

## LIBERALISM: THE NEW CRACK

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### **How Liberal Policies Have Devastated The Black Community**

Early in his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. assessed the unhappy situation of black Americans, a century after their emancipation. It is the darkest passage in a speech blazing with radiant imagery and uplifting messages of hope:

*One hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.*

The better part of five decades has passed since that speech was delivered, the Civil Rights Acts was signed, and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society was engineered. Sadly, Dr. King's diagnosis could be pronounced again today, with only a few minor changes.

That lonely island of poverty is still there, lost in the tides of material prosperity. The unemployment rate for black Americans is almost *ninety percent* higher than for whites, whose have it bad enough in today's jobless economy. The Census Bureau reports the average per capita income of blacks to be only \$18,000 per year, compared to over \$30,000 for whites. The rate of home ownership is about 20% lower for blacks, while they own a mere 5% of small businesses.

The corners of American society remain a place of exile. Black illegitimacy rates hover above 72%, which is more than triple the rate for whites or Asians . . . and more than triple what it was at the beginning of the Great Society era, when most black children were raised in two-parent households. Blacks represent about 13% of the American population, but account for 36% of all abortions. They suffer disproportionately from violent crime, with about half of all homicide victims being black. There are areas where the high school graduation rate for black males is well under 25%.

Most of these social and economic indicators have been getting worse, year after year, despite a vast amount of money and energy poured into the black community by liberal programs. Perhaps "despite" is not the right word . . . for much of black America's plight is *caused* by the Big Government programs intended to help them.

Blacks suffer much collateral damage from the collapse of urban America. Big cities have been wrecked by decades of liberal control. Cities like Detroit have been virtually destroyed as high taxes, stifling regulations, and public-union dominance killed businesses or drove them away. Black Americans have traditionally been concentrated in urban areas, ever since the Great Migration of the nineteenth century, although recent Census data suggests they are beginning to move away from dying blue-state cities. It's not hard to see why a population that tends to live in those cities would experience high rates of crime and unemployment.

The urban mindset, which looks for centralized solutions to big problems, does black Americans no favors . . . especially

when combined with the toxin of generational welfare dependency. Every black American is born into a system which regards his or her life as a problem to be solved, rather than an opportunity to be explored.

Large populations tend to respond to social incentives and penalties. The Great Society subsidized a landscape of broken homes, in which the acid of an entitlement mentality dissolves ambition. This has done more damage to the black community than any diabolical plan hatched by dimwits in white sheets could possibly inflict. A black child of the Fifties faced a formidable enemy in racial discrimination . . . but a black child in today's America faces an even more relentless enemy when he looks at the empty seat where his father should be sitting.

The system of dependence and futility built around black Americans *needs* them to survive. It will not easily let them escape. Black children find themselves trapped in a failing public education system, which has vast amounts of money and political clout available to keep the doors chained shut. The District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship voucher program for disadvantaged kids, which was shut down by the Obama Administration but may soon be re-authorized by Congress, enjoys 74% support from the community. That didn't stop Obama from killing it without any of his customary dithering or fanfare.

Black Americans have the misfortune to be one of the largest political collectives in the American electorate. The Democrat Party depends on collecting 85% or more of a substantial black turnout for its political survival. In order to keep these voters motivated and properly bundled, black leaders and white liberals sell a narrative of *hopelessness*. That is the only logical conclusion to draw, when told the maternal protection of a vast government. It's the end result of denying there can ever be a permanent triumph over racism, and even temporary victory is impossible for *individuals*. Only a desolate life could be shaped entirely by the hatred of others.

Hope flourishes in response to opportunity. A decade of rapidly expanding government has crushed opportunity beneath its bulk, and this is especially devastating to the fragile hopes of underprivileged minorities. The cost of labor has been artificially increased. Regulatory barriers have been placed before business formation. Investment capital has been made scarce. Even the dream of home ownership was cruelly perverted into a financial time bomb, which detonated when liberal ideology saddled eager minority homeowners with debts they could never repay.

The endless class warfare rhetoric of the Left teaches its clients to hate their own aspirations, and turn away in disgust from those they should be *studying*. No greater disservice has ever been done to the poor than convincing them to make enemies of the people who might wish to hire them. Replacing ambition with resentment is equivalent to handing a sledgehammer to a drowning man.

No deviation from liberal orthodoxy is allowed – the Left slanders no one as viciously as a black conservative. The clients of liberalism are reduced to making increasingly angry demands for diminishing increases in a bankrupt quest for "social justice." Unacceptable results are protected by making alternative solutions unthinkable. The result is a vicious cycle of political addiction. Liberalism is the new crack.

