

The Weaponization of Race Hurts America

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Image Source: Miki Jourdan on Flickr

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Introduction



Image Source: Martin Luther King, Jr., delivering "I have a dream" speech, 1963 U.S. Library of Congress

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, which was delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963¹.

While there have been many notable advancements in racial equality² since 1963 -- the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act, Fair Housing Act, and the U.S. Supreme Court's 1967

Loving decision that struck down interracial marriage bans in Virginia and

15 other states^{3,4}-- the left has arguably abandoned a core element of Dr. King's dream, substituted a form of discrimination that is advanced as "racial equity"⁵, and vastly expanded the size and reach of the Federal Government.⁶

Rather than pursuing Dr. King's dream of a society in which Americans would "not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," the left has weaponized racial issues in a manner that divides Americans into separate identity groups and proclaims that blacks are inherently victims trapped in a systemically racist culture⁷ that has been instituted by white supremacists.

Congressional Black Caucus Member Attacks Black Colleague

On January 4, 2023 -- nearly 60 years after the "Dream" speech -- Congressional Black Caucus member Cori Bush (D-MO) attacked a black House colleague, Rep. Byron Donalds (R-FL), who had been nominated to serve as Speaker of the House. "Byron Donalds is not a historic candidate for Speaker. He is a prop," Bush tweeted. "Despite being Black, he supports a policy agenda intent on upholding and perpetuating white supremacy. His name being in the mix is not progress -- it's pathetic," Bush argued.⁸

Rep. Donalds called out Cori Bush for her remarks. "Before you judge my agenda, let's have a debate over the policies and the outcomes. Until then, don't be a crab in a barrel!"⁹

Bork Demonized in Supreme Court Confirmation Process

Invoking racial arguments has become a tactic in numerous policy battles in the 60 years since Dr. King's "Dream" speech. In 1986 and with a Republican majority in the U.S. Senate, President Ronald Reagan nominated Antonin Scalia for the U.S. Supreme Court, and he was confirmed unanimously. A year later, but with a new Democrat majority in the Senate, Reagan nominated Robert Bork to replace Lewis Powell, a moderate justice who had been nominated by Richard Nixon.¹⁰

In November 1986, incoming Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Joe Biden (D-DE) said he would support Judge Bork if "after our investigations, he looks a lot like Scalia . . . and if the groups tear me apart, that's the medicine I'll have to take." Shortly thereafter, Biden embarked on a run for the 1988 presidential nomination and abandoned his previous expression of support for a Bork nomination. "If you nominate [Bork], you'll have trouble on your hands," Biden warned Reagan in 1987.¹¹

Within an hour of Reagan's announcement that he was nominating Bork, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) took to the Senate floor to paint a picture of "Robert Bork's America." He described it as "a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions" and "Blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters . . ."

Ilya Shapiro, formerly Vice President for Constitutional Studies at the Cato Institute, explains how the weaponization of racial arguments played a major role in the defeat of Bork's nomination. "Republicans had hoped to woo Southern Democrats, who were uneasy about the Court's direction on abortion and religion, but the allegations of racial insensitivity put these senators in an awkward position because of their need for Black votes."¹² The racial allegations also provided an excuse for a few non-Southern Democrats with pro-life voting records to vote against the Bork nomination.^{13 14}

Clarence Thomas Says Abortion was the 'Elephant in the Room'

Four years after the Bork confirmation battle, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Joe Biden presided over the controversial Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas. While a major focus of news coverage was on the allegations of sexual harassment by Anita Hill, a law school professor and former colleague of Clarence Thomas at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Justice Thomas believes the abortion issue was "the elephant in the room." In a September 2007 interview with CBS "60 Minutes"

Justice Thomas said, “That *was* the issue, that *is* the issue that people are apparently so upset about, that you determine the composition of your entire federal judiciary [around], it seems now.”¹⁵

During his tenure as Chairman of the EEOC (1982-1990), Clarence Thomas challenged affirmative action policies. Thomas views such policies as discriminatory practices that violate the principle of equal treatment under the law. Similarly, Thomas has stated that he believes affirmative action policies are not helpful to the people they are intended to benefit and that they actually reinforce negative stereotypes about the abilities of minority individuals.¹⁶ Anita Hill has long been a supporter of affirmative action policies¹⁷ and she has spoken out strongly against the Supreme Court overturning the *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision.¹⁸

