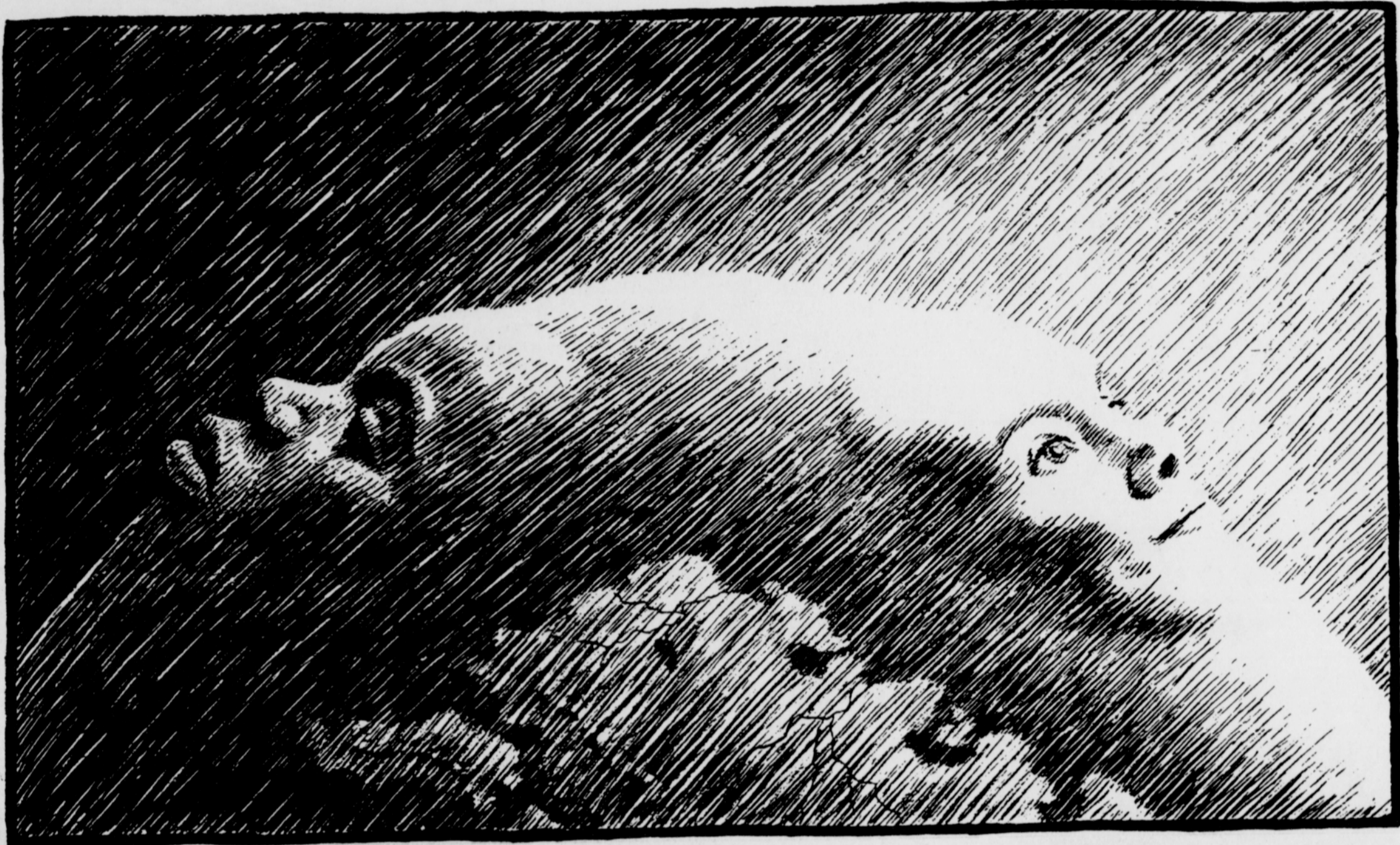




In a dark time the eye begins to see.
- Theodore Roethke

GARY AAGAARD



IT'S NOT JUST BREEDING

I think I know what Andy Rooney was trying to say.

Rooney gaffed himself in an interview with a reporter from a gay magazine, which quoted him as saying, "most people are born with equal intelligence, but blacks have watered down their genes because the less intelligent ones are the ones that have the most children." Later he defended himself in his own syndicated column. "I said," he wrote, "the least fit are proliferating; and I didn't say blacks." He has been accused of gay bashing and claimed the magazine quote was made up as part of a campaign by homosexuals to discredit him.

