

Holder shied away from having a real conversation on race

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

America's long national nightmare is drawing to a close. Soon-to-be retired U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder got his tenure off to a fine start by calling the country he served "a nation of cowards." America's cowardice, as he saw it, had to do with its reluctance to have an honest conversation on race.

The problem is that it's his side of the aisle that refuses to have the honest conversation. What liberals consider an honest conversation bears no resemblance to a conversation as others know it. What they want to do is lecture us relentlessly without ever listening to a dissenting view.

The left wishes to blame everything on "white privilege." Yes, there is such a thing as white privilege. But it's not the greatest handicap that black children face. The greatest hurdles that blacks have to overcome are their own dysfunctional culture and the myth peddled by Democrats that blacks are so hopelessly handicapped by this white privilege that they can only function with the helping hand of government.

By exaggerating the impact of white privilege, the left, as represented by Holder, brainwashes too many young men and women of color into believing they have no chance on their own. So they don't even try. They settle for the gangster subculture, and they and their neighborhoods suffer.

There are neighborhoods in this country where taxicabs will not go to pick up a fare. Domino's and Pizza Hut will not deliver pizza in those neighborhoods either. If taxi drivers and pizza delivery boys know where those neighborhoods are, it's a cinch that the police know where those neighborhoods are as well. Even civil rights agitator Jesse Jackson knows where those neighborhoods are and avoids them.

Nineteen years ago, Jackson told US News and World Report that: "There is nothing more painful to me than to walk down the street and hear footsteps and start thinking about robbery, then look around and see somebody white and feel relieved."

In all of these cases, the reason for apprehension has nothing to do with race so much as it has to do with risk management. These neighborhoods are approached with caution or avoided altogether because of their high crime rates, especially violent crime. For young men and teenagers living in these neighborhoods, murder is the No. 1 cause of death.

Gangs have carved the cities into territories and kill gangsters who dare to trespass. Occasionally non-gang members are killed for wearing the wrong color clothes. That these neighborhoods are populated almost exclusively by blacks and Hispanics is a truth that Holder refuses to confront.

These neighborhoods have something else in common. Approximately 80 percent of the children are born to unwed mothers and will never have fathers in their lives. Statistically, a child born into such circumstances is far more likely to grow up in poverty or land in prison.

It doesn't have to be this way. Until the program ran out of funds, I used to represent Washington State University in black and Hispanic schools, extolling the virtues of higher education to demographics that are underrepresented in college.

"Underrepresented demographics" is an obtuse, academic way of saying, "blacks and Hispanics."

In many of the schools, it was clear that the culture was not conducive to education. There was little discipline in the classroom and pupils who did try to post good grades faced social ostracism for "acting white."

But I did visit one glittering exception. One high school I visited was located in close proximity to three military bases and most of the pupils had at least one parent in uniform. The student body was predominately black, but the culture was radically different from the inner city schools I had visited. I asked about and learned that most of the pupils I spoke to were already planning to attend college. I learned that 80 percent of each year's senior class attended college. The young man assigned to assist me had been accepted to the University of Washington's engineering college.

And that's an important point that the Holders of the world refuse to grasp. To improve the condition of African-Americans, the culture that the kids grow up in must change. The parents of the kids' from that high-achieving school didn't blame white privilege. They instilled discipline and self-respect in their children.

To solve the problem, we need to change black culture, not white culture.

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