

By Harriett Muhammad

(Continuation of a letter from Mr. J. C.—Seattle, Wash.)

Since the suicide rate would be expected to be much higher than it is, one question that comes to mind is—why isn't it? One important factor is the love and sense of belonging that many Negro babies get from being nursed by their mothers. Another is, the Negro child, by the very nature of his existence, has to stand more stress, forcing him to learn how to survive.

You asked if the aboriginal black people in America have become victims of a mental or moral astigmatism? Yes, they have, and, odd as it appears, one factor of this astigmatism is an agent for containing their suicide rate.

The self-image reflected upon Negroes from the white culture in which they live, is the cause of several mental conditions that afflict many Negroes — depression, frustrative and aggressive syndromes; hostilities, and simple schizophrenia.

These conditions expose different types of threshold anger i.e., shoot-outs, cut-ups, Negroes attacking Negroes — which act to work off anxieties. This release of anxieties is a third factor explaining why the Negro suicide rate is lower than would be expected.

You asked: "How can one deal with human idiosyncracies?"

Human idiosyncracies can be dealt with by studying them, by understanding them, by working with them. There is no "Mickey Mouse" short cut to this end. Social science fields — sociology, psychology, psychiatry — deal with such phenomena.

Lastly, you asked: "Is history the fortuitous play of individual caprice?"

In my opinion, no, it is not.

It may seem to be the chance play of individual impulsiveness but, when his-

tory is examined, one can find much repetition stemming from similar factors. Exceptional persons do touch off certain events or chains of reactions, but you have to keep in mind the background social conditions and scientific conditions that had a part in prompting these events. A study of the past and present can enable us to predict the future — even control it to a certain extent.

Different people and schools of thought have different views on why things happen the way they do. Some believe that man can never be satisfied and, his unending attempts to get more and more, drive him to do the things he does.

Others say that history is the struggle of economic classes, one trying to control the other trying not to be controlled. Others say that history is the revelation of a divine plan.

It is good to know different views and, for this you would have to do some reading. For the first view, may I suggest Merton and Camus; the second, Karl Marx; the third, the Bible, the Holy Qur-an, and the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad in this newspaper.

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.

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