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Black on black economic violence

By James Clingman
SPECIAL TO THE POST

"When the ax enters the forest, the trees view the handle as one of their own."

Where I live, there is constant hand-wringing in response to the physical degradation, retribution, and self-destructive behavior among our young brothers and sisters. We see homicide, suicide, fratricide, and everything in between. What are the causes of this madness? If you read Amos Wilson's book, "Black on Black Violence," especially the parts regarding the economic side of things, you will see the correlations between the physical violence and selling one's soul for a dollar or two.

You knew this had to get down to economics at some point, so let's jump right into it. I will not review Wilson's seminal work; he was a literary genius, and I would not do him justice. You need to get the book and read it for yourself, that is, if you really want to understand and then deal with the problem, rather than just complain about the symptoms. I will say, however, that Wilson does not place the entire blame for our self-inflicted violence on economics alone, but he does put both in proper perspective.

With that in mind, I want to talk about another form of black-on-black violence. It's black-on-black economic violence. While some of our high and mighty, socially elevated, black "leaders" shamefully decry the physical violence taking place in "the hood," they are busy cutting their deals and taking their cuts from deals made on the backs of their brothers and sisters.

Here's one example. Just when I thought I had seen it all, along came another in a long line of economic sanctions against a city, called by black folks because they were not being treated right. In the spirit of the South African boycott that led to the demise of apartheid, buoyed by the memory of those who walked to work in Montgomery, ensconced in the principles laid out in MLK's final speech in Memphis, inspired by the three year standoff in Miami, and motivated by Stevie Wonder's "Happy Birthday," which became the rallying cry against the state of Arizona, this new boycott was called.

This new boycott was against a city whose downtown white-owned restaurants closed during a weekend in which thousands of black folks came to town, a city that allows police abuse and brutality to go unabated with impunity, a city that spent billions in local and federal tax dollars with meager sums and benefits going to the nearly 50 percent black population, and a city that denies First Amendment rights to "some" of its citizens.

Almost immediately after this boycott was called, out came the black folks, with their smiling faces on brochures, saying, "We're on the Move," while subliminally suggesting to the world that everything was all right in this city, and black people were as happy as pigs in slop. Of course, this massive PR campaign was done to stop the boycott; it was done in return for deals and perks given to blacks who had their hands out and were obviously willing to do whatever the mayor and Mister Charlie told them to do.

The latest scene in this tragicomedy features five black folks going on a mission to cajole the National Coalition of black Meeting Planners (NCBMP) into believing this is a "new" city and that it is living up to its contrived "most livable" status. It is ironic that five of these black economic predators went out to solicit black dollars for this city while five black men lay cold in their graves, unjustifiably and wantonly killed by white police officers that have never been criminally punished nor ever will be in this city.

