

Can Everyone Please Stop Playing the Race Card?

I confess up front that this is an exercise in futility. I admit that this article will have no effect on the national climate. But in the hope that at least some readers will listen and agree, I make this simple, heartfelt appeal: Can we p-l-e-a-s-e stop playing the race card? Must everything be filtered through the perspective of racism?

Some years ago, after reflecting deeply on race issues in America, with great help from people of color in my radio audience, I came to this conclusion. In overgeneralized terms, white Americans often do not see racism when it is there. Black Americans often see racism when it is not there.

Yet today, everything is about race, be it issues on the border or issues in the inner-city or issues in the White House. Racial debate rules the day, and you're either a racist or a race-baiter, no matter where you land.

Forget about the president's "go back" tweets. That's old news now. (In the words of Matt Shuham on the TPM site, "President Donald Trump's tweet telling four Democratic congresswomen to 'go back' to 'the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came' was quite literally textbook racism.")

The more recent, racially charged debate focuses on the president's Twitter attack on Rep. Elijah Cummings and the condition of the city of Baltimore.

An article on lays out, "How Trump used a centuries-old racist trope to attack Baltimore," summarizing the views of countless critics of the president.

In response to such charges, Kimberly Klacik, a black Republican living in Baltimore, filmed other African Americans

in her community who affirmed Trump's words.

She also retweeted this response from Miranda Dawson, a black conservative: "So let me get this straight, it's not racist to be elected as a representative to help the district you represent, have it be rat infested and in unlivable conditions for your constituents, but being called out on your failure to run a district is the act of racism?"

Earlier this month, a Rasmussen poll found that, "32% of Democrats Say Any White Criticism of Politicians of Color Is Racist."

And, unsurprisingly, Rev. Al Sharpton claimed that Trump has a "particular venom" for blacks and people of color.

Also unsurprisingly, in an interview focused on Christians working together to help those in need at our southern border, Rev. William Barber equated "white evangelicalism" with "slaveholder religion." Indeed, while accusing President Trump of playing the race card, Rev. Barber masterfully played that very same card.

It is at this point that I shout out, "Enough is enough!"

To be clear, I believe there is still systemic racism in America.

I also believe that racial divisions in America were deepened by President Obama and have been exacerbated by President Trump.

And personally, I wish that the president found a more constructive way to expose what he felt was the hypocrisy of Rep. Cummings for his outrage at the conditions on the border in contrast with his alleged inaction on behalf of his own city.

But I do not believe for a second that "any white criticism of politicians (or, more broadly, people) of color is racist,"

nor do I believe that most Americans are racist.

I also do not believe that most Americans want secure borders because they are racist or xenophobic.

We have always been a nation of immigrants, and part of the beauty of our country is our diversity, even if equality has not always been easy to come by for all.

But a fact-checking article from January of this year noted that, as claimed by Trump, “in past decades, Democrats have been generally enthusiastic in their support for increased border security.”

Yet today, if you support border security, you must be a white supremacist xenophobe.

Thankfully, in the midst of the shrill, unceasing race-related rhetoric, Dr. Ben Carson has raised his voice, basically asking, “Since the problems in our inner-cities are real, can we work together to help solve them?”

That means Rep. Cummings working side by side with President Trump. And it means Americans of all colors and ethnicities working together for the common good.

In reality, only God knows if Donald Trump is a racist or if William Barber is a racist. (As I write these words, I can already hear the angry comments pouring in from those of you are who are 100 percent sure that these men are or are not racists. If you can't resist, have at it.)

My appeal, though, is quite simple. Now is not the time to shout at each other. Now is not the time to be reactionary. Now is not the time to spend all our time accusing the president (and others) or defending him (and others).

Instead, let's put the race card down and let's refuse to be race-baited.

Let's sit down with people of different color and race and say, "Please share your perspective with me. I'd love to understand how the world looks through your eyes."

Then, after listening to their perspective carefully, if they're open, share your perspective with them.

And then, look at each other in the eye and say, "What can we do to work together to help improve our own community?"

Hopefully, at least some of you will say, "Count me in!"