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Obama's Anger

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"The anger is real. It is powerful, and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races." - Barack Obama

Back in the late 1980s I was on a plane flying out of New Orleans and sitting next to me was a rather interesting and, according to Barack Obama, unusual black man. Friendly, gregarious, and wise beyond his years, we immediately hit it off. I had been working on Vietnamese commercial fishing boats for a few years based in southern Louisiana. The boats were owned by the recent wave of Vietnamese refugees who flooded into the familiar tropical environment after the war. Floating in calm seas out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, I would hear tearful songs and tales from ex-paratroopers about losing brothers, sisters, parents, children, lovers, and beautiful Vietnam itself to the communists.

In Bayou country I lived on boats and in doublewide trailers, and like the rest of the Vietnamese refugees, I shopped at Wal-Mart and ate a lot of rice. When they arrived in Louisiana the refugees had no money (the money that they had was used to bribe their way out of Vietnam and into refugee camps in Thailand), few friends, and a mostly unfriendly and suspicious local population.

They did however have strong families, a strong work ethic, and the "Audacity of Hope." Within a generation, with little or no knowledge of English, the Vietnamese had achieved dominance in the fishing industry there and their children were already achieving the top SAT scores in the state.

While I had been fishing my new black friend had been working as a prison psychologist in Missouri, and he was pursuing a higher degree in psychology. He was interested in my story, and after about an hour getting to know each other I asked him point blank why these Vietnamese refugees, with no money, friends, or knowledge of the language could be, within a generation, so successful. I also asked him why it was so difficult to convince young black men to abandon the streets and take advantage of the same kinds of opportunities that the Vietnamese had recently embraced.

His answer, only a few words, not only floored me but became sort of a razor that has allowed me ever since to slice through all of the rhetoric regarding race relations that Democrats shovel our way during election season:

> "We're owed and they aren't."

In short, he concluded, "they're hungry and we think we're owed. It's crushing us, and as long as we think we're owed we're going nowhere."

A good test case for this theory is Katrina. Obama, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and assorted white apologists continue to express anger and outrage over the federal response to the Katrina disaster. But where were the Vietnamese "leaders" expressing their "anger?" The Vietnamese comprise a substantial part of the New Orleans population, and yet are absent was any report claiming that the Vietnamese were "owed" anything. This is not to say that the federal response was an adequate one, but we need to take this as a sign that maybe the problem has very little to do with racism and a lot to with a mindset.

The mindset that one is "owed" something in life has not only affected black mobility in business but black mobility in education as well. Remember Ward Churchill? About fifteen years ago he was my boss. After leaving the fishing boats, I attended graduate school at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I managed to get a job on campus teaching expository writing to minority students who had been accepted provisionally into the university on an affirmative action program. And although I never met him, Ward Churchill, in addition to teaching in the ethnic studies department, helped to develop and organize the minority writing program.

The job paid most of my bills, but what I witnessed there was absolutely horrifying. The students were encouraged to write essays attacking the white establishment from every conceivable angle and in addition to defend affirmative action and other government programs. Of the hundreds of papers that I read, there was not one original contribution to the problem of black mobility that strayed from the party line.

The irony of it all however is that the "white establishment" managed to get them into the college and pay their entire tuition. Instead of being encouraged to study international affairs, classical or modern languages, philosophy or art, most of these students became ethnic studies or sociology majors because it allowed them to remain in disciplines whose orientation justified their existence at the university. In short, it became a vicious cycle.

There was a student there I'll never forget. He was plucked out of the projects in Denver and given a free ride to the university. One day in my office he told me that his mother had said the following to him: "M.J., they owe you this. White people at that university owe you this." M.J.'s experience at the university was a glorious fulfillment of his mother's angst.

There were black student organizations and other clubs that "facilitated" the minority student's experience on the majority white and

"racist" campus, in addition to a plethora of faculty members, both white and black, who encouraged the same animus toward the white establishment. While adding to their own bona fides as part of the trendy Left, these "facilitators" supplied M.J. with everything he needed to quench his and his mother's anger, but nothing in the way of advice about how to succeed in college. No one, in short, had told M.J. that he needed to study. But since he was "owed" everything, why put out any effort on his own?

In a fit of despair after failing most of his classes, M.J. wandered into my office one Friday afternoon in the middle of the semester and asked if I could help him out. I asked M.J. about his plans that evening, and he told me that he usually attended parties on Friday and Saturday nights. I told him that if he agreed to meet me in front of the university library at 6:00pm I would buy him dinner. At 6pm M.J. showed up, and for the next twenty minutes we wandered silently through the stacks, lounges, and study areas of the library. When we arrived back at the entrance I asked M.J. if he noticed anything interesting. As we headed up the hill to a popular burger joint, M.J. turned to me and said:

> "They were all Asian. Everyone in there was Asian, and it was Friday night."

Nothing I could do, say, or show him, however, could match the fire power of his support system favoring anger. I was sad to hear of M.J. dropping out of school the following semester.

During my time teaching in the writing program, I watched Asians get transformed via leftist doublespeak from "minorities" to "model minorities" to "they're not minorities" in precise rhythm to their fortunes in business and education. Asians were "minorities" when they were struggling in this country, but they became "model minorities" when they achieved success. Keep in mind "model minority" did not mean what most of us think it means, i.e., something to emulate. "Model minority" meant that Asians had certain cultural advantages, such as a strong family tradition and a culture of scholarship that the black community lacked.

To suggest that intact families and a philosophy of self-reliance could be the ticket to success would have undermined the entire angst establishment. Because of this it was improper to use Asian success as a model. The contortions the left exercised in order to defend this ridiculous thesis helped to pave the way for the elimination of Asians altogether from the status of "minority."

This whole process took only a few years.

Eric Hoffer said:

> "...you do not win the weak by sharing your wealth with them; it will but infect them with greed and resentment. You can win the weak only by sharing your pride, hope or hatred with them."

We now know that Barack Obama really has no interest in the "audacity of hope." With his race speech, Obama became a peddler of angst, resentment and despair. Too bad he doesn't direct that angst at the liberal establishment that has sold black people a bill of goods since the 1960s. What Obama seems angry about is America itself and what it stands for; the same America that has provided fabulous opportunities for what my black friend called "hungry" minorities. Strong families, self-reliance, and a spirit of entrepreneurship should be held up as ideals for all races to emulate.

In the end, we should be very suspicious about Obama's anger and the recent frothings of his close friend Reverend Wright. Says Eric Hoffer:

> The fact seems to be that we are least open to precise knowledge concerning the things we are most vehement about. Vehemence is the expression of a blind effort to support and uphold something that can never stand on its own.

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