Whatever the imbroglia and its consequences (he was suspended from CBS for three months), Rooney, homophobic/racist or just plain elitist (champion of breeding only by people of "breeding") pointed out an increasing problem about the world population explosion. Humanity is more prolific than rats, and as Abraham Lincoln said: "God must love poor people because he made so many of them." Most of the world's children are poor and hungry, with little chance of education or sustaining employment. Rooney was wrong, however, to attribute the problem of breeding solely to the people begetting children. After all, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, black, white or etc., humanity's single compelling and insensate purpose is to breed, to instinctively and virtually mindlessly perpetuate the species whether it is a good idea or not.

Rooney implies that intelligent folk are losing genetic headway, they don't multiply as rapidly or numerous as the mentally deficient. Yet given that for millions of years adolescence has been prime breeding time for human beings (despite modern society's disapproval), perhaps an unwed teenaged mother from the inner city has a better chance of producing healthier stock than 30-something gentrified yuppies who wait to have children, and settle for only one or two.

Rooney's remark that the least fit are proliferating does not probe the circumstances that might qualify some people less fit to reproduce than others — and if he did, indeed, target blacks despite his denial, he is actually on the mark, though for quite opposite reasons than he seemed to imply.

Impoverishment, malnutrition, chronic unemployment, lack of education or the opportunity for education are major factors toward dis-

solving the potency of a community, a nation, a race. They are not the result of inferior genes but of defective social and political policies and prejudices that might rightfully, though cautiously, be called genocide.

Blacks in America have always been a suppressed people. Slaves or free, their arduous, tragic and unequal role in building and defending the nation has always been devalued and generally ignored. Just as the word history seems to imply only male endeavor (his story), so does it also imply Western/European/white dominance and supremacy over world affairs. Yet the black struggle for civic and social equality, particularly in the last generation, has been the most inspiring and closest to the revolution of the Enlightenment that gave birth to the nation than any other. This struggle has actually been a continuation of what Washington, Jefferson, Adams, et al, started and unfortunately denied "people of color," who were regarded as property and not human beings "born equal" and certainly not "born free." The current political revolutions of Eastern Europe have in common with black civil rights activists and black power advocates the desire to throw off the grinding oppression that threatens to completely dissolve the will and capacity to continue as peoples and persons.

The renewed and vengeful backlash of prejudice and oppression against American blacks for having dared challenge white supremacy is revealed as more insidious than mere colonialism or neo-apartheid if it is understood that the underlying intent is for them to indeed breed themselves into helpless oblivion without any means of support for survival. With few exceptions American blacks are contained and isolated in urban ghettos in much the manner Nazis forced Jews into European ghettos. They are denied adequate education, employment, housing or health care, forced to subsist on deleterious doles stingily appropriated. Their rage is forced inward, against themselves. The barely constrained contempt whites hold for blacks is probably equally felt toward whites by blacks who are victims of the antipathy, but, outnumbered ten to one and without the tremendous armament and legal power of the whites, they are generally unable to strike back without horrible consequences.

Before Sartre branded the U.S. war against Viet Nam as genocide he cautioned that the word must be used sparingly and precisely or

it loses its meaning and power. Genocide is defined as the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political or cultural group. Genocide can be overtly applied through war or by establishing death camps. It can also be carried out more subtly, over a long period through political and social attrition.

The prevailing white attitude toward blacks was summed up by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Roger Taney in 1857, when, speaking for the majority in the Dred Scott case, he stated that Negroes were considered "so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

Not all whites are supremacists, though most are racist — if not intentionally, usually on impact. Separate standards exist: somehow it is okay for a white to be armed but dangerous if a black carries a gun. The KKK can be, if not forgiven, at least explained. Black power is, however, a threat. The fact that most drug addicts are white is dismissed as a personal flaw. Black addiction is thought to be a racial disorder.

Whites have fought and some have died for civil rights for blacks. An unlikely supporter of black liberation was Lyndon Johnson. When he signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, he said, "Three and a half centuries ago, the first Negroes arrived. . . They came in darkness and. . . in chains. . . The story of our nation and of the American Negro are like two rivers (that) flow through the centuries along divided channels. . . When the Liberty Bell rang out in Philadelphia, it did not toll for the Negro. When Andrew Jackson threw open the doors of democracy, they did not open for the Negro. It was only at Appomattox, a century ago, that an American victory was also a Negro victory. And the two rivers, one shining with promise, the other dark-stained with oppression, began to move toward one another."

One of Voltaire's friends said there would never be justice, equality and freedom until the last king was strangled with the intestines of the last priest. He might have included dispatching racial supremacists. Not only do they cause much of the world's troubles, they also substantiate Andy Rooney's general theory of genetic defectibility. Skinheads, as a friend of mine says, have more hair than brains.

— MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER