

“Black against Black violence”



Dr. Marable Manning

The urban ghettos of America increasingly are becoming armed, military zones. Millions of people live in fear of being raped, robbed or mugged. Thousands of homes are burglarized every week in Black neighborhoods. Hundreds of our young people are being slaughtered in the streets and back alleys. And many of our high schools are now battle grounds for drug pushers.

Between Jan. and Aug., 1988, only eight months, 143 people were murdered in Miami, a figure which was higher than the city's total number of murders in 1987. Crime statistics from other are equally grim. During the same period in 1988, New Orleans recorded 216 murders; Houston, 411 murders; Washington, D.C., 323 murders; and New York City, 1,231 murders. The vast majority of the victims are nonwhite males. In the United

States, a white male has a one-in-186 chance of becoming a murder victim. For all Black men, the odds are one chance in twenty nine. And for those living in Washington, D.C., the South Bronx, Chicago's South Side, or other urban centers, the murder rate odds for Black males probably decline to less than one out of twenty.

Black leaders must begin to address, squarely and forthrightly, this crisis of human values within our communities. Many social institutions such as churches and schools no longer exert the moral and social influence among younger Blacks. The economic crisis of poverty and unemployment directly contributes to the violence as well. When people cannot eat or clothe their children, they will steal to survive. When crack dealers pay unemployed teens hundreds of dollars per day, why should they aspire to hold subminimum wage jobs? A person without a job and who has been influenced by the rampant materialism of the dominate culture can be recruited into criminal activity.

The only long term, fundamental solution to the violence between Black people is found within the strategy of community and group empowerment. People who are involved in political change, economic development and community-based reform movements do not destroy each other. They channel their energies into the constructive acts of social economic and political change, and their outlook on their friends, peers and neighbors also changes. They seek to build local institutions and to equip others in the tools for political and social involvement, and in doing so, their understanding of interpersonal relations deepens.

If a person hates himself or herself, and has no appreciation for the culture and sacrifices of Black people of previous generations, he or she will act in a criminal manner against other Blacks. To end the violence, we must organize ourselves from within.

Police argue that most of the recent violence is directly attributable to the proliferation of crack. The street trade in crack cocaine is so profitable that many

gangs are now as heavily armed as police SWAT teams. Witnesses of drug-related crimes often disappear; the arrests of thousands of young people who are low-level dealers has done little to keep thousands more from taking their places.

The flood of violence, however, can only be understood by going beyond the single issue of drugs. Why does violence become the sole method for resolving conflict between so many young Black men? What is the long-term political and economic impact of violence within the national Black community? People resort to violence in their relations with each other when they devalue the humanity and dignity of those individuals with whom they are in conflict. Disagreements are inevitable within all societies. But when people are routinely shot for less than ten dollars, or a young Black man in Detroit can be murdered on a city bus for no reason, a very disturbing level of human alienation and social decay has been reached.

Urban violence frequently takes its casualties from the innocent bystanders, those who have no role in drugs, crime or murder. Two weeks before this Christmas, a nine year old boy died in Chicago public housing project because para-medics refused to enter the apartment building at night. The para-medics later claimed that their ambulance was being hit by rocks and eggs hurled by local residents. The family of the dead boy disputed these charges, and filed a \$60 million suit against the Chicago Fire Department. Whether the para-medics were attacked or not, is secondary to the larger issue of the pervasiveness of urban violence. When postal workers, delivery worker, medics and other health-care professionals are afraid to enter entire neighborhoods without police protection, then the quality of life for the population in that area must deteriorate.

Dr. Manning Marable is Chairperson of the Department of Black Studies, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

My Name is Cocaine

Beware my friends, my name is cocaine, coke for short or the rock...

I entered this country without a passport,
Ever since then I've been hunted and sought.

I'm more valued than diamonds,
more treasured than gold.
Use me just once and you will too be sold.

I'll make a school boy forget his books,
I'll make a beauty queen neglect her looks,
I'll take a renowned speaker and make him a bore,
I'll take your mama and make here a whore,
I'll make a school teacher forget how to teach,
I'll make a preacher, not want to preach.

All kinds of people have fallen under my wing,
Just look around, you can see the results of my sting,
I've got daughters turning on their mothers,
I've got sisters robbing their brothers,
I've got burglars robbing the Lord's house,
I've got husbands pimping their spouse.

I'm the King of Crime and the Prince of Destruction
I'll cause the organs of your body to malfunction,
I'll cause your babies to be born hooked,
I'll turn the most honest men into crooks,
I'll make you rob, steal and kill,
When you're under my power, you have no will.

I've destroyed actors, politicians,
and sports heroes,
I've decreased bank accounts from millions to zero,
I'm a bad habit, too tuff for the man,
I've caused the law to invest in the battering-ram.

Well, now you know, what will you do?
Remember my friend, it's all up to you.
If you decide to jump in my saddle,
you better ride me well,
For on the white horse of cocaine,
I'll ride you straight to hell!

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