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United States

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In the early 1970s, I participated a number of times as a faculty member in the Salzburg Seminar In American studies, in Salzburg, Austria. The seminar had been set up right after World War II. The idea was that Europe had been cut off from the United States, and this was a way of bringing to young Europeans--scholars, scientists, professionals--knowledge of developments in the United States. We were at the beginning of that "American century" which is now coming to an end, after less than half a century. The United States had saved Europe from Hitler; it was by far then the most powerful country in the world, economically and militarily. With some arrogance, and perhaps some justified pride, the United States thought it had something to teach Europe, devastated and prostrated by a second World War within a mere three decades.

The sessions of the seminar I participated in dealt with urban problems. It was already questionable just what Europeans could learn from the United States about urban development, urban planning, urban problems. After all, the United States had no great tradition of urban planning, and its instruments for the guiding of urban development had been only recently developed. Many European countries were far in advance of the United States when it came to urban planning, the guiding of urban development, the administration and governing of cities. We were the country of rampant capitalism and individualism and a good deal of urban governmental corruption.

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There was another problem that made questionable the relevance of American urban experience for Europe: race. Our cities in the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s filled rapidly with black migrants from Southrtn rural areas and small towns. City populations began to decline in the older parts of the country, as suburbs grew. Suburbs became the homes of large numbers of former city-dwellers, seeking newer housing, more space and more land, opened up by new highway development. As suburbs exploded, and central cities stopped growing, or went into decline, the American urban world more and more began to be defined by a central city increasingly black and increasingly poor, and a ring of suburbs, dominantly white and more prosperous than the cities left behind.

The United States was ahead of Europe in suburbanization, and there were substantial differences between the character of American and European suburbanization. But the overwhelming difference, I believed, was the factor of race. It was not only the desire for newer housing and more work that drove suburbanization; it was the desire to escape from increasingly black cities. It often seemed to me, lecturing in Salzburg to European urban planners and city officials, that our distinctive racial and social problems made irrelevant to them the American urban experience.

Today, as Western European countries deal with the issues raised by substantial non-European populations, as they ponder the problems of dealing with great numbers of asylum seekers from the Third World, as they note with alarm the possibility of great migrations from an Eastern Europe wracked by the transition from Communism and the eruption of old ethnic conflicts, matters may be different. Europeans might well think there is something to learn from the American experience. At any rate, whether there is anything to learn or not, some parallels are beginning to become evident: the concentration of foreign, immigrant, and non-European populations in the older areas of the large cities; the consequent dominance of this new and poorer population in some inner-city schools; their prominence as clients of social service institutions; the issue of the acculturation or assimilation of these populations--in language, in education, in social customs; the tensions between the newer, immigrant, foreign and non-European population and natives, and between these newer populations and the police and other public employees; the question of what policies should be developed to raise and assimilate these populations. Should their areas of concentration be dispersed, and if so, by what means? Is it good that their children are concentrated in certain schools--or should they rather be dispersed among native children? Should they be taught their distinctive languages, cultures, religion, histories in the schools, or should they rather be taught to forget these differences, and become like the natives? And what policies should be adopted toward the possibility of greater numbers of foreign, immigrant, non-European populations?

We have dealt, we are dealing, with all of these questions in the United States. Without suggesting for a moment that the situations are parallel, there are reasons for Europeans to look more closely at the American experience, reasons, which are

different from those which might have motivated such an examination 20 or 40 years ago. Forty years ago the United States was still a possible country of emigration for Europeans who did not know that the time would come when they would be prosperous and a magnet for migrants themselves. Twenty-five years ago, Europe might have wondered whether America's racial problems would not fatally damage it as the leader of a free world opposing Communist power. Today the matter is different: the United States may in some respects prefigure the issues Europe will have to deal with.

From this point of view, the terrible riots in Los Angeles last Spring must be a terrible discouragement, not only to Americans, who have been asking themselves, what after all has changed since the Los Angeles riots 27 years ago, but to those Europeans who might have seen in the United States an example of how a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society could manage its affairs successfully. Superficially, the riots of 27 years ago had similar causes, reflecting similar social problems, leading to a similar extended outburst of self-examination. Everyone understood that the recent Los Angeles riots were not exceptional, reflecting conditions in that city alone. It is true the riots might have been better contained had Los Angeles had a more sensitive police chief, and a larger and more experienced police force in dealing with mass urban disorder. Imitative riots were on the whole avoided in 1992, as they were not in the late 1960s. But everyone understood that the underlying conditions were almost everywhere the same. While Los Angeles struggled with the question of how to rebuild large parts of the city, what social programs to undertake, where to find the resources to deal with them, matters were hardly different in the other major metropolitan centers of the United States. It was, to use a well known American expression, "Déjà vu all over again." This was the conclusion of a committee of the state legislature of California. But if it was the same all over again, if the massive urban programs in the 1960s and 1970s, the great expansion of civil rights legislation, had had seemingly such little effect, what hope was there that new programs, which would inevitably be on a much more modest scale owing to the financial constraints on the Federal government, now running a huge deficit, would do any better?

