

Some find it strange and sinister that the Chinese, who are just 5 percent of the population of Indonesia own an esti-

mated 80 percent of the capital of the country. But it is neither strange nor sinister.

The Chinese did not come in and take over the commerce and industry of Indonesia. The Chinese *created* most of that commerce and industry. It is no more strange that most of the capital in the country belongs to the Chinese than it is that most of the feathers in the world belong to birds. That is where feathers originate.

What is strange—and what may ultimately be sinister in its effects—is the blind dogma that any deviation from an even distribution of income, wealth, occupations or honors is both odd and a sign of something nefarious going on. In reality, such “disparate” statistics are common around the world and have been common in centuries past.

People from India once had a similar predominance in the businesses of much of East Africa—not because they took over these businesses but because they created them. So did the Jews in prewar Poland, the Germans in southern Brazil, the Ibos in northern Nigeria, the Italians in Buenos Aires, the Lebanese in West Africa . . . and on and on.

If we want to understand why the majority populations of these various places did not have the same entrepreneurship as these minorities, then we can talk about history and culture. But, if we are ignorant of such things, then we can at least avoid misleading everyone with romantic hogwash about “the dispossessed.”

President Suharto and his family have used the power of government to create lucrative monopolies for themselves, as well as raking off graft from legitimate businesses. But it is very doubtful that the president’s heavy-handed military forces are letting the masses burn and loot the Suharto enterprises.

In short, those who caused the present economic crisis in Indonesia are suffering few, if any, consequences while those

who built up much of this country are scapegoats being treated as if they had torn it down. Politics has a way of turning everything upside down.

The economic crisis in Indonesia was created by the government's austerity program, which was imposed by the International Monetary Fund as a condition for giving a multibillion-dollar bailout. These IMF officials are thousands of miles away from the riots, in Washington, D.C.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the bailout are the international financiers who put big bucks into risky investments in Indonesia, secure in the knowledge that IMF bureaucrats would bail them out if things turned bad.

Why is the IMF so generous with money supplied by American and other taxpayers? Precisely because it is other people's money—and because handing out that money allows the IMF to wield global power and impose their pet notions on governments that are desperate for the bailout.

When you see rioting in Indonesia, you are seeing your tax dollars at work.

You are also seeing what can happen when a corrupt president is above the law.

BLACKS AND BOOTSTRAPS

One of the things I have been falsely accused of many times over the years is advising blacks to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. But you can look through the 21 books, dozens of articles and hundreds of newspaper columns I have written without finding any such statement. That is because I am not in the business of giving advice to individuals and groups, but rather in the business of discussing public policy and trying to show where one policy is better than another.

It is considered the height of callousness to tell blacks to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. But the cold historical fact is that most blacks did lift themselves out of poverty by their own bootstraps—before their political rescuers arrived on the scene with civil rights legislation in the 1960s or affirmative action policies in the 1970s.

As of 1940, 87 percent of black families lived below the official poverty line. This fell to 47 percent by 1960, without any major federal legislation on civil rights and before the rise and expansion of the welfare state under the Great Society programs of President Lyndon Johnson.

This decline in the poverty rate among blacks continued during the 1960s, dropping from 47 percent to 30 percent. But even this continuation of a trend already begun long before cannot all be attributed automatically to the new government

programs. Moreover, the first decade of affirmative action—the 1970s—ended with the poverty rate among black families at 29 percent. Even if that one percent decline was due to affirmative action, it was not much.

The fact that an entirely different picture has been cultivated and spread throughout the media cannot change the historical facts. What it can do—and has done—is make blacks look like passive recipients of government beneficence, causing many whites to wonder why blacks can't advance on their own, like other groups. Worse, it has convinced many blacks themselves that their economic progress depends on government programs in general and affirmative action in particular.

It is undoubtedly true that the careers of black "leaders," politicians and community activists depend heavily on government programs. It is their ability to lobby for government goodies that keeps such people in business and in the limelight. It was the breakdown of restrictions on black voting in the South that caused a rapidly rising number of black elected officials.

Even today, it is the politicizing of racial hype that enables many black public figures to remain public figures and to extort money and concessions from private businesses by threatening to call them racists or organize boycotts if they don't pony up. There is no question that the 1960s marked the decisive upturn in opportunity for race hustlers.

