

Dr. James H. Buford Column

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In Juan Williams' new book "Enough", poor blacks are described as being lazy, inept and immoral people who are waiting for their next handout from the government and social service organizations. Although this may be true of some blacks, it is not true for all. "Enough" is a book that has been written in support of Bill Cosby's noted speech during the Brown vs. Board of Education's 50th Anniversary Celebration. Although I do support some of Cosby's comments about the need for more personal responsibility on the part of poor African Americans, I am also in support of Cosby's generous financial donations to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and civil rights institutions. I also commend Cosby for his positive portrayal of blacks in the media. It seems to me that Cosby has earned the right to talk about the priorities of poor blacks.

Williams, on the other hand, is a noted journalist who is very skilled at identifying the problems of the black community. However, he comes up short on the solution. Telling blacks to finish their high school and, preferably, college educations, maintain a good job, and delay childbirth until after marriage is often easier said than done. Climbing out of poverty not only requires a self-determined spirit but also a need for a helping hand. In Cosby's speech, he talks about "lower economic people not holding up of their end of the deal," but there is a deal to be made on both sides. Middle-class and rich blacks also have to make sure that they are lending a hand to help the underclass to make it too.

Confessing a theory that is very similar to Booker T. Washington's Williams feel that African Americans need to accept personal responsibilities for our own destinies and pull ourselves up by their own boot straps. Citing the high dropout rates, the soaring rates of single parenthood and the ever-increasing black-on-black crime rate, Williams feel that we, as African Americans, are our own worst enemy and that we need to stop blaming the white man for our problems. He feels that blacks should take responsibility for our own education, careers, wealth building and social justice. After all whites aren't solely responsible for a high crime rate, 70% out of wedlock births, and the education

achievement gap in the black community. But, oddly enough, white racism is rarely mentioned as being the root cause for any African American problem.

He goes on to state that the black leadership of today has failed their constituents. Among the 'failed' are the leaderships of Jesse Jackson Al Sharpton, the black church, the NAACP and the Urban League. Although some who are mentioned are definitely true, there are also some sweeping generalizations that are being made.

First of all, the black church has been a venerable institution and the very backbone of the Civil Rights Movement in America. When other middle class blacks have moved away and turned their backs on impoverished, urban areas, many black churches have stayed in these areas and worked with their neighbors. Williams said that black pastors have not made a stand against crime and have not spoken out against the destruction of hip-hop music, single parenthood and drug abuse. But I will venture to say that they have preached against these urban diseases because it is part of church doctrine. Other organizations such as the Urban League and NAACP have also remained in devastated areas to lend a hand with scholarships, outreach programs and more.

In my opinion, it has been a lack of personal responsibility in the poor African American community and a lack of concern in the middle and upper class black communities that have led to the lack of progress in the black America. Since the end of the progressive Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, there has not been a successful African American movement since. The main reason for this lack of progress has been the sense of disunity that permeates the black community. In the 1950s and 1960s, you did not hear of Dr. Martin Luther King speaking out against African American groups or classes and you also didn't hear him tearing down another black leader. Today, this has become commonplace. There is a scripture that states that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Today family, the African American community has become a house divided. Let's resolve to do better, the real solution lies within the Black community.