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Biko Agozino

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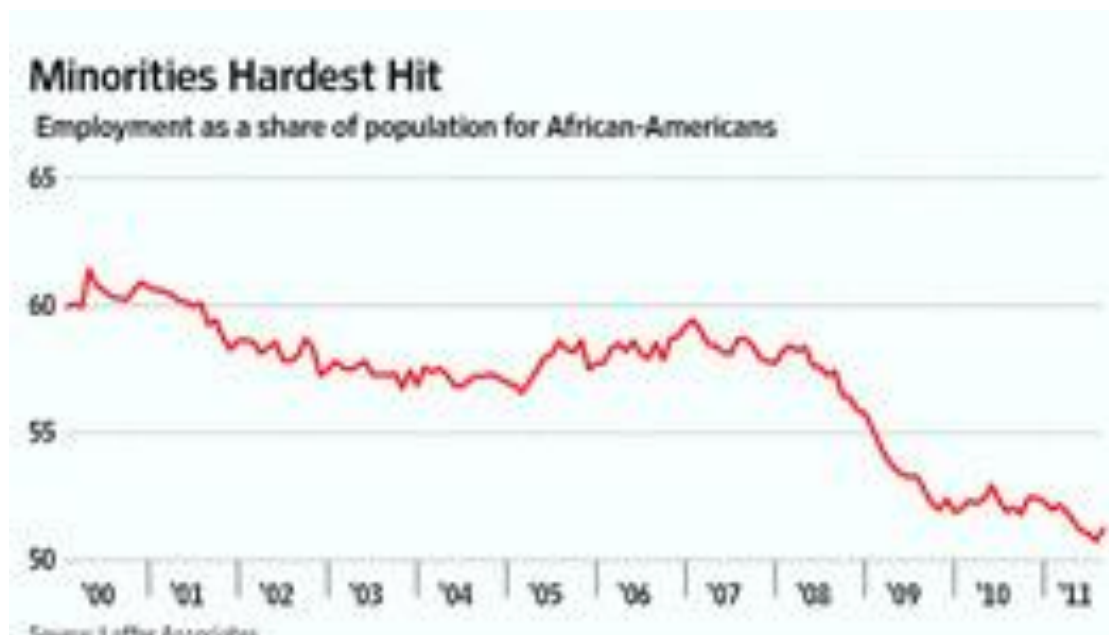
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**Editorial: Press Release: African Criminology and Justice Association Policy
Proposal on Black Unemployment**

Drafted By Biko Agozino

This resolution was tabled at the annual meeting of the African Criminology and Justice Association in November, 2011, Washington D.C. Following a debate, the meeting voted to approve the resolution. A text of the resolution was later circulated by email for approval by the members and following approval, it was released to the press. A similar resolution was earlier drafted for an association of black social scientists but they are yet to approve it for release. I commend the members of the African Criminology and Justice Association for approving this resolution the way they approved the earlier resolution against the war on African Americans.

The unemployment rate for African Americans (16.7%) has been reported to be at its highest level since 1984.ⁱ At nearly double the national average (9.1%) or over double the rate for white Americans (8%), the members of the African Criminology and Justice Association, meeting in Washington DC, November 2011, hereby vote to propose feasible policies for the elimination of such a scandalous level of unemployment among African Americans in particular and Africans in general who were always at the receiving end of hardship even in 1984 when unemployment was lower than it is today.

