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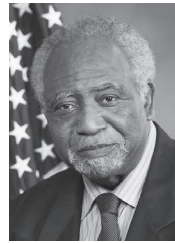
Criminal Justice Disparities Present Barriers to Re-entry

Austin, Ill., the community where I live, in the heart of the congressional district I represent, includes the zip code with the largest number of releases from the Illinois Department of Corrections; 90 percent of the individuals released are African American males.

When these (mostly) young men are released from prison, they find all of the social and economic barriers they faced before incarceration, plus additional barriers to jobs, housing, education, and almost every aspect of daily life. One in every 40 adults is unable to vote because of a current or prior felony conviction. For African Americans, the rate is one in 13.

Over the past 50 years, our penal system has become an increasingly urgent issue that has reached crisis proportions, especially in the African American community. There were about 338,000 individuals in prison in 1970. Today, that number is over 2,000,000. That number has grown every decade over the last half century without regard for the falling crime rate. The Federal Bureau of Prisons appropriations increased more than \$7.1 billion from FY1980 (\$330 million) to FY2016 (\$7.479 billion)

Every year in the United States, 641,000 people walk

Rep. Danny
K. DavisSenator
(D-Ill)

out of prison gates, and, every year, people will go to jail over 11 million times. This is called jail churn.

It happens because most of the people who are jailed have not been convicted.

Some will make bail within a short time; some are too

“I have fought to reduce disparities in our criminal justice system

poor and will stay in jail until their trial. Some will be convicted of misdemeanors and will receive sentences of under a year.

African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of Whites and while they make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, they are 40 percent of the prison population. In some states that rate was 10 times or more. Research from numerous scholars and organizations has been instrumental in de-

veloping a growing bipartisan consensus on the forces driving this great disparity and the additional costs this disparity places on the African American community and society in general.

A recent report by The Sentencing Project notes:

Proposed explanations for disparities range from variations in offending based on race to biased decision-making in the criminal justice system, and also include a range of individual level factors such as poverty, education outcomes, unemployment history, and criminal history.

During my years in the Congress, I have fought to reduce disparities in our criminal justice system.

I believe my “Second Chance Act” and other initiatives, coupled with the fiscal realities that these disparities have imposed on the states and federal government, have helped to create a space for bipartisan debate and consensus about how best to reduce these disparities.

I believe that debate and consensus laid the groundwork for some gains we saw during the Obama presidency. The Sentencing Project notes:

While states and the federal government have modestly reduced their prison populations in recent years, incarceration

trends continue to vary significantly across jurisdictions. Overall, the number of people held in state and federal prisons has declined by 4.9% since reaching its peak in 2009. Sixteen states have achieved double-digit rates of decline and the federal system has downsized at almost twice the national rate. Twelve states have continued to expand their prison populations even though most have shared in the nationwide crime drop. States with the most substantial prison population reductions have often outpaced the nationwide crime drop.

These incremental steps toward equal justice are now being reversed by our new administration.

Friday’s policy change effectively rescinds Obama-era guidelines for federal prosecutors that were designed to curtail the harshest sentences for defendants charged with low-level drug offenses.

The previous memo, first promulgated by then-Attorney General Eric Holder in 2013, reserved the most severe options in the federal sentencing guidelines for “serious, high-level, or violent drug traffickers” instead of defendants charged with lower-level offenses.

Read the rest of this commentary at
TheSkanner.com

Bill Maher Betrayed Black Intellectuals

When considering the implications of Bill Maher’s latest antics, it is important to level set. Maher has, over the years, become the trusted media host for Black left-wing intellectuals. His roster of guests includes a Who’s Who of the Black intelligentsia; luminaries from old stalwart Cornel West to MSNBC host Joy Reid and others have been regular guests over the years. So, given this history it would seem surprising that Maher would so readily toss his friends under the bus by his casual on-air use of the n-word.

But if one really considers Bill Maher and his history, a more complicated story emerges.

Maher is a liberal prognosticator who exhibits a pretense of tolerance and open-mindedness — thereby giving him comedic license to offend.

Maher’s latest missive — responding to Senator Ben Sasses’ exhortation to engage in grass roots ‘field’ political organizing in Nebraska with the dismissive remark, ‘Senator, I’m a house n***er,’ — is not surprising. But the remark was so out of context that it could not have been anything other than a strategically-timed joke — one that unfortunately missed the

Armstrong
WilliamsNNPA
Columnist

mark.

Read in the context of Maher’s irreverent stance on many issues — it seems that the use of the n-word was meant to remind Black liberal

“That Maher chose to use the n-word on his ‘scripted’ talk show (deceptively named ‘Real Time’) was undoubtedly a calculated act

intellectuals that they are the wholly-owned property of the liberal elite.

It was an open admission of something conservatives have noted all along: Black intellectuals do not have an actual ownership stake of the liberal establishment, but in fact serve at the pleasure and whim of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

Whether Maher, a 61 year-old White guy who has been employed by HBO for the past 14 years, actually considers himself a ‘house negro’ is not what’s significant here.

He, in fact, may identify his job with that of a well-kept

slave on the media plantation.

That Maher chose to use the n-word on his ‘scripted’ talk show (deceptively named ‘Real Time’) was undoubtedly a calculated act.

This was probably not the first time Maher has used the ‘n-word’ in the presence of African Americans — he probably believes that since he allows many of them to come on to his show and debate, and that he sticks up for them against the various conserva-

Whites, they know first-hand how hurtful it is. The word is an obscene smear created for the specific purpose of putting Black people in their place — relegating them to second-class citizenship, and alerting the intended victim that he is less than human. I have personally never used the term (nor any form of obscenity), and regard it as one of the most abhorrent terms in the English language. I don’t like it when Black entertainers use it, and I certainly don’t like it when Whites use it either — no matter what their so-called liberal bona fides. I believe the word has no place in public discourse, much less in the enlightened sphere of intellectual debate.

Curiously, the reaction among Black intellectuals to Bill Maher’s verbal attack has been typically passive. They seem to have taken it on the chin and let him off the hook. No one has seriously demanded Maher’s resignation from HBO, and there has been no organized boycott of his sponsors at the network. Can you imagine the reaction if a conservative host on Fox News or any conservative media channel was caught using the n-word?

Read the rest of this commentary at
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