

How america vilifies black people who shed light on injustice

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



It has become more and more evident that history is continually repeating itself, for a number of reasons. Firstly, and probably more importantly, we have experienced limited progression since the time of Martin Luther King Jnr and Malcolm X. Secondly, throughout history we are reminded at different junctures that we “ should never forget” yet somehow we conveniently forget as long as it serves the greater good; in terms of controlling black society it is always necessary and convenient to forget their trials, tribulations and hardships. Let us not forget that within days of giving his most famous ‘ I have a dream’ speech Martin Luther King was classified, by the FBI, as the most dangerous man in America. A disturbing reminder, and one that is still present today, of how America vilifies black people who shed light on injustice. Colin Kaepernick has himself been vilified and is now rendered unemployable by the NFL despite his skills on the field.

Recently, it was documented that Donald Trump had made several references to a number of countries that are home to black people, for example Haiti and Africa, and he was quoted as saying “ Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here? Why not people from Norway?”(Trump, 2018) Naturally, this angered a great many people and rightly so, it was an example of racism at its finest, and what was even more degrading and demoralising is that it came from the leader of America, however his views are not shared by most people living outside of America and apparently a great number of Norwegians responded with the question “ Why would we move to a country with a shithole President?” (Twitter, 2018).

It begs the question as to why America, the proclaimed leader of the first world, can have a President (and I use that term lightly in reference to Trump) that is overtly racist, misogynistic and unable to professionally lead and yet the people of America despite their collective outrage are happy to sit and wait for his term to naturally end. This would be the perfect occasion for the majority of America to take charge and demand immediate and effective change, “ Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men.” (Massachusetts Constitution, 1780: 2). If men such as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Colin Kaepernick can be vilified for their beliefs and actions to effect positive change then why is it an impossibility to vilify someone who not only holds racist beliefs but feels very comfortable openly verbalising them to the world.

Surely WE the people have an opportunity to, not only demand, but be granted the right to a better, more qualified, more positive, impartial leader who can work towards a brighter, egalitarian country that actually works to enhance the lives of ALL its people. “ I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character” (Martin Luther King, 1963).

Do Trump’s overtly racist comments, and his eagerness to claim that a great many white supremacist protestors are very nice people, not justify Colin Kaepernick’s protest? It is irrelevant how Mr. Trump feels towards Kaepernick and his protest and beliefs. What is offensive however is his declaration of

what is legitimate from what is not. His focus is to question someone's patriotism rather than actually explore and rectify the real issue of inequality. Surely, he is the one being unpatriotic to flag and country especially when we consider his views and alignment with white supremacists, for example the appointment of Steve Bannon, well known for his alt-right beliefs. David Duke, a well-known, longtime white supremacist, said this, " This represents a turning point for the people of this country. We are determined to take our country back. We are going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump. That's what we believed in, that's why we voted for Donald Trump. Because he said he's going to take our country back. That's what we gotta do." (David Duke, 2017).

Does the flag really represent all that Donald Trump appears to stand for and believe in? If so, then it would justify anyone's reasoning to protest, when we examine that a country built on immigrants is now being led by someone who believes equality is limited to those who look like him.

Women

Throughout history women have been at the forefront of our struggle and played pivotal roles in relation to the oppression that was experienced throughout our communities. Not only were women oppressed because of the colour of their skin, but also because for a long time they had to endure discrimination purely because they were women. This meant that for many they were battling a double edged sword. In 2018 women in the vast majority of industries are still not viewed as equal in relation to their male counterparts. They have to fight harder to receive promotions and in some

cases are paid considerably less for the same job as a man. If you couple the struggles of being a woman with being a black woman then the fight becomes harder.

Black woman throughout history have been demonised for their sex and race. During slavery and right up to the present day they have been sexualised, demonised and forgotten, despite having raised families single handedly, battled on a daily basis to be awarded the right to education and good job prospects and all this whilst still positively contributing to the struggle of their own people, yet it is only recently that some of these women have been recognised for their achievements and accolades.

However, it would be silly to overlook the role so many of these women have played in paving the way for the rest of us. Women such as Rosa Parks, Angela Davis, Florynce Kennedy, Kathleen Cleaver, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Assata Shakur, Elaine Brown, Chaka Khan, Tarika Matilaba, Alice Walker, Shirley Chisholm, Charlene A. Carruthers, Jessica Byrd, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi have provided platforms for others and been very vocal and active in promoting equality and raising awareness on the issues prevalent to black people, black women and people of colour.

Without their contributions we would not have achieved the milestones that were reached at various junctures throughout history and the present day.

