

OPINIONS

Governments must protect their

by Joma Nyakorema Nkombe

It is extremely misleading to see the ongoing racial tension in Toronto as a matter simply between the police and the African (black if you wish) community.

The police forces are organs of the state; and the government is the only element in the state system which is invested with the power to claim obedience and loyalty from all citizens, especially from the instruments of force. Constitutionally therefore, the police must serve the state by serving the government.

In this context, any strain in police relations with a particular group must be, in the final analysis, the responsibility of the government.

In Canada, it is the provincial legislature and parliament of Canada that respectively enact laws regulating police behavior. If the Police Act outlaws arbitrary use of police powers and one of the cops departs from this constitutional order, the government of the day elected by and for the people, must be held accountable for this particular deviance.

Lack of government control over the instruments of force may be indicative of corruption or incompetency. The government may be weak in relation to other elements in the state system including the police. It may be strong but choose to remain neutral. With respect to any police misconduct, neutrality means the police are free to misbehave since the full power of the state will not be martialled against the offenders.

But whatever the government chooses to do, it cannot escape the ultimate responsibility of serving and protecting all peoples. Why else would there be a need for society to constitute a government?

We are now in a position to understand why the ongoing war between the police and the African community must be seen for what it actually represents —

the war between the African Canadian and the government, which is responsible for keeping the leash on the instruments of force. That is to say, any attack on a particular group by agents of the state must be seen as an attack by the state or the government. This is a very important point to bring with us on the next section of this article.

WHY FOCUS ON AFRICANS?

Historically speaking, when it comes to serving and protecting the African people, some governments especially in the United States, Canada and South Africa

for the so-called "War on Drugs." George Bush appeared on national television with a black child on his shoulder facing the camera. I suppose we should applaud this presidential love and concern for the victim of a long prospering drug industry.

However, what we may have missed is that the president had consciously or unconsciously stereotyped Africans, and in actual effect, instructed state agents for the enforcement of drug laws to centre predominantly on Africans, but to be cunning enough not to let them know the focus might be intentional.

police presence in predominantly black neighborhoods seems cross-sectional.

In short, the police face no "dilemma" when it comes to separating white bad guys from white good guys. "Drug pushers" and "drug using community" become the code words for the Africans; whereas "concerned citizens" becomes the code reserved for the "responsible, hard-working, law-abiding and, therefore, morally-superior white citizens."

Bush's example of the black child is indeed authoritative in that it comes from the declining, but still commanding heights of the western empire. This is the very empire pervaded by ideas which hold men to be the ordained masters of women (Genesis 3:16); and the social Darwinist view that the races of mankind can be ranked into an evolutionary hierarchy, with the African classified as the lowest constitution.

It is also an empire in which despite the truism that poverty, crime, drugs et al. transcend cultural and racial boundaries, these complex social issues are taken out of context, distorted and manipulated to prove the inferiority of one race — all in language so subtle and scholarly that to uncritical minds, the truths seem self-evident.

It does not, therefore, surprise anyone that a few days before the shooting of Marlon Neal, a police officer in Toronto went public stating similar eugenic and social Darwinist doctrines. The officer called for mandatory birth control for those on welfare assistance. Presumably, he was referring to the corporations which as we all know, are the main recipients of the government money.

Eugenicists and social Darwinists, it must be remembered, hold the view that the government has a duty to limit the multiplication of its least fit citizens, defined by race or class. Slums and ghettos are here regarded as breeding grounds for the worst kinds of human

You simply cannot legislate or force respect between peoples. Respect is an attitude that must be developed through a process of socialization.

tend to assert neutrality in a roundabout way that is not to everyone's taste. As we have already stated, neutrality in this sense means looking away when agents of the state treat a particular group differently.

In fact, it is very telling to witness through the print and electronic media that when black people are burying one of their children gunned down by the cops in the streets of Toronto, similar funerals are reported taking place in the United States and South Africa. Indeed, one is very tempted to conclude that the police in Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, New York, Miami, Johannesburg and Capetown (just to name a few), seem to co-ordinate their actions for the shootings to occur almost simultaneously.

In an apparent move to win support

The guise is hidden in the coded language of the anti-drug slogans. The effect of showing a caucasian (member of the white race) in a particular drug raid is quickly neutralized by showing "concerned citizens" (apparently being white means being a good citizen) calling the police to come in and get rid of drug pushers in the community; or for police officers to come in and display their wonderful toys while pretending to keep peace during an indoor basketball match at a metro housing complex.

The message reads: there are caucasian drug pushers, but not as many as there are good white citizens. Sometimes the media will also use non-critically-thinking blacks to make the calls — for special effect purposes — so that the support for massive and provocative



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