At one time, the aspirations of black leaders and the well-being of the black population at large coincided, since both were striving to end Jim Crow laws and other racial barriers. But such coincidences do not last, either among blacks or among other racial or ethnic groups in the United States or in other countries.

"Leaders" have their own interests and agendas that they push, even when the effects on those for whom they claim to

speakers are detrimental. That is where we are today. Black leaders have a vested interest in black dependency—on them and on the government that they can try to influence.

Independent blacks who make it on their own are ignored as irrelevant or distracting. That is true not only of individuals, but also of institutions like all-black Dunbar High School in Washington, which for 85 years brought quality education to its students. Dunbar students exceeded national norms on IQ tests, years before the Supreme Court said that separate education was inherently unequal.

Dunbar was located within walking distance of the Supreme Court that essentially declared its existence impossible. Ironically, it was the political maneuvering following the historic desegregation decision of the High Court that ended Dunbar's long career as a quality institution and reduced it to just another failing ghetto school. But there are other quality black schools today—and they are still largely ignored today.

We have now reached the point where virtually everything that serves black "leaders"—dependency, grievance-hunting, racial hype and paranoia—are major disservices to the cause of advancing blacks, at a time when their opportunities have never been better.

“RACISM” IN WORD AND DEED

It has become all too common for some innocuous remark by a public figure to be seized upon and twisted to make it seem “racist,” setting off loud denunciations by those who are in the business of loud denunciations. Meanwhile, actions and policies that do very real and very lasting harm to racial and ethnic minorities not only pass unchallenged, but are often engaged in by politicians who enjoy overwhelming support from minority voters.

There was virtually no comment from black leaders or the media when recently published census data showed that the black population of San Francisco had declined 15 percent between the 1990 census and the 2000 census. In San Mateo County, on the adjoining peninsula, the decline was 20 percent. In once predominantly black East Palo Alto, blacks are now a minority.

All of these are places firmly under the control of liberal Democrats, so no politically incorrect words are ever likely to be said about blacks in the communities from which they are being forced out. Yet any businessman whose hiring policies had such a “disparate impact” on minority employment would be liable to find himself hauled into court and charged with discrimination.

The point here is not to claim that the substantial reduc-

tion of the black population in the San Francisco Bay area is a result of racism. The point is that there is something happening whose net effect is to make it harder for blacks to live in places dominated by Democrats, who receive nine-tenths of their votes.

It is very doubtful that the policies which force blacks out of much of the San Francisco peninsula are racially motivated. The affluent liberal-left types who dominate the region would very likely accept a black family that wanted to buy a house costing half a million dollars and up, or rent an apartment at a couple of grand a month.

Even in the more precious high-end communities on the peninsula, a place could probably be found for those blacks who can afford to buy lots zoned for a minimum size of two acres and requiring room for four parking spaces on their property, in addition to whatever space is taken up by their swimming pools and stables for their horses. It is just that not many blacks are in the market for such housing.

While it is not necessary to charge racism, it is also not simply a happenstance that liberal Democrats are in control in California communities where sky-high housing prices have forced ordinary people—black or white—to move out. The political agenda of California's liberal Democrats has made housing unaffordable at the very time when their words constantly proclaim their desire for "affordable housing."

There was a time, about 30 years ago, when California's housing prices were not very different from housing prices in the rest of the country. Then a combination of environmental extremists and other liberal-left types became dominant in the state's Democratic Party, leading to innumerable and ingenious restrictions on the building of housing.

That was the point at which coastal California's housing prices left planet Earth and soared into outer space. Now peo-

ple of average incomes, of whatever race, have to move to communities farther inland to find homes or apartments they can pay for. Some have to move so far inland that you can even find a Republican in office now and then.

Housing is just one of the areas where the black vote goes overwhelmingly to politicians whose policies are harmful to blacks. Even more harmful in the long run are failing public schools in the ghettos, where much of the next generation has its hopes of advancement destroyed before they can even get off the ground.

