

A DIALOGUE ON RACE SERIES

Race And Diversity

By FLOYD R. CRUSE

As one that has been involved in the ongoing challenges of equality in the job markets and fairness in the media, legal system, housing and social services, the complexities of the issues fail to fall into one or two categories.

There are many models or theories (paradigms) being advocated as cures for the mental illness of racism and its legacy of bigotry and bias. The core of the struggle that has brought us to this point is found in the belief that one person, group or gender is superior to another. After years of entrenchment this belief has finally met its match.

But, what could match the tenacity and venom of the superiority movement with its privileges and rewards for certain groups? The challenges come from an old axiom which says

that "behavior is based on belief". If we believe something to be true, our behavior follows accordingly.

What we have is not only a concept of racial superior but also values superior. What most people of color and women find most disturbing is the requirement to assimilate in various forms. This Assimilation requirement has its effects both in the physiological and psychological aspects of a person.

Physiologically, the effects range from stress to high blood pressure in an attempt to deal with the alienation created by not measuring up to the requirements. Psychologically speaking, self-hate, distrust, inhibition and "looking out for number one" attitude become the norm.

One of the ways to look at this enigma could be through a human rights training program developed by the USDA entitled "A Life Style

Analysis". In the analysis, behavioral characteristics are placed on a continuum with the extremes of behavior represented as Black and White, not to be confused with skin colors, (however, inevitably, mention of these two colors are immediately associated with skin colors.)

These characteristics are not confined to any ethnic groups even though people of color do fall predominantly under the Black lifestyle as described below:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Lifestyle Analysis | |
| Black | White |
| Honesty (self) | Dishonesty |
| Sense of Community | Individualism |
| Emoting | Non-emoting |
| Feelings | Non-feeling |
| Letting it all hang out | Inhibited |
| Free | Upright |

Ambiguity Unable to deal with ambiguity

When we are referring to the word **Honesty**, we are not speaking about whether or not a person steals, we all will steal under the right circumstances (e.g.: to save a life) here the reference is to being up-front about who you are and what you are about. In the American culture, this has been a privilege associated with power and maintained through fear. It is also a gender issue where women were and are encouraged to keep their mouths shut and don't rock the boat.

Sense of Community is defined as **having care and concern for those other than your own immediate family or friends.**

Emoting is defined as the expression of emotions. It is referring to the process of getting in touch with your feelings and being aware of them

and how they affect your decision making.

Next is the idea of **Letting It All Hang Out**, analogous to a person unencumbered by what others think. Imagine an intoxicated person singing to themselves and walking down a street, in their own world not bothered or worried about how they look, think or feel.

Next is the act of feeling **Free**. And finally, **Ambiguity**, or the ability to deal with change.

These characteristics are likened to snakes. Those in the Black lifestyle are like Rattlesnakes, they sound off when their values are infringed upon, they let you know where they are coming from, they are up-front about who they are and generally very expressive. Conversely, the White lifestyle is likened to a Cobra, who's attributes are those



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that strike without warning, not letting you know where they are coming from unless you really infringe on something they value very much, and then releasing all, being passive and very individualistic.

Lazy Speakin' Wid Ebonics

By KEILISI GYAN FREEMAN

Communication has been the mainstay of our society. It has been the glue that has kept the wheels of industry moving forward. Conversation has been the way history has been transferred from one generation to the next. Ideas, dreams, hopes life and death have all come about by means of expression. Each culture has its particular flavor that blends in and out of a "mainstream" of communication.

Those who have mastered a foreign language find joy in using that skill to the fullest. Using a second language has been a way to better self and to allow the mind to comprehend faster and create new synapses that further memory and understanding. Traits of sluggishness and seeming laziness are removed in order to make way for crisp enunciation. Structure of tenses has been sharpened in order to create clear understanding of thoughts and remove any questions that might arise.

Some languages such as French have variations in sound of words and how a tense is used. This indicates the region that the person speaking may have come from or the type of industry in the area. This may be true for a majority of the European languages. It is not a negative for the language. It is more an identifier of the area from which the speaker comes

from. And what of Ebonics?

Using grammar that may sound lazy, or sloppy can be cute if one is just learning how to speak English. Sometimes in illness, recovery may require a slow building again to mastery of language. If you are of the culture that has promoted Ebonics, when you hear it spoken, what is the intent behind it's usage? True, it may be a form of a foreign language, and yet is it really? Ebonics can be a way of saving or holding on to cultural identity. What is the effect on others that may not understand, even of the same culture?

Going back to those who speak a foreign language, those within that particular language are able to comprehend at least the basic meaning, the simplest ideas being offered by the one speaking even though some words might be used differently. The thought being, the language is still understood by those hearing without much difficulty or explanation needed. The same can be true for Ebonics.

The point being, there is a matter of perception that may be given by those speaking Ebonics, especially in this society where racism is still a covert and sometimes overt matter. A clearer understanding of 'racism' may be the place to start this portion of our discussion.

