

ITS NOT JUST BREEDING

BY MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

"That blackness is most black, brothers,
most black."

~RALPH ELLISON ('INVISIBLE MAN')

July 4th might be reduced to Honky Independence Day if 'Juneteenth' becomes a national holiday. The day represents June 19, 1865 when a Union general told Texas slaves that Union victory in the Civil War just ended freed them. Juneteenth is celebrated in black communities all over the USA, and a petition before Congress seeks to make it National African-American Independence Day.

The story of the United States is struggle between white and black, which was at the core of the Civil War 130+ years ago. (The three century genocide against native Americans is a third leg of the racial triangle.) Social programs, even those whose success has resisted the racist demolishment of social spending, are of little help until the nation as a whole resolves the bitter enmity between American blacks and whites.

A few years ago a TV personality gaffed himself in an interview with a reporter from a gay magazine, who 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." (He later defended himself: "I said the least fit are proliferating, and I didn't say blacks.") The subsequent imbroglio caused by this champion of breeding only by people of *breeding* aside, he pointed out an increasing problem about the world population explosion. Humanity is more prolific than rats: 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. It is myopic as well as deceptive to attribute the problem of breeding solely to the people begetting the 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.

The implication is that intelligent folk are losing genetic headway because they aren't multiplying as rapidly as mentally deficient folk. Yet given that for millions of years adolescence has been the 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 upscale 30-somethings who establish careers before children.

The idea that the least fit are proliferating does not probe the circumstances that might qualify some people less fit to reproduce than others — and if it does indeed target blacks, it is actually on the mark, though for quite opposite reasons than implied.

JIM CROW REDUX

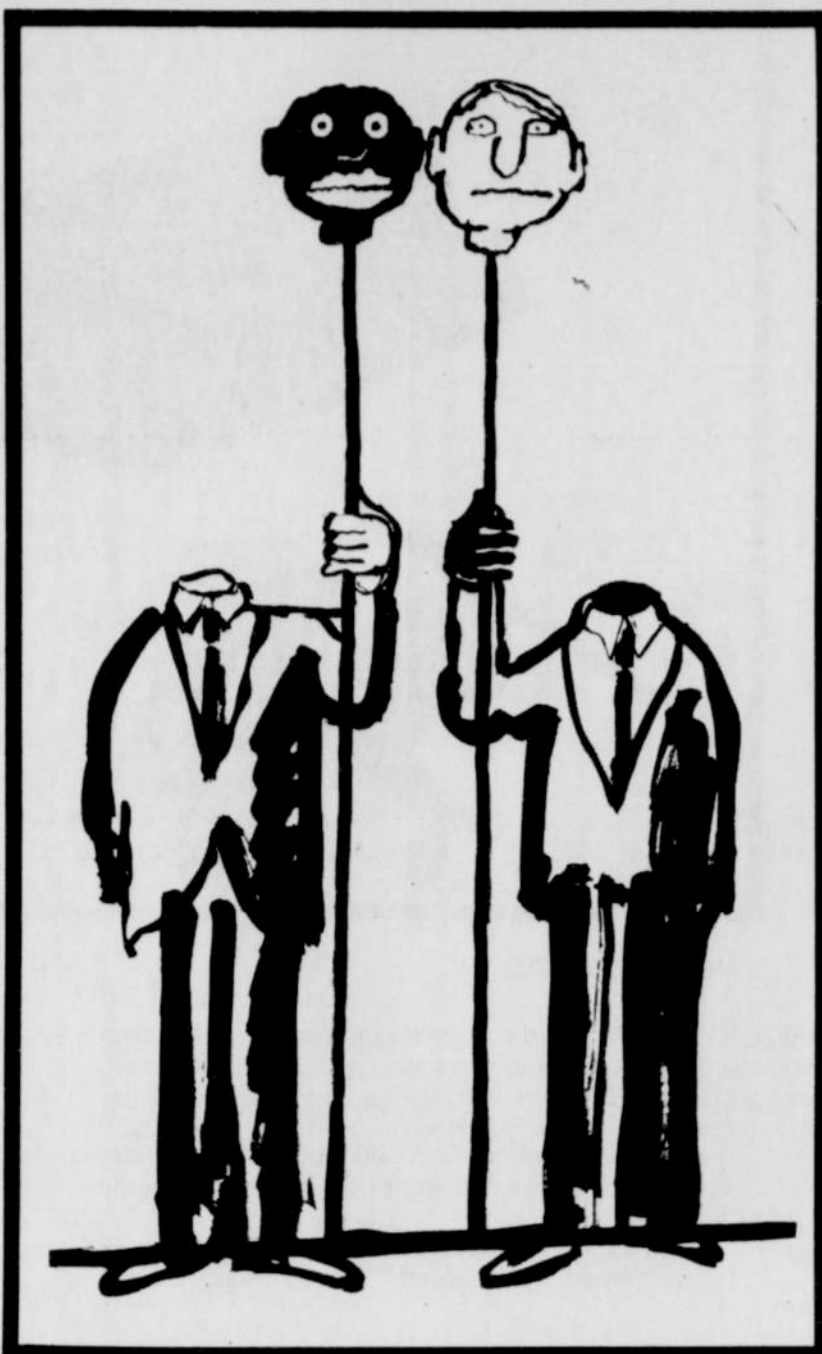
Simultaneous with Bill Clinton's proclaimed war on racism, conservatives in the House of Representatives concoct the hackneyed misnamed "Civil Rights Bill of 1997" that is intended to effectively end affirmative action for all time, first with government jobs and subsequently private industry. Its sponsors claim affirmative action is a "system of preference that violates equal opportunity" and is thus unconstitutional. A similar bill in 1995 never made it to the floor of either the House or the Senate. This time the bill's sponsors claim public opinion is on their side. Yet fickle and ever changing public opinion, or for that matter legal decisions which have been pretty hard on affirmative action do not change the fact that white males dominate the work place in government and out. The concept of affirmative action is an attempt to level the playing field and create the very opportunities of equality for race and gender critics claim it denies. The truth is that affirmative action loosens the iron fist of a dominant minority.

