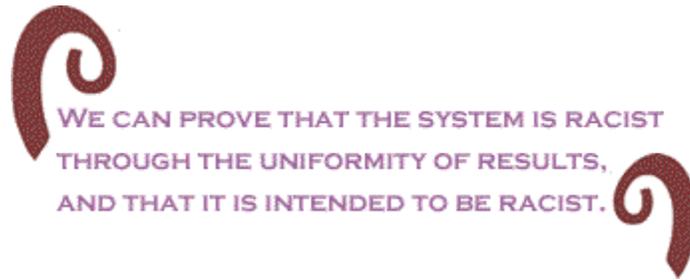


CoMMeNtary

Mass Black Incarceration is White Societal Aggression



The mass incarceration of African Americans is historically comparable only to the treatment of Gypsies in Eastern Europe. Gypsies were also enslaved until the mid-19th century, and are generally not considered by most ethnic Hungarians and Romanians to be true citizens of these nations. Europeans lie and obfuscate about the “complexities” and “intractability” of the Gypsy “problem,” which stubbornly persisted through generations of command-economy and Soviet dominance in the East, and under dictatorships and democracies on the Iberian peninsula. Few Europeans will admit that the problem is that Hungarians and Romanians have always hated and persecuted Gypsies, and still do. Spain exploits and co-opts Gypsy culture, but values the actual people less than other citizens.

The logic of hate leads to predictable results, as we wrote in **bc**'s inaugural issue, April 5, 2002:

“Hungary's beleaguered Gypsies, or *Roma*, constitute 5% of the population but account for around 60% of the nation's male prison inmates. The penal system of Romania, home to the world's largest concentration of Gypsies, appears to have been designed mainly for the purpose of keeping the Roma out of circulation. In Spain, the descendants of the women who bequeathed Flamenco dancing to humanity represent just 1.5% of the population, yet comprise 25% of female prisoners.” In the United States, mass incarceration of Blacks is national policy. This is an obvious and provable fact – otherwise there would not be such uniformity of practice throughout this vast country. The disparity-creating process begins with the intake system, which instructs police to observe, stop and interrogate Black people with far greater frequency and intensity than whites. Those whites unfortunate enough to brush up against the criminal justice system intake machinery, are disproportionately spit back out without being charged with an offense. The pool Blackens, as police attach more severe and numerous crimes to the Black “offenders” in custody. Prosecutors further cull wayward whites from the herd through lenient application of statutes, and by pursuing less harsh penalties for the charges brought. Judges lend their hands to the racial distillation process, using whatever discretion they are allowed to favor whites in sentencing and conditions of confinement.

Inexorably, and with near-identical effects at every stage of the process and across regions, the U.S. criminal justice system reveals its essential racist character. We can prove that the system is racist through the uniformity of results, and that it is intended to be racist by the relentless duplication of the process over time and geography. Ernest M. Drucker, in his contribution to the National Urban League's 2003 State of Black America compilation, used New York as an example of what is, in fact, the national pattern:

In New York State, despite the lack of any evidence of significantly higher rates of illicit drug use for blacks and Hispanics, drug-related incarcerations of young black and Hispanic males is 40 and 30 times the rate, respectively, of young white males. Since the so-called Rockefeller drug laws took effect in 1973, the rate of drug incarcerations in New York increased from 8 percent of the prison population to more than 30 percent. Ninety percent of that group are male; 78 percent are New York City residents; 94 percent are black and Hispanic (although blacks and Hispanics are just 12 percent of the total state population); and 70 percent of them come from just six New York City neighborhoods.

If these results were the product of mistaken theories, the society that demanded such an approach to drug use would have taken corrective action. After 31 years, white society clearly approves of the results: massively disproportionate Black and Latino incarceration.

Euphemisms for savagery

The semi-learned like to say that draconian drug laws are a “cultural reaction” to the “excesses” of the Sixties. This too is a euphemism and diversion, as is proven by the statistics and by white political behavior in the face of the facts of incarceration. The real “culture shock” of the decade was the sight of Blacks standing up as men and women – not the irritating sideshow of white kids getting intoxicated. (Otherwise, the prisons would have been filled with white youth, in order to teach them a “cultural” lesson.) Mass incarceration was the national response to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, a white societal reaction to Black intrusions onto white “space.” The incarceration frenzy shows no signs of letting up.

America is as deeply racist a society as exists on Earth. The statistics prove it. The national character is reflected in the incarceration rate, which puts the United States in an uncivilized class of its own. Two-thirds of America's prison inmates are Black or Latino, a disparity that, by itself, accounts for the nation's ranking among warden-states. Paul Street explored the phenomenon in his November 20 article, "Starve the Racist Prison Beast."

In the second year of the new millennium, 40 of every 100,000 people in Italy were imprisoned. The incarceration rate in Sweden was 60 per 100,000. France: 90 per 100,000. England: 125. South Africa: 400 per 100,000. Russia, with the second highest rate in the world: 675. The United States led the world with 690 per 100,000. Incredibly enough, the nation that proclaims itself the homeland and headquarters of world freedom comprises 5 percent of the world's population but houses more than 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

Americans are quick to point to the Siberian prison colonies of the old Soviet Union – the "Gulag" – as evidence of a truly evil system. Yet African Americans are far more likely to be sent to some rural Hell in the U.S. prison archipelago, than was the average Soviet citizen to be dispatched to Siberia. Close to one in three young Black men will spend time in the Gulag – literally, the worst imprisonment odds in the world. One out of every eight prisoners on the planet is African American, although African Americans make up about one-half of one percent of humanity.

Such heights of racist barbarity are not reached by accident.

Fear, or hate?

When all else fails, apologists for the national policy of mass Black incarceration invoke the excuse of white "fear" – an amazing, ahistorical leap. Rather than address the logic of hatred, which puts the onus on the hater, "fear" serves as a device that deflects responsibility from the evildoer. Did whites establish and perpetuate slavery because of fear of Africans? Did southern whites fight a war to keep their slaves out of fear of Black proximity? If they feared Blacks, why did slave masters and their neighbors take the slaves with them in the western expansion? When did this irrational, deep-seated, absolution-giving fear break out like cholera among whites?

If whites are so consumed with fear of Blacks, why aren't they dropping dead in droves from stress – as do so many African Americans? Who's stressing who?

Hatred, on the other hand, is abundantly evident. American whites have repeatedly erupted in paroxysms of hate-fueled violence whenever Blacks have attempted to assert their full humanity: in the crushing of Reconstruction; the massive white urban violence that met new Black migrants to northern cities; and most recently, the methodical, mass incarceration of Blacks across the width and breadth of the nation in the aftermath of the Sixties – a sustained, three decades-long act of violence against the entire Black community.

The tenth anniversary of California's three-strikes law came and went uneventfully, this month. 50,000 life-sentences later, there is no evidence that the measure has "worked" – unless the purpose was to incarcerate as many non-whites as possible for as long as possible, in which case, the American Gulag is working just fine.

http://www.blackcommentator.com/82/82_prisons.html