But in one key respect it was not "déjà vu all over again." The racial composition of Los Angeles, and many major American cities has undergone a massive change since 1965. The initiating spark for the riot of 1992 may have been the same as that of 1965--police insensitivity and brutality. The major antagonists may have been those two races that have been in a tragic encounter on the soil of the United States for 350 years, black and whites. But new parties had entered the fray, Hispanics, or what we increasingly call Latinos, and Asians. It was Asian storekeepers who were the chief target of destructive rage (and of light-hearted looting) in 1992; and it was Latinos, of Mexican and Central American origin, who played as large a role as blacks in the destruction and looting. The cast of characters in the American city, in American society, had changed. These two new elements introduce a decisive change in the American racial and

ethnic problem.

In 1965, as we were in the middle of a burst of major civil rights legislation which guaranteed black participation in politics and which banned discrimination in every area of public life in the United States, we also passed legislation, little noted at the time, that was part of the great effort to root out all aspects of racism from American public life. This was the immigration reform act of 1965. It should be pointed out that after major restrictive legislation in the early 1920s, the United States never expected to become a country of mass immigration again. The immigration acts of the early 1920s sharply restricted, almost eliminated, immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, the major source of the mass immigration of the early 20th century. The restrictive immigration laws along with Depression and War radically reduced immigration to the United States for 30 years. Even during the years of Hitler's persecution of Jews, the immigration restrictions were rigorously enforced. They remained in force after the war, with only modest modifications that permitted some displaced persons and refugees to enter.

The immigration restriction act was seen by liberals as a monument to racism--as it indeed was, with its ban on all Asian immigration, its sharp restriction of Jewish and Catholic immigrants from Eastern Europe its favoritism toward England, Ireland, and Germany. This act was finally overthrown in 1965. Few foresaw the consequences of the new regime in immigration law. Its sponsors believed they were correcting a historic injustice, and increasing the opportunity for some Americans to bring relatives over and reunite families. Certainly few connected the immigration reform of 1965 to the fate of the American Negro: it seemed simply part of the effort to eliminate all considerations of racial difference from public law.

But as Los Angeles has reminded us, by this legislation we transformed the American city, the place of residence of the great majority of American blacks, and transformed the conditions they face in trying to improve themselves.

Why the immigration act has such unexpected consequences is a story I will not go into. But immigration grew steadily, to reach a level in the late 1980s and today of more than 700,000 a year. Its composition also changed. From an immigration stream that was almost entirely European, it changed over time to an immigration stream that is overwhelmingly Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean.

The transformation of the racial composition of the United States was startling. New York City, our largest city, with more than seven million people, was, when I was writing a book on the ethnic groups of New York in the early 1960s, four fifths white, of European origin. One could then envisage the city's politics and economy and culture as shaped by major European immigrant groups--Irish, Jewish, Italian, Blacks and Puerto Ricans could be seen as relative newcomers who would in time rise economically and politically and form part of the complex interplay of ethnic and racial elements. Today the city, with the same size population, is one quarter Black, one quarter Latino, seven per cent Asian, only about two-fifths European white. The old

tensions and conflicts among the European origin groups persists, but the life and problems of the city are increasingly dominated by the lines that separate white, Black and Latino. Our overall population characteristics, for the nation as a whole--12 per cent black, 7 per cent Latino, 3 per cent Asian--do not indicate the importance of immigrant and minority issues in our central cities and metropolitan areas. It is there that the old black population and the newer immigrants are concentrated. And that sets the stage for events such as the Los Angeles riots.

Our immigration today is not in volume as great as in the periods of heaviest immigration, before World War II. But its effect to my mind is as great, and one reason is that it is more highly concentrated in certain cities and metropolitan areas than was the last great European immigration. That immigration was also largely to urban areas, which were growing and which had jobs available. But it was widely dispersed through the Northeast and the Midwest, and many cities were affected by it. The immigration of the past 25 years has been sharply concentrated--Los Angeles, the New York metropolitan area, Florida, to a lesser degree Chicago and the growing cities of Texas have been the chief objectives of the immigrants. Great cities formerly as attractive to immigrants as New York or Chicago, such as Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and St. Louis have been remarkably unaffected by the immigrant waves. Thus the Los Angeles metropolitan area is now 27 per cent foreign-born (up from 18.5 per cent in 1980), New York is 20 per cent foreign born (up from 17 per cent in 1980), Miami is 34 per cent foreign born (against 26 per cent in 1980). But Philadelphia is only 5 per cent foreign born, with no change from 1980; Detroit 5.5 per cent, with a drop from 1980. These are all figures for the metropolitan areas; there are greater concentrations of the foreign born in the central cities of these metropolitan areas.

The impact of the immigration, concentrated as it is among Latinos or Hispanics--the term the census uses for the people from New World Spanish-speaking areas--and Asians, means that the weight of blacks in the major metropolitan areas declines. The age of black expansion in the central cities and metropolitan areas, which shifted much of the black population of the United States from the small towns and rural areas of the South to the central cities of our major metropolitan areas, has come to an end. The percentage of blacks in such metropolitan areas as Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, actually declined in the 1980s. Where it increased, as in New York, it was largely because of black immigration from the West Indies. The only major metropolitan area with a substantial increase in black population was Miami, and there undoubtedly the major reason was the immigration of Haitians.

Asians, who until the 1980s were only tiny proportions of the American population, now assume a substantial place in many parts of the United States. The number of Asians doubled in the 1980s, from 3 million to 7 million, still only 3 per cent of the American population. But in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, they are almost 10 per cent of the population--more numerous than blacks. In San Francisco they are a startling 15 per cent of the population. In the huge New York metropolitan area they are 5

per cent of the population.

