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“Reverse Migration Could Facilitate Nation Formation”

Unfortunately, and in general, African Americans know little about their Afrodescendant counterparts in the Western Hemisphere. Even I must admit being a late-comer to this knowledge.

However, it is not enough just to know that, for example, Brazil has the largest Afrodescendant population in the world; that certain Latin American countries are predominantly Black (e.g., Belize); or that Afrodescendants in Latin America experience the same type of racism that Black Americans experience.

There is one additional very important fact with which we should be familiar; namely, that, in most Latin American countries, Afrodescendants have a history of controlling large tracts of land as a group, which they occupied and developed. While, in certain cases, this land is being contested today, the fact is that Afrodescendants have legitimate claims to much of this land, and they are winning title to it through hard-fought legal battles.

Afrodescendants in the U.S. have no such well-known history. It is true that Blacks acquired vast amounts of land individually in the decades following the Civil War (see Robert Higgs’ “Accumulation of Property by Southern Blacks before World War I; *American Economic Review*; Vol. 72, No. 4, pp. 725-37). However, these lands were purchased as opposed to being taken through initial settlement.

Why is this important? Simply because without land there can be no freedom. If you have land and you enter into conflict with another party, then you can retreat to your land as a safe haven and live as you like—as long as the other party does not attack. However, without land, you have no safe haven. You have no place within which to live freely and uncontestedly.

Should Black Americans seek to obtain large tracts of land that they can call their own in the U.S.? Why not? How can this be achieved? Interestingly, reverse migration is occurring in the U.S. A sizeable proportion of the Black population is migrating back to the South (see Conor Dougherty’s “South Draws U.S. Blacks” in the January 10, 2011 edition of *The Wall Street Journal*). If, and when, sufficient Blacks relocate to southern areas, it may be possible for those Blacks to gain *defacto* control of certain areas. Over time, depending on the political choices made, and depending on the evolution of respect for Blacks’ human rights in the U.S., Black Americans may seek to establish a separate territory that they can control.

Of course, there is the question of whether it is in Black America's long-term best interest to occupy southern versus northern versus western territories in the U.S. due to evolving climatological factors—the southern portion of the country is projected to become abnormally hot and dry in the future. However, the reverse migration that is taking place today certainly serves as a method by which Afrodescendants in the U.S. might obtain territory to call their own.

As a whole, Black Americans have never known true freedom in the U.S. because they have not had title to and controlled a territory. In my view, the only way that Black Americans will ever be free is to achieve this outcome and to gain control of land. Given that a process of reverse migration is in process, it seems reasonable that Blacks should use this process to acquire land so that they can experience freedom.

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