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“Five Bites at the Rotting Apple”

Describing the past and current duality in the American socio-economic order, during his 1995 [Million Man March Speech](#), Jessie Jackson noted:

Looking down on a fallen apple, those at the top see red and that which is delectable.
Looking up from the bottom one sees rot and worms... We all have the right to eat the fruit, but not the worms and the rot. (paraphrasing)

Today, there are at least five topical areas where Black Americans are eating worms and the rot, and critical reforms are required: Election reform; police reform; entitlement reform; land reform; and entertainment reform.

Election reform

The presidential election process in the US is fraught with structural problems that produce undemocratic outcomes. In 2000 and in 2016 winners of the popular vote lost the presidential elections. The electoral college is a constitutional connivance that takes control out of the hands of the people. Also, the US Constitution is essentially silent on what to do when an election is not “free and fair.” The [Report on The Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election](#) (the so-called *Mueller Report*) clarifies, beyond doubt, that the election was not free and fair. Instead of annulling the election and starting over, America has been entertained with a “Special Counsel” drama worthy of an Academy Award. However, Black America has had to endure international and domestic political and economic policies that have proven, and will prove, to be problematic for us. All of this from a force that should have never reached the White House.

Recommendation: Form a Black political party that, *inter alia*, fights for election reforms.

Police reform

Everybody’s talking about criminal justice reform. What about police reform? It is true that, at the national level, Black Americans are nearly proportionally represented by population on police forces across the country. But should we be looking for proportional representation based on population or should it be based on police engagement. The world knows who police engage with most in the US. Would not Black Americans fare better if there were significantly more Black police officers in the nation managing those engagements. Under such a regime, deaths at the hands of the police would drop dramatically and arrests and incarcerations would decline, and the police could still perform their functions properly. Importantly, the educational prerequisite for a

police person is generally two years of college; they are paid a reasonable salary; and they generally receive a very good benefits package.

Recommendation: Black Americans must lobby and push at the local level for a significant rise in the number of Black police persons on the force. This lobbying can be buttressed by efforts to withhold local (mainly property) taxes on the grounds of insufficient representation on the force.

Entitlement reform

Former US Federal Reserve Board Chairman and Chairman of the 1983 Commission on Social Security, Alan Greenspan, came out recently arguing for [entitlement reform](#). According to Mr. Greenspan, the US should abandon its adherence to “defined benefit-type” entitlements in exchange for “defined contribution-type” entitlements. In other words, your receipt of old-age health and pension benefits will shift from being funded by the pool of US workers, to being funded mainly or solely by you. Obviously, if one earns a high level of income, then one is better positioned to fund one’s old-age health and income requirements from compensation than one who earns a low level of income. Under this type of entitlement arrangement, it is likely that many low-income workers will be unable to fund their health and income requirements sufficiently to meet and keep pace with the cost of living during their retirement. While this reform may be favorable for the government’s coffers, it is likely to be very unfavorable for a significant portion of the population—especially low-income earners.

Recommendation: In response to this approach to entitlement reform, we recommend that Black Americans begin to re-emphasize extended family relationships. We are all too familiar with the dastardly nature of retirement homes. Let us address the issue by organizing our lives, our abodes, and our religious organizations around caring for our own elderly population. This means that we can benefit from whatever our elderly can accumulate in their defined contribution health and pension plans and prevent a financial outflow from our areas of influence.

Land reform

It is common knowledge that Black American land ownership (and home ownership for that matter) ranks at the bottom of the social-economic hierarchy. We are dealing with [“the impossibility of equality without a gift.”](#) History and the data show that this outcome is, in large measure, the result of purposeful action by non-Black Americans. Without doubt, we need land to build wealth, to escape the vagaries of residing in a racist America, and to produce our inevitable rise as a nation.

Recommendation: While many agree that reparations are due to Black America, there is great consternation concerning the methods that might be used to deliver reparations. However, there is one method that is not usually given sufficient consideration: Permitting [reparations](#) to take the form of available land that is owned by the US Government (Federal Lands). In most cases, the inequities that Black Americans have faced, and still face, in the US are linked to action or inaction by the Federal Government. It stands to reason that the Federal Government should play a significant role of righting the scales in our favor.

Entertainment reform

In each of the past few generations, a handful of Black American sports and cultural entertainers have become financially successful. In almost all cases, financial success is linked to a form of slavery and is divorced from any attempts to effect real and positive change for the broader Black American population through social or economic action. The wealth that these entertainers accumulate is seldom invested to meet the interests of Black America broadly. Particularly for sports entertainers, the success flame flares brightly for a very short period, followed by early death or prolonged illness. Too many Black entertainers find popular success only to lose it and the related wealth before returning to mediocrity or poverty. In many cases, the entertainers exploit Black Americans and/or deepen the pain and suffering of Black Americans.

Recommendation: Black Americans should realize that Black entertainers do not comprise members of the talented tenth about which W.E.B. Dubois wrote. Given our need to survive in the world of tomorrow, we should discontinue our support for these entertainers and discontinue sacrificing to become entertainers. Rather, we should reorient our creative and intelligent youth to sacrifice their lives to become skilled in the fields that have relevance for the future—science, technology, engineering, mathematics, artificial intelligence, history, high finance, law, economics, education, and many applied fields.

These five reforms and related recommendations form a corpus of concerns that should be addressed as soon as possible. They should help guide our thoughts and actions going forward. A very good starting point would be to place these reforms on the action agendas of all Black American organizations. These organizations can plow this rotting fruit into the ground, and make it serve as fertilizer for a new crop of ripe, red, and delicious apples that Black America can eat.

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