



William Raspberry

A Belief in Conspiracy

AS LITERATURE, philosophy or social commentary, it is hardly on a par with the letters that make up George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*.

But the letter from a convict at Lorton may be more typical of the views of those black inmates who see themselves as political prisoners or as victims of some massive, well-coordinated conspiracy—more typical in part because it is at least as earnest and a good deal more confused.

It is typical, too, in that it was written by a man whose politics have nothing to do

with his being where he is; he's doing time for attempted burglary and petty larceny.

But for him the conspiracy is real. "It has become nationwide," he writes, "and seemingly, the respected citizens are either blind or refuse to accept facts and visual proof of a master conspiracy . . .

"I am aware of our many black leaders in the community, and in Congress, but it is my belief that these leaders unknowingly are being used to further an existing master plan.

"THE PLAN consists of Identification, Categorized Minority Control, and Gradual Extermination. I am sure many of our citizens have heard these charges before, but most people ignore the thought that any such plan is feasible.

"I know it sounds far-fetched, too big and hideous to be true. But if one would stop to think who he is dealing with, and what the controller stands to lose . . . one could realize that such a plan would not be out of context—in fact, very logical and practical.

"All the big to-do about population explosion—who does it directly affect? Birth control: they find it necessary, not without malicious intent, to stress the importance of this measure to minority individuals. Economic standards and prejudice have caused such conditions that make it almost impossible for those of the minority to avoid any opportunity to use one another to steal, and to lie in an attempt to better their personal situation — and to survive. . .

"Most conditions are intentional to some extent, giving the controller an excuse for strict and carefully directed law-enforcement procedures. This serves the purpose of identification and control of as many black faces as possible. The military services fit this category, also, and contributes highly to extermination. . .

"If a black face has not yet got a jail number, FBI identification, military service number, you may depend

on an efficient government to see that they have one or the other — and sooner or later an official registration number at the morgue."

ALL RIGHT. It sounds pretty paranoid, and the logic breaks down now and then. So why didn't I throw it away?

Well, for one thing, it's

not as insane as it sounds. I don't happen to believe that there is any nationally coordinated conspiracy against blacks or any other minority. But the guy who can't find decent work to support his family, and who lands in jail when he attempts the only alternative he knows, may find it easier to convince himself that such a conspiracy exists.

And he reads enough about bloody police raids, birth control, welfare budget cuts, the military draft, poor health care and other forms of "genocide" that he may start to think that someone really is after him—after us.

Nor is everyone who shares this feeling in jail. Some very respectable, outwardly successful blacks start to wonder just what is going on when, for example, their work requires that they be photographed for ID cards—by the same machines the South Africans use to make passes for blacks.

(The reaction to anything that smacks of registration or identification is very much like the reaction of the antigun control people who fear that registration will be followed by confiscation.)

But what do you say to a man who really believes there is an antiblack conspiracy afoot? You can point out that a number of blacks are setting new records for achievement; but he knows that already.

And he also knows what you know: that black Americans are still being victimized by hypocrisy in high places, by official indifference and neglect and by pervasive racism. And if you believe that is still happening, is it paranoid to assume that it isn't happening by accident?