

Blackonomics: Expecting More from Ourselves

Frederick Douglass’ words – “Power concedes nothing without a demand” – have been haunting me lately, because of the pressing issues we face in today’s political world, the dire economic straits in which many of our families find themselves, and the ever-present social problems Black people deal with every day. The key word in that admonishment is demand.

Ever since Douglass uttered those words, we have used them to determine how and what we must demand from others. Our responses have been external. My question is: What is our internal response to Brother Frederick’s words? Are we demanding anything from ourselves as we seek power instead of mere influence in this society?

Although we seldom follow through on much of the knowledge passed down to us by our forebears, we sure do like to quote them. I guess it makes us feel good; but as I always say, “There is a big difference between feeling good and doing good.” Yes, words make us feel good, but they should also make us “do good,” too. Too many of our ancestors have sacrificed too much of themselves for us to merely repeat what they said without following through on what they said.

Thus, the “demand” that Dou-



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

James Clingman

glass spoke of is magnified to an even larger degree and should be – must be – taken on an internal basis as well as an external one. Our elder also said, “People might not get all they work for in this world, but they must certainly work for all they get.” That statement is more suited for an internal response, which is probably why we don’t use it as much as the one that has to do with power.

On an economic level, Black people are deserving of repair, or reparations, as some would say. There is no doubt and no lack of truth about our history in this country as it pertains to the wealth we created for others with our free labor, and the intellectual contributions our forefathers and mothers made to this society. Those contributions, including inventions that are still used today, along with a couple of centuries of free labor, are definitely worth billions, if not trillions of dollars. We should at least have a discussion at

the highest level of government, from the president on down, about how to make up for such a wrong. Apologies are not enough.

Beyond that ideal, I believe we must also consider and act upon what Conrad Worrill and Ken Bridges called “Internal Reparations,” which speaks very directly to the internal demands we must be willing to make upon ourselves. Are we willing to demand that we support one another? Are we willing to demand that we become the primary educators of

are only bent on selfish opportunism?

Those are just a few questions related to the demands we must make on ourselves, individually and collectively. We must be willing to acknowledge our internal faults and deal with them head-on if we want to make educational, political, social, and economic progress. Yes, it will take the backbone of a Marcus Garvey, the resolve of a Harriet Tubman, the fearlessness of an Ida B. Wells, the strength of a Maynard Jackson,

strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

“He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”

“Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.”

“He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”

Amen, Brother Martin, that sure is right!

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our children? Are we willing to demand much more of ourselves when it comes to loving one another, respecting one another, and trusting one another more? Are we willing to demand of ourselves a sense and practice of Black-on-Black love rather than hate and destruction? Are we willing to demand of ourselves, especially our leaders, a high level of integrity, dedication, and sincerity? Are we willing to stand against the lies, divisiveness, and evil tactics of those among us who

and yes, sometimes even the willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did.

Fittingly, I end with some MLK quotes and ask you to think about and act upon what he and others have said; and then demand from yourself the internal fortitude to stand against the “wiles of the devil” by doing the right things for the right reasons – all the time.

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the

Obama Should Have ‘Audacity’ to End War on Drugs

The Institute of the Black World 21st Century is gearing up for a Day of Direct Action June 17 in Washington, D.C. to demand an end to the War on Drugs and mass incarceration and call on President Obama to invest in marginalized urban inner-city Black communities across the nation. While ending the war on drugs as a devastating racially-biased policy is essential, we in IBW have always insisted that overcoming joblessness and economic underdevelopment is ultimately the key to combating the crime, violence, fratricide and mass incarceration that have

NNPA GUEST COLUMNIST

Ron Daniels

In a recent New York Times article by Jared Bernstein, Senior Fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, lamented the fact that chronic unemployment has emerged as a major problem for Americans in general with 11.7 million looking for work as of the last job report and “about eight million more stuck in underemployment.” But, as William Julius Wilson has pointed out, the problem of joblessness is much more severe in Black communities where work has simply “disappeared” because of massive disinvestment in urban areas and structural factors like deindustrialization. Therefore, there are disastrous, depression levels of joblessness in Black communities — levels which would not be tolerated in White communities.

The absence of jobs and economic opportunity contribute to destructive behavior among young people, particularly Black males. However, in the absence of “legitimate” jobs/work, an illicit economy and new “employer” have become a reality of life in America’s dark ghettos – the trafficking of illegal drugs. Africans in America are only bit players in a multi-billion dollar global enterprise dominated by huge transnational cartels. But, the fierce and deadly competition to share in and control a lucrative piece of the action has had a devastating impact – turf wars, chronic crime, violence, fratricide, targeted, paramilitary policing and

mass incarceration.

Every week there is the equivalent of a Newtown massacre in some Black community in this country. Data compiled from a variety of sources by Zachary Williams of IBW’s Research Consortium paint a painful picture:

Blacks in the United States are disproportionately affected by homicide. For the year 2009, Blacks represented 13 percent of the nation’s population, yet accounted for 47 percent of all homicide victims.

In that same year, the homicide rate for Black male victims was 32.14 per 100,000 ... For White male homicide victims it was 4.26 per 100,000.

Eighty-two percent of Black victims were shot and killed with guns – 74 percent ...were killed with handguns.

The Depression-level joblessness and horrific scale of fratricide in America’s dark ghettos is a national disgrace, a moral and political crisis that should concern all Americans. But, there is no national outcry, no outrage because the affected people are Black – “the wrong complexion to get the protection.” Who would have believed that 50 years after the March on Washington that a State of Emergency would exist in Black urban inner-city neighborhoods? President Obama must have the “audacity” to act on this crisis.

In his New York Times article Bernstein strongly recommends that liberals/progressives resurface and reaffirm the goal of a full employment economy as reflected in the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978. Under the proposed bill, the

government would become the employer of last resort when unemployment rises above 5 percent. The emphasis would be on utilizing public sector jobs as a short-term remedy.

A direct, targeted public sector jobs program with a priority on employing formerly incarcerated persons would have amazing results. Decent jobs with good wages and benefits is the best anti-

crime, anti-violence, anti-fratricide and anti-mass incarceration program that this administration and the nation could embrace.

As we approach the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, it’s time for President Obama to do more than reference Martin Luther King and the “Moses generation” as if the civil rights/human rights agenda is a thing of the past.

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become the scourge of America’s “dark ghettos.”

According to a study by the Community Service Society, the unemployment rate for African-American men in New York, age 16 to 24, was 33.5 percent at the height of the Great Recession. That figure is likely closer to 50 percent when young Black men who are no longer looking for work are included. What is true of New York is true of virtually every urban inner-city area in this country

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