But, of course, the most substantial changes of the 1980s, continuing through the 1990s, is the steady increase in the number of Hispanics: One third of the Los Angeles and Miami metropolitan areas; a fifth of the Houston metropolitan area; 15 per cent of the New York and San Francisco metropolitan areas. This immigration is both legal and illegal. Concern over illegal immigration led to a major piece of legislation in 1986, the immigration restriction and control act, which incorporated a great compromise that was supposed to solve the immigration problem: illegal immigration would be made more difficult by penalizing employers who hired illegal immigrants; and amnesty, the right to permanent settlement, would be granted to millions of illegal immigrants who fulfilled certain conditions. Viewed in terms of its objectives, the act can only be considered a failure. Illegal immigration has not been halted, and the southern border with Mexico cannot in practice be sealed. The fact that one amnesty legalizing the status of millions of immigrants has been granted, quite reasonably suggests the hope to illegal immigrants that there will be another. The pressures of civil war, widespread disorder and massive poverty in Central America and the Caribbean produces a push for immigration, and higher wage rates in the United States attract immigration. We cannot devise the legislation, nor is there the political will to propose and enforce it, that would make much difference.

But what is the effect of this huge ethnic and racial change on the native black population, now concentrated in our central cities? This is the group that has been resident in the United States as long as our oldest European settlers, it was the object of our major civil rights legislation and much of our social legislation of the 1960s. The matter is not simple and does not lend itself to any easy answer. But I think the new immigration has, in a number of key ways, hurt American blacks. I will not ascribe the problems blacks struggle with today simply to the new pattern of immigration. But it has in combination with other factors made the black situation more difficult.

Only a few demagogic black leaders, supported by more substantial sentiment among poor urban blacks, express an animus against the immigrants. The Korean merchants of Los Angeles, themselves immigrants of the 1970s and 1980s, who had established themselves in black areas, are attacked as exploiters. The very conditions that make possible their success arouse black hostility. For example, one reason Korean storekeepers succeed was because they use as little hired labor as possible, depending on their own family members, and their own labor. This means they do not hire local blacks. This then contributes to their image as outsiders, exploiting blacks. This is perhaps the most obvious form of conflict and contention between blacks and Asians, who have in many cities taken over, in surprisingly short time, the retail trade of these areas. Asians move into these areas because they have little capital; because businesses can be bought for very little, since conducting business in these areas is dangerous and those who have alternatives would not consider it; because they have a culture that encourages enormous effort for the sake of the family and in which children will accept

obedience to parental wishes, and work in the parents' store even while carrying a heavy load at school. But the blacks in these areas are no sociologists and the explanations of what is happening do not mollify them: they see only exploitation.

But why have blacks not seized the opportunities that retail trade in their areas of high concentration offer? That is an old story, and there is no easy answer. Before the Koreans and the Chinese, there were the Jews. Undoubtedly black failure to make good use of retail trade opportunities in their local areas has deep roots, perhaps going back to slavery.

One might ask, why are there still such large sections of concentrated black settlement, overwhelmingly poor, afflicted by social problems, in our major central cities? Similar conditions once prevailed among major poor migrant groups to our cities--the Irish, Jews, Italians. In time, the opportunities provided by a growing economy permitted them to rise, and these immigrant ghettos were reduced to fragments, or totally disappeared, or, if they remained, served only as tourist attractions and shopping centers for the dispersed ethnic populations. Why do such areas persist and even grow after the reduction of prejudice, the expansion of laws against discrimination, the establishment of a wide network of social services (wide by American standards, if still grossly deficient by Dutch standards)? Why have other groups, which have also met some degree of prejudice and discrimination, and in some cases very severe prejudice and discrimination, been able to mount the ladder of social mobility and why has it been so difficult for blacks? Why are they still concentrated in the central city to meet the competition of new immigrants, who are ready to take lower wages, and to work harder, and who have strong family structures of support?

This is one of the most difficult things to understand. The volume of research is immense, and is not conclusive.

To begin with, we should not allow the reality of these large enclaves, mostly black but also Latino, of poverty and concentrated social problems to become our entire view of the American black population. By certain measures, there has been an enormous improvement in the black situation since the 1960s. Thus, there has been a large movement of blacks into professional and white collar occupations. Overall, median black household income was, in 1900, only 63 percent that of white income. But in the West this figure was 76 per cent, a substantial improvement over 68 per cent in 1979. In the East, this was 68.5 per cent, a substantial improvement over 63 per cent in 1979.

This crude overall measure of household income however covers two worlds, one in which opportunities for blacks, and returns to that opportunity, are equivalent to those for whites; and another in which concentrated social problems make opportunity a mockery. In one, blacks work in jobs in government, in industry, in the manufacturing and service economy, and their incomes match those of similar whites. In the other, however, we have a very large proportion of the black population supported either on welfare or on earnings from casual labor or crime. It is this large proportion of the non-working or problem population that brings down the black median household income. It has been noted for a long time that stable black

educated families have incomes not far below whites. It is the very high proportion of female-headed families, with low incomes, mostly from welfare, who bring down the black median. The question then becomes, why are there so many more such families among blacks than among whites or among new immigrants? This question has been explored now for more than 25 years.

