

that in the U.S. the per capita consumption by blacks is much less than that of the white population, such observations are not likely to arouse the enthusiasm of blacks.

Disaffiliation of blacks from the environmental movement would be particularly unfortunate, because in many ways blacks are the special victims of pollution. A white suburbanite can escape from the city's dirt, smog, carbon monoxide, lead, and noise when he goes home; the ghetto-dweller not only works in a polluted environment, he lives in it. And in the ghetto he confronts his own, added environmental problems: rats and other vermin, the danger of lead poisoning when children eat bits of ancient, peeling paint. And, through its history, the black community can be a powerful ally in the fight against the environmental crisis. The environmental crisis is a crisis of survival, for pollution signifies the eventual breakdown of the very environmental system on which we depend for our lives and our livelihood--the soil, water and air. To middle class Americans, survival is not a familiar issue. They have not yet learned how to face such a soul-shaking threat; witness our continued failure to appreciate that the existence of ready-armed nuclear weapons means that doomsday may be tomorrow. For blacks, the issue of survival is 200 years old. If they too have not yet mastered it, they have at least had a good deal of experience that may be enormously valuable to a society which, now as a whole, must face the threat of extinction. Blacks need the environmental movement, and the movement needs the blacks.