Affirmative action is assailed at the same time hundreds of thousands of workers are "downsized" from their jobs. The majority are white males because they are the majority of the workplace. Blacks and women are made scapegoats (Hispanics and gays also) for white male corporate decisions to enhance stock portfolios by cutting their workforces. Instead of looking for broad longrange solutions House Republicans especially, and probably a number of quiet Democrats, turn the blame to race and gender to take the heat off their corporate patrons: so they use buzzwords like "reverse discrimination" and "quotas" as a smoke screen. (Another smoke screen might be the rekindled passion of House Republicans to punish "desecration" of the flag, a fervor that might simply be a righteous sham to divert attention from the truly unconstitutional activities of their corporate patrons.)

President Clinton proclaims his purpose as kick-starting racial harmony — the same type of projection of Presidential responsibility that Harry Truman illuminated when he said his job was to goad the citizenry into doing what it already knew it must do. But Clinton is vague about specific ideas and actions. He does not impose his considerable stature as President to back up his oratory. He vacillates instead, trumpeting an empty gesture of governmental apology for its long tolerance of slavery more than a century since emancipation as the keystone to his attack on racism.

Racism will only end when children of every race are taught early that the color of skin is of far less concern than the quality of hearts and minds. That will not be easy. No less than the essential education system of the USA must be uprooted and rewired to reflect the common struggle of both races to build and survive in this country. Then perhaps Lyndon Johnson's two rivers might converge.

~MPMc



TOMI UNGERER

Impoverishment, malnutrition, chronic unemployment, lack of education or the opportunity for education are major factors toward dissolving the potency of a community, a nation, a race. They are not the result of inferior genes but of defective social and political policies 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 insinuate Western/European/white(male) dominance and supremacy over world affairs. Yet the black struggle for civic and social equality, particularly in the civil rights movement, has been the most inspiring and closest to the revolution of the Enlightenment that gave birth to this nation than any other. This struggle is a continuation of what Washington, Jefferson, Adams, *et al.* started but denied "people of color" who were regarded as property rather than persons "born equal" and certainly not "born free."



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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 realized that the underlying intent is for them to indeed breed themselves into helpless oblivion without any means of support for survival and in turn dissolve the will and capacity for them to continue as a people as well as persons. 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 (which are exploited as examples of the need for abolishing welfare altogether). 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 legal strength and firepower of the whites they are generally unable to strike back without horrendous consequences.

Before Sartre branded the U.S. war against Vietnam as genocide he cautioned that the word must be used sparingly and precisely or it loses its meaning and power (which it has partially because Sartre freed its use). 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 U.S. Supreme Court Roger Taney in 1857, when speaking for the majority in *Dred Scott* 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 are prevalent: it is okay for a white to be armed but dangerous if a black carries a weapon. 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 of each. Black addiction is thought to be a racial disorder.

Whites have fought for 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 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.

But rivers of blood course between them. That same year of 1965 the Watts riot in Los Angeles erupted, and five years ago the worst domestic riot in U.S. history occurred in the same place because white police who savagely beat a black man senseless were acquitted by an all white jury. The riot in early May 1992 replaced its predecessor insurrection and those in Detroit and Liberty City (Florida) as the 20th century's worst; all of which flared as a result of treatment by police. White dominated police forces act in black communities as if they were foreign occupying armies. Most of the time, as Jefferson understood in the Declaration of Independence, people patiently suffer the iron heel, but an excessive act (such as the acquittal of cops for beating Rodney King) can be the final indignity that erupts in thermonuclear reaction.

One of Voltaire's friends said there would never be justice, equality or freedom in the world 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 the general theory of genetic defectability. Skinheads, as a friend of mine says, have more hair than brains.

MARTIN LUTHER KING'S DREAM

M is for mad — sometimes he got mad.
A is for afraid — he sometimes was.
R is for respect — he helped people get it.
T is for time — he took time to listen.
I is for integration — he worked to get it.
N is for nice — he most always was.

L is for love — he loved everyone.
U is for united — he wanted us to be.
T is for the truth — he told it always.
H is for heart — he never lost it.
E is for extraordinary — he was very extraordinary
R is for return — he returned home.

K is for knowledge — he had lots of it.
I is for insisting — Peace on Earth.
N is for noble — he was very noble.
G is for genius — he was a genius.
'S is for safe — he made some people safe.

D is for the dream that Dr. King had.
R is for refused — he refused to give up.
E is for education — he wanted all kids to have one.
A is for attention — he gave it to his kids.
M is for memories — a kind, brave man.

~JESSICA MILLER

Jessica Miller is 13 and a student at Astoria Middle School. Her poem appeared in her 6th grade class Spring 1997 Writing Anthology.