Justice Thomas’s conservative views have made him a special target of the liberal establishment. “There’s different sets of rules for different people,” Thomas said in a film about his life. “If you criticize a black person who’s more liberal, you’re a racist. Whereas you can do whatever to me, or [former Housing and Urban Development Secretary] Ben Carson, and that’s fine, because you’re not really black because you’re not doing what we expect black people to do.”¹⁹

“We were told that, ‘Oh, it’s gonna be the bigot in the pickup truck; it’s gonna be the Klansmen; it’s gonna be the rural sheriff. But it turned out that through all of that, ultimately the biggest impediment was the modern day liberal.”

Thomas believes this racial double standard was particularly acute during his Supreme Court confirmation process. “I felt as though in my whole life I had been looking at the wrong people who would be problematic toward me. We were told that ‘Oh, it’s gonna be the bigot in the pickup truck; it’s gonna be the Klansmen; it’s gonna be the rural sheriff,” he said in the film.²⁰

“But it turned out that through all of that, ultimately the biggest impediment was the modern day liberal. They were the ones who would discount all those things because they have one issue or because they have the power to caricature you,” Justice Thomas continued.²¹

Justice and Senator Labeled “Uncle Tom” and “Uncle Tim”

In 2023, Georgia Republicans sought to honor Justice Thomas, a native son of the state, with a statue on the grounds of the State Capitol. Democrats overwhelmingly voted against bestowing the honor, with State Sen. Emanuel Jones, a Decatur Democrat calling Thomas an “Uncle Tom.” Sen. Jones said Justice Thomas is like someone who has “sold his soul to the slave master.”²²



Image Source: U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) (Senate Website)

In April 2021, Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) delivered the Republican response to President Joe Biden's first State of the Union address. During his speech, Sen. Scott referred to America as "not a racist country" while recognizing racism exists and is a problem he personally faced. In response, some Twitter users began using the hashtag #UncleTim as a spin for the derogatory and more common “Uncle Tom” pejorative.²³ The term “Uncle Tom” or “Uncle Tim” is a derogatory term used to describe a black person who is perceived as subservient to white people, particularly those in power. The term comes from a common misinterpretation of the character Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin," whose character has been reinvented by contemporary thinkers as being overly deferential to his white slave masters.²⁴

The hashtag #UncleTim quickly became a trending topic on Twitter. The application of the “Uncle Tim” moniker to Sen. Scott's comments was a very open attempt to degrade the Senator based on his race by suggesting that he is a sellout to the black community. The slur is rarely applied to white people regardless of political orientation and is exclusively used to reinforce racial stereotypes and police political thought within the black community.

On May 1, 2021, Tiffany Cross, host of the MSNBC show "The Cross Connection," depicted Sen. Scott as a “token” who was being used to downplay the issue of racism in America. Cross used her platform with about half a million viewers to soundly reject Scott's assertion that America is not a racist country.²⁵ Senator Scott himself addressed the controversy, saying, "It is stunning in 2021 that those who speak about ending discrimination want to end it by more discrimination." He also stated that the use of the hashtag was “disappointing.”²⁶

Ironically, liberal TV hosts and Twitter influencers didn't respond with such malice when prominent Democrats like President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris concurred with Sen. Scott and publicly stated that they do not believe America to be a racist country.^{27 28}

NAACP Ties George W. Bush to Horrific Killing of a Black Man

During George W. Bush's tenure as Governor of Texas, a hate crimes bill stalled in the State Senate and was never sent to his desk. While the main controversy about the bill was whether to add sexual orientation as a category covered by State hate crimes law, proponents of the legislation sought to make race the central focus of the debate.^{29 30}

When a black man named James Byrd was killed by despicable racists who chained him to a truck and dragged him through the streets, Bush was blamed for not securing passage of the hate crimes bill. Even though the two main perpetrators of this horrible crime received the death penalty and a third was sentenced to life imprisonment after cooperating with prosecutors, the NAACP ran radio ads in 10 states (18 media markets) and print ads in black newspapers and *The New York Times* shortly before the 2000 presidential election that sought to associate George W. Bush and non-passage of proposed Texas hate crimes bill with the horrific killing of Mr. Byrd.^{31 32}

Obama's Campaign & Election Fosters Hope, Then Disappointment

As a candidate for president, Barack Obama campaigned as a unifier but governed divisively -- including on race.

