

Alveda King Cries Foul Over Image of MLK Wearing Hoodie

While I salute the passion and creativity of artist Nikkolas Smith in reference to the image of Martin Luther King Jr. wearing a hoodie, I feel compelled to cry, "Foul, shame on you," to the media moguls and **civil rights** legends who want to stir up a controversy where there is none.

I am not angered by the artistic expression. I am just plain hurt and saddened to see the message of my uncle reduced to a debate over an article of clothing. I would love to talk with the artist about my uncle.

"Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will," reads his letter from the Birmingham Jail on April 16, 1963.

My grandfather was always a meticulously dressed and well groomed man. He encouraged and actually insisted that his family follow his lead, because he was grooming us all to represent Jesus, our family and our community. Uncle M.L. and my daddy grew up to become leaders and did their best to honor and respect their father's teachings. Like all humans, they sometimes fell short, but not for lack of trying.

I am no way suggesting that hoodies are a bad thing. The young folks in my family wear them. They are actually handy in the rain. Yet there are other ways to remember Dr. King. Perhaps most importantly, that way would be found in his sermons and letters.

"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools," he said in a speech in St. Louis, Mo., on March 22, 1964.

As to the controversy, **George Zimmerman** seemingly never explored the content of Trayvon Martin's character. Rather, he identified and profiled **Trayvon Martin** according to Trayvon's choice of attire, which was a hoodie.

We as African-Americans should never be racially profiled. We must advocate as Martin Luther King Jr. advocated: for defining ourselves by the content of our character rather than according to the color of our skin or our choice of attire. This should be the standard for every ethnic group, every family and every individual.

Unfortunately, the trial was about finding reasonable doubt in a murder case concerning what happened the night Zimmerman shot Trayvon. Reasonable doubt was established, and thus human justice was served in a human court of law. Yet was everyone so concerned about serving man's legal system that we forgot to serve God?

Sadly, the legal aspects of the trial were not about whether or not **George Zimmerman** racially profiled Trayvon Martin. That issue now becomes a matter of civil rather than criminal law.

The criminal legal process was not about hoodies and candy. It wasn't even about smoking marijuana. (By the way, two United States presidents admit to having smoked marijuana as young men; one says he inhaled, and one says he didn't.)

This leads me to wonder what kind of man **Trayvon Martin** would have become if he had been allowed to live. By observing his parents during the time of his tragic and fatal shooting and this trial, I am sure that Trayvon would have turned out just fine. His parents have called for justice and peace during their suffering and loss throughout this entire ordeal. My prayers continue to go out to them.

In the final analysis, **Trayvon Martin** represented humanity, life and purpose as ordained by God for all persons, in and out of the womb, and he deserved not to be profiled but rather

regarded as precious soul.

Trayvon wore a hoodie not because he was black, but because it was his choice of style, as it is for teens in this time in our society. His clothing should never have been a factor in defining him.

As Martin Luther King Jr. was called to greatness, you, me and, yes, **Trayvon Martin** and George Zimmerman, have also been called to greatness, purpose and the right to live in America. The difference is that MLK lived long enough to answer his call. Trayvon was killed before he could live out his call and dream, which is buried with him. George Zimmerman made a decision that has changed his life as well.

Every human being is part of the one single human race. We are one blood. One race. We are created with a dream inside, and when we are allowed to be born and to live out our God-ordained lives, we have a chance to be great.

Would Martin Luther King Jr., as a teenager, wear a hoodie in the 21st century? I may not think so, but who knows? Would Martin Luther King Jr. weep at the tragic loss of the life and dream of Trayvon Martin and the now-deferred dream of George Zimmerman? Most likely.

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