Shortly before the Watts riot of 1965, Daniel P. Moynihan, now a Senator from New York State, published a report on the black family that was to become very controversial. He pointed to the rise in black female-headed families. The figure was then about 25 per cent of all black families, about three times the white percentage. It has since risen to more than half. There has been an equivalent rise in the percentage of white female-headed families, but from a much smaller base. The two-parent black family, already endangered in the 1960s, has come close to disappearing in the poor black inner-city areas. It was not easy to discuss this phenomenon during the 1960s and 1970s. It was attacked as "blaming the victim." But if one looked at income statistics, and tried to explain them, it was impossible to avoid this reality. If one looked at school achievement among inner-city blacks, it was impossible to avoid considering family circumstances. A recent visitor to a school in New York City asked the principal how many of the children came from female-headed families. The principal answered, ask rather how many now come from no-parent families--children being raised in foster homes because they had been taken away from or been abandoned by their mothers, or by grandparents. Clearly poverty was one part of the explanation, poverty based on prevailing prejudice and discrimination, perhaps the heritage of slavery too was involved. But some analysts, most notably the historian Herbert Gutman, pointed out that the black family was stabler in earlier periods, that this break-up had occurred precisely in the decades--the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s--in which the legal circumstances of blacks had been enormously improved, in which the range of social programs available to the poor had greatly expanded, in which the political power of blacks had increased. It seemed as if the processes, whatever they may be, that were reducing the proportion of stable married couples in the black population were leading a life of their own, quite independent of the influences of change in the larger legal and economic and political environment which might have been expected to strengthen the black family. Of course some of these larger social influences were leading to a substantial increase in the bearing of children out of wedlock, in divorce and in separation, throughout the society. New immigrants were less affected by these influences, which was one source of their advantage. But the impact of these cultural changes on the black family quite dwarfed what was happening elsewhere in the society.

So what was the cause of this change in the black family? One social analyst, whose work has been controversial, Charles Murray, argued that the only explanation could be the rise of the very social programs, in particular welfare and other programs that offered support to the female-headed family, that were designed to help the poor and unfortunate: the programs changed the system of incentives faced by the young. Others disputed

him: Why were out-of-wedlock childbearing and female-headed families increasing in the 1970s and 1980s, when inflation was reducing the value of welfare, and thus the incentive Charles Murray argued could explain the change?

Perhaps the most powerful counter argument has been launched by the black sociologist, William L. Wilson, who argued that it was the reduction of manufacturing jobs, the jobs that had first drawn blacks from the South to cities like Chicago and Detroit and Cleveland, that was responsible. Men with modest skills could no longer earn good incomes in manufacturing. The pool of marriageable men declined as they became unemployed, and as young men entering the labor force could not find decent paying jobs. But the matter was not solely this economic change, according to Wilson. The very concentration of poor blacks in central cities, as the more successful left for the suburbs, created a world in which few men had regular jobs, in which few women entered into stable marriages, in which few mothers lived with the fathers of their children, and in which the consequent socialization of the young in the habits necessary for effective schooling, work and stability was damaged.

Recently yet another feature of this complex has come to the fore: Crime, not only as a consequence of these conditions, but as a central factor in perpetuating them. The scale of the impact of crime in explaining some aspects of the black condition has only recently become apparent. The research of the labor economist Richard Freeman, who has for some years been studying why participation of black youth in the labor force is markedly below that of other youth, has been decisive. He asserts on the basis of his research:

"...the proportion of disadvantaged young men with criminal records grew so large in the 1980s that crime became a major determinant of their economic life rather than merely deviant behavior on the margin. As a result, traditional programs to help the disadvantaged--job training, education, affirmative action, and area economic development--will not suffice to bring these men into the mainstream economy.... Among blacks, one-fifth of 16-34 year old men and as many as three-fourths of 25-34 year old high school dropouts had criminal records in the 1980s.... Even in low unemployment cities such as Boston, at the peak of the 'Massachusetts Miracle', economic opportunities were insufficient to deter large numbers of disadvantaged youths from crime...."

Crime's effects on the inner-city black communities are various. Its incentives deter youth from applying themselves to legitimate jobs. The high rate of arrests and incarceration makes it harder for them to present themselves as reliable employees: it will even make it impossible for them to join the armed forces, which has offered an important avenue of social mobility to black youth. Crime further contributes to high rates of death among black males, and reduces that "marriageable pool" that concerns William Wilson. It further encourages all who can to move out, leaving black neighborhoods bereft of examples of

stability and success.

It is only when one discovers the scale of crime's impact on black males that one sees that this is a decisive and important characteristic of the condition of blacks in American cities. Overall, the rate of serious crimes in the United States tripled between the early 1960s and early 1980s, fell slightly in the early 1980s, rose again in the late 1980s. During the 1960s, the numbers of persons incarcerated fell somewhat, but they have risen steadily from the early 1970s to today. In 1988, almost one million persons were incarcerated in federal and state prisons and local jails. An additional three million were on parole or on probation. Half of incarcerations are of black men (Richard Freeman, 202, 203-5, 209).

In the inner city areas, these incredibly high proportions are even higher. Thus, from a recent report of the situation in Baltimore we learn that "56 per cent of the city's black men between the ages of 18 and 35 were either in prison, on parole, or probation, being sought on arrest warrants or awaiting trial on an average day in 1991" (Washington Post, Sept. 2, 1992)." Much of this huge inflation in arrests is owing to the war on drugs, which, despite great expenses and efforts seems to have done little to stem drug trafficking, with its associated ills of higher burglary and robbery rates and deadly warfare between groups of drug dealers.