No group is more in favor of vouchers than blacks—and no one is more opposed to vouchers than the Democrats, including the Congressional Black Caucus. This doesn't mean that Democrats are racist. It is just that they need the support of the teachers' unions, and they are not going to get it if they vote for vouchers, whereas they can count on the votes of blacks regardless.

Under these conditions, who should be surprised that Democrats are ready to sacrifice another generation of black youngsters for the greater good of the teachers' unions?

Urban Renewal, policies artificially forcing up the price of food and many job-destroying policies promoted by Democrats all work against blacks. But these are only deeds, while words seem to be supreme in politics.

SWEEPING SUCCESS UNDER THE RUG

Recently I was surprised to learn of a highly successful black architect whose career began back in the 1920s, and of a black engineer and inventor from even further back, in the 1870s. With all the attention being given to various blacks during “Black History Month” and other such celebrations, it seemed strange to me that so little attention had been paid to these two men.

There has also been a remarkable lack of interest in some academically outstanding black schools, despite much political hand-wringing over the problems of black education. Put bluntly, some kinds of success seem to be swept under the rug, while other minor figures are inflated for the sake of racial breast-beating.

Why?

Let us begin with Paul Williams, a black man who became an architect in southern California in the 1920s, despite warnings from others that there was no market for a black architect. Few of his own people had the money to hire an architect and whites would prefer to hire a white architect. The 1920s were, after all, one of the periods of the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and its spread outside the South. Racism was big.

Nevertheless, Paul Williams studied to become an architect. His first job offers were so meager that he agreed to be-

come an office boy at an architectural firm—with no salary, working just to get experience. Yet, after he started working, the company decided to pay him after all. Obviously, he must have impressed somebody.

Over the decades that followed, Williams impressed many people. Wealthy white businessmen began having him design both their businesses and their homes. So did movie stars like Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, and Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. He also designed churches and other structures, and was part of the team of architects who designed the modernistic theme building at the Los Angeles International Airport.

An even more remarkable black man was Elijah McCoy, born in 1844, the son of escaped slaves. He lived in Canada but somehow made his way to Scotland, where he studied engineering. After returning to North America, McCoy invented a device which allowed machines to be oiled automatically while still running. Before, machinery either had to be shut down to be lubricated—which was costly in terms of lost production—or boys had to risk injury by oiling by hand while the machines were moving.

McCoy's invention was so successful that it had many imitators. None was as good, however, and buyers began to insist on getting "the real McCoy"—adding a new idiom to the language.

Why are these men much less celebrated than other blacks whose achievements were not as great?

What they did was an individual achievement and owed nothing to the civil rights movements or other political activity. More than that, they cast doubt on the whole vision of blacks as being held back solely by white racism and discrimination. Both men encountered prejudice and discrimination, but it didn't stop them.

Much the same story could be told of various black schools

which maintained high academic standards, even during the era of Jim Crow, when separate was seldom equal and very few of the supposed “prerequisites” of good education were available. Here again was an achievement that did not follow the script of black protests or other appeals to whites.

Paul Williams was candid enough to say that cultural deficiencies within the black community played a role in the economic and social lags of blacks. In other words, white racism was not the be-all and end-all excuse. Other independent black achievements suggest the same thing. That may be why they are swept under the rug, lest the great ideological bubble burst.

A black attorney once told me that, when he first entered law school, the black students there told him that a certain professor never gave blacks a higher grade than C. But this particular student decided that he just had to have the course that this professor taught and so he took his chances. After he received a grade of B+ he was surprised to find other black students being resentful toward him. He too had burst the bubble.

Egos, careers and massive government programs have all been based on a certain vision of race. Anything which threatens that vision is likely to be ignored or resented. But we need success and the lessons taught by success more than we need any political vision.

SORTING BY RACE

New York City is cracking down on taxi drivers who refuse to pick up black males. The mayor, the media and the intelligentsia are suddenly energized, as if this were some new problem that they just discovered.

As a black male, I have for years either rented a car or had somebody pick me up to drive me to places in New York where I had to go at night, because I was not about to stand around waiting for a taxi to pick me up. There were no problems getting taxis in the daytime in midtown Manhattan, but night is a different ball game.

Do I resent having to make special arrangements? Of course. Do I blame the cabbies? No.