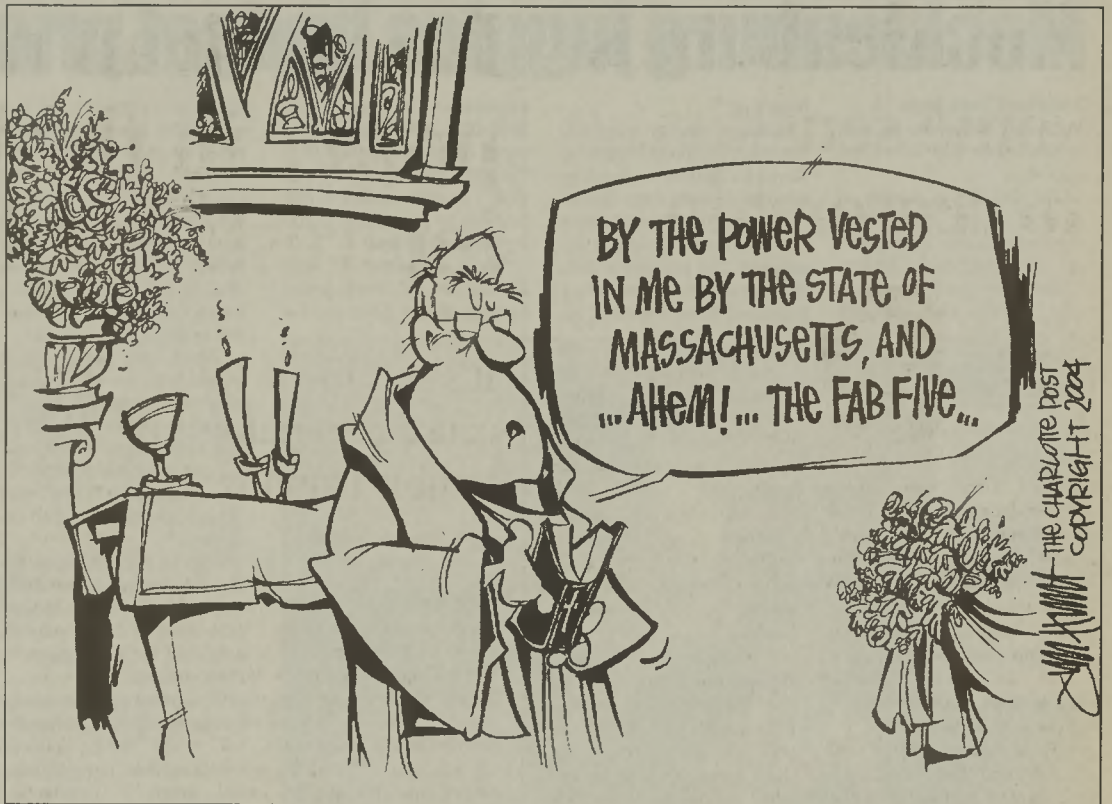
These five black people, one from the majority Chamber of Commerce, one from the Black Chamber of Commerce, one from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, one from, of all places, a local funeral home, all led by the "vice" mayor of this city, had the temerity to ask black people from across the country to bring their money to a city where black people are grossly mistreated. Go figure.

Everyone has to answer to his or her own conscience. That is, if they have one. So this is for information only. I want both sides of the story to be told. My conscience will not allow me to be silent about the murders of five young men, however. I will continue to tell their story because they cannot, and just as vigorously as I work for economic freedom, I will continue to disclose economic injustice.

Montgomery blacks boycotted for seats on buses; Arizona Blacks boycotted to get a King Holiday; South Carolina Blacks boycotted to get a flag removed; and Miami blacks boycotted because Nelson Mandela was snubbed by public officials. The city I am referring to, of course, is Cincinnati, where blacks boycotted primarily because of police violence against blacks.

Looks like snubs, flags, holidays, and bus seats carry more weight for some black folks in Cincinnati than do the lives of five of their brothers, because this boycott has resulted in an even more dastardly brand of violence against Blacks: Economic violence committed by blacks against blacks.

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Business leaders miss education point

As I See It
GERALD O. JOHNSON



Business leaders went on record asking the county to supply more money to the schools to meet the growing educational requirements of the system.

The "ask" came with the condition that CMS demonstrate more accountability with educating children especially inner city black children.

The "ask" is somewhat misguided as I see it, because the tools for measuring results are flawed. I blame business folks for being the reason we are in this mess to begin with. Business folks love measuring results. We need to know if this year's quarterly sales outpaced quarterly sales from last year.

Did we retain more earn-

ings this year than last year? Business evolves around comparisons and accountability.

It is perfectly okay because business people have more control of their own destiny. All business models regardless of how complex the business can be broken down into: Inputs plus Internal processes equal Outputs.

For a business to be successful, it must have complete control over the model flow. Having that control dictates accountability. It becomes mandatory. Changes in inputs dictates tweaks in internal processes to reach a desired output.

When you attempt to adapt this business model to education, it falls apart at the seams. The flaw with the model is the input. Public education is required to educate every kid.

Not every kid that can speak English. Not every healthy kid. Not every kid who wants to learn. Not every kid that comes from a

stable home. Not every kid that gets three meals a day at home.

Not every kid whose parents value education. Every kid by law is afforded a public education.

Based on that alone, there can't be internal processes that can guarantee desired outputs. Moreover, if you complicate the picture by dictating how much I have to spend on my internal processes, I can assure you the output will not only be unpredictable, but most likely undesirable.

But tools are put in place to measure this flawed system. As a community we use this misguided information to throw stones at the system. Any business faced with the same challenge would produce the same unpredictable outcome.