It is not easy to exaggerate this awful situation, yet again we must point out it is only part of the picture of black America. What seems to have happened during the 1980s is a growing bifurcation of the black population. Large numbers left the central city for the suburbs. This move did mean generally an improved situation: higher income, more home-ownership, access to better schools, lower crime. This bifurcation was reflected in the income statistics. A recent Census study reported that the proportion of high income black families--earning more than \$50,000 in current dollars--doubled between 1967 and 1990. But the percentage earning very low incomes--under \$5,000--also increased substantially, from 8 to 12 per cent.

But what is the relationship between the changing ethnic and racial composition of American cities, the story with which I began in Los Angeles, and these indices of severe social problems among a large part of the black population? Certainly a direct relationship cannot be demonstrated. Econometric studies do not show a relationship between immigration and black economic circumstances, but this is not surprising. These studies contrast cities with high immigration with cities with low immigration. Cities with high immigration are also growing and more prosperous cities, and blacks do better there than in the declining cities. For the same reasons immigrants go to these cities. What social scientists would consider anecdotal accounts tell a different story. Blacks have been in many cities replaced in occupations they formerly dominated--service in hotels, cleaning office buildings, in some low-wage manufacture, by immigrants. When one talks to employers, the reasons become clear. It is not simply that immigrants may work for lower wages, though that is part of the story. Immigrants are often more reliable. They are more docile, more willing to accept

authority. One could say they don't know their rights, but in the litigious environment of the United States that is an advantage for the employer.

And if immigration were lower, would matters be different? The defenders of high immigration, who in the United States include employer interests (most prominently the free-market Wall Street Journal), as well as liberals in general, often explain that immigrants take jobs that blacks don't want, because the working conditions are hard, or pay is low. But if the supply of immigrant labor was reduced, would not these jobs change? They would pay more, and their working conditions would improve. We know that other developed societies manage with a much smaller supply of immigrant labor, or, as in Japan, none at all. One cannot conclude that because of immigrant labor, young black men don't get or take jobs, turn to crime, are incapable of being good fathers to their children, and so raise the female-headed family rate. Connections are never that clear. I believe a culture has been institutionalized in low-income black inner-city areas that maintain these conditions even in the presence of greater opportunity. But there is also I believe a connection with higher immigration.

What then is to be done, will be done in the wake of Los Angeles? Very little, one suspects, much less than was done in the wake of the Watts riot 27 years ago. Certainly there is no hint we will try harder to control illegal immigration, or limit legal immigration. Business interests and liberals alike would oppose such efforts. Nor will there be any expansion of social programs after Watts. We still had hope that social programs would markedly affect the seriousness of our inner-city social problems. Undoubtedly one can argue that not enough was done, that more would have been more effective. The judgement of the American electorate was in time that enough had been done, and more would not matter. The major social program of the 1980s, it turned out, was the war on drugs and the incarceration at great expense of a good part of the male black population. Other programs languished. It was not possible to show marked improvement in low-income black areas from the prosperity and low unemployment rates in large parts of the United States in the later 1980s. Inner-city problems are not on the national political agenda today. People deal with these problems by moving, if they can. And many can. The proportion of the population living in the inner cities does decline, as the suburbs grow. They are now home to a much larger proportion of the population, including the black population. Thus in the overall political equation there seems no profit in sustained attention to the problems of the inner cities.

Despite Los Angeles, the American electorate is not clamoring for more sustained attention to these problems. One reason they are not calling for more attention is that they are not convinced that the attention we paid, in the form of more programs, more money, more concern, in the 1960s and the 1970s, paid off. This conclusion may be too crude: the black middle class was greatly expanded, in part through these measures, but it is also true the conditions of the black poor seems to have in marked ways declined. Social scientists and policy analysts have

not been able to come up with convincing proposals as to how we can address this situation. When one reviews the major proposals now on the table (not that one expects much will be done to advance any of them) one is not convinced we have any answer in the present armory of policies to deal with these matters.

Thus, one major policy thrust is to invest more in the ghetto areas from which business and industry has fled, in order to make jobs available to the youth who live there. The instrument proffered to do this is "enterprise zones," areas in which the burden of taxation and regulation on new business is reduced. But one cannot be optimistic: new investment is deterred by high costs of crime and a poorly trained and motivated labor force, and that outweighs whatever advantages the state can offer.

One major set of proposals looks to the breaking up of black concentrations of the poor. These are more popular with liberal policy analysts than the public. It is almost impossible to locate new housing that would attract the more prosperous to these areas because of crime and drugs and poor schools. Can then the black poor alternatively be moved to the suburbs? A small program in Chicago tells us that when inner-city blacks are moved to stable suburbs their children will do better in schools and their circumstances generally will improve. This program is only possible because of a court decision of two decades ago which insisted that the Chicago housing authorities do something to break up black concentrations in housing projects. The courts are less activist today. In any case, those who can, do move: There is prejudice in white suburbs, but blacks are far more widely distributed in metropolitan areas today than in the 1960s, and cases of vicious attack to keep them out are much less frequent. This kind of change, in which people act on the basis of their judgment as to their best opportunities, does not require any distinctive government program, aside from enforcement of the laws against discrimination and the maintenance of an economic environment in which opportunity is available.

One major effort of the 1960s and 1970s--was the attempt to integrate schools, even if blacks were residentially concentrated, by busing students for purposes of racial integration. This met massive resistance in many cities, and generally the only effect of such programs was to reduce the number of white students in inner-city schools, as they shifted to private schools or their move to the suburbs was accelerated. Again, with less activist courts, there is little to be expected from this form of integration, and its possible positive effects on black youth.