Given the crime statistics, do I have a right to demand that taxi drivers risk their lives for my convenience? What am I going to say to the widows and orphans of dead cabbies? "Hey, I have to get to the Manhattan Institute to give a talk and don't feel like bothering with Hertz or Avis"? That would be a very hard sell, especially to the widows and orphans of *black* taxi drivers, who also pass up black males at night.

The tragic irony in all this is that things were not always this way. There was a time when my biggest problem with taxis in New York was being able to afford one. Crime is the

real culprit, however much the demagogues may prefer “racism.” Do the cabbies suddenly become racists after sundown?

Professor David Levering Lewis’ great book about the 1920s, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, refers to taxis available there at night and being hailed by whites from downtown after they emerged from Harlem parties in the wee hours of the morning. That was a different world. The reality was different, not just “perceptions.”

Racial profiling by the government is more troubling, especially when it involves armed police in broad daylight. But nobody judges each person as an individual, no matter how much that pious phrase is used. And race is by no means the only basis for profiling.

People familiar with the stringent security system that you have to pass through going into and out of Israel are amazed when I tell them that my wife and I have been through it four times without ever having our suitcases opened for inspection. For whatever reason, we must not fit the profiles used by Israeli security guards.

The last time we were going to Israel, we saw some poor lady right ahead of us held up for more than half an hour while the security guard opened up her suitcase and spread her belongings all over the counter. When our turn came, he waved us on impatiently, as if he didn’t want to waste time on us.

Back when I was a young Marine who had graduated from the Navy’s photography school at Pensacola, a group of us were assigned to the photo lab at Camp Lejeune, N.C. We were a bunch of cocky young guys who got a reputation as trouble-makers and became known—not always affectionately—as “the Pensacola gang.”

When the captain in charge had about as much of us as he could stand, he had us all transferred out—and separated.

Months later, another graduate from Pensacola was assigned to the lab but, the moment he set foot on the base, he was told that his orders had been changed. He was transferred sight unseen.

He was not judged as an individual. Just the one word “Pensacola” probably sent the captain’s blood pressure up through the roof. Except for me, all these people were white, so race had nothing to do with it. But it was profiling.

The new guy, a very easy-going fellow who would undoubtedly have fit in well at the lab, had a right to be resentful. But toward whom? Just the captain or also those Pensacola graduates who preceded him?

An even more personal example involved a physician who referred me to a cardiologist for extraordinary testing after he had given me a routine physical. The physician said that nothing he had seen in his examination of me would have led him to refer me to a cardiologist. He did it because three of my brothers had died of heart attacks. I was not judged as an individual—nor should I have been.

We ought to be concerned because taxis avoid picking up black males at night. But we ought to be concerned about what causes it, not just seize another opportunity for self-righteous denunciation.

THE MAGIC WORD

Perhaps Secretary of State Colin Powell's decision to pull the American delegation out of the so-called U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, will be just a footnote in history. But we can at least hope that it may be a turning point toward a future time when "racism" will no longer be a magic word used to gain money or political concessions.

Within the United States, Jesse Jackson and others have repeatedly scared millions of dollars out of big corporations, just by threatening to use the magic word "racism." Even the police have sometimes turned a blind eye to violations of the law, lest they be tarred with that magic word that will bring the whole liberal media crashing down on them. But letting criminal activity go on unimpeded and unpunished has hurt minority communities most of all.

Against this background, it was to be expected that some African and Arab nations would hope that invoking this magic word might scare some money out of the United States as "reparations" for slavery and get some kind of United Nations condemnation of Israel as a bonus. But this time the magic didn't work.

Singling out Israel to blame for the Middle East's problems was probably the straw that broke the camel's back, leading

both the U.S. and Israel to withdraw their delegations from the conference in Durban. Arab caricatures of Jews with big noses and bloody fangs were hardly a way of being against racism.

The real world-class chutzpah, however, was the demand of African and Arab nations for reparations of slavery. Just who do you suppose enslaved the millions of Africans who ended up in the Western Hemisphere? It was the Africans. And who enslaved the even greater number of millions of African slaves who ended up in the Islamic world? It was the Arabs.

