



“Stop Whining”?

Have you ever before heard either a Democratic or a Republican leader tell his party’s strongest supporters, “Stop whining”?

Blacks have a lot to complain about, not just about this Democratic administration but about many other Democratic administrations, national and local, over the years.

Unfortunately, black voters, like many other voters, often judge by rhetoric, rather than realities. When it comes to racial rhetoric, the Democrats outdo the Republicans by miles.



Even Ronald Reagan, the great communicator, had problems communicating with black voters, as I pointed out years ago in my book *A Personal Odyssey* (pages 274-278).

All this came back to me during a recent cleanup of my office, which turned up an old yellowed copy of the *New York Times* with the following front-page headline: “White-Black Disparity in Income Narrowed in 80’s, Census Shows” (July 24, 1992).

How many people in the media have pointed out that the black-white income gap narrowed during the Reagan administration, just as it has widened during the Obama administration? For that matter, how many Republicans have pointed it out?

The Reagan administration did not have any special program to narrow the racial gap in incomes. The point is that the kinds of policies followed in the 1980s had that effect, just as the kinds of policies followed by the Obama administration had opposite effects. But just listening to rhetoric won’t tell you that.

Over the years, some of the most devastating policies, in terms of their actual effects on black people, have come from liberal Democrats, from the local to the national level.

As far back as the Roosevelt administration during the Great Depression of the 1930s, liberal Democrats imposed policies that had counterproductive effects on blacks. None cost blacks more jobs than minimum wage laws.

In countries around the world, minimum wage laws have a track record of increasing unemployment, especially among the young, the less skilled and minorities. It has done the same in America.

One of the first acts of the Roosevelt administration was to pass the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which included establishing minimum wages nationwide. It has been estimated that blacks lost 500,000 jobs as a result.

After that Act was declared unconstitutional, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set minimum wages. In the tobacco industry alone, two thousand black workers were replaced by machines, just as blacks had been replaced by machines in the textile industry after the previous minimum wage law.



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Fortunately, the high inflation of the 1940s raised the wages of even unskilled labor above the level prescribed by the minimum wage law. The net result was that this law became virtually meaningless, until the minimum wage rate was raised in 1950.

During the late 1940s, when the minimum wage law had essentially been repealed by inflation, 16- and 17-year-old blacks in 1948 had an unemployment rate of 9.4 percent, slightly lower than that of whites the same ages and a fraction of what it would be in even the boom years after the minimum wage rate kept getting increased by liberal Democrats.

Urban Renewal was another big Democratic liberal idea. It destroyed mostly low-income minority neighborhoods and replaced them with upscale housing that the former residents could not afford. People by the hundreds of thousands were scattered to the winds, destroying community ties between families, neighbors, and local institutions from churches to family doctors to businesses.

Even when liberal Democrats try specifically to help blacks, the results often backfire. The political crusade for “affordable housing” and minority home ownership drew many blacks into homes they could not afford. The net result was an especially high rate of foreclosure and, in the end, black home ownership rates lower than they were before the “affordable housing” crusade began.

Listening to political rhetoric often leads to opposite conclusions from those resulting from checking out hard facts — and not just for blacks.

To find out more about Thomas Sowell and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com. Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His website is www.tsowell.com.

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