Today yet another avenue has perhaps the greatest support: Improving the schools in the inner cities, as the first step toward increased opportunity. More has been happening to change the pattern of schooling in the inner city than in any other area. These changes are designed to reduce the power of central school bureaucracies, increase the power of parents and innovative teachers and principals. Its chief consequence is to increase the variety and types of schools available to black youth.

Around the theme of school improvement, we find a surprising alliance of supporters, from left and right, and they often even agree on the specific measures that will bring school improvement. School reform measures are today popular. They are in line with much current thinking, which tells us to place more emphasis on investments in increasing the social capital of the individual: doing the things that will make the individual more literate and numerate, that will inculcate habits useful for productive work. This seems like a rather modest program for a big problem. Its major virtue is that it has the support of black parents and political leaders, as well as the support of major actors in public policy, from left to right. It is not without its own disputes, of course, as to just what policies, what emphases in curriculum, should dominate school reform. The concentration on schooling as a means of change reflects the fact that while our problems are large, our thinking has not come up with the grand analyses and proposals that command general assent.

Blacks in the inner cities face a terrible situation, one that is not improved, to my mind, by our commitment to a large flow of new immigrants. We have no grand solution, no grand program. If we did, we would not find the political will to provide the resources for it. The American pattern has generally been to place more emphasis on individual solutions than social solutions. There was, in the past, the frontier; there is, today, the suburbs. I see no alternative in the United States now in grand social policy to these individual solutions, and it is perhaps for this reason that school reform is so attractive.

We often speak in the United States of our racial and minority problems. But to my mind these problems break down into two: one is the old problem of the black American, who is not an immigrant, and who is still the least integrated of our racial and ethnic groups. As for all the others: whatever their problems, we have already displayed in our history our ability to integrate them into an effective multiracial and multiethnic society. When it comes to blacks, our success is much more limited. A great black middle class has been created. What we are to do to address the problems of what we increasingly call "the underclass" is not particularly effective. No panaceas are available; indeed in some measure almost all have been tried, and are in one degree or another in effect. For the moment, we are putting our hope in education, and in the fact that we are a large country, in which many people seem to find their way one way or another to productive lives, even in the absence of a directive governmental role.

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Een trieste balans

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EEN TRIESTE BALANS

Toen ik de geschreven versie van Prof. Glazer's voordracht las, in de stilte van mijn studeerkamer, heeft die mij, moet ik u bekennen, zeer ontroerd. Ziehier een geleerde die zijn werksame leven besteed heeft aan het onderzoek van minderheden in zijn land en die ons hier nu de trieste balans komt voorleggen. O zeker, er is ook winst te melden: een groot deel van de zwarte Amerikanen woont thans in een "nette" voorstad en heeft een "nette" baan en onderscheidt zich, sociaal en economisch, nauwelijks meer van zijn mede-Amerikanen. Maar met hen die achtergebleven zijn in de oude binnensteden, is het van kwaad tot erger gegaan. Sprak men eerst over een "cultuur van de armoede", thans heerst er, kan men zeggen, de cultuur van de misdaad, waarbij het niet bij kruimeldiefstallen blijft. Harde misdaad, met harde hand bestreden door een kolossaal repressief apparaat. Er zitten in Amerika, kan ik u zeggen, naar verhouding tienmaal meer mensen in de gevangenis dan hier in Nederland, de helft ervan is zwart. En wie eenmaal een strafblad heeft, is getekend en kan een reguliere baan meestal wel vergeten.

Glazer gunt zich niet de satisfactie schuldigen aan te wijzen. Integendeel, hij presenteert ons onpersoonlijke maatschappelijke krachten die onherroepelijk, lijkt het wel, tot het geschetste resultaat geleid hebben. Als in een Griekse tragedie. Niemand kan hem een teveel aan voluntarisme aanwrijven! Er is van alles geprobeerd, betoogt hij, bijstandsregelingen, busing, grootscheepse sociale programma's. Het heeft allemaal niet mogen baten, ja, sommigen beweren zelfs dat het effect ervan averechts geweest is. Deze laatste theorie is fel omstreden, maar heeft ook veel applaus gekregen. Verdacht veel. Glazer's meest gruwelijke constatering is misschien deze, dat "het probleem van de Amerikaanse binnensteden niet meer op de

politieke agenda staat." Pas als zich weer eens burgeroorlogachtige toestanden voordoen, zoals dit voorjaar in Los Angeles, verschijnt de President op de TV en spreekt zorgelijke woorden. Dan komt ook enig geld ter tafel. Maar voor het overige niets. De oorzaak, dunkt me, is tweeledig: radeloosheid bij een deel van de publieke opinie, pure politieke onwil bij anderen. De torenhoge kosten, materiële en immateriële, van de bestaande situatie, nemen zij blijkbaar voor lief, ... als zij zich de omvang ervan tenminste realiseren.

