

JEFFERSON

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

TRUTH IN LOVE

Bridging the Diversity Gap

By Parris J. Baker
April 2023

Editor's note: Following is the first of a five-part series addressing a growing culture of incivility and contempt in the United States. Brandon Wiley, founder and executive director of Opened Eyes, Inc., and Dr. Parris Baker share strategies about how to build bridges between culturally diverse groups through conversation. The series will continue on Tuesday, April 25.

The ghastly executions of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and George Floyd^[1] are commonly associated with the genesis and endurance of #BlackLivesMatter in America. Black Lives Matter is a leaderless movement that is fueled by shared pain, outrage, and exasperation (we have had enough!) and in search of truth, justice, and equitable treatment. Black Lives Matter has also become a worldwide phenomenon; a marvelous movement of galvanized diverse groups unified in a common purpose. Many of the group members, who had never worked together, began marching and protesting together, all seeking the seeming elusive goal of liberty and justice for all.

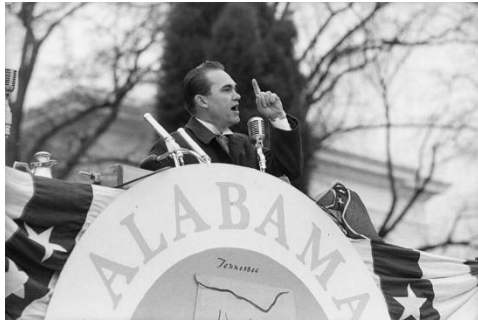


Originally, the reason for #BlackLivesMatter was the belief between three women[2] that communicated, communal love between suffering mothers who had lost a son to police violence could also provide comfort and hope for parents and communities that had experienced similar loss. Presently, the movement has become a global organization, Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc., whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.[2] Ironically, while Black Lives Matter has united certain segments of the American and global

populations, other primarily white groups have vilified the organization. Black Lives Matter has become a pique, a pariah, and a political and evangelical target of these groups.

Carol Anderson (2016),[3] author of *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*, attributes this ideological and racial separation and divide to white rage. According to Anderson, white rage is the historic and vitriolic response to black resilience and accomplishment by powerful white men. Historically, men like Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Johnson, Supreme Court Chief Justices Roger B. Taney and Morrison R. Waite, and Governors Orval E. Faubus (Arkansas) and George C. Wallace, Jr. (Alabama) all believed in racial segregation and articulated that American government was only for white men. Each of those men also supported American policies designed to impede or frustrate Black achievement, advancement, and acquisition.

White rage, according to Anderson, *is not* an indictment or criticism against all white people, particularly white allies. However, it is an identification of the attitudinal and behavioral responses of white people in positions of power (political, judicial, and economic power) toward Black achievement. Moreover, Anderson posits an inverse relationship between Black achievement and white acceptance; that is, she believes there is an existing perception that Black success in America is moving too fast and white adjustment and acceptance to black progress is moving too slow.



After his election in 1962, Alabama Governor George Wallace vows, “Segregation today, segregation, tomorrow, and segregation forever!”

Derrick Bell,[5] like Anderson, recognized that most attempts to redress the injustices and injuries of white supremacy, slavery, and structural racism were consistently met with major legislative pushback from

state and federal judiciaries. Professor Bell concluded that racism is and remains deeply rooted in America society, that structural racism is permanent, and that white authority at all levels of government will reassert systemic racist behaviors after each successful legislative reform or achievement.

One example of Bell’s postulate is the current opposition to H.R.4-John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021 by Republican senators. Though in the Senate minority, Republicans have blocked legislation because it requires 60 votes to pass. Lawrence Glickman,[6] professor of History at Cornell University and a columnist for *The Atlantic*, reported that the resentment and resistance displayed by some white people (those with relative societal power), “described one of the oldest and deepest patterns in American politics ... [that is] deeply woven into American political culture and that extends back to the era of Reconstruction, at least.”

On the surface, the United States of America, at times, does not appear to be united at all. Instead, the country appears to be a fracturing nation of segregated states identified as red, blue, or purple, by party affiliation, or by the type of freedom and justice being pursued or defended. A growing number of elected representatives of those stratified states promote extreme tribalism – the conscious loyalty of the tribe or group above every other group. Arthur Brooks[7] (2019) believes the development of segregated tribes occurs through the process of “ideological siloing.” Groups that have ideologically siloed, passionately, radically, and at times, desperately embrace their oppositional viewpoints. Siloed tribal groups believe fervently their monocultural ethnocentric worldview is the only correct perspective. They tend to discontinue discussions with dissimilar groups to distance themselves primarily through contentious attitudes and behaviors, and, eventually, these factions stop interacting with other diverse groups entirely.

New membership to the group is reserved only for those who share the group’s extreme binary opinions, seek to confirm existing ideological positions, and self-identify in very specific, discriminating terms that are linked to their tribal identity. From the ideological silo perspective, humanity is expressed in binary terms: white and non-white, heterosexual and homosexual, Christian and non-

Christian, Republican and Democrat, conservative and liberal, right and wrong, winners and losers, and us and them. These siloed communities have become polarized and isolated, presenting tremendous challenges for those who desire to reunite our American ethos, “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

[1] The author acknowledges there are thousands of named and unnamed African American victims of lynchings in the United States; too many to mention in this essay. The Equal Justice Initiative estimates slightly more than 5000 lynchings of African Americans have occurred in the United States between Reconstruction and 2021. <https://eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america/>

[2] Taylor, K-Y. (2016). *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Black Lives Matter, founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tomeli, was initially created to express black love.

[3] #BlackLivesMatter - <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

[4] Anderson, C. (2016). *White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury, USA, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

[5] Derrick Bell, author of *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. (1993). New York, NY: basic Books., was the first black tenured professor at Harvard Law School.

[6] Glickman, L. B. (2020). How White Backlash Controls American Progress. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved on March 31, 2023. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/05/white-backlash-nothing-new/611914/>

[7] Brooks, A. C. (2019). *Love your enemies: How decent people can save America from the culture of contempt*. First edition. New York, NY: Broadside Books.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Parris J. Baker is an Associate Professor at Gannon University, where he is the Social Work, Mortuary Science and Gerontology Program Director. An alumnus of Gannon, Baker received his graduate degree from Case Western Reserve University, Jack, Joseph, & Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and his doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work. Presently, Baker serves as the Senior Pastor of Believers International Worship Center, Inc. He is married and has five children.



Dr. Baker can be reached at: baker002@gannon.edu.

[Subscribe to JES Publications Mailing List!](#)

[Support JES | Donate](#)

In Case You Missed It

[The Wider World| Spotlight Turns to Global Affairs in New Series](#) written by President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Words Really Do Matter: Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Probing Education | Ibn Khaldūn and the University of Fez, Morocco](#) written by Director of the Brock Institute for Mega Issues Education **Rev. Charles Brock**

[Be Well | It's Time to Rejuvenate Your Body](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Book Notes #139 | Coda to Book Note #138: Kurt Vonnegut's 'Slaughterhouse-Five'](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[The Extinction of the Friday Lent Perch Dinner: A Huge Sacrifice?](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**

