

Blacks Suffer "Santa Claus Complex"**Survival Means Self-Determination, Self-Help**

by Rodney Sumler
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As a child, I had a recurring vision each November of how I would enjoy Christmas. I would be with my family in a big house, I could see quite vividly, in a large family room with a fireplace and Christmas tree. My mother and two sisters would be there, enjoying the spoils and toys of the season.

But the fact of the matter was - we were poor and I didn't know it. Still, I had my vision and I liked it.

My bubble of a vision would start to burst about the beginning of December, when I would realize that we would probably be looking at a Christmas with no toys, no gifts and no means to give to others.

The idea of Santa Claus and Christmas must have been painful to me back then, for reasons I care not to remember. Later, after college, after working numerous odd jobs, working as a lifeguard for the Winston-Salem Recreation Department and working at the U.S. Post Office, I learned to appreciate my "Christmas Past." In fact, after a while, I began to like it.

I felt right at home enjoying not having some of the things other

children had, who had a mother and father. My father abandoned our family when my youngest sister was born. For years, I would return to that world, my December world. But I always returned with a sense of relief and release. I had love, good health, pride, self-respect and a competitive spirit. These were the only gifts that my mother could afford to give us. But they are the kind of gifts that last a lifetime.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about those days. Especially now that it seems Black Americans are making their way to the bottom of the pond in national consciousness and economic development.

As a race, it seems, Black Americans with an annual buying power for more than 230 billion dollars, still have their hands out asking for others to give them something. As it appears, the trouble begins with the words "Santa Claus." As children, we look for some jolly white man to bring us our Christmas presents and many blacks grow into adulthood expecting to get something for nothing.

Many Blacks grow up with the "Santa Claus complex" expecting to receive, instead of being able to

give. Fact of the matter is, if you can give, you are able to help others and, indirectly, help yourself. Perhaps that is why it is better to give than to receive.

The "Santa Claus Black Complex" manifests itself throughout history. Black Americans seem to hold on to the "Santa Claus Complex" and expect others to constantly give to us. We expect the complex to filter down through jobs mostly. The biggest reason being, Blacks have not used their economic resources to create businesses and industry, and thereby create jobs. Blacks constantly demand that white landlords come in and clean up our neighborhoods because we refuse to stay behind and rebuild our communities.

Not surprisingly, blacks also insist that white people come in and solve the drug problem in our communities and black-on-black crime. Someone else has to do it because we refuse to share our time and resources to solve our problems our selves.

To put it bluntly, the majority of Black Americans are suffering from the "Santa Claus Complex" and there doesn't appear to be any

magic potion that can cure it. We are waiting on solutions for our problems to come in the form of gifts from some great benefactor. Instead of doing for ourselves - digging deep within for pride and self-respect - we turn elsewhere for solutions.

The central focus of this writing is directed at the nature of the failure of Black Americans. Currently, we are failing in economic progress, educational achievement and the control of our destiny as a people. True, there have been some individual breakthroughs, but can one black, or a million for that matter, carry the rest of us on his shoulder?

The first step in the quest of blacks to become self-sufficient is to rid ourselves of the "Santa Claus Complex." Why don't we give Santa Claus back to children and restrict him to our children only? As a people, blacks need him to learn to give to ourselves. Maybe then we'll understand the meaning of the biblical phrase that states: "It is better to give than to receive." *Editor's Note: This article is reprinted annually as a reminder to the Black Community.*

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