



BlackEconomics.org

“New Protest Strategies for the 21st Century”

We were disappointed by the strategy adopted to conduct the Ferguson Rebellion in response to the recent modern-day lynching of the late Michael Brown, which was, and is, an artifact of underlying economic conditions—wealth and income inequality.

In Ferguson, Black Americans adopted 20th century protest methods to express discontent. This approach destroyed a considerable amount of commercial property, and created an excuse for the use of a militarized police force to quell the rebellion. Unfortunately, the protest methods that were adopted portend greater harm to Black Americans in Fergusons and elsewhere than it does to the rest of America. The destruction of property while protesting only leads to insurance “red lining,” higher insurance rates, reductions in related residential property values, and/or higher consumer prices for Black Americans.

How should such a rebellion be conducted in the 21st century?

First, and to put it in nomenclature that has been internationalized in the 21st century, all Black Americans (especially Black males) should realize that we are subject to “Michael Brown” incidents, and we should view the need to prevent such incidents as a personal “jihad.” In other words, as it was in the case of Travon Martin and so many others, Black America should view what happened in Ferguson as a national crisis.

Second, to address this national crisis, we need a national social and communications strategy. Every Black American-controlled institution (educational, religious, civic, etc.) and communications instrument (television and radio stations, newspapers, and Internet blogs) should focus on the issue and work collaboratively to forge a strategic way ahead. It is perfectly acceptable for multiple strategies to be voiced, discussed, and assessed initially. Ultimately, a few will rise to the surface as the best strategies to adopt to resolve the issue.

Third, it is insufficient to just have strategies. It is critical that Black Americans leverage our power to force the implementation of the strategies that we adopt. As we all know, the focus in America is on dollars and cents, and Black Americans have access to over \$1.0 trillion each year. Therefore, we should use our economic power to force the adoption of strategies that we propose. For example, we can implement the following three economic actions:

- A. Black Americans should adopt a hard and fast rule of patronizing Black-owned businesses first where they exist and offer quality goods and services at reasonable prices.

- B. Let us undertake an “economic fast”. By economic fast, we mean discontinue commercial purchases that are not absolutely essential, particularly during the holiday season. We should answer anew the question that is often asked at Christmas (“Do you know the reason for the season?”) by saying “He came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly.” This means that we should rethink how we respond to Christmas and other holidays, and decide to avoid life-draining Christmas debt and wasted life resources when we purchase holiday gifts that lose their luster after just a few days. On the contrary, we should use the end-of-year holidays to save so that we can have a more abundant life during the remainder of the year.

What should Black Americans do with our saving? We should pool our saving and form “savings circles”; ultimately, we can form credit unions and banks. Shamefully, there are only 23 Black-owned banks in the US; there are about 150 Black-controlled credit unions. As you know, one of the dire needs in Black America is financial institutions. We should use our saving to create pools of financial capital that can be used to grow the Black American economy.

- C. Key Black-controlled organizations that have national or regional networks (including the major Black church denominations, the NAACP, the Urban League, the NAN, etc.) should independently or collaboratively create scorecards for major firms in key consumer industries. Firms that are found to generally hire Black Americans and cater to our needs appropriately should be graded highly. Black organizations should direct members of their networks to only patronize these highly graded firms when there are no Black business alternatives.

To maintain good relations with Black Americans, these highly graded firms should—at our urging—be motivated to use a portion of their lobbying dollars to create favorable economic and political change at the national, state, and local levels on behalf of Black Americans.

We are in the 21st century, and we should use 21st century techniques to address our concerns. Because most of our concerns are economic in nature, we should focus on economic methods. We believe that the economic actions that we have outlined here, if they are adopted and implemented persistently, will help us ensure that “Michael Brown” incidents disappear and that the related need for Ferguson Rebellions fades away.

BB Robinson
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