In his Lincoln-Douglass Dinner speech last month, black freshman Congressman Allen West (R-FL) summed up the situation: "It has been almost 50 years since President Lyndon

Johnson's Great Society and many in the black community are still waiting. Many of the same problems of the 1960s remain today. For too long, the choice has been to give a handout instead of a hand-up. Liberal politicians continue the same old tired policies of dependence on big government – always the promise that government will solve your problems. We are indeed creating the Nanny States of America.”

The answer is not a policy, but rather the elimination of policies that keep black Americans from finding their own answers. Like every other segment of the American population, they hold ideas beyond the imagination of central planners, and can find opportunities invisible to government bureaucrats. The sum of liberal race theory is the assertion that minorities cannot compete in a hostile, racist world. There was a day when systemic discrimination was an obstacle to competition . . . but it's time for us to break the cycle of political addiction by recognizing *that day has passed*.

There is, and will always be, racism in every society on Earth. Racists no longer have *power* in the United States. It is no longer necessary to deploy massive, intrusive, expensive government power to battle their phantom memory. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the other heroes of the civil rights movement were not just brave and determined, they were *victorious*. What service is rendered to the black community by denying their victory?

The policies that benefit black Americans are the *same* policies that benefit *all Americans*. The black middle class was growing rapidly before the current recession. Remove the barriers government has placed before business formation and growth, and the black middle class will resume its upward trajectory. What does any free man, of any color, need more than a decent job, offered and accepted willingly . . . or the chance to build a business that offers such jobs to other men?

Every subsidy is also an incentive, something liberals freely admit when they talk about the alleged social benefits of their favorite policies. If we remove the subsidies for promiscuous behavior and broken homes, we will eliminate a poisonous incentive that has done terrible harm to the intended beneficiaries. Name a social pathology, and rest assured it is worse among illegitimate children, especially in the inner city. Black America needs its fathers back.

Our public school system produces inferior educations at fantastic expense. It says minority children cannot be properly educated without even *greater* expense. It's *long* past time to let competitive private educators accept that challenge. The graduation rate for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program was 91%. That's *thirty points higher* than D.C. public schools could manage.

In a recent column, black conservative author and radio host Larry Elder pointed out that Ronald Reagan's much-vilified “tax cuts for the rich” and “trickle-down-economics” cut the unemployment rate for blacks from 20% in 1982 down to 11% in 1989. Under Barack Obama, by contrast, the black unemployment rate is over 15%. The Reagan years also saw black-owned businesses grow by 38%, which was more than *triple* the robust growth for all American business. And yet, Reagan is smeared as a racist because he opposed affirmative action programs. Even those who believe in the necessity of those programs should be open-minded enough to concede that by doing the right thing for all Americans, Reagan's economic policies did a *stunning* amount of good for black workers and business owners.

The most revered moment in Martin Luther King's speech was his dream that his children would live in a nation where they would “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” To be conservative is to have boundless faith in the content of their character . . . and the character of their fellow citizens. It is time to do away with policies that assume our character is corrupt. No one ever broke an addiction without faith.

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“There's a world view expressed in the language of the bureaucracy that the generation of conservatives now coming to government service has to change. Background: Georgia set up a college loan program this year based on projections of how students would react to changes in HOPE eligibility. The assumption was that 15,000 students would apply for \$20 million low-interest loans. Instead, it was 5,181. The state is considering opening the application process. ‘We don't want to have any money left,’ said Tracy Ireland, an official with the Georgia Student Finance Commission. It's OK to have money left in the pot – even loan money. The notion needs to change that those who run government programs have to search for takers. It invites passivity and the expectation that government will bring them a solution.” (Jim Wooten, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* July 21, 2011)

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In early July, the House considered (but did not pass) a bill to repeal the ban on old-style incandescent light bulbs. The 2007 measure under attack requires bulbs sold within the United State to meet certain efficiency requirements, including lasting longer and using less energy to run. Against the backdrop of ever-increasing federal regulation and micro-management, the statute has become a shibboleth, dividing two philosophies of government. Republicans, who inexplicably acquiesced to the bill four years ago, are now overwhelmingly pushing back against our government compulsion. Energy Secretary Steven Chu summed up the philosophical divide well, arguing against repeal by claiming that – with the federal light-bulb rules – the Department of Energy is “taking away a choice that continues to let people waste their own money.” On that rationale, may we please rid ourselves of the Department of Energy? (*National Review*)

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A McKinsey study found that 30 percent of companies might drop their health plans as a result of Obamacare. The White House and its allies trashed the study, demanding that McKinsey explain its methodology – which it then did, disproving all the dark hints of shoddiness. The administration has three reasons for concern. First, most people like their company plans and do not want to be forced out of them. Second, Obama repeatedly promised that they would not be. Third, Obamacare's budget assumes that they are not. The more people there are who lose their employer coverage, the more there will be on Medicaid and on the subsidized exchanges Obamacare establishes. Many Democrats predicted that the legislation would grow more popular over time; we're still waiting. (*National Review*)