



BlackEconomics.org®

### “The Declining Significance of Protests”

Black America has engaged continuously the tit-for-tat strategic war with our national counterparts mainly by organizing protests (marches, sit-ins, etc.) when egregious wrongs have become transparent. In response, the nation has proffered constrained concessions, which are often rolled back later, or they are broadened to benefit others more than Black Americans.

However, there is some evidence that protests are declining in significance; i.e., their power to create change is decreasing. We may harken back to the large and pervasive global protests that followed the 2020 George Floyd murder, but a quick check of the record will reveal that the murder of Black American males and females by police has not abated subsequently. One “no-brainer” murder conviction has not halted the continuous attack on Black life in America by the police. Moreover, the imprisonment of George Floyd’s murderer has had little impact on the core issue facing Black America (resolution of socioeconomic inequalities), which was a key rallying cry during the 2020 protests.

Given that we are engaged in a strategic war, we would be remiss if we did not consider the opposition’s plans to address our likely future actions to keep socioeconomic inequalities in the spotlight and to wrest more rights and opportunities from the system.

Other than an all-out guerilla-type shooting war, the most dramatic action that Black Americans could execute is national sit-down strikes. Imagine the impact of a nearly 20 million work force purposely staying at home for an extended period. The nation would be brought to a screeching halt. If planned and implemented properly, sit-down strikes would bring relevant parties to the table to hammer out agreements on a range of key issues on which Black Americans can all agree—including Reparations. In response to sit-down strikes, we should expect the President and the Congress to scurry to the negotiating table the way they scurried just a few weeks back to prevent a national rail strike. A relevant question is: “Is there Black leadership with sufficient influence among Black Americans today to plan and implement sit-down strikes.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> If you believe that we are overestimating the power of national sit-down strikes, then answer the following questions: (1) Which was Gandhi’s most effective tool in kicking the British out of India? (2) What was an early and very powerful tool used by Black South Africans to disband Apartheid? (3) What

were sanitation workers doing in Memphis that drew MLK’s support and that led to his assassination? and (4) Why have Black Americans not organized **national** (not locale- or industry-specific) sit-down strikes in the past 100 years?

It should be no surprise that the nation and the world, directed by autocrats and plutocrats, experienced the near shutdown of the world economy during 2020 under the guise of protecting the populous from COVID-19. Could this have been, *inter alia*, a dry run to assess outcomes if workers of the world decided to strike in response to egregious violations of civil and human rights. We certainly learned much about who were, and were not, essential.

So, how are major owners/investors preparing for potential extended sit-down strikes by Black Americans and/or other groups?

Some important and obvious responses to potential sit-down strikes that are being organized include: (1) Increasing incorporation of computers, robots, and artificial intelligence (AI) in most goods producing industries; (2) increasing use of robots and AI in selected service industries (e.g., food delivery, transportation, and educational services); (3) increasing use of robotic and digital technologies in security services industries; (4) increasing operational automation, enhanced store-to-supplier communications, and expanded self-checkout in retail industries; and (5)

intensifying and accelerating the development of FINTECH systems to support central bank digital currencies.

While the just-mentioned responses cannot now enable owners/investors to dispense completely with workers, continuing to follow the current path could render many workers obsolete in less than a decade.

If Black America fails to execute well-planned and organized sit-down strikes in the next ten years, then this “nuclear” option will disappear. As a result, we will find ourselves at the mercy of a system and a nation that neither needs nor wants us.

If you find yourself rejecting this analysis, then take a moment and identify which of the following racial/ethnic groups are solidly aligned with Black America in our quest to resolve socioeconomic inequalities: Africans, East Asians, South Asians, Hispanics (White or Afrodescendant), Middle Easterners, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, or Whites (American or European)?

These are thoughts to contemplate as you prioritize actions for the 2023 New Year.

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