

“Back Down Memory Lane for Blacks in Los Angeles”

By: Dr. Rosie Milligan

I suggest that we reflect in our mental mirror and compare where we have been and where we are today. We must remember to never forget the *Past*—for the *Past* serves as a compass that will tell us when we are headed in the right direction. There was an era in history when hope in the unborn had died. We must not allow our youth to revisit that past era of history of living without hope for themselves and their offspring.

We slept during the political fight to take prayer out of the schools—and we have seen the devastating effects from not standing up for what we know is right. Let us not go to sleep behind the wheel ever again.

We went to sleep at the wheel when we were tricked into voting for the “*Three Strike*” law. The voters were deceived; they were unclear as to the ramifications of this law. Most people thought it was designed to incarcerate hardcore criminals, such as carjackers with guns, murderers, those who participated in drive-bys, etc.—certainly not for someone who steals a piece of pizza. We must ask ourselves this question: What came first—the increase in building more prisons or the increase in crime? It does not take a rocket scientist to see that the laws were put intact to guarantee the justification for building the “*New Slave Ship*,”—prisons—the ship that does not sail.

It is not enough to enslave the adults—our children are now being tried as adults! It sounds like good economics to me—for those who profit from the sweat of the incarcerated.

Our children were not always unmotivated about attending school, and they were excited about going to college. They had summer jobs and training programs. They felt safe playing in their neighborhood parks. There was no such thing as “*drive-bys*” or “*selling drugs*,” and they could wear any color without the fear of being identified with a gang. Many of them worked in their family-owned businesses. During integration, many Black-owned businesses were abandoned, which forced them to close. Blacks became more interested in having their children work for white folks rather than helping to build their family businesses.

Forty years ago, when you mentioned the word “*minority*,” it was synonymous to saying “*Coloreds*,” “*Blacks*,” or “*African-Americans*.” Today, however, when you say “*minority*,” you are including *everyone* except the white male. It’s like a pie where before, Blacks shared one-half of it. However, now, that same one-half portion of the pie has to be shared by four or five other ethnic groups/nationalities.

Let me take you back down memory lane. I want to remind you of what it used to be like for Blacks in Los Angeles so that you may gain a better perspective on what must be done to change the conditions for Blacks in our city.

Following the *1965 Watts Riots*, we had training programs and corporate work partnership programs for our youth and young adults. We had programs—*CETA*, *WIN*, *STEP*, *MDTA*, and summer programs at churches and parks for our youth. Do you remember? Moreover, our youth were not killing each other, neither were they selling drugs. They were not

dropping out of school, becoming nonproductive citizens. They were literate and college-bound. Even a blind man can see what happened back then, and what needs to happen today!

Do you remember that prior to the *1965 Watts Riots*, if a person got shot or otherwise critically injured in South Central Los Angeles, that person would be taken to the *Big County General Hospital*, on Soto Street, in East Los Angeles? Many bled out and died en route. The *Watts Health Foundation/Medical Clinic*, on 103rd Street, near Alameda Street, and the *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital* came into existence to fill the needs of Blacks for healthcare. Then, Blacks constituted most of that demographic population. Do you remember when Black doctors' offices were plentiful in our community? Do you remember when Blacks owned many of the businesses in South Central? *Where are all these today?*

In addition, do you remember the *Morningside Hospital*, on Harvard, off Manchester Avenue, near Western Avenue—*Kennedy Hospital*, on Manchester, near Figueroa, just under the (110) Harbor Freeway—the *Bonaire Hospital*, on 120th Street, near Broadway—the *Broadway Hospital*, on 96th and Broadway—the *University Hospital*, on Vermont, near Exposition—*View Park Hospital*, on Stocker, near Don Felipe Drive—*Dominguez Hospital*, in Compton? *Where are all these today?*

Looking back is a good thing when it helps one to trace his steps to where progress began in years passed. Remember, if you know where you have been—you *can* go back there again. There is a strategic plan to wipe out an entire generation of Black people—via an inadequate public school system. As you very well know, miseducation leads to incarceration, and poor healthcare leads to early death.

Legislation that was passed to not provide public assistance for a mother's new birth has caused an increase in abortions among the economically challenged, which only adds to our problems today. The rate of incarceration for Blacks, coupled with all the above, will provide us with a bleak future if we do not wake up and devise a plan to save "US." Make no mistake, *we will be history.*

Let's look back, gain a proper perspective, and do the right thing.

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