

Customs, Mores and Racism: How these Three Words have impacted the Thinking of America.

Transcript of a Commentary by Ambrose I. Lane, Sr.
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AMBROSE: And top of the morning, top of the week. This is We Ourselves. I'm Ambrose I. Lane Sr.

This morning we're gonna talk about the meaning of three words and how they impact this nation. Those words as are: customs, mores, and racism.

Now **custom** is defined as; an ordinary or usual manner of doing or acting, or the habitual practice of a community or people, common usage.

And under the law it means; an old or general usage that has obtain the force of law.

In order for us to understand racism in this country you have to understand how racism took effect. In the 1600's white males who were in charge of taking over this continent and killing all of those that they found or enslaving all of those that they found occupying land in this country, decided that one of the best ways to distinguish between those who were slave and those who were free was the color of their skin. And so in importing Africans and annihilating or enslaving or placing on reservations the brown skinned people they found here they thought they had found the solution.

Well, it meant that if they could place in law enough laws enforceable by the government, which means enforceable by the police or the army, the military, that they could make it a habitual practice. As I have said to you many times Europeans didn't come to this continent as white people. They came as Englishmen and Frenchmen and so forth. Neither did Africans come here as black people. But it was convenient for those who had the military force of arms and who didn't want to work themselves to build this continent, to do the heavy lifting or plant the crops that they shipped overseas to their fellow Europeans. If they could make it a law that descendants of people of color would always be, would always occupy the bottom rung of the economic, cultural, and political ladder in this country they would secure for themselves, now designated as white people, all of the wealth, all of that which was good for humans.

So they did that. They passed laws such as the law passed in Virginia that read;

Children who got by Englishman upon a Negro woman shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother. If any Christian shall commit fornication with a Negro man or woman shall pay double the fine of the former act.

It meant -- that law meant that white males by having babies by black slave women could enrich themselves because -- since these, their children became their slaves, property they could sell. That's how they did it by law. And those laws became, as most laws do, customs, which means the habitual practice of a community or people. So it was the habitual practice of communities in this country. And it became general usage that had obtained the force of law. And so we move from laws to customs.

And then we move from customs to mores. M-O-R-E-S. And that is defined as: those established, traditional customs or folk ways regarded by a social group as essential to its preservation and welfare; the accepted conventions of a group or community. Let me read that again; those established, traditional customs or folk ways regarded by a social group as essential to its preservation and welfare. And in this country on this continent, racism became a custom that was regarded by everyone as essential to its preservation and welfare; the accepted conventions of a group or community. And so mores impacted both those who were the objects of the laws that put them in an inferior position and those who practiced them. It became essential to both groups.

And racism became, on this continent, in this country essential to the preservation and welfare of everybody. And how is racism defined? Racism is defined as; an excessive and irrational believe in or advocacy of the superiority of a given group, or people or nation on racial grounds alone; race hatred. Let me repeat that; an excessive and irrational believe in or advocacy of the superiority of a given group, a given people, a given nation on racial grounds alone.

So we've had many centuries of practice of racism and it became a mores; established, traditional custom or folk way regarded by everyone as essential to its preservation and welfare. That's what the efforts by people like Dr. King were challenging. They were challenging customs regarded by everyone in this country as essential to its

preservation and welfare. Dr. King had difficulties with his own people. He had special difficulty with his own preachers. So many of his fellow black clergy were torn apart by the actions of Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He had a real battle with the National Black Baptists because the head of that group was -- was determined that Dr. King would not be able to convince the rest of the National Black Baptists to join in his movement. The last thing in the world the head of the National Black Baptists wanted at that time.

And so -- and why? Because the laws of this country produced in this country customs that said racism is the ordinary manner of doing things here. Racism is a habitual practice, both North and South, of especially those people who had power. And those customs became mores and therefore those groups in this country that experienced and practiced racism felt that racism was the essential to the preservation and welfare of all groups in this country. And that obtained throughout the history of this country and there were groups all across this land that would fight you to defend racism. And those who wanted to fight you because they felt that racism was the right way to go were both black and white. And if you look now at the -- how television is treating people like Barrack Obama, then you'll understand how deep racism is as a mores, as mores in this country.

How many times have you seen so many black males taking positions on cable and on TV networks, positions that are directly contrary to the best interests of the American people? Now, I first noticed this after the change in the law in 1996 when Newt Gingrich had the Republican Congress to pass the Telecommunications Act of 1996, how convenient it made for those with wealth in this country to make certain that they were able to target the American mind by repetition of certain things they wanted to make sure that people never forgot.

If you remember when the current Democratic Chairman Howard Dean was running for the Presidency, in order to make himself heard he shouted and television recorded the shout and he --and they replayed that shout 663 times in the next 24 hours. 663 times in order to make him appear as a person totally out of control and certainly not a person you could trust in the Presidency. They tested it with him but they have been doing it to everyone who's a threat to the racist regime that is in power.

Let me give you just a couple of examples. Barrack Obama. In the last 30 days, according to NEXUS, the television stations have repeated Obama and his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright more than 3,000

times -- more than 3,000 times. They have repeated Obama in bowling since he scored low on that bowling alley in Pennsylvania 1,043 times. And Obama and patriotism, 1,607 times. Now that is quite a record. And while replaying and having so called guests discussing it as if they were trying to be -- not prejudice they have folks repeating the same stuff. Now how many times do you have to replay Obama and is former pastor in order to let people understand what's going on?