In a speech on race relations at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia in March 2008³³, Obama separated himself from the words of his former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, and his use of "incendiary language to express views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide but views that denigrate the greatness and the goodness of our nation that rightly offend white and black alike."



Image Source: Chuck Kennedy/ The White House

Obama said Rev. Wright's remarks "expressed a profoundly distorted view that sees white racism as endemic and that elevates what is wrong with America above all that we know is right with America . . . The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no

progress had been made; as if this country -- a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black . . . Latino, Asian, rich, poor, young and old -- is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past.”³⁴

On Father’s Day in 2008, Obama spoke to a largely black congregation at the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago.³⁵ He highlighted the role of the church and fathers in building strong communities:

Here at Apostolic, you are blessed to worship in a house that has been founded on the rock of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. But it is also built on another rock, another foundation -- and that rock is Bishop Arthur Brazier. In 48 years, he has built this congregation from just a few hundred to more than 20,000 strong -- a congregation that, because of his leadership, has braved the fierce winds and heavy rains of violence and poverty; joblessness and hopelessness. Because of his work and his ministry, there are more graduates and fewer gang members in the neighborhoods surrounding this church. There are more homes and fewer homeless. There is more community and less chaos because Bishop Brazier continued the march for justice that he began by Dr. King’s side all those years ago. He is the reason this house has stood tall for half a century. And on this Father’s Day, it must make him proud to know that the man now charged with keeping its foundation strong is his son and your new pastor, Reverend Byron Brazier.

“Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation.”

Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it.

But if we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that what too many fathers also are -- is missing -- missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it.

You and I know how true this is in the African-American community. We know that more than half of all black children live in single-parent households, a number that has doubled -- doubled -- since we were children. We know the statistics -- that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools; and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.

How many times in the last year has this city lost a child at the hands of another child? How many times have our hearts stopped in the middle of the night with the sound of a gunshot or a siren? How many teenagers have we seen hanging around on street corners when they should be sitting in a classroom? How many are sitting in prison when they should be working, or at least looking for a job? How many in this generation are we willing to lose to poverty or violence or addiction? How many?

Yes, we need more cops on the street. Yes, we need fewer guns in the hands of people who shouldn't have them. Yes, we need more money for our schools, and more outstanding teachers in the classroom, and more after-school programs for our children. Yes, we need more jobs and more job training and more opportunity in our communities.

But we also need families to raise our children. We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child -- it's the courage to raise one.

We need to help all the mothers out there who are raising these kids by themselves; the mothers who drop them off at school, go to work, pick them up in the afternoon, work another shift, get dinner, make lunches, pay the bills, fix the house, and all the other things it takes both parents to do. So many of these women are doing a heroic job, but they need support. They need another parent. Their children need another parent. That's what keeps their foundation strong. It's what keeps the foundation of our country strong.³⁶

Obama recounted his own experience growing up with an absent father but said he was luckier than most, giving credit to his mother and "two wonderful grandparents from Kansas who poured everything they had into helping my mother raise my sister and me -- who

worked with her to teach us about love and respect and the obligations we have to one another.”

Candidate Obama went on to say, “I resolved many years ago that it was my obligation to break the cycle -- that if I could be anything in life, I would be a good father to my girls; that if I could give them anything, I would give them that rock -- that foundation -- on which to build their lives. And that would be the greatest gift I could offer.”

He stressed the importance of “setting an example of excellence for our children -- because if we want to set high expectations for them, we’ve got to set high expectations for ourselves.” Education is crucial, he said. “We know that education is everything to our children’s future. We know that they will no longer just compete for good jobs with children from Indiana, but children from India and China and all over the world. We know the work and the studying and the level of education that requires.”