During the era of African slavery, Europeans died like flies in tropical Africa, where diseases flourished for which they had no biological immunity and for which medical science had yet to devise a cure. Capturing people to sell into slavery was the work of Africans in West Africa and of Arabs and Africans in East Africa.

Europeans came in their ships, bought slaves from the Africans, and then left the scene quickly before they fell sick from African diseases. Even so, many white crewmen on the ships bringing slaves from Africa to the Western Hemisphere died on the way. The notion that it was white people who introduced slavery to Africa, or who captured most of the slaves themselves, may fit the mindset of those who thought that *Roots* was history, but this myth will not stand up to facts, logic or economics.

Since it was the Africans and the Arabs who actually caught and sold slaves, do the African and Arab nations plan to send reparations over here to the descendants of enslaved Africans living in the Western Hemisphere? Of course not. They want the United States to lay some of those American dollars on them! We have fallen for so many other sucker plays in the past, why not try this one on us?

When slavery is mentioned, too many people automati-

cally think of whites enslaving blacks. That is not even one-tenth of the story of slavery, which existed on every inhabited continent. The very word “slave” derives from the word for some white people who were enslaved on a mass scale—the Slavs—for more centuries than blacks were enslaved in the Western Hemisphere.

Moreover, slavery existed in the Western Hemisphere before the first black or white person ever set foot on these shores. The indigenous peoples of this hemisphere enslaved one another, just as Asians enslaved Asians, Europeans enslaved Europeans, and Africans enslaved Africans. Attempts to limit the discussion of slavery to slavery in the United States or in Western civilization make sense only as a strategy to get money or political concessions.

Western civilization was the first civilization to regard slavery as morally wrong and it is the civilization with the most sense of guilt about it. To this very moment slavery continues in parts of Africa and the Islamic world. Very little noise is made about it by those who denounce the slavery of the past in the West, because there is no money to be made denouncing it and no political advantages to be gained.

If the American delegation walking out of the U.N. Conference Against Racism represented a belated waking up to the scams being played, that could be a very healthy sign for the future—not only on the international scene, but within the United States as well.

RACE AND THE NEW CENTURY

W. E. B. DuBois once said that the problem of the 20th century world was going to be the problem of the color line. Like many ringing predictions, it missed the mark by a wide margin. The biggest atrocity of this century against any people—the Holocaust—involved people of the same color as those who killed them. So do the current atrocities in the Balkans and in Africa.

In one sense, however, DuBois was right. The biggest political problem of this century for black Americans has been the fight to abolish the color line, epitomized by Jim Crow laws in the South.

With a new century approaching, it is by no means clear that the biggest problem facing black Americans is still the problem of the color line. Indeed, that problem has already been superseded by another: self-destruction, both cultural and physical.

In the high-tech world that is already upon us and shows every sign of expanding dramatically in the next century, know-how is king. People who started businesses in garages have gone on to earn fortunes because they had the know-how. You don't even have to find someone to hire you. You can start up your own business.

People from India are not only hired in Silicon Valley, they

own their own companies in Silicon Valley. So much for the color line. But you have to have the know-how. And even college-educated blacks are seldom going into the fields where you can get high-tech know-how. Ghetto schools seldom provide the skills on which science and engineering are based.

The public schools are where the battle needs to be fought, but too many black political “leaders” are too dependent on labor unions in general and the teachers union in particular to fight that battle. And they are too dependent on a vision of victimhood to risk telling young blacks that they have to get their own act together too.

On the contrary, Jesse Jackson is currently defending hoodlums who have been expelled from school. This is a classic example of black “leaders” who are leading their people to cultural suicide, just as surely as cult leader Jim Jones led his followers to physical suicide in Guiana. There are few things more dishonorable than misleading the young.

It is an old cliché that generals try to fight the last war over again. That is what a whole generation of black “leaders” is doing—fighting the old war against the color line. Jesse Jackson’s claim that blacks are shut out of Silicon Valley jobs is that old war—as well as a lie. Blacks with the technical know-how already own their own businesses in Silicon Valley.

Fortunately, Silicon Valley CEO T. J. Rodgers challenged Jackson to a public debate on the issue—and Jesse backed out. Too many other CEOs in too many other corporations find it easier to pay off Jesse Jackson and other hustlers. That may be the path of least resistance for these corporations, but it is a disservice to America, including black America.

