SILENT APPROVAL

Clark Attacks Negro Leadership

(Editor's note: Last week THE DAVIDSONIAN carried the first part of a two-part article by Associate Editor Johnny Clark concerning his impressions of the Los Angeles riots which occurred while he was in that city last August. Following is the concluding part of his article.)

By JOHNNY CLARK
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Only a minority of the Negroes of the city were actually participating in the riots, but I was completely amazed by the failure of the Negro "civil rights" leaders to condemn the actions of the rioters. They would only offer, "Of course I don't condone the violence, but..." and proceed to list Negro grievances, some valid and some not so valid.

While huddled up on the roof one night, we watched the Joe Pyne Show (sort of a local Jack Paar Show) during which one radical Negro "spokesman", an ex-Black Muslim, actually defended and praised the acts of the rioters, as businesses continued to burn and people continued to die. True, he didn't speak for the majority of the Negroes, but the segment he did speak for was able to commit $200 million worth of damage, in addition to causing 37 people to die senselessly.

The other Negro leader on the program, called an "Uncle Tom" by the extremist, did voice the sentiments of most civil rights leaders and other champions of the oppressed. He said that he did not condone the violence, but that the violence was the result of "police brutality" and many other oppressions of the Negroes and not the fault of civil rights leaders' tactics.

Even Governor Pat Brown, who seemed to be sort of a California Lyndon Johnson, refused to condemn the rioters, blaming instead the LA police department and Mayor Sam Yorty, with whom he had long been at odds. Mr. Brown is a politician first, last and foremost, and he knew the risk of possibly alienating many liberal votes, even as people died, he continued to play politics and refrain from condemning those who included among their civil rights the right to steal, burn, destroy and even kill.

No, most of the Negro civil rights leaders did not consciously want the violence, but what did they expect? As the articulate Negro writer George S. Schuyler wrote, "The net result of (the civil rights leaders') long encouragement of civil disobedience, disdain for authority and general disrespect for public morals was to set the stage for the successful disgraceful orgies of burning, looting, vandalism and death, with the criminal elements of the slum proletariat taking over. Ironically, when police called upon these civil rights leaders to help control the rampaging mobs, they were (if found) completely ineffective."

Will Herberg, the noted Jewish theologian, wrote that those such as James Farmer and Martin Luther King, "the inciters to law-defiance in the name of 'conscience', are ultimately responsible for the riots."

Los Angeles attorney Morton B. Jackson added, "They (the rioters) had been encouraged to believe that they were only taking what was rightfully theirs and what had been wrongfully withheld from them all these years. They had been told that they were being willfully suppressed, so they were getting even."

The Negroes of Watts did have some valid complaints, most of them concerning lack of opportunity. But how then do their "leaders" who refused to condemn their actions could think that anything could justify their actions of violence, I don't know.

The Negro leaders' refusal to condemn murderers and looters seemed to indicate a silent approval as the riots mounted in intensity to their peak on Saturday and Sunday. Certainly, the only effective discouragement the rioters received were the bullets and bayonets of police and National Guardsmen.

Law and the respect of the general populace for law and order is the foundation of our civilized life. The advocacy of disobedience to laws which one considers "bad" can only lead to other situations like LA, Rochester, Harlem, and Springfield. Justice Felix Frankfurter has said, "If a man can be allowed to determine for himself what is law, every man can. That means first, chaos; then, tyranny."

Martin Luther King and all the would-be M. L. Kings did not have to fly out to LA to find their scapegoats. They just had to open their eyes.

Admittedly, a lot more understanding and a lot more giving will have to occur on both sides before this mess is settled.

Yet, the Negro will achieve the respect he wants, along with the understanding and the giving, by showing, as many Negro leaders have already done, a capacity for responsibility rather than a capability for precipitating disrespect and disobedience for the law which, however imperfect it may be, is the foundation of our civilization.