Obama said the greatest gift we can pass on to our children is “the gift of hope” and he cited the importance of faith. “That is our ultimate responsibility as fathers and parents. We try. We hope. We do what we can to build our house upon the sturdiest rock. And when the winds come, and the rains fall, and they beat upon that house, we keep faith that our Father will be there to guide us, and watch over us, and protect us, and lead His children through the darkest of storms into light of a better day.”⁵⁷

The 2008 election of Barack Obama as America’s first black president was widely hailed as a watershed moment in race relations. On the night after Obama’s election (November 5, 2008), Gallup Poll daily tracking found that 71% of American voters – including 61% of John McCain voters – viewed Obama’s election as one of the most important advances for black Americans in the past 100 years.⁵⁸

Obama Focuses on Disparate Impact; High-Profile Events Stir Controversy

As president, Obama repeatedly used disparate-impact analysis to suggest that statistical disparities were indicative of racial discrimination. “Disparate impact is woven through all civil rights enforcement of this administration,” said Russlynn Ali, the assistant secretary for the Department of Education’s (DOE) civil rights office in October 2010.⁵⁹

One of the areas that DOE focused its disparate-impact analysis on was school discipline. Roger Clegg, former president and general counsel of the Center for Equal Opportunity and

a former top official in the Justice Department's civil rights division, expressed concern that the practice could drive schools to "get their numbers right" to avoid being "hailed before a court or some administration agency and threatened with loss of federal funding whenever they have a racial imbalance of one kind or another."⁴⁰

Per an October 2010 report in Education Week, Clegg "explained that educators might become hypersensitive to students' race or ethnicity in discipline decisions, resulting in disciplining some students who shouldn't be and not disciplining others who deserve it."⁴¹

Obama was sometimes quick to suggest racial bias in high-profile cases involving the police or quasi-law enforcement officials. Following the death of a black 17-year-old, Trayvon Martin, in an altercation with a 'white Hispanic' neighborhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, Obama said, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon." Obama was responding to a reporter's question about the case in March 2012 after many had called for Zimmerman's arrest but several weeks before he was charged. "When I think about this boy, I think about my own kids," Obama continued.⁴²

Abigail Thernstrom, then Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, expressed concern about Obama's Trayvon remarks and the possibility that the president "wanted the prosecutors, judge and jury to believe that this was a case about race where justice demanded a guilty verdict. If that was his motivation -- and we cannot know, but reasonable people may certainly suspect -- then Obama should be ashamed of his effort to stir America's turbulent, dangerous racial waters," Thernstrom continued. "The president's role is not to be a racial agitator, and the mark of a great civil rights leader has been a determination to reject the temptations of that approach. And not that long ago -- in 2008, in Philadelphia -- candidate Obama distanced himself from such agitators," Thernstrom stated in an opinion article published by CNN.⁴³

During Obama's 2012 re-election campaign against Mitt Romney, Vice President Joe Biden stirred a racial controversy when he alleged that Romney would "Unchain Wall Street" and let the big banks write their own rules. "They're going to put y'all back in chains," Biden told a Danville, Virginia audience that included hundreds of blacks in a city that is about 50 percent black.^{44 45}

In an analysis of the Gallup findings ("Americans See Obama Election as Race Relations Milestone"), Senior Scientist Frank Newport said 67% of Americans "say a solution to relations between blacks and whites will eventually be worked out, the highest value Gallup

has measured of this question.”⁴⁶ However, in a June 17, 2020 article (“American Attitudes and Race”) Newport said, “by the end of his [Obama’s] administration, attitudes on race had soured rather than improved.”⁴⁷

Biden and Trump Spar Over Racial Controversies and Spike in Crime



Image Source: Adam Schultz

President Biden may believe that invoking the “systemic racism” narrative is politically advantageous to him and there is some empirical data that suggests it might have helped him in 2020.⁴⁸ Former President Trump criticized the mayor of Minneapolis and the governor of Minnesota for not calling up the National Guard sooner when rioting broke out following the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.⁴⁹ Trump subsequently criticized other mayors

and governors when the rioting spread to other parts of America during the summer of 2020. He attacked presidential candidate Joe Biden for not sufficiently speaking out against the rioting and he threatened to send in troops if local officials didn’t get things under control.⁵⁰ Biden countered by accusing Trump of inflaming racial tensions and exacerbating the unrest.⁵¹