Toch blijft er één punt over, zegt Glazer, waarvan vriend en vijand soelaas verwachten, de verbetering van het onderwijs. Wie evenwel de staat van de openbare scholen in de Amerikaanse binnensteden kent en weet hoe groot de uitval is, zelfs bij het lager onderwijs, moet vrezen dat het hier om de spreekwoordelijke strohalm gaat. "Wij blijven hoop houden", zo sluit Glazer zijn betoog af, "want Amerika is een uitgestrekt land waarin al zovelen een productief bestaan hebben weten op te bouwen." Het zal u als toehoorder niet ontgaan zijn dat dit een bezweringsformule is. Meer niet. Maar soms kan een mens daaraan zo allemachtig veel behoefte hebben.

Het zou al te goedkoop zijn als ik het liet bij een parafrase van Glazer's betoog. Hijzelf vraagt trouwens iets anders. Het is hem niet ontgaan dat ook Nederland een multi-etnische samenleving geworden is en de prangende kwestie is: gaat in Nederland gebeuren wat in Amerika gebeurd is? Precies zo of ongeveer zo?

Het toeval wil dat er zeer onlangs een uitvoerige monografie verschenen is die zich buitengewoon goed leent voor een vergelijking op hoofdpunten met Glazer's stellingen.* Het gaat om een studie van Creoolse jongeren in Amsterdam, meest van Surinaamse herkomst en afkomstig uit wat van oudsher in Suriname "de volksklasse" heet. De historische trauma's van deze "volksklasse", haar sociale constellatie en culturele achtergrond, komen sterk overeen met die van de zwarte bevolking in Amerika.

Het onderzoek in kwestie is in de beste antropologische tradi-

tie uitgevoerd. Al met al heeft de auteur vier en een half jaar intensief contact onderhouden met zijn respondenten. Hij heeft eindeloos met ze gepraat, geroddeld en geouwehoerd, heeft feesten en partijen met ze bezocht, heeft een menigte rollen voor ze vervuld, zoals barkeeper, sociaal werker, fotograaf, informele raadsman. Maar hij heeft nooit verzwegen dat zijn voornaamste doel was hen te bestuderen. "Op een gegeven ogenblik", zegt hij, "werd mijn woning bijna een dependance voor mijn onderzoek. Het voordeel spreekt voor zich. Het nadeel was dat ik geen privéleven meer had." - Ik bedoel maar, deze onderzoeker had er wel wat voor over!

Het is een leerzaam boek geworden, met als voornaamste verdienste dat het de lezer in staat stelt zich te verplaatsen in de gevoelens van de mensen om wie het gaat. Het is ook een verontrustend boek.

De auteur heeft periodes van veldwerk afgewisseld met tijden waarin hij andere dingen deed. Daardoor heeft zijn onderzoek een longitudinaal karakter gekregen. Er zijn zo'n zestig individuen die hij in het begin van de jaren tachtig als jonge jongens heeft leren kennen en die hij tien jaar lang heeft kunnen volgen. In 1981 was het gros van hen nog op school of volgde een cursus, in 1991 hadden er dertien een min of meer reguliere baan, alle overigen hadden een uitkering, velen dan wel met "bijverdiensten". Enkelen waren in het circuit van de harde criminaliteit terecht gekomen, een handvol was verslaafd.

Werkloosheid is dus de norm, regulier werk de uitzondering en de vraag is natuurlijk, hoe is dat zo gekomen? Een belangrijk punt is dat de eisen die werkgevers stellen, hoger worden. Wie met moeite en ondanks alle achterstand de MAVO gehaald heeft, merkt dat hij voor de baan die hij begeert, minimaal HAVO moet hebben. Wie een beroepsopleiding of cursus gaat volgen - en die zijn er in alle soorten en maten - weet dat, ook al maakt hij die af, er totaal geen garantie is dat hij ook werk zal vinden. Waarom dan al die moeite gedaan? Glazer noemt als bijkomende factor voor zwart Amerika de concurrentie van andere, recent gearriveerde minderheden, die nu eenmaal, zegt

hij, gedweeër zijn en zich makkelijker laten uitbuiten. Iets dergelijks is hier het geval. Creolen hebben de reputatie bij de tijd te zijn, niks te pikken en een grote bek te hebben. Dus waar werkgevers de keus hebben, geven zij nogal eens de voorkeur aan werknemers uit andere minderheidsgroepen. Het werk dat ze eventueel nog wel kunnen krijgen (poetser, vakkenvuller, schoonmaker) vinden ze maar niks. Misschien goed voor een Turk of een Hollander, maar niet voor hen, zeker niet voor langere tijd. De auteur spreekt zelfs van een "anti-arbeids-ethos". Handenarbeid in loondienst maken zij graag bespottelijk. Over Creoolse jongens uit hun omgeving die zulk werk verrichten, worden eindeloos grappen gemaakt. Zo iets is abnormaal, iets voor mietjes of dommeriken. Ze noemen het "rotbaantjes" - wat het natuurlijk ook zijn - die dan ook nog hoogstens f 400 per maand méér opleveren dan een uitkering. Dat bedrag (of meer) kan je ook extra verdienen door te "hosselen".

Dit Surinaams-Nederlandse woord "hosselen" heb ik zo'n dertig jaar geleden in Suriname leren kennen. Het betekende er zoveel als scharrelen: met uiteenlopende baantjes en bezigheden een karig bestaan opbouwen. Suriname was, en is ongetwijfeld nog, bij uitstek het land van de hosselaar.