And while they're doing that they're totally ignoring people that are doing things that you ought to be very much concerned about. You ought to be very concerned about what is really happening in Iraq and what Cheney and Bush are doing to our civil liberties in our country. But you don't see that repeated over and over again. And let me compare and contrast the repetition of more than 3,000 -- and NEXUS says there's too many to be counted -- they stopped counting at 3,000 about Obama and his former pastor.

But Attorney Yoo has written misleading legal memoranda, before he left the White House, about the 4th Amendment which is very important to the American people. And that was repeated in a month 16 times, 16 times. That's 1 and a 6. And Yoo and his approval memoranda about torture were repeated 102 times in 30 days. And Mukasey, our now Attorney General and what he had to say about 911 has been repeated 73 times in 30 days. But Obama and bowling, 1043 times in 30 days; Obama and patriotism, 1607 times; Obama and his pastor, more than 3,000 times; and Clinton and Lewinsky, 1079 times.

Those are decisions being made for us by the owners of the News Media. And they're doing it for a purpose. Where are the important items dealing with the lives of the American people? Where are they? Why aren't those repeated? Time and time again, this is just on television. What about all the radio, right-wing talk show hosts? And you can multiply that by thousands and thousands times.

We are being considered -- and it's done in such a way that you have to be concerned that they consider the American public's minds -- ah -- foolish minds. They think that they can get away with telling the American people -- feeding the American people only the garbage they want us to hear. And they have successfully done that.

Why aren't they telling us about Mr. John McCain? Let me share with you some of things they aren't telling the American people about. John McCain voted against setting up a national holiday in honor of Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. But now he tells us his position has evolved. Yet John McCain has continued to oppose key civil rights laws.

Now people have tried to say McCain is not as conservative as folk think. Well, according to Ultra-Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan, McCain will make Cheney look like Gandhi. (Laugh) Now he is opposed to a women's right to choose. And the Children's Defense Fund rated McCain as the worst Senator in Congress for children. He voted against Children's Health Care Bill last year. Then he defended Bush's veto of the Children's Health Care Bill. Now you'd never know, you're never told how wealthy he is. Well he's one of the richest members in the Senate, and that Senate is filled with millionaires. Now according to AP he and his wife own at least 8 homes, and since he owns - he and wife own 8 homes - he says the solution to the housing crisis is for people facing foreclosure to get a second job and skip their vacations. That's exactly what he said.

But you're not going to get that on cable television because they keep repeating over and over again Obama and bowling, Obama and Rev. Wright, Obama and patriotism. And yet when they talk about McCain and his relationship with preachers they don't talk about how he has sought out the extra religious right. His pastor, the pastor that he calls his spiritual guide, Pastor Ron Parsley, believes America's founding mission is to destroy Islam which he calls a false religion. He sought out the political support of right-wing preacher John Hagee who believes, at least he says believes that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for Gay rights and Mr. Hagee has also called the Catholic Church the Anti-Christ and a false cult.

But, we have to get those facts by doing our own research because the major media will not tell us about those things. And so what you're looking at in this country now are people struggling with racism as an established, traditional custom - the established folk ways of America, regarded by whites as well as others as essential to white preservation and welfare; the accepted conventions of a group or community. And that's the reason so many people were happy to see Obama inspire so many young people of all colors and all creeds and all political persuasions to come out and see the increase in voter registration, to see the increase in young people voting and being active. Because many of us believe that the more involved they became, the more they understood that they had to attack the racist mores so many Americans observe else we're gonna be up the creek again.

And unfortunately we're seeing the super rich and the 5 corporations

that control almost everything we read, see, hear on television and radio turn up the notch on racism. And that's the tragedy of what we've seen happening over the last few months. We saw it begin with Bill Clinton and his wife. They are the ones who brought racism into this campaign. And we're seeing how racism as a custom and as mores of this country has recaptured the minds of some people.

It's interesting what one of the strongest supporters of Hillary Clinton said about the state of Pennsylvania that you had Philadelphia on one side, Pittsburgh on the other and Alabama straight up the middle. That was given the repeat treatment. What in the world did that mean? Well he was trying to tell us that straight up the middle of Pennsylvania is a racist group of people who happen to be white and who're gonna make sure Obama is not successful in Pennsylvania? Why hasn't he been asked those questions? Where in the world is CNN? We know where FOX is. But all of the others - MSNBC - and all of the rest of them. Why haven't they told us what this man, who is married to an ultra-conservative who serves the interests of the Bush administration, why haven't the press -- because he's on there quite frequently - why haven't they asked him that question; "What did you mean Alabama straight up the middle?"

But that's the tragedy of the ownership of the media in this country. So much has been denied us. You know every time I come on I wonder what I'm gonna talk to you about because there is just so much that's not available to most people. A lot of people who use their computer to Google certain sites get the information I'm telling you. But a lot of people don't have computers and don't have any idea about the sites to Google to get information that is denied the American people through television and I almost forget radio.

Well let me stop chatting here. The number to call if you want to talk about these issues is 588-0893 or 202-588-0893. Customs and mores and racism and how this impacts the thinking of America.