This in no way diminishes the role men have played, however Colin Kaepernick recognized that it was imperative for him to play an active role in today's fight. Especially considering that the message of equality for all and black lives matter does not mean that as black people or people of colour we

see no value or worth in the lives of others, moreover that we demand that black lives are afforded the same value as others.

White Allies

“ We look at life through rose-coloured glasses, rationalizing and pretending that things are not so bad after all. But then day after day – tragedy after tragedy strikes and confuses us and our pretense fails to aid or dispel the nagging feeling that we cannot have security in an insecure society” (George Jackson, 1967: 110)

A white ally is exactly what is says, a white person who is an ally to the cause by showing their allegiance to the fight for equality and respect. They are also willing to lend their voice when it may appear that a black person or minority is voiceless. One very famous white ally is Jane Elliott, a former teacher and anti-racism activist. Jane Elliott began her career by conducting the blue eyes, brown eyes exercise with her students, and so began her career as a very public speaker against discrimination, racism and the existence of white privilege.

Truth stands alone and cannot be disputed. The fact of the matter is black and brown people were stolen, sold, and brought to a foreign land. As a direct result they were stripped of their identity, culture, creed and religion, etc. Some may say despite all the progress we cannot continue to go on through life pretending slavery never happened.

As a people, we can accept the apology that was never given. But acceptance of slavery's existence on the side of white society is also

imperative. Responsibility must be taken, and moving forward if those words, "Equality and Justice for all" is acted out, then and only then will grassroots organisations such as Black Lives Matter; a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters, be able to fully embrace and recognise the white allies in attendance of BLM marches worldwide and their relevance and importance. When I witness their support, they are not bolstering #ALLLIVESMATTER which for a number of white Americans is a conscious attempt to desecrate #BLACKLIVESMATTER and its real meaning.

It was the same in 1963 when white supporters and activists were labelled "n****r lovers" by fellow whites for joining civil rights rallies. Of course there are huge numbers of white people around the world who agree that black people are discriminated against, who acknowledge that black people are not afforded the same rights as their white peers and who also see the blatant acts of racism that minorities endure at the hands of government, schools, police and any number of institutions. However, their implicit silence is either their fear of the repercussions for their outward support for the fight towards equality, a lack of knowledge of how to show unwavering support for equality or their silence is merely their ignorance and happiness with the current status quo, as Martin Luther King once said, "There comes a time when silence is betrayal". For white allies this is no longer the time to remain silent and continue to betray us.

In 1963 white people were also in this predicament as to how best to support their black peers. It was imperative for the white people to find that inner strength and determination to challenge the existing system and hopefully

effect change and it was equally import for black people that across America and world wide their white allies were visible to clearly demonstrate that this was not just an issue or a very real concern for black people or people of colour but the issue of racism was something that was so evil and oppressive even white people had a need for it to be eradicated. Thus the importance of a white ally was born out of a real need for unification on both sides.

Those images are what so many of our leaders (past and present) fought for. Malcolm X once said, " I dont have no mercy or compassion in me for a society that will crush people, and then penalize them for not being able to stand under the weight." That is exactly what is happening to black and brown people of America, they have literally been crushed under the weight or oppression and discrimination for hundreds of years . However, we have so many examples of white allies who have been in support of not only blacks but against the systematic oppression of minorities. Coach Greg Popovich for the San Antonio Spurs has always been an example of a white ally in his continuous support of blacks. Recently, for black history month Popovich said " The league is made up of a lot of black guys. To honour (black history month) and understand it is pretty simplistic, its always important to bring attention to it, even if it angers people. The point is that you have to keep it in front of everbody's nose so that they understand it, that it still hasn't been taken care of and we have a lot of work to do."

Coach Popovich bold statements are made in an era where people love to endorse you in SILENCE! To me White Silence equals Silent Agreement.

Recently, Lebron James expereinced backlash from Fox News anchor Laura

Ingraham's "shut up and dribble" comments. Coach Popovich championed LeBron James as our BLACK PANTHER, just to recognise and acknowledge what James means to the African American community is so much bigger than just dribbling a basketball. Popovich's words are commendable, his speaking out was clearly an attempt to support LeBron rather than placating a particular group or one person and it is necessary that more allies within the white community take a stance. We need unity.