Nu staat "hosselen" in de Van Dale. Creoolse jongens menen dat zij er een bijzondere begaafdheid voor bezitten. Het heeft, denken zij, iets met hun bloed, hun natuur te maken. Je kunt het niet op school leren, maar het is waardevoller dan schoolkennis. Je moet er handig en uitgekookt voor zijn, het heeft te maken met handel, met vrij man zijn en je eigen baas. Nederland is het land van de onbegrensde mogelijkheden op hossel-gebied. Soms legaal, vaker licht crimineel ("grijze hossels") of écht crimineel ("zwarte hossels"). Voorbeelden: muziek maken (voor een paar snippen) op Surinaamse feesten; er wat bijverdienen als uitsmijter, in een koffiешop of bij een "escort service"; een piratenzender exploiteren, snorder zijn, pooieren, helen, en onvermijdelijk ook; handelen in drugs. Meestal is het hard sappelen en blijft het bij kruimelwerk:

"De meesten zijn gelegenheidshosselaars: zij proberen met allerlei activiteiten aan de status van niksdoener te ontsnappen. Zij zijn incidenteel dealer ("bolletjesverkoper"); kleine doorstoter, af en toe inbreker, af en toe pooier. ...Ze zeggen van alle markten thuis te zijn, maar in feite zijn hun hossels door klungeligheid gekenmerkt. Hun levensstijl is door de uitkering bepaald. Ze gaan hosselen als het geld van de uitkering op is. Het blijft "rommelen, rommelem" zoals de enkele echt geslaagde handelaar het noemt. Dit wordt echter in hun zelfbeeld helemaal niet onderkend."

Aan het zelfbeeld van zijn Creoolse jongemannen heeft de auteur veel aandacht besteed. Zij hebben absoluut geen lage dunk van zichzelf. Je hebt in hun ogen hosselaars en niksdoeners. Kijk, Hollanders die van een uitkering leven, zijn niksdoeners. Ze zitten de hele dag thuis, hangen voor de TV, zuipen bier en zeuren. Wij zijn zo niet, zeggen ze, wij zijn altijd bezig. Natuurlijk weten ze dat handelen in drugs door veel mensen wordt afgekeurd. Maar ze hebben er een perfecte rechtvaardiging voor:

"Het is niet erg als je iets verdient met een beetje dealen. Kilo's en zo, dat vind ik erg...En junkies zijn zelf zo stom om heroine te gebruiken, iedereen weet toch dat dat slecht voor je is?...Van dealers heeft niemand last, van junkies wel. Die pissen zomaar op straat. Ze hebben geen gevoel, geen respect!"

Zwarte jongens hebben een fenomenaal succes bij vrouwen. Dat menen ze en dat is misschien ook wel zo. Dat komt, vinden ze zelf, omdat ze eleganter zijn, zich beter weten te bewegen en beter plezier weten te maken dan andere mensen. Hun ideaal zijn de zwarte sportvedetten en misschien nog meer de sterren van de showbusiness. Hoeveel hip-hopgroepjes zijn er niet, die dromen van het grote geld? Voorwaarde is wel dat je mooi en modieus gekleed bent ("wat je draagt, ben je"), liefst met één

of meer gouden sieraden; goud is ook goed voor je kra (je ziel). Dat kost allemaal handenvol geld, waarvoor een uitkering of een "rotbaantje" niet toereikend is. Dus moeten ze er wel wat bijverdienen...en zo is de cirkel weer rond.

Ziehier het beeld zoals dat oprijst uit dit boek. De parallelen met Amerika zijn onmiskenbaar, de verschillen ook. De verhoudingen zijn hier minder gepolariseerd, Los Angeles-achtige (of Brixton-achtige) toestanden zullen zich hier niet zo licht voordoen. Nou ja, dat hoop ik tenminste. Van het onderwijs is hier misschien iets méér te verwachten dan daar. Feit is dat deze jonge Creolen beter opgeleid zijn dan hun ouders. Hun houding tegenover de school is zeker niet uitsluitend negatief, veeleer ambivalent. Ze stellen wel terecht de vraag: wat heb ik eraan voor de praktijk?

En onze politieke agenda? "De minderhedenkwestie" heeft daar onlangs wel degelijk opgestaan! Laat ik er mild over zijn: bijster veel heeft het niet opgeleverd, maar het heeft ook slechts beperkte schade aangericht.

De grote kwestie is blijven liggen. Die is, hoe komen we af van dat onafzienbare leger van mensen die jarenlang werkloos zijn, allochtonen én autochtonen? Of moeten we wachten tot we ook hier Amerikaanse toestanden krijgen? Moeten we niet naar minder conventionele oplossingen zoeken? Bijvoorbeeld: als er voor deze mensen geen arbeid voorhanden is, moeten we dan niet overwegen zinvol werk voor hen te creëren? Ach, ik vraag maar. In het verleden, moet ik bekennen, heb ik wel eens plannen in deze richting ontworpen. Curieus vond men dat, maar niet iets om serieus over na te denken. Toegegeven, een wondermiddel zou het niet zijn. "Die zijn er niet", zegt Glazer terecht. Het zou hoogstens een noodzakelijke, zeker geen voldoende voorwaarde zijn voor succes. Allemaal waar. Maar als de spraakmakende gemeente zulke plannen afwijst, heeft zij wel de dure plicht zelf te zorgen voor een bruikbaar alternatief.

* L. Sansone: Schitteren in de schaduw; overlevingsstrate-

gieën, subcultuur en etniciteit van Creoolse jongeren uit de lagere klasse in Amsterdam, 1981-1990. Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis 1992, 280 pp.

A.J.F. Kóbben