

Black Unemployment: Just Don't Mention the Immigration!

By: Mark Krikorian - December 18, 2012

The *Washington Post* has run three stories in the last few days on the high unemployment rate among black workers, and only one makes even passing reference to immigrant competition. As context, my colleague Steve Camarota has just published a detailed look at unemployment, breaking out subgroups in a way that BLS doesn't, and he found that unemployment among native-born black Americans is roughly double that for immigrants. And remember, people are only counted as "unemployed" if they're actually looking for work, so this isn't a matter of idleness. (Cato Institute open-borders gadfly Alex Nowrasteh has graced the report with high praise: "This report is not as egregiously and offensively wrong as usual." Practically an endorsement!)

Anyway, Michael Gerson's column starts off with an unexpectedly sound observation, identifying "the greatest single threat to the unity of America: the vast, increasing segregation of young, African American men and boys from the promise of their country." He lists a number of possible avenues to address this problem:

promoting early childhood education and parenting skills; encouraging youth development and mentoring; expanding technical education and apprenticeships; fostering college enrollment and completion; offering greater opportunities for national service; extending wage subsidies to low-income, noncustodial fathers; reforming sentencing and easing prisoner reentry. When there is a canyon to fill, just about everyone can usefully take a shovel.

There's one shovel, though, that must not be taken.

Then, BET founder Robert Johnson is reported to be calling for the use in all corporate hiring of the NFL's Rooney Rule, "which requires teams to interview minority candidates seeking head-coaching or general manager jobs before making hiring decisions." (It's not clear how this would apply to the vast majority of unemployed black workers.)

And a big front-page story by Michael Fletcher identified weak social networks as a reason for persistently high unemployment among blacks. This was the only article that even contained the word "immigrants," noting only that "Recent research also shows immigrants have active networks that help new arrivals navigate the country, and trading information about jobs is an important part of that" and suggesting that the solution lies in even more affirmative action.

There are many causes for the disengagement of black men from the American labor market, but one of them is undoubtedly mass immigration. Frederick Douglass

understood the problem 150 years ago better than today's liberals: "Every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived emigrant, whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place." Or Booker T. Washington: "To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, 'cast down your bucket where you are.'" Or W.E.B Du Bois, after the immigration pause enacted in the 1920s: "the stopping of the importing of cheap white labor on any terms has been the economic salvation of American black labor."

Mass immigration isn't the only cause of the deep employment problems of less-skilled black workers. It's not even the main cause. But it's the easiest one to remedy. And the unwillingness to embrace cuts in legal immigration and the tightening of enforcement by those wringing their hands about the plight of black men confirms my observation of a few years back that,

open immigration has become an immutable value of the Left. There is no policy the liberal establishment won't abandon, no election it won't forfeit, no constituency it won't sacrifice to ensure the survival and success of open borders.