



“Between The Lines” **Anthony Asadullah Samad**

50 Solutions To “The Black Dilemma” **(Part I in a Five Part Series)**

After writing a commentary on the future of black advocacy, I received close to a thousand e-mail responses (thank you), mostly the question back to me, “So, what is the solution?” Clearly, a common theme across the country is that we all (or most of us, at least) know the problems, and have long grown tired of them. Most of us concur that prevailing tactics in black advocacy have limited effectiveness. And many of us agree that a major contributor to our problems is the convolution of self interests that conflict with collective interest goals and progress.

As long as money and notoriety are in the mix, somebody (Black) is going to go against the collective interest of African Americans, in pursuit of their individual self-interest. It presents a true dilemma, particularly when self-interest and collective interests are not congruent. So for the next four weeks, let’s explore, together, 50 solutions to address the debilitating state of Black America. We’ll deal with them 10 at a time, understanding that space limitations don’t allow for full explanation, but serve as a springboard to future conversation. Who knows? This could start a national debate on how we solve (some of) black America’s problems. It is this generation’s dilemma, you know.

Let’s acknowledge out front that we will never be able to totally solve our problems and eliminate self interest totally. Certainly, we can no longer ignore that there is a “profit side” to black crisis, and a fame side for those who speak to black crises. That’s the up-side, and we always pay more attention to the up-side than the down side. The down side, however, is most damaging when our collective interests aren’t served, and most dangerous, when they are. But we can eliminate potential of conflicting self interest, meaning you can come up as long as, or in helping, the people come up—but you shouldn’t come up at the expense of the people. With that said...

Solution 1: Let’s acknowledge that we’re all different but experience the same challenges. Black people are not monolithic and shouldn’t be expected to accept “cookie cutter” approaches to solutions. Malcolm X said 40 years ago that we don’t catch hell because we’re Christian or Muslim, Democrat or Republican. We catch hell in America because we’re Black. It’s still true.

Solution 2: Let’s acknowledge that racism isn’t over. Just because white people have eliminated it from the public discourse, doesn’t mean that it went away. Race-neutrality, or “Colorblindness” is the new Jim Crow that allows us to be separated, mistreated and still unequal. We must address race inequities that are every bit as disparate as they were 50 years ago.

Solution 3: Stop playing to our lower self, or the worst in our society. We will never progress for as long as we allow others in the race to disrespect our women, our children, and call each other the worst thing our grandfathers could be called, Nigger. The pimp, thug, dawg, and gangsta mentality doesn’t serve our best interest either. It’s degradation and cannibalism—pure and basic, feeding on each other. Can’t we just be human, or more importantly, men and women?

Solution 4: Establish a “quality of life” survival level for our communities. Forty years of white flight and job relocations have created communities without sustainable economies. Minimum wage jobs cannot support the economy of any community. Identify companies that rely

on the black dollar and demand work. Otherwise, don't spend with those that don't support us.

Solution 5: Engage in only responsive, action-oriented advocacy. Let others know we mean business. Target our advocacy to demonstrate that we are responsive enough to close a business, or vote someone out of office, when they betray our trust, or go against the collective interest. Back up the "twist and shout" with "Get 'em out." Others will respond when they see we can respond.

Solution 6: Identify and expose "interlopers." Interlopers are those who call themselves part of the community, but show others how to exploit the community and take payment for it. They can work in corporations, government, elected office or in the church. This is currently black America's biggest problem—those who will do a good deed in support of the community out in the open, but do two dirty deeds behind closed doors to undermine the community interest.

Solution 7: Take our children out of public schools, if they cannot be properly educated. If we haven't figured out that public education is "dumbing-down" our children, we will never figure it out. I know this is controversial, but for as long as public education is broken, it is the biggest contributor to black adult illiteracy (now over 50% in some parts of the country) and the marginalization of black employment. Like 50 years ago, poor education is now our biggest threat.

Solution 8: Do not condone crimes against society, particularly our community. Blacks are currently the biggest criminal exploiters of other Blacks. We can't (or even shouldn't) expect the other man to do anything about this "black on black" thing. We have to solve this one ourselves.

Solution 9: Practice sound economics to lift our communities. Economics is not arithmetic. "Buy black" days and five dollar a month checking accounts will not build wealth in our communities. Massive wealth building strategies, like the Rule of 72, or REIT investment circles that double your money in 4.2 years, are the only solutions that will allow us to keep up with rising costs in housing and business start-up markets. Blacks must learn to live on 50% to 70% of what they earn, and save the rest. Looking good and being broke went out with platform shoes and jeri curls. Econo-practicality that emphasizes saving will close the racial wealth gap. Consumer mentality on quickly depreciable assets (cars, clothes, some jewelry) keeps us poor. Give it up.

Solution 10: Pull your money out of banks that do not lend it back to you, pure and simple. Banks are strangulating our communities, taking money in but not letting it out, unless it's in another community. Lending practices are highly questionable and we need to hold banks in our community accountable. We cannot allow economic redlining to persist, as leverage builds wealth.

These are the first ten solutions to the most common (and complex) collective problems in our community. The next ten will focus on personal behaviors, mental well-being and health.

Anthony Asadullah Samad is a national columnist, author and managing director of the Urban Issues Forum. His new book, *50 Years After Brown: The State of Black Equality In America* can be ordered online (go to www.thestateofblackequality.com). He can be reached for comments at www.AnthonySamad.com