

See Why Oprah Says America Is 'Awake'

It's been a half-century since the civil rights movement, but America is now "awake," Oprah says.

"Life is always there to teach, enlighten, and open you up to the greater possibilities of what can be done ... if you're willing to be awake and see it. What's exciting to me is that people are awake," Oprah Winfrey told . "If it took Eric Garner and it took Michael Brown and other instances to do that, then ... that's where we are in our evolution as human beings."

The comments were made alongside promotions for her latest film, *Selma*, which chronicles Martin Luther King Jr.'s crusade to secure equal rights, highlighting the pivotal marches through Selma, Alabama.

"In *Selma*, it was voting rights," David Oyelowo told *USA Today*. Oyelowo is nominated for a Golden Globe for his portrayal of King in *Selma*. "Initially, it was a black problem. It wasn't until Bloody Sunday, and the world seeing Bloody Sunday, that it became an American problem. It's the same thing in Ferguson. When it was just Ferguson, it was a black problem. But when you see the undeniable injustice of this man being murdered on-screen in the shape of Eric Garner, similarly, the nation rallied."

The timing of the movie's premiere and deaths reportedly based on racial profiling is coincidental, but powerful, Winfrey says.

"I really think that this film can teach people a lot, because what this film says is it's been done. It was done. Y'all are not the first to do it ... the first to have an idea ... the first to want to protest ... the first to be upset. We didn't even

have the right as citizens to vote in this country, and because of that you had Martin Luther King as a leader joining with his band of brothers with disciplined, rigorous, peaceful protests, and they had a goal and intention in mind. You just can't march and not know what you're marching for," she told *TheGrio*.