Raspberry
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because we preferred integration to supporting our own painstakingly established institutions. Indeed, aside from black churches and black colleges, little remains to show for that entrepreneurial spurt of the early decades of this century.

The other thing that has happened is that we over-learned the lessons of the civil rights movement. That movement, brilliantly conceived and courageously executed, marked a proud moment in our history. The upshot was that black Americans, for the first time in our sojourn here, enjoy the full panoply of our civil rights.

Unfortunately, that period also taught us to see in civil rights terms things that might more properly be addressed in terms of enterprise and exertion rather than in terms of equitable distribution. Even when we speak of business now, our focus is on distribution: on set-asides and affirmative action.

Entrepreneurs and Self-Help

Our 1960s success in making demands on government has led us to the mistaken assumption that government can give us what we need for the next major push toward equality. It has produced in us what Charles Tate of the Booker T. Washington Foundation recently described as a virtual antipathy toward capitalism.

Even middle-class blacks seldom talk to their children about going into business. Instead our emphasis is on a fair distribution of jobs in business created and run by others. We ought to have a fair share of those jobs. But the emphasis, I submit, ought to be finding ways to get more of us into business and thereby creating for ourselves the jobs we need.

That is especially true with regard to the so-called black underclass who tend to reside in areas abandoned by white businesses.

In addition to figuring out ways of getting our unemployed to jobs that already exist, we need to look for ways to encourage blacks in those abandoned neighborhoods to create enterprises of their own. What I have in mind are not merely the shops and Mom & Pop stores that we still patronize (but whose owners are far likelier to be Vietnamese or Koreans than blacks), but also an entrepreneurial approach to our social problems.

I am not suggesting that government has no role in attacking these problems. It has a major role. What I am suggesting is that we need to explore ways of creating government-backed programs that instead of merely making our problems more bearable go in the direction of solving those problems. We are forever talking about the lack of day care as an impediment to work for welfare families. But why aren't we lobbying for legislation that would relax some of the anti-entrepreneurial rules and permit some of the money now spent on public welfare to be used to establish child-care centers run by the neighbors of those who need the care? Why aren't we looking for ways to use the funds that are already being expended to create small jitney services to transport job-seekers to distant jobs?

Success is the Goal

I said at the beginning that I am not a theoretician, but I do have one little theory that may have some relevance to our subject. It is this: When people believe that their problems can be solved, they tend to get busy solving them—partly because it is the natural thing to do and partly because they would like to have the credit. When people believe that their problems are beyond solution, they tend to position themselves so as to avoid blame for their nonsolution.

Now none of the black leadership will tell you that they think the problems we face are beyond solution. To do so would be to forfeit their leadership positions. But their behavior, if my theory is correct, suggests their pessimism.

Let me offer an example of what I am talking about. Take the woeful inadequacy of education in the predominantly black central cities. Does the black leadership see the ascendancy of black teachers and school administrators and the rise of black politicians to positions of local leadership as assets to be used in improving those dreadful schools? Rarely. What you are more likely to hear are charges of white abandonment, white resistance to integration, white conspiracies to isolate black children even when the schools are officially desegregated. In short, white people are responsible for the problem.

But if the youngsters manage to survive those awful school systems and make their way to historically black colleges—that is, if the children begin to show signs that they are going to make it—these same leaders sing a different song. Give our black colleges a fair share of public resources, they say, and we who know and love our children will educate them.

The difference, I submit, is that they believe many of our high school students won't succeed, and they conspire to avoid the blame for their failure But they believe that most of our college youngsters will make it, and they want to be in position to claim credit for their success.

I suspect something like that is happening in terms of our economic well-being. Many of us are succeeding, in an astonishing range of fields, and the leadership does not hesitate to point out—with perfect justification—that our success is attributable to the glorious civil rights movement: that black exertion and courage made our success possible.

But many of us aren't succeeding. Teenage pregnancy, dope trafficking, lawlessness, and lack of ambition make us doubt that they ever will succeed. But do our leaders suggest that the reasons have to do with the inadequacy of the civil rights movement, or with any lack of exertion and courage on the part of the leadership? No. When we see failure among our people, and have reason to believe that the failure is permanent, our recourse is to our mainstay myth: Racism is the culprit. Mistakenly, we credit black pride for our successes and blame prejudice for our shortfalls.

I leave it to others to suggest the specifics by which we will move to increase the economic success of black America. I will tell you only that I believe it can be done—not only because it is being done by an encouraging number of us, but also because it has been done by earlier generations who struggled under circumstances of discrimination, deprivation, and hostility far worse than anything we now face.

My simple suggestion is that we stop using the plight of the black underclass as a scourge for beating up on white racists and examine both the black community and the American system for clues to how we can transform ourselves from consumers to producers.

I used to play a little game in which I would concede to members of the black leadership the validity of the racism explanation. "Let's say you're exactly right, that racism is the overriding reason for our situation, and that an all-out attack on racism is our most pressing priority," I'd tell them.

"Now let us suppose that we eventually win the fight against racism and put ourselves in the position now occupied by poor whites. What would you urge that we do next?