In "Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary", racism is defined as: "a

belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial difference produce an inherent superiority of a particular race."

In his well-known speech of 1963, Dr. King used the phrase, "...the content of his character..." In a society that is quick to judge on the first visual impression, that has a history of oppression of the black community, and still has factions that believe in "inherent superiority of a particular race," thus the inferiority of another, what is another way of somehow minimizing those beliefs? Communication and expression.

In learning to speak Ebonics, I might gain habits of lazy speech and my mind becomes sluggish in using proper English which is vital for advancement in this society, who am I to look to with question? I could say my educator. They didn't have my best interest at heart in giving me a tool that could be a hindrance to me rather than a help. If I choose to keep those habits in the "name of cultural difference," even though I have the opportunity to get the correct habits, then who is at the point of question? Only self.

Beauty is in the ear of the listener. The crux of the matter is this: We live in a society that is quick to judge. First impressions mean so very much. In a nation where being Black can be an immediate strike against, the only way is to overcome that by sounding

intelligent. I offer this experience. I work on the phone quite a bit. Recently, I was working with a Public Relations firm. Because I choose to speak properly, the person I had been talking to had no idea I was African American until a co-worker shared that with him in conversation. I still find it amazing that how I sound has so much to do with the impression that others have of me.

I take pride in using proper grammar when the situation calls for it, and I love to share with those who speak like I do, more in the vernacular. I don't want to come across as two-faced in this question of Ebonics and racism.

Both forms of speaking have their place. Both are beautiful to each listener. To some, it is a foreign language. To others, it's a form of judgment that can be used not only against the speaker, but can be used against the entire 'race'.

My inner feeling is this, if I feel comfortable using proper English all the time, because it serves me, than I will use it. If I choose to use Ebonics as a matter of having fun and a change in expression, then I will use it. It becomes my choice to accomplish a desired goal.

I could go crazy worrying about others' impression of me. I need not give others a weapon to judge me in a negative way, and then cry foul when they do. If Ebonics creates an impression I don't want to hold for myself, I find another way of speaking. If someone speaks differently about me, I allow them their way without being harsh or judging them. I realize they may judge me because I sound differently in their ears also.

The choice is yours along with the measure of success you want in your life.



Keilisi Gyan Freeman

The Issue Of Race

By DR. CLAUD ANDERSON

Racism is a power relationship between groups based upon color. It is a group concept and occurs when one group has so much power that it can force another group to do what it wants. Its purpose is the uneven and unfair distribution of power, privilege, land and wealth to Whites. Contrary to the arguments of conservatives, racism is not fundamentally about individual actions and beliefs. The concept of racism did not exist until the 16th Century commercial enslavement of Blacks began. Because Blacks as a group do not have the power, the black race has no racists, only Blacks re-acting to racism.

Any constructive look at race must be based upon an analysis of history. It is an examination of history that tells why the race issue exists, how it came to be, the social laws and customs that form the legacy that we see today in disparities between Blacks and Whites. A serious discussion would also seek to quantify the harm that was done to Black people. The uninformed opinions and misinformation that usually characterize racial discussions, result from an unwillingness to examine history and to approach the topic intellectually rather than emotionally.

Race by definition refers to a group. Blacks as a group were subjected to the cruelties of sla-

very and Jim Crow apartheid. It was because they were members of a group that Blacks were enslaved, lynched, castrated.

Blacks are the only planned, involuntary, non-immigrant group in America. Ethnic groups, by definition are immigrants. Ninety-nine percent of this nation's immigrants have been non-black and they have received privileges, hospitality and access to resources that Blacks have never received. The race issue is the uncorrected legacy from slavery. The discrimination that immigrant groups may experience does not equate to the structural, historical legacy of Blacks in the U.S. that continues today.

The original Executive Order that established Affirmative Action issued in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson, was intended as corrective action for Blacks. Government actions and responsibility do not apply in the same way to any other groups. 'Hispanic' is a fabricated race. It includes all those who speak Spanish, regardless of their country of origin - Spain, El Salvador, Mexico, Cuba. The Spanish language has never been enslaved, castrated, lynched or economically exploited. The circumstances of Hispanics, Asians or any other immigrant group cannot be equated to that of Blacks. Ethnic groups chose to come to this country. Even native Americans are in a different category than Blacks. Most Indian tribes



Dr. Claud Anderson

were slave holders and the United States government has created numerous governmental policies and compensation efforts for Indian tribes.

For centuries, this nation's "Government of, by and for the people" did not include the Black race. Without government support, neither slavery nor Jim Crow segregation could have long endured. The government has apologized to all other groups to whom it has committed offenses, except Blacks. Yet, Black Americans have borne the burden of every obligation this nation has had since 1619.

Racial equality for Black in America begins with an apology and acknowledgement from the government that millions of Blacks were wrongfully used and killed. Economic justice and reparations must naturally follow.

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