The flaw is not necessarily with education. The flaw is attempting to use business models as tools for educational accountability. We

can't hold a school system

accountable for kids coming to school with no desire to learn. We can't hold a school system accountable for promoting failed kids because there is nowhere to house them if you hold them back. You can't hold a school system accountable when 60 percent of students in a school don't speak English and you only have two translators in the school. We can't hold a school system accountable when every social ill ends up on our schoolhouse doorsteps.

School systems need to be held to a standard. But educating children is not like making widgets. There are a lot of human factors that will come into play. The tools for measuring how well a school system is doing should take this into account. Otherwise school systems will remain stuck between the dog and the fire hydrant.

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Try judging those wimpy Democrats

GEORGE E. CURRY



Unlike Democrats, Republicans have understood the importance of controlling the courts and have carried out a successful campaign to seat right-wing judges at every level of the federal judiciary.

George W. Bush has been so determined to pack the courts that he appointed two candidates that had not been approved by the Senate - Charles W. Pickering Sr. of Mississippi and former Alabama Attorney General William H. Pryor Jr. - to recess appointments, effectively circumventing the Senate's confirmation role under the constitution. Federal judges receive lifetime appointments; Bush's unconfirmed recess appointments terminate on Jan. 20.

Democrats, upset over the appointments, showed a flicker of courage by threatening to filibuster Bush's other nominees. Under Senate rules, it would take 60 votes on a cloture motion to end the filibuster. The Republican edge in the Senate is not large enough to end a filibuster.

The perfectly positioned Democrats recently did what they usually do under pressure from Republicans -

they caved in.

Weak-kneed Democrats agreed to allow votes on 25 Republican nominees in exchange for Bush promising not to make any more recess appointments before Jan. 20. To their credit, the Democrats excluded seven far right appeal courts nominees. But they could have done more. A better power move would have been to leave the positions vacant until we find out who will be our next president. The Senate doesn't normally act on nominations the summer before a presidential election and this would have only added a couple of more months.

Democrats have ceded the courts to Republicans. Consequently, Republicans will soon control 12 of the 13 federal circuits. If Bush gets a second term, all 13 circuits could be Republican-controlled by the time he leaves office. Not only will Republicans be controlling the courts, they will be controlling the social agenda of the country with their rulings on such key issues as affirmative action.

And that's only part of the picture. The person elected president in November may get a chance to appoint three Supreme Court justices. Bush has already stated that his ideal justices will be in the mold of Clarence Thomas and Antonio Scalia, the two most conservative justices on the court. With

affirmative action being upheld by a narrow 5-4 decision last year, a single appointment to the court could reverse decades of civil rights progress.

Interestingly, Bush is making some of his most strident appointments to the appellate courts. His strategists realize that while most of the attention is focused on the Supreme Court, the High Court reviews less than 1 percent of the decisions made at the appeals level. In reality, the appeals court becomes the court of last resort.

As Republicans effectively scheme to hijack the judicial system, Democrats are shamelessly timid.

Let's take the case of Clinton. To appease Republicans in the Senate, he appointed centrist judges. Instead of meeting Clinton half way, Republicans blocked 20 percent of Clinton's nominees during his last five years in office. In Bush's first three years - a period in which he has mostly appointed staunch conservatives - only 3.4 percent of his nominees were rejected.

To come up with losers, Bush had to go to the bottom of the barrel. One example is Janice Rogers Brown, a female Clarence Thomas. She is a frequent dissenter on the Republican-controlled California State Supreme Court. Even the chief judge there, a fellow Republican, accused her of misrepresent-

ing this country's racial history. Yet, that didn't stop Bush from fighting for her confirmation, which is still pending.

Bush has made an in-your-face statement to Democrats by not only appointing ultra-conservatives to the federal bench, but by selecting some that were actively engaged in trying to impeach Bill Clinton for his affair with Monica Lewinsky. Bush has nominated four Kenneth Starr deputies to the federal bench. Two of them - John Bates and Amy St. Eve - have been confirmed. A third, Steven Colloton, is awaiting confirmation for the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis and a fourth, Associate White House Counsel Brett Kavanaugh, has been offered a seat on the appeals court based in Washington, D.C., often seen as a stepping stone to the Supreme Court. Another Starr aide, Theodore Olson, is Bush's solicitor general.

If Democrats learn to be as single-minded as Republicans, they may finally stop losing to them. With Republicans in control of Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court, this is no time to be timid. It's time to give Republicans a dose of their own medicine.

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