During the first five months of 2020, Trump attained the highest job approval ratings of his presidency – 49 percent in five different January – May Gallup tracking polls. Following George Floyd’s death on May 25, Trump’s approval dropped by 10 points in the next Gallup poll and to 38 percent in a later June poll.⁵² In an early June 2020 NPR/PBS News Hour/Marist poll, 67% said Trump had mostly increased racial tensions -- including 88% of African Americans, 73% of Independents, and 63% of whites.⁵³ A Reuters/Ipsos poll released in June 2020 found that only 33 percent of Americans approved of Trump’s handling of protests following George Floyd’s death, while 56 percent disapproved.⁵⁴

Biden Doubles Down on Disparate Impact, Claims Bias in Law Enforcement

As president, Joe Biden has argued that white supremacy is the greatest threat to America and he frequently invokes the riot at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, to reinforce that argument. Biden's Justice Department has prioritized its focus on alleged white supremacists and Biden has made the topic of "systemic racism" a central focus throughout his Administration, permeating policy areas that include the economy, education, energy, and the environment, health care, housing, and law enforcement.⁵⁵

Biden has doubled down on disparate-impact analysis and frequently alleged bias in law enforcement. As the presumptive Democrat nominee for president in August 2020, Biden invoked the sixth anniversary of 18-year-old Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri following an altercation with a police officer. "It's been six years since Michael Brown's life was taken in Ferguson -- reigniting a movement. We must continue the work of tackling systemic racism and reforming policing."⁵⁶ Biden's vice president, Kamala Harris, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) as candidates for president in August 2019, tweeted on the fifth anniversary of Michael Brown's death that it was the anniversary of his "murder."⁵⁷

The circumstances of Michael Brown's death in 2014 were investigated by the Obama Justice Department (under Attorney General Eric Holder) and Saint Louis County prosecutors, among others. George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley explains⁵⁸ why no charges were ever brought against police officer Darren Wilson:

The Brown case was the subject of multiple investigations by state police, state prosecutors, the Justice Department, and a grand jury. All of those investigations found no basis to charge Officer Darren Wilson with a crime. The investigations also found that the evidence showed that Brown did not have his hands up (which led to the widely used "Don't Shoot" demonstrations) and that he attacked Wilson after robbing a store. Specifically, the Obama Administration under Attorney General Eric Holder reached the following conclusion: "The autopsy results confirm that Wilson did not shoot Brown in the back as he was running away because there were no entrance wounds to Brown's back -- several witnesses stated that Brown appeared to pose a physical threat to Wilson as he moved toward Wilson."⁵⁹

In the aftermath of Michael Brown's August 2014 death, there was considerable unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, and other cities across the nation. The later discredited "hands up, don't shoot" mantra⁶⁰ went viral (even internationally) as many activists advanced the argument

that Michael Brown had been murdered by a police officer. The increase in crime that occurred following this turmoil has sometimes been called the “Ferguson effect.”⁶¹

South Carolinians Unite Following High-Profile Tragedies

Less than eight months later (April 4, 2015), a South Carolina police officer shot Walter Scott Jr. in the back as he sought to flee following a traffic stop. The police officer was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 20 years in prison.⁶² Contrary to developments following Michael Brown’s death, Walter Scott’s family, as well as government and community leaders in South Carolina succeeded in calling for calm and came together in support of requiring all law enforcement agencies in the state to use body-worn cameras.⁶³ U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) praised then Gov. Nikki Haley and the state legislature for moving quickly to enact the body camera legislation. “I am proud we were able to come together as a state and take this step to help keep both our law enforcement officers and the communities they serve safer,” Sen. Scott said.⁶⁴

Two months after Walter Scott was killed and while the community was still healing, an avowed white supremacist walked into Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (“Mother Emanuel”) in Charleston, South Carolina. He was welcomed by a group of African Americans who were gathered for a Bible study, and they prayed with him for about an hour. Despite this outpouring of kindness to a stranger, the young man stood up and started firing a gun, killing nine people, including the senior pastor and state senator Clementa Pinckney.⁶⁵ It was a horrific crime that could have torn the community apart and set off rioting throughout America.