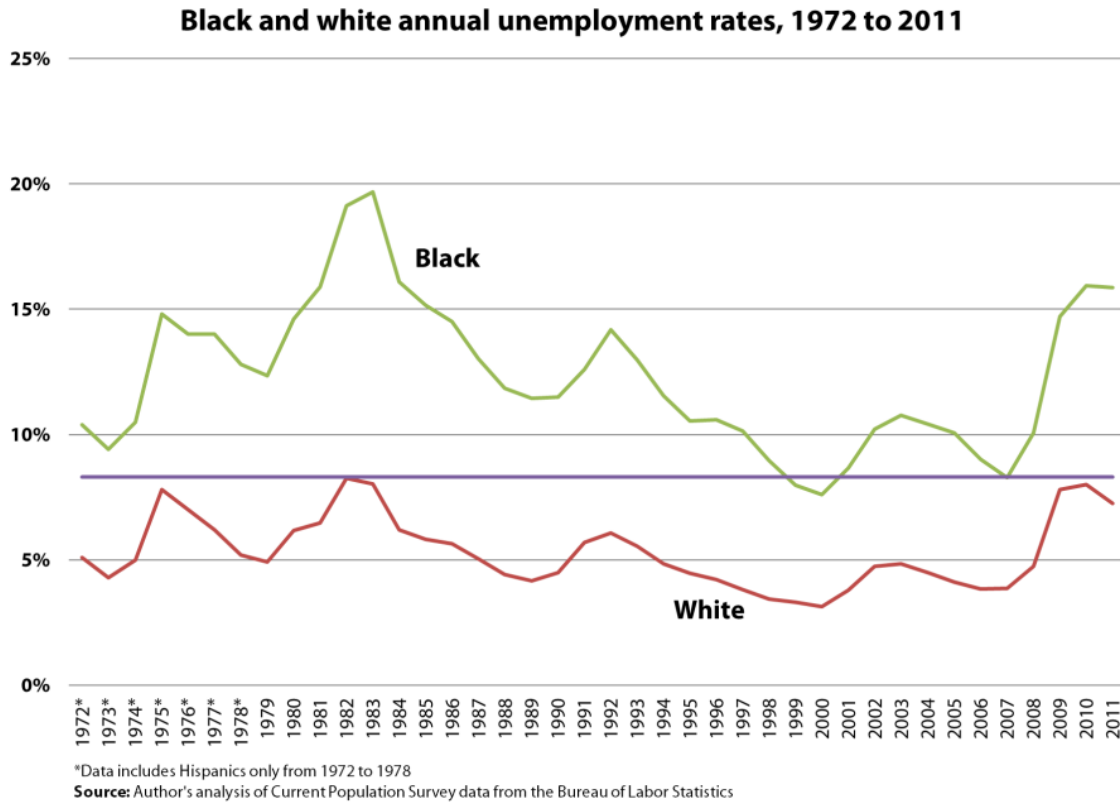


Source: *Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2011.

We disagree with the rightwing proposal of Mr. Arthur Laffer, chairman of Laffer Associates, the architect of Reaganomics who is co-author, with Stephen Moore, of "Return to Prosperity: How America Can Regain Its Economic Superpower Status" (Threshold, 2010).ⁱⁱ In an opinion editorial article published in *The Wall Street Journal* of

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September 12, 2011, Mr. Laffer called for the creation of ‘Enterprise Zones’ in the inner cities where a) There should be zero payroll tax on employers employing people who live in the inner city zone; b) The minimum wage legislation would be suspended; c) Building codes in the zone should be audited quickly with the view not to constrain entrepreneurs and union membership requirements should be suspended; and d) Profits from the zone should be taxed at one-third the normal tax rate.



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Such a policy of sweat-shop zones in American inner cities would make matters worse by turning our fellow citizens into working poor who would be trapped in unsafe working conditions with less than minimum wages while corporate fat cats would enjoy tax holidays. Mr. Laffer’s ludicrous suggestions would only take African Americans back to the years of share-cropping with all the attendant oppression, exploitation and impunity. There must be a better way for African Americans and indeed for all people of African descent.

First of all, we call on President Obama and all the presidents of African countries to look beyond the Jobs Bill and consider an entrepreneurship bill for African Americans and all Africans. Obama needs to set aside at least \$50 billion from the proposed Jobs Bill (estimated at \$470b) to be disbursed to unemployed Americans to enable them to set up their own small and medium businesses. The same way that the government gives out

huge grants as agricultural subsidies and business start-ups for the richest one per cent, we call on the government to initiate enterprise subsidies for the urban poor.

We commend the governor of Anambra State in Nigeria, Mr. Peter Obi, for disbursing one hundred million naira to a thousand unemployed youth after their training to help them to be self-employed. We urge him to make this an annual part of the budget and not a one off and to increase the size of the checks given to some to enable them to become medium to large-scale entrepreneurs. Governor Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State in Nigeria has also implemented a similar grants program worth about fifty million naira while the federal government announced that it has fifty billion naira set aside for similar purposes.

We condemn the plan of Donald Trump and Newt Gingrich to turn poor inner city school children into janitors and toilet cleaners for their schools in the guise of training them as apprentices on the assumption that poor children have no work ethics even though poor people are the hardest working people.

The entrepreneurship policy we advocate will work as follows: select 1000 unemployed citizens from each state and send them to be trained as apprentices by successful businesses. On completion of the short apprenticeship, award each of them one million dollars to set up their own enterprises. If each of them goes on to employ 100 people, that will be 5,000,000 new jobs every year! Repeat this every year and we will be creating millions of jobs every decade while making sure that the wealth created will stay in our communities to help transform the urban neighborhoods into zones of prosperity. The Hip Hop generation has been telling us that they are not into seeking jobs to work for Massa anymore, they want to be their own bosses and our simple and practical proposal will help to do this quickly and save the economy too. The government already does this to bail out Wall Street, it is time to bail out the street corner too.

We support the current Occupy Movement that is sweeping across the world but we go beyond the call to occupy Wall Street and to occupy cities to call for the occupation of the prison industrial complex. The excessive incarceration of African Americans and other minorities is helping to fuel to job crisis because corporations that rely on prison labor would be unlikely to hire free labor until we end the inhumanity of what Michelle Alexander^{iv} aptly dubbed The New Jim Crow and free the captives from the unjust drug wars, decriminalize all drugs and restore the voting rights of all felons.