"Pool our resources? Establish and support black businesses? Insist that our children take advantage of the opportunities that a society free of racism would offer? What should be our next step?

"Well, just for the hell of it, why don't we pretend that the racist dragon has been slain already—and take that next step right now?"

Mariotti
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600,000-member National Federation of Independent Business, Mr. Mariotti's achievements in the field of free enterprise education have been featured in numerous network news broadcasts, television programs and national publications.

For the past six years, I have been trying to become an expert in a neglected field—that of teaching entrepreneurship and basic free market economics to inner-city black, Hispanic, and disadvantaged youths. My interest in this field came about under unusual circumstances.

Seven years ago, I was a small businessman with an import-export firm on New York's Lower East Side. One day I went out for a jog and was mugged by four inner-city kids. It was very like the experience of Bernhard Goetz; they approached me and demanded money—five or ten dollars. I didn't have the money and I asked them to go away. I was assaulted. Needless to say, it was a very traumatic experience.

But while I was recovering, I began to think about the incident from a different perspective. If those kids had come to me for a $10 loan, or had they had something legitimate to sell me, or had they wanted me to invest in a business, I probably would have given them the money. I was troubled that they had to resort to violence when they could have been making a sales pitch.

Putting Entrepreneurship into the Curriculum

I thought about this for about six months, and I began writing letters and making phone calls to a variety of people. What I discovered was that there was virtually nothing being done in order to get inner-city youths involved in business. As you may know, most high school business departments are controlled by typing teachers, so the majority of students go through four years of education without getting any information about finance, marketing, or product development, much less basic economic principles.

So I decided to make a career change. I approached the New York City school board and introduced myself. I requested assignments in the most difficult neighborhoods, and once I was there, I asked for the "worst" students. Of course, I was labelled a nut; after all, there are a lot of schools in New York where teachers just won't go voluntarily, and lots of "worst" students every teacher wants to avoid. At a school where I was assigned early on, Boys and Girls High School, which lies at the heart of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant area, there were 48 physical assaults in one year, and that was typical. I taught in schools around the New York City area for six years, but I couldn't convince a single principal to endorse my work or approve a plan for students to start their own companies. I couldn't get any financing either. Administrators cited fears about handling money, about holdups, liability, and that sort of thing.

Then, finally, I met a remarkable woman in the section of South Bronx called Fort Apache, generally considered the most dangerous area of the city. Her name is Patricia Black and she is the principal of Jane Addams Vocational High School. From our first meeting, she gave her full support to my plan and she put me in charge of the business department in the field of special education.

> "...when a student is treated well and, moreover, treated as a professional entrepreneur, he begins to act the role."

Special Ed Students

Special ed students have a great many problems dealing with the world around them and they often don't function very well in a structured environment. But I enjoy working with them because I believe they are indeed special and that God has granted them special gifts to offset their problems. Sometimes, it is just that they don't fit into the conventional hierarchy of traditional education; Henry Ford and Ray Kroc were such special ed students.

To date, about three hundred students have gone through the program which includes learning all the basic steps of starting and running a small business as well as the fundamentals of a market economy. The companies these students formed have earned more than $100,000 in sales in just the last two years.

The Influence of Ludwig von Mises

None of this would have been possible without the help of Barbara Bell and Raymond Chambers of the Boys and Girls Club of Newark (which is doing some of the best educational work in the inner-city today). In addition, I founded my own non-profit group, the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship. But it also wouldn't have been possible for me, at least, without an introduction to the writings of one of the great minds of this century, Ludwig von Mises.

When I was sixteen years old, I was a socialist, to the horror of my relatives, especially my grandfather, Lowell R. Mason, a well-known libertarian attorney. He sent me a copy of Mises's monumental study, *Human Action,* with a note that said that if I read the book and wrote a report on it, he would pay me $100.

Well, that was the most valuable job I ever had. I will never forget the experience of finding out about the way the free market works. The effect on my thinking was revolutionary. Within a matter of weeks, I went from looking at life as a totalitarian to a classical liberal. The insights of Ludwig von Mises, whom *Hillsdale College's Champions of Freedom* series honors, have helped me accomplish what amounts to pioneering work in the inner cities.

What is really ironic, however, is that with all the emphasis on the study of entrepreneurship which goes on at the college level in America, and with the worldwide intellectual movement toward classical liberalism, Ludwig von Mises's name is rarely mentioned outside of places like Hillsdale College. Of all the "crimes" of academia which can be attributed to Keynesian socialism and communism, one of the greatest is that the Austrian school of economics has never gotten the credit it deserves. My debt to Ludwig von Mises and his followers, like my old friend Richard Ebeling who now holds the Mises chair at Hillsdale, is incalculable. And so is my debt to Hillsdale College, which I consider to be one of the finest liberal arts schools in this country. This school, with its dedication to human liberty–both political and economic–is a beacon to all of those who must stand alone in defense of freedom.

Positive Results

There are six basic findings which I have discovered in teaching free enterprise and entrepreneurship to inner-city youths.

Improved Attitude

The first finding is that the students who go through the program display marked improvement in their general attitude and

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