

Can a White Man Give Input on Race Relations in America?

Please help me to understand something. I'm not a Muslim, but I can speak about Islam. I'm not gay, but I can address LGBT issues. I'm not an atheist, but I can address atheism. Yet when I weigh in constructively on racial issues in America, I'm told I have no right to speak or, worse still, I'm accused of racism. Why is that?

Why do I get comments like this on YouTube after taking issue with Trevor Noah's TV commentary about the NFL protests? "Disrespect the flag please!!! Dr Brown police disrespect Black Lives Everyday. So please hand in your doctrate [sic]." Seriously?

Lest you misjudge the purpose of this column, I'm not whining and complaining, and I'm not portraying myself as the victim. (Yes, I can feel the hostile comments coming already!) Rather, I'm calling out a dangerous blind spot, challenging my critics to look in the mirror before they throw out charges of racism.

A dear black friend of mine sent me the Noah video, saying it expressed the frustrations of many black Americans who feel that white Americans tell them when it's OK to protest. So, I watched it ready to learn and be informed, but I was shocked by the gaping holes in Noah's presentation and decided to do a video response. In that response, I also suggested that there was a better way to draw attention to grievances than protesting during the anthem.

What's so ugly about doing that? And what in my response to Noah merited a response like this, from a black American? "Dr Brown is a in name only..." (on Facebook, also in response to the same video). What, sir, were you watching?

Or what provokes comments like this? "Once again white

Christians supporting racism just the same way their ancestors did during slavery and how their fathers did during the civil rights era." Supporting racism? Are you kidding?

And what about this? "I have noticed a pattern of Brown getting frothy and slobbery over almost all issues that pertain to systemic racism against blacks, including the disproportionate incarceration rates and instances of police brutality. Interesting indeed."

Did this viewer forget that just a few days before posting the Noah video, I had drawn attention to these inequities in our criminal justice system? Has he forgotten my other articles raising similar issues?

It is because I want the concerns of African-Americans to be heard that I have stated that protests during the anthem create more hostility than sympathy. What is racist and unchristian about this?

I'm not claiming to be the voice of black America (obviously), nor am I claiming to be the spokesman for victims of social injustice, whatever their race or ethnicity may be. But I'm an ally and a friend. I'm a fellow American. And, within the faith, I'm a fellow believer. Why must I be silent when it comes to African-American issues?

As someone who appreciates positive revolutionary movements, I often quote the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and I have learned much from the strategies of the Civil Rights movement. I also have dear friends and coworkers in the African-American church with whom I share great solidarity. Why, then, am I not allowed to give constructive input into issues concerning black Americans?

For years I have denounced the black genocide (speaking of the high percentage of abortions in the African-American community, which many trace back to Margaret Sanger's philosophy of eugenics). When there have been accusations of

police brutality or unfair treatment of blacks, I have used my radio show as a platform for discussion, with many African-American callers providing valuable commentary. Why, then, must I withhold my own viewpoint? Why am I not allowed to speak?

A black friend of mine with direct involvement in the NFL anthem controversy has come to me for counsel, wanting my input on the best strategies for players to adapt. Yet when I share my thoughts in public—the same thoughts I have shared with him in private—I'm blasted as anti-black or racist or speaking out of turn. Is not this a form of racism—the criticism of another's viewpoint based on the color of their skin?

We know that the Civil Rights movement was calculated and tactical. That's why Rosa Parks was chosen as the face of the fight against segregation rather than 15-year-old Claudette Colvin, who previously refused to give up her seat on a bus.

That's why college-aged blacks protesting the segregation of Nashville lunch counters were given instructions on how to dress and behave. All negative stereotypes had to be crushed. Why, then, should these lessons be discarded with today's protests?

I'm not saying the protests should stop, and I'm not saying that there are no reasons for concern. I'm simply suggesting that there's a better way to get the message across.

In response, comments like this are posted: "Wow, you come off like a stereotypical right-wing echo chamber."

Really? Read my recent articles on the protests, watch the Noah video again, and tell me if there's a shred of truth to this claim.

How about this? "Stick to Christian issues or at least political issues that have a more direct Christian

implication. You spend far too much time acting on behalf of the Republican party and not what you're actually good at."

What? Concerns about social injustice are not "Christian issues"? And I'm acting on behalf of the party that I frequently criticize and fault for compromise and inaction?

A black pastor wrote, "Videos like this is the reason I don't listen to or support this show anymore. He is always anti-black in almost all his videos. He more identifies with being a white American than being a believer. (I know he's Jewish.)"

My dear brother, I challenge you to take the time to watch my relevant videos again, which are posted as an ally and friend, and then ask yourself if there's not bias in your own heart.

But this pastor is not alone. Consider these comments:

"I'm bigoted against white racists, especially the cowardly ones who hide behind statements like 'they should find another way to protest.' I'm OK with that." (So, I'm a "cowardly white racist" if I offer constructive advice to make a protest more effective?)

"If you take a collection of all his videos on the matter, he never takes a non-bias approach. Just one that supports a republican or conservative view point." (In other words, I'm biased if I take issue with extremists in Black Lives Matter and say, "Separate the value of black lives from the extremes of the Black Lives Matter movement.")

"Don't talk to me about disrespecting the flag when you support a president who is cool with people protesting while holding the American flag next to the Nazi and Confederate flag chanting Jews will not replace us." (You actually think that, as a Jew myself, born and raised in New York, not Virginia, that I would tolerate for a split second the president approving of something like this?)

“I bet if players were taking a knee in protest of how bad Jewish people are treated by the Muslim world ‘Dr’. Brown would have a different take. He is becoming a joke.” (Actually, I’d give the same advice: Find a better way to protest, one that creates solidarity rather than anger and hostility.)

And on and on it goes.

So, here’s my challenge to all those accusing me of racism because of my constructive input on the NFL protests: Check to see if you’re judging me through racially tinted glasses. I assure you I’ve done the same thing many times over, and I’ll continue to do so as long as I’m in this world.

Will you?