In contrast to what happened in Ferguson, Missouri 10 months earlier and what happened after the tragic killing of George Floyd in May 2020, Gov. Nikki Haley, church leaders, family members of the deceased, and other state and local leaders came together and refused to let the despicable act of one deranged individual cause them to turn on one another. People of all races, religions and other backgrounds came together in prayer and a determination to capture the shooter and bring him to justice and heal their community. Once again, they didn’t let outside agitators come in and whip up anger in Charleston or anywhere else.⁶⁶

The morning after the attack, police arrested Dylan Roof in Shelby, North Carolina. The 21-year-old white supremacist had targeted members of the church because of its history and status. Roof was subsequently convicted of 33 federal hate crime and murder charges, and sentenced to death. He later pleaded guilty to all nine state charges to avoid a second death

sentence and was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. While he will have some opportunities to appeal his federal death sentence, Roof may eventually be executed by the federal justice system.⁶⁷

In listening to the black leaders who had been so instrumental in holding the people of South Carolina together in the wake of such a horrible and racist crime, Gov. Haley was told that seeing the Confederate flag fly over the State Capitol every day was hurtful to them as they viewed that flag as a symbol of slavery. In an appearance at the Center for Urban Renewal and Education's (CURE) 2021 National Policy Summit, Gov. Haley said she determined that it was time for the Confederate flag to come down and be placed in a museum instead. She rallied legislators to take that course of action and they responded with an overwhelming vote in both houses of the state legislature.⁶⁸

Tyre Nichols Death Racialized Despite Black Police Officers' Involvement

Following the January 2023 beating death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee at the hands of five black police officers, President Biden once again invoked race as a factor. "It is yet another painful reminder of the profound fear and trauma, the pain, and the exhaustion that Black and Brown Americans experience every single day." Biden blamed Senate Republicans for blocking the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.⁶⁹ Conversely, Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) has blamed Senate Democrats for filibustering his police reform legislation -- the JUSTICE Act.⁷⁰

Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) sent out a fundraising email in which he said Tyre's death was the result of an "operating system" that dehumanizes black people. "This kind of white supremacy is not just about skin color, however: it's about ideology. It's the operating system on which too much of our society is based," Rep. Bowman said.⁷¹

Karen Bass, a former congresswoman and now mayor of Los Angeles said in an interview, "Even with the black officers, I wonder how they would have reacted if it was a young white person?"⁷²

Rev. Al Sharpton said, "[Tyre's death] is an outrage and race is still involved." CNN's Van Jones said that even though the cops were black, "they might still have been driven by racism."⁷³

White progressives also advanced a pervasive racism narrative. Vermont ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's argued that "the fact that the officers who murdered Tyre are Black shows how

deeply embedded white supremacy is in American culture and specifically in policing.” They went on to tweet: “You do not have to be white to act in service of white supremacy. It is more powerful than any one individual or group of people, it is in the air we breathe and built into the systems that surround us.”^{74 75}

Larry Elder Pushes Back Against Racial Narrative in Tyre’s Killing

Columnist Larry Elder pushed back against this racial narrative in two successive opinion articles distributed by Creators.com. “Here are the facts. It is rare for cops to kill anybody,” Elder said. Citing Bureau of Justice Statistics data involving millions of civilian contacts with police, Elder argued, “Odds are much less for an unarmed black person to be killed.”⁷⁶

Elder pointed out that a former Thompson Reuters data scientist (Zac Kriegman) wrote in 2021: “Over the past five years, police have killed more unarmed whites than unarmed blacks. . . The raw statistics suggest that there is actually a slight anti-white bias in police application of lethal force.”⁷⁷

Manhattan Institute Fellow and City Journal contributing editor Heather Mac Donald, citing data from researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and U.S. Justice Department, says, “African Americans between the ages of 10 and 34 die from homicide at 13 times the rate of white Americans.”⁷⁸ Larry Elder says almost always the young black male’s murderer is a young black male. He believes that explains the “disproportionate” police interaction with blacks.⁷⁹