The head coach of one of the most scrutinised teams in sports, the Golden State Warriors Steve Kerr is also a white ally who speaks up on social issues and issues that are important to his players. After a twitter debacle, when President Trump disinvited the NBA Champions to the White House, despite Steph Curry's earlier admittance to reporters he wouldn't be attending. The team then decided to do something more fulfilling like treating 40 kids from Kevin Durant's hometown Seat Pleasant Rec centre to tour the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Steve Kerr who has always supported his players in their personal choices and core beliefs. Also attended and it was his second time in doing so and said, "If you've never been before you have to go, it's one of the most powerful experiences you'll ever have," Kerr articulated his experience of the tour, "The way the museum is designed it is beautiful. It goes from despair and hopelessness at the beginning of the African American history, the slave trade. You're at the bottom of the slave ship, You read about the history. It's just devastating, and you wonder about the human spirit and you wonder about the people, are they good or are they evil? All these existential

questions go through your mind, and as you go up, each level, there's more and more hope and you have more and more faith in the human spirit and you're amazed at the resilience. How would any of us respond in similar circumstances? And yet you get to the top level where there's this amazing cultural excellence in the African American community through sports, history, politics, medicine and music."

Kerr's words were that of a man who has accepted the fact that his forefathers may have played a hand in the deterioration of Africans whom through bondage became African American. More compassion, respect, courage and bravery is need to combat racism, facism, hatred, disrespect and all the negativity that goes into setting us back. Steph Curry said, " The experience was unifying," and he had some comments that I believe helped the 30 kids that were able to attend the game against the Washington Wizards see the vision we aspire to achieve in the future, in all aspects of life. " Everybody has a voice," Curry said, " When you come to the arena tonight, you'll see people from all different walks of life and people from all different backgrounds enjoying entertainment and sports on the court, it brings people together. I am of the opinion that is exactly how it manifested itself in this whole conversation. Rhetoric and hate generated from the very top in an obvious attempt to insight divisiveness, in reality had the opposite reaction. We've done our part, I believe, to try to further that message of unification." Sports has its way of unifying people. The imagery and the visuals is so important. I remember seeing Philadelphia Eagles defensive end Chris Long (who happens to be white) in support of his teammate Malcom

Jenkins who raised his fist during the National Anthem in support of Colin Kapernick and the racial injustices and inequality. The image of Long in support and solidarity of his teammate and friend is enough to inspire. There are young boys and girls who will see those visuals and ultimately mimic what they see.

Chris Long donated his entire 2017 base salary (\$1 million) to benefit educational charities. The Chris Long Foundation said he will donate his next 10 game checks to organisations that support educational equality in three cities that he spent his 10 year career playing in, Philadelphia (Eagles), Boston (New England) and St. Louis (Rams). The campaign " Pledge 10 for Tomorrow" encourages fans and businesses to donate or match his contributions. Long never publicised his donations but decided to do so after the negative outcry because of the national anthem protest and unnecessary violence during a Ku Klux Klan rally in Charlottesville that led to the needless death of a young woman counter-protesting racism.

Questions were being asked with regards to what these socially vocal players were actually doing. Long felt compelled to share what his contribution to these issues actually was and this was his way of showing he was an ally. " The scholarships were going to happen anyway. But I think to do it publicly, is kind of turning a negative into a positive. There are a lot of positives. We do want to promote diversity and equality and educational opportunities. That's something I've been passionate for a couple of years." Chris Long is pushing educational reform. His teammate, Michael Jenkins, is pushing bail reform, criminal justice reform and police reform. Despite their different

agendas, they are staunch in their support of one another because they have the insight to know we are all interconnected in some kind of way. Pushing forward in all positive agendas pushes us all forward, AS A PEOPLE, AS A NATION. “ Educational opportunity and equality are the best gateways to a better tomorrow for America”.

Heather Heyer, the young white ally who lost her life in Charlottesville, was a beautiful soul. Her life was taken by a hateful racist, a white supremacist, as she stood as part of a peaceful rally fighting for justice on behalf of her fellow Americans. Though we never heard her voice, she spoke to us through her sacrifice. Her death cannot be in vain. The principles she stood for are born out of the fact that she was attending a rally to dispel racism, hatred and bigotry only to be slain by the very hate she chose to confront so humbly. Heather paid the ultimate sacrifice, “ In estimating greatness one should consider the intensity, sincerity and capability with which an individual plays (his or her) role, whether that role be large or small. To exclude a great “ small” man because his life gave him a small role and include one whom it appointed to play a larger role seems to me to be idealising the stage and not the individual.” J. A. Rogers

Heather's role was great and her life will always be associated with the FIGHT for JUSTICE. She gave us the ultimate sacrifice as a testament to the innermost character of her soul..... she will forever be an ally.