

Charismatic Apostle Prays, 'Deliver Us as Black People From Reflexive Racial Responses'

I have a new prayer for a future age, based on a past age.

When I was a child, Jim Crow laws were still kicking. It was the tail end of some of our nation's harshest racism when skin color dictated treatment and regulated fairness. The population seethed with rage at unrequited justice.

The history and horror of mistreatment, coupled with the inability to escape overarching bigotry, stamped your core foundation as a child. Out of self-preservation, you had to build defenses that safeguarded, but never insulated, your psyche. Panic would grip you when you left the security and familiarity of a Black neighborhood to venture into the white world.

Encountering a white person paralyzed you. Not knowing if your skin color would trap or harm you, your heart raced, your head pounded, your ears rang and your muscles tensed. Instinctively and reflexively, you went into fight or flight. This didn't diminish over time, you just got used to the feelings that churned subconsciously.

Growing up in such an environment, knowing that others may not accept us because of our skin color, bred deep-seated fear, anger and terror. Our response became instinctive, reflexive, sometimes irrational, often muscular. It was also conditional, sown purposely into Black children for our own protection.

Long before we could discover for ourselves that our skin color could be deadly, our parents had to tell us about

racism. Before they would send a 5-year-old to kindergarten or a 10-year-old to join a club, they drew a racial picture to convince us to be watchful, that dangers lurking outside the neighborhood could snatch us away. These fearsome facts would return to us at night.

From this background, I offer my prayer. I pray, first of all, that God graces our Black population with the Spirit of truth. Scripture speaks of people who are zealous but not according to knowledge. We're often zealous, but equally often, we feel it's okay to live without knowledge.

Because of that, we get oversaturated with historical and often one-sided tales of bias and bigotry. Wrong facts tend to blind our judgment, making us ungrateful and even hateful.

Take the current rage-fest over Kamala Harris. There is contention among many Blacks that her skin color alone should be the measure of her character. Her faith is not a factor because her skin color defines it. Her politics do not matter because as Black Americans, we commiserate and celebrate skin tone first. Her hostility to her political opponents is acceptable because her skin color, being darker than a white American, justifies her. Such sight-without-sound judgment downgrades our wisdom and credibility.

Where is our conscience?

Every Black person knows Harris is a "colored" woman, not a Black American. A Jamaican father and East Indian mother do not justify the reflexive Black American defense of her qualifications. It is irresponsible to induct every person of color into the Black American's plight.

It is political bigotry to skip over Condoleezza Rice, the first truly Black woman to hold a high seat in our government. If we go down this road, we could just say "colored" and abolish Black or African American altogether.

The furor over Harris is not the first time the values and politics of the black population have fallen to race-based loyalties. Let us not forget the Barack Obama administration that showed loyalty to just about anything but Black Americans. Our enthusiasm over what should have been our day of dignity and distinction ended in disappointment because of our flawed ethnic ideals. At the end of those eight years, Black people could barely say what ground that president gained for us.

Leaders pursuing public office have limited occasion to sink into the dark side of America's blackness. To qualify for candidacy, they must rise to a status that includes money, prestige, power and position. Identifying with our suffering is significantly blunted by the high station required to earn a political seat.

In spite of our oppressed existence, it is time for us to face more than the dismal facts of our history. Black people have not only endured, but more than a few of us have far exceeded survival. Millions in the Black population are thriving because of education opening to us. Laws changed and gave us access to the American dream. Today, millions of Black children cannot imagine being turned away from a restaurant, denied a plane seat or refused advantages that were once unlawful for us.

It is time for us to acknowledge our gains and not just our oppression. It is time for us to turn Jim Crow consciousness into 21st-century power and purpose to become Americans who are Black and not just Black Americans.

Most importantly, let us decide if people of any color deserve our inbred, reflexive "race" defense. After all, Harris, although a "colored" woman, is sitting in a high government seat. This says much about the progress of severely oppressed people.

Should our loyalty be limited only to those that truly suffered our cruel but real (and dare I say “celebrated”) heritage? Should our activism be aroused by skin color, race or just any opportunity to vent old, often hand-me-down, racial memories? Somehow other common skin-toned races manage to differentiate their genetic and ethnic groups and respond accordingly, equity and objectivity notwithstanding.

Why do Black Americans blindly lash out to defend any nonwhite person’s plight, whether they deserve it or not? How long will we keep dragging out the same old racial protests whenever a nonwhite person is asked to prove themselves on their own merits. Isn’t it high time Black Americans blend justice and truth into their activism to balance judgments? Can we cease being ruled by hair-trigger emotions?

Here is my complete prayer: *Lord, deliver us as Black people from reflexive racial responses. Give us racial wisdom that detects differences and similarities. Help us acknowledge the truth as we stay our course. Anoint us to act responsibly on what is left to complete our journey to full equality in our land. I pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.* {eoa}

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