

ERACISM

Book Signing Talking Points

ERACISM DEFINED:

Following the many victories of the modern civil rights movement, the Black American political leadership was not able to sustain much of their achievements or translate the advances to benefit the community at large.

The essential reason for this internal political deficiency is the fact that Black civil rights leadership and its constituent base were not strategically organized and politically deployed in the elective process to generate political leverage, enforcement and accountability.

As a consequence of a lack of electoral sophistication, independent political analysis, strategic deployment and financial sustenance to grow the movement, Black political leadership began to fail. Black political leadership became insulated, began to fragment and became fratricidal to the extent of undermining and marginalizing the emergence of organic community leadership.

Hence, Black folk in general and Black political leadership in particular have become their own worse enemy. In addition, the Black community remains the political weakling as compared to all other political and ethnic minority communities. In practical terms, the political, social and economic disposition of Black leadership is on a self defeating trajectory, effectively erasing itself as a political factor of consequence.

Concomitantly, racism continues to be touted and argued by many in the Black community, particularly among the civil rights leadership, as the primary cause for the current state of Black America as the foremost political weakling.

But, it is the opinion of this writer that while racism remains an operative social and political construct in institutions and in the hearts of some; racism and “political oppression” is not the reason for the current dire state of Black America. At this point in American history, the political, economic and social state of Black America can only be improved by Black Americans. Racism continues to be a factor but, it is not an obstacle.

Therefore, the title of the book ERACISM is a metaphor for this paradoxical state of Black American affairs. Accordingly, “ERACISM” may have eclipsed racism as a mitigating factor to the progress of the Black community at large.

THE BOOK CONTENT

The book is essentially a memoir of my political-social development and maturation. The story embodies the dynamic, rich and colorful 1960’s to the present status quo. Some names have been changed to protect the innocent, but there are many recognizable and real-time names of people, organizations and events.

A native New Yorker, I witnessed the heroin epidemic of the mid 1950's that devoured most of my peers. And I am an expert witness to the series of political and social historical events that bring us to this perplexing state of affairs in the Black community, America and in the world.

Born in the South Bronx at the old Lincoln Hospital, I attended Morris High School, Jr. High School 40 and PS 99. During my senior year at Morris (1960), my parents purchased a house in Southeast Queens, where I lived until 1982, when I moved to Harlem, where I currently live.

I owned a printing and desktop publishing business located on 5th Avenue between 125th and 126th Streets from 1985 to 1995. Prior to my Harlem business venue, my office function was located on Jamaica Avenue on the corner of 169th Street, in Jamaica Queens. My political and business consulting enterprise was based there for about 4 years.

The circumstances under which I lost my Queens venue and relocated to Harlem was the culmination of a very controversial, provocative and colorful career as a community organizer and political gadfly. This intriguing dimension is explored in the substance of the book.

The launching of my Harlem business and political based provided my hands on introduction into Harlem's electoral politics. That entry into community and electoral politics of Harlem proved to be equally colorful, controversial and challenging as the Queens experience. I can also assure you that as we speak the controversy continues.

CRACK RED LIGHT DISTRICT

Located on 5th Avenue between 125th and 126th Streets my office was in the red light district for major crack distribution. I had to create a "War Zone" in front of my premises to defend against crack transactions and associated intimidation of my clientele.

I was inspired to write the book for many reasons. Not the least of which is the fact that over the years it has been my observation that only a particular few voices and points of view that emanate from the Black community are heard and/or covered by the media and powers that be.

Be they White political powers that be, or Black political powers that be, they both function as gatekeepers against the emergence of organic grassroots leadership and independent political thought.

The details of some of the nefarious and odious political machinations that the political leadership establishment uses to thwart (knowingly or unknowingly) the best interest of the Black American community at large are outlined throughout the pages of the book.

One of the main objectives of the book is to promote the need to engage in a serious conversation and critical analysis of the road ahead in view of the objective political facts on the ground in the Black community.

What are the objective political facts on the ground?

ANSWER:

Despite the fact that Black American's are the oldest "minority" community in America, and continue to be arguably the most numerous "minority" in the United States, the Black community remains the weakest in terms of political leverage and influence as compared to others.

Coupled with the fact that Black Americans gained emancipation from slavery, and achieved unprecedented social, political and economic advances during the civil rights movement of the 19th century; and notwithstanding legislative and statutory victories of the modern civil rights movement of the 20th century, the state of Black America at large is a perplexing political paradox at best.

Black American elected officials out flank in numerical terms all other minority communities. Yet, for some reason the Black political leadership are unable to speak or act on behalf of the Black community specifically. Black political leaders do not reference the Black community without including Latino's or Hispanic's at the minimum.

The most popular phrase these days is the politically correct phrase, "people of color." This politically correct phrase is a retrograde back to the 1940's and 50's, when we were colored people or Negroes.

The last time that I checked, it was Black Americans who were forcibly enslaved in the United States as a consequence of the Trans Atlantic African slave trade. Last time that I checked it was Black people who were prohibited by law from education and a normal family life in this land of liberty. America continues to be a rough camp for Black folk in particular. Although, we may be doing a little better then our Native American brothers and sisters.