It has been said that the truth will set you free. In the present situation, the truth is the only thing that will set young blacks free. So long as a whole generation of young blacks continues to be told, day in and day out, that their

problems are caused by whites, they are never going to be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities in Silicon Valley or anywhere else.

Many of those who still push the old party line on race also try to get young blacks to study hard in school and prepare themselves for the opportunities available. But mixed messages don't hack it.

All across the country, there are heartbreaking stories about young blacks in schools who condemn those among them who try to be good students as "acting white." Sometimes the condemnation extends to ostracism and beyond—to outright violence.

Many blacks who are sending mixed messages to the young are horrified at such attitudes. But there is no point creating the cause and then being appalled at the effect.

Perhaps the biggest problem of the 21st century will be moving on beyond the problems of the 20th century to confront the new realities—and the new opportunities. But that may require a whole new generation of black leaders to arise, no longer looking back at the struggles of the 1960s but ahead to the demands of a very different world.

That takes time. But it ought to start now.

“ACCESS” TO RESPONSIBILITY

Dishonesty has become so routine in discussions of racial issues that perhaps I should not have been surprised at a headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that read: “Minority Students Need Access to Honors Classes.”

Are there honors classes which refuse to accept minority students who meet the same standards as others? If so, that should be the subject of a lawsuit, not a mere op-ed piece. But, of course, this is not the case.

“Access” is one of the great dishonest words of our times. I have had as much access to a career in professional basketball as Michael Jordan had. He just happened to play the game a lot better. Indeed, practically everybody has played the game a lot better than I did.

My problem was not “access” to basketball. Neither is the problem access in most other situations in which this slippery word is used politically. At the very least, we need to distinguish access from performance.

Blurring that distinction is at the heart of many claims of discrimination based on statistics. The claim behind the misleading headline in the *Chronicle* is that the University of California system is discriminating against black and Hispanic students who apply—by judging them by the same standards applied to others!

One of the factors taken into account in admissions decisions in the University of California system is a grade-point average that gives extra points for grades earned in honors courses. High schools in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods offer fewer honors courses. Therefore, the lawsuit claims, the admissions criteria are discriminatory.

If this argument were meant seriously, instead of politically, then the remedy would be to have high schools in black and Hispanic neighborhoods offer more honors courses. If anybody should be sued, then it should be the public schools, rather than the University of California, which has nothing to do with how many honors courses are or are not taught in various high schools.

The real point of the lawsuit, and of the op-ed support of it, is to get the admissions standards repealed or circumvented, so that there will be a larger body count of so-called “underrepresented minorities” on University of California campuses. If this effort is successful, blacks and Hispanics may not get any better education in high schools, but their symbolic presence will be greater at Berkeley, UCLA, etc.—even if they flunk out before graduating.

Use of the term “underrepresented minorities” is not accidental. It would be hard to make the case that white folks are keeping out non-whites, when Asian Americans are greatly over-represented among students in the University of California system, as they are in other top-level institutions around the country.

If the real problem is access, then why do the Asian American students happen to have it, while black and Hispanic students don't? You could turn the question around and ask: Why do blacks seem to have “access” to professional basketball, while Asian and Hispanic Americans seem not to?

The answer in both cases is the same: Access is not the issue. Performance is the issue.

You cannot have more honors classes in schools where students do not do honors-level work, unless you are prepared to define honors classes downward and have the term become meaningless. There is far too much research available on academic performance differences between Asian American students and students from “underrepresented minorities” for this simple, uncontested fact to be unknown to those who are accusing the University of California of “discrimination” for treating all applicants alike.

What are called “inequities in secondary education” could more accurately be called differences in the extent to which students are prepared to do the kinds of work required in honors courses. A case might be made that individual black or Hispanic students who are ready for honors work suffer from the fact that there may not be enough of their classmates who share their dedication.

There are various ways this problem might be dealt with— if one honestly wanted to deal with it, instead of using it to claim special exemptions from university admissions standards. But no such exemptions are likely to do nearly as much good for “underrepresented minorities” as “access” to personal responsibility.