

“America, We Are Better Than This!”

Last summer, God revealed a message to me just before the tragic death of Michael Brown. “Alveda, tell the people of the world this: You don’t have to live this way. You are better than this.” Weeks later Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson.

Yesterday, my friend Bishop Harry Jackson, world leader and Pentecostal Pastor of Hope Christian Center spoke to our nation with these words: “America, we are better than this.” The message is very clear. God values our lives, all of our lives. These words came just after a powerful “2014 Evening of Prayer for Our City & The Urban World” hosted by Bishop Raphael Green and other ministers and leaders in Ferguson.

Bishop Jackson, Niger Innis—National Spokesperson for Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), executive director of and founder of Restore the Dream 2015—and I are part of a growing coalition of socially and ethnically blended preachers and civil rights leaders who are leading the charge to promote peaceful solutions to the systemic issues that are at the root of explosive eruptions across our nation. Right now, the spotlight is on Ferguson, Missouri, where a grand jury comprised of the peers (blacks and whites) of Michael Brown and Darren Wilson failed to indict Officer Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown.

Niger writes:

“A form of justice prevailed in Ferguson. Yet larger issues must be addressed by us all, together as a nation. The evidence has been examined and reexamined, undoubtedly with an understanding of the unique importance of the outcome. Yet we must understand that this is not just a decision on the perceived tensions between law enforcement and the black

community. This is not the final say on the value of black men's lives, of indeed all human lives. This is even bigger than the decision on the actions of police officer Darren Wilson.

"Yes, all of us must step aside and look at the facts; we must discuss and react to this decision passionately, but respectfully.

"There are broader issues that have been brought to light in Ferguson that must be addressed by our entire nation in Red and Yellow, Black and White. It is important that our law enforcement community protects and serves the people with integrity and decency. It is also crucial that when this occurs, the community sees law enforcement as allies.

"The homicide rate among African-American men is far too high. Yet another somewhat confusing mitigating factor is that over 90 percent of the deaths of black males come at the hands of other black men, not white police officers. Are those black lives worth less than those taken by whites?

In the weeks and months ahead, Americans and our leaders must focus on addressing these issues in a thoughtful and inclusive manner."

"America, we are better than this," says my friend Bishop Harry Jackson, world leader and Pentecostal Pastor of Hope Christian Center.

America, we are truly better than this. Michael's memory deserves better than this. Michael stole cigarettes. This was a crime. Yet, we have elected at least two presidents who admitted to smoking illegal marijuana in their youth. A crime is a crime. How do we know how Michael's life may have turned out? Tragically, we will never know.

America, we are at a crossroads. Will we settle for burned-out cities or will we pray for an arising of hope?

Michael Brown's parents are calling for peace and justice. We can best honor Michael by agreeing with his parents.

We are reminded: "Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9, NLT)

Again, peers, including several blacks, in a unanimous vote found that reasonable doubt might prevent the prosecutor from gaining a conviction of Officer Wilson.

Looking back, I can't help wondering what might have happened if Officer Wilson had waited for backup before engaging Michael? Tragically we will never know ...

Perhaps the words of my Uncle ML, my Daddy and most importantly our Heavenly Father best describe a solution for peace, not only in Ferguson, but for the world:

"After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of that movement is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time—the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression" (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., excerpt from NPPA Ceremony, 1964).

"Martin Luther King Jr. is a symbol of a movement that holds peace and agape love at its core. May this Nobel Peace Prize honor his sacrifice and humility; and ever remind us of what can only be achieved through faith and God's grace" (Rev. Alfred Daniel Williams King Sr., "Brother to the Dreamer," 1964).

I am amazed that after 50 years, Uncle ML's words are not only a page out of history, they are as relevant today as they were 50 years ago.

Not only are we still grappling with racial strife. What Uncle ML aptly described as “man’s inhumanity to man” has escalated in Century 21 to mirror “the days of Noah,” with abortion, sexual immorality, unholy war, greed, violence and much assault on God’s people running rampant.

We need a move from the Lord, in Ferguson, in America, in the world. So let’s call on our Creator and our Father God, our Lord Jesus, God’s Lamb and Holy Spirit to help us. We love You, Lord! You love us best!

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16-17, NLT).

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