IDENTIFICATION

In 1966, while employed as a liable claims insurance adjuster for a growing insurance company, I joined the staff of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) as an organizer in the borough of Queens. There were five other staff organizers responsible for activities in their respective boroughs, and we received a salary of \$200.00 per week. The local headquarters of NWRO was in Harlem on 126th Street off of Amsterdam Avenues in the offices of the City-Wide Council for Welfare Rights under the leadership of Ms. Beulah Sanders.

The history of welfare rights organizing and activism in New York State and around the country during the 1960's and 70's is voluminous if not legendary. The various confrontations of welfare mothers with police on horseback while demonstrating for

justice and equity in the system paints a dramatic landscape of the early days of the civil rights movement. And in many instances welfare mothers were the initial shock troops for the civil rights movement.

THE MALCOLM FACTOR

I first heard Malcolm speak in 1963 at Mosque number 7. I was invited to listen to him speak by Ken, the oldest brother of my good friend Roger. Ken was thoroughly impressed with Malcolm's narrative and he made it a point on many occasions to invite me to accompany him to the 116th Street Mosque.

When I finally attended Malcolm's presentation my known world was absolutely and forever rocked. I attended many more meetings and developed many friendships in the Nation. But more importantly Malcolm X helped me develop my own world view, and my political and social character. His influence fueled a personal conflict within me and inspired my transition to community organizing and political activism in the civil rights and Black power movements.

Prior to Malcolm's influence on me, I was on a middle class social economic trajectory, as a result of the plum job that I landed in 1962. I was employed as a trainee liability claims insurance investigator/adjustor, a forerunner of what today is called a paralegal.

I along with some others considered ours as protégés of a Black corporate executive in the company. I worked in the field suited up everyday carrying an attaché case and a Polaroid Land camera. The company, Consolidated Mutual Insurance Company paid my car insurance and I received a bi-weekly expense account that covered gas, tolls, lunch, etc.

I just knew that I was a big deal and when the Ford Mustang was first introduced in September of 1964, I purchased one. After I got the Mustang, the Malcolm factor took hold of my social and political consciousness. Ultimately, I was moved to revise my view off self and materialism and I began to shed my impulse to accumulate stuff.

I began to have a moral conflict that I couldn't reconcile in terms of the role that I was playing as a company man, while the civil rights and Black power movements were unfolding. I became disillusioned and quit my conventional job to join the civil rights movement as a staff organizer for NWRO.

It was the inspiration that I got from listening to Malcolm X that was the impetus of my entry into community activism and electoral politics. One of his famous statements continues to resonate with me. "If your not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." Many in my generation sacrificed professional careers and higher education objectives in order to join the movement.

ORIGINS OF NYC BLACK POLITICAL STATUS QUO

The fragmentation that characterizes electoral and community politics in New York City's Black community as we speak, has its origins in the late 1960's following the noted successes of integration, civil rights and voting rights legislation.

Harlem has always been the center piece of Black America particularly in terms of arts, culture, literature and politics. During the 1960's Harlem was singularly the base and vanguard of Black American politics in New York and Black America in general. Popularly known as the Harlem Fox, J Raymond Jones and his political club was the archetype of Black politics, whose legacy continues.

But during that period, the charismatic congressman Rev. Dr. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. personified Harlem as the political vanguard of Black America, the civil rights and Black power movements.

Congressman Powell, by share force of personality virtually united New York City's Black communities and confirmed Harlem as the base of Black politics in New York City. But beginning in 1967 the politics of Harlem was challenged in terms of political leadership, as the civil rights movement underwent organic challenges due in part to its victories and successes. Political euphoria abounded in the wake of civil rights movement successes that ultimately translated into a challenge to the leadership of Congressman Powell.

Also, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) heretofore was the major civil rights brain trust, training institution and multi faceted political activist base of operation in New York City. In 1968, CORE was in the throws of an internal leadership struggle. When the smoke cleared, Roy Innis had emerged victorious as the new Chairman of CORE, following a controversial election.

The advent of the Innis chairmanship effectively spilt CORE in New York. Brooklyn seceded from the organization and became distinguished as "Brooklyn" CORE with Sonny Carson as its chairman. The bifurcation of CORE seeded a political dichotomy between Brooklyn and Harlem's Black political leadership at the electoral and community activist levels.

Apart from the critical split of CORE, there was a major transition in electoral politics that witnessed the political demise of Congressman Powell and the decline of Harlem as New York's Black political monolith. The defeat of Congressman Powell was fraught with political intrigue and controversy. But Congressman Charles Rangel was able to prevail with the assistance of both the Democratic as well as the Republican Parties.

While the civil rights movement in New York was in decline, the youthful Black power movement was on the ascension. The youthful Brooklyn leadership began to emerge in electoral politics to challenge the singular leadership of Harlem.

Following many Black power conferences around the country, including the Black Political Convention in Gary Indiana during 1972, Brooklyn launched a successful

initiative in electoral politics and emerged as the “vanguard” in the Black community. Hence, since the mid 1970’s to date, there is a dubious political relationship between the Harlem and Brooklyn political leadership contingent.

Some of the details and personalities associated with this continuous political dichotomy between Brooklyn and Harlem leadership is woven into **ERACISM** and I hope you buy the book and read about it.

I LOOK FORWARD TO ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS IN PERSON OR BY WAY OF EMAIL.

THANK YOU