In his second article following Tyre’s death, Larry Elder cited a 2021 paper by Zac Kriegman entitled, “BLM Spreads Falsehoods That Have Led to the Murders of Thousands of Black People in the Most Disadvantaged Communities.” Kriegman says a growing number of cops who, fearing false allegations of “systemic racism,” refused to engage in proactive policing. Kriegman argues this has resulted in thousands of “excess murders” of mostly black victims, who otherwise would be alive had policing not gone passive.⁸⁰

Reacting to Kriegman’s findings, Larry Elder had some harsh words for those who insist on driving the same racial narrative regardless of the circumstances. “So, due to his baseless anti-cop rhetoric, Biden, the Democrats, and the media have blood on their hands. And Thompson Reuters fired Kriegman when he refused to retract his findings,” Elder said.⁸¹

Despite his 2008 Father’s Day Speech, in which presidential candidate Barack Obama said that “children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and

commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison” -- and noting that this problem is especially pronounced in the black community -- Barack and Michelle Obama called Tyre’s death a “painful reminder” of America’s cop problem.⁸²

Larry Elder says, “there is a sad, tragic throughline in almost all of these dead black suspect/police encounter cases: resisting arrest. Why is it taboo for ‘black leaders’ and blacks in the media to encourage black suspects not to resist arrest?!?”⁸⁵

Has Dr. King’s Dream Been Sidetracked?

Rev. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech may be most memorable for its ‘judging people by the content of their character, not the color of their skin’ component but it had some other important messages. “We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline,” he said. “We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.”⁸⁴

Dr. King called on participants to dedicate themselves to working for positive change in their states, churches, and local communities. “Continue to work with the faith that unearthed suffering is redemptive,” he said. “Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.”⁸⁵

In the next several years following Dr. King’s speech, major civil rights measures were enacted into law.⁸⁶ The 24th Amendment, which outlawed the poll tax as a requirement in federal elections, was ratified by the states in January 1964.⁸⁷ The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act (1965), and the Fair Housing Act (1968) were enacted shortly thereafter.⁸⁸

Tragically, the assassination of Dr. King in 1968 led to a great deal of rioting and social turmoil in America. The enactment of President Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” programs in the mid-1960s vastly expanded the role of the Federal Government and to some degree supplanted prior responsibilities of the family (especially fathers), churches, and local communities.⁸⁹ ⁹⁰Welfare reforms in the 1990s sought to rebalance these responsibilities

and, many would argue, contributed to increasing recognition of the dignity of work and a reduction in poverty.⁹¹

Black Americans saw real median income grow by 7.9 percent in 2019 -- a record one-year increase that brought the black income level to a new high.⁹² The black poverty rate fell by 2 percentage points to a record low.⁹³ Hispanic unemployment hit a record low and black unemployment was at its lowest rate ever.⁹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this progress in 2020 and the Biden Administration is once again seeking to increase the role of the Federal Government in many areas of civic life.

Different Visions for the Future

States and the Federal Government are increasingly moving in opposite directions. While the Biden Administration and their allies in Congress are seeking to vastly expand federal spending and involvement in social program spending⁹⁵ and, along with some allied states, are promoting racial reparations measures^{96 97}, conservatives in Congress and the states are advancing school choice and economic opportunity legislation.^{98 99} Conservatives are also fighting against critical race theory¹⁰⁰ and other measures they believe cause racial division -- contrary to the dream Dr. King articulated 60 years ago.

A great deal has transpired in America since Dr. King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. However, our nation’s founding documents remain the same and Dr. King mentioned them prominently in his 1963 speech. “When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men – yes, Black men as well as white men – would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” Dr. King said.¹⁰¹

Dr. King went on to say that at that point in time, America had “defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned.”¹⁰² While our nation shortly thereafter enacted major civil rights protections into law and blacks have broadly realized strides in educational and economic attainment, we still find ourselves divided on racial matters and many still believe the promise of America is unfulfilled for them.¹⁰³

In the coming years, the American people will decide what course our nation takes, whether it will be one of unity and equal opportunity or one of division and government manipulation. They will choose leaders who create a vision and implement corresponding policy decisions.

And they will determine if our leaders are free to weaponize racial issues or to look beyond our differences and chart a path that truly provides equal opportunity and freedom for all Americans.

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