Across Africa, unemployed youth are increasingly being drawn into violent armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom gangs. We believe that have every African state implement our entrepreneurship policy proposal would result in massive wealth creation and possible reduction of street violence across Africa. Every industrialized country gives out massive grants to spur entrepreneurship while African countries neglect the creative talents that abound in Africa and only call on developed countries to end subsidies to their own entrepreneurs.

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With the decriminalization of drugs and the ending of the war against African Americans in the guise of the war on drugs, as we have called for in a previous Press Release, many of the youth who may not get grants to start their own businesses could grow their own marijuana and sell them legally to medical patients and recreational users alike, pay taxes on their sales, create jobs that will pay well and end the 'homey-cidal' violence that is associated with the war on drugs. We can rely on education to get our fellow citizens to say no to drugs the same way we do with more dangerous drugs like alcohol and tobacco which kill more people than all the illicit drugs put together.^v

Readers will be able to make connections between this editorial and some of the articles in this issue of our journal. We open with an incisive essay by Dawn Rothe and Jeffery Ross (pp1-18) on how state authorities facilitate the genocidal trade in arms across Africa. The authors do not make the comparison that this editorial invites but it is true that the arms trade is far more dangerous than the drugs trade and that by decriminalizing the drugs trade while controlling the arms trade, the connections between drugs and firearms would be eliminated as was the case with bootleg liqueur in America.

George Thomas and Rani George (pp19-31) follow with an article on how tobacco promotion promotes smoking. Again the authors did not mention the war on drugs but it is well known that tobacco is a dangerous drug which is responsible for an estimated six million deaths worldwide per annum and yet it remains legal while relatively safe substances like marihuana that could provide employment opportunities for millions of impoverished youth around the world remain illegal and are used as the excuse for criminalizing the people and waging war against them as is the case in Mexico where more than 40,000 people have been killed in the past few years.

Thirdly, M.A. Kasali (pp32-48) analyzes the evolution of private security firms in Nigeria with reference to unemployment as a security factor but without mentioning the war on drugs as an issue that escalates public insecurity unnecessarily. Akinwale and Aderinto (pp49-77) follow with a long analysis of the crisis of governance and urban violence in Nigeria and they too highlight unemployment as a factor but without making the link here that the decriminalization of drugs will create fair employment and reduce urban violence. A research news item about a publication on the death penalty in Trinidad and Tobago is inserted as page 78 to cover a gap in the pagination but also to encourage our readers to follow that debate in Public Criminology.

Oluwafemi Ladapo (pp79-94) dwells on the need for effective investigation of crimes in Nigeria without reference to problems of unemployment and the drugs trade. The suggestion in this editorial would indeed improve police effectiveness in investigating crimes if scarce police resources are diverted from the pursuit of responsible adults who consume or sell substances without posing any threat to the public and devoted to more pressing security problems in the country. Jephias Matunnhu (pp95-108) offers an explanation of the xenophobic violence against African immigrants in South Africa and identifies unemployment as a major factor but without making the connection in this editorial that legalizing drugs in South Africa would boost legitimate employment, increase respect for law enforcement officers and help to reduce violence.

Nathan Muwereza (pp109-118) explores the atrocities related to the conflict in Northern Uganda where the Lord's Resistance Army has been battling the government forces for decades but the author did not make the links between the crisis and the need to create mass employment by, for instance, ending the war on drugs. Rather, the focus of policy makers is the search for whom to punish and the international community has joined in the escalation of the conflict by providing foreign troops instead of providing support for the massive creation of jobs through the ending of the war on drugs worldwide.

We close with two research notes in this double issue of our journal. Samuel Aronson (pp119-126) reflects on US counterterrorism assistance in Africa especially after 9/11. While he references the problem of unemployment, he is silent on the problem of the war on drugs that terrorizes otherwise law-abiding citizens in Africa and pushes them closer to criminal networks that control the lucrative drugs trade. Finally Ebai Eban (pp127-146) reports on the social construction of criminal responsibility in Cameroun but without reference to the issues raised in this editorial – the fact that by decriminalizing drugs, it is possible to reduce the crisis of criminal responsibility, create more fair employment opportunities and leave the police more time to focus on the real bad guys.

References:

ⁱ 'Black unemployment at highest level in 27-years' *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 2011.

ⁱⁱ Arthur, Laffer, 'How to Fight Black Unemployment: The tragedy of the failed stimulus is felt hard in minority communities. There's a better way.' *Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: Algernon Austin (2012) 'For African Americans, 50 years of high unemployment' <http://www.epi.org/publication/african-americans-50-years-high-unemployment/>

^{iv} Alexander, M. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, New York, New Press, 2010.

^v Rieman, J. (1979). *The Rich Get Rich and The Poor Get Poorer*. New York: Wiley.