

Who Is Playing the Race Card?

My article "Open Letter to My Black Evangelical Friends" elicited some very helpful comments along with words of affirmation and, unfortunately, a number of very ugly comments. The thoughts of many hearts were certainly revealed!

Is it possible that some of the readers were not aware of the great love and respect I have for my black brothers and sisters and that it was out of love and respect that I asked some pointed questions? Is it possible that some readers wrongly viewed me as some kind of white supremacist, completely misreading my words and my intent? Perhaps I assumed too much about our unity in Jesus?

Thankfully, I did receive a number of very insightful comments, and that is the best place to start. (The only comments I will be citing were those that were made, to the best of my knowledge, by my black brothers and sisters.)

Tommy explained that "there have always been two Americas, white privileged America and separate and unequal black America," and white evangelicals were all too often on the wrong side of pressing moral and social issues, like the Civil Rights movement. (Pro-integration leaders like Billy Graham were often the exception to the rule.)

And so, as Mr. Bailey noted, "Perhaps the answer to Mr. Brown's question has more to do with the history of racism against black people in the US than anything theological. Therefore in our gut (yes I am black) we want to vote for Obama precisely because he is black whether we agree with his policies or not."

Pastor Samuel wrote that, "Many black people, place racial issues above the subject of abortion, gay marriage, stem-cell research, and America's relationship with Israel."

He also explained that, "You must first understand what the Black Christian is thinking. You must take the time to hear their heart. Even if you disagree, you must at least hear them out and attempt to understand their perspective. There is no other way you are going to have a meaningful conversation with us."

Exactly! And that is why I wrote the article. It was to have a meaningful conversation.

Because of that, I received some positive comments from black leaders, including this one from Pastor Michael: "This is actually a very good and integrity-filled submission... Dr. Brown basically voices the very concerns and dilemmas of other conservative African-American Christian leaders... As an African-American pastor and community leader, I have no problems with what Dr. Brown has shared! BTW... I voted for neither Obama nor, Romney!"

Sadly, the very fact that I wrote this open letter made me the target of a number of blatantly racist, accusatory statements. Truthman wrote, "It's so devilish racist what Brown said 'blacks voted in favor of food stamps.' Hey kkk, sir, blacks work as hard as whites and have served this country disproportionately more than any other group." And Truthman is writing as a Christian?

First, I never made the comment in question; I cited a black pastor who shared that concern and I asked if his concern was true on any level. Second, other black Christians wrote to me and said they totally agreed with that pastor's position. Third, it is nothing less than sinful judgmentalism to call me—or any other child of God—a "devilish racist" and "kkk." (Be assured that I forgive you from the heart, Truthman.)

According to Mission, "Your ever so politically correct and condescending phrased questions to your Black Evangelical Friends mean in essence: Why did you dummies vote for Obama?"

So, asking honest questions in a respectful tone is being condescending?

Brian would say emphatically yes: "I think that this article reveals a mindset that is paternalistic, and full of presumption. Sir, you have no right to lecture African-Americans as if we were ignorant little children." Lecture? Really?

Vernon stated, "Sir you are a racist. I am a South African . . . You have valid points, but the moment you decided to just talk to your black friends, you began to prejudice blacks."

So, after challenging my white evangelical friends for years on certain issues, when I ask pointed questions of my black evangelical friends, I am now a racist? And despite my repeated comments that I was asking, not accusing, JD wrote, "Mr. Brown, you are accusing. Let me ask, is the reason that you did not vote for him, is because he's black?"

God forbid! The thought never once crossed my mind. I don't see color when it comes to right and wrong. But I can say this from the heart: I really wanted to have the privilege of voting to elect our first black president, but I could not vote for Mr. Obama with a clean conscience before God.

Let me also say that I have been in many closed door meetings with conservative Christian leaders in America, and not one time has there been the slightest hint of racism in a single comment made concerning the president. Our opposition was based on biblical issues. Why then must all criticism of President Obama be interpreted by some black Christians as if it were racially based? When I criticized President Clinton, was it because he was white?

JD wrote that, "President Obama said that he believes marriage is between a man and a woman."

Of course he doesn't. He is an out and proud advocate of same-

sex “marriage.” This makes JD’s last comment all the more shocking, “Come on White Evangelicals, stop with the racism.”

Writing with an even more judgmental and accusing tone, Elizabeth stated, “In the days of Christ, you and your ilk, the so called White Evangelicals would have been derided by Christ Jesus as Pharisees – i.e. Hypocrites who are nothing like Christ Jesus but displaying an outward appearance of holiness. . . . You care more for your belief in the supremacy of your race and the continued oppression of others and to maintain this, you were willing to endorse an Anti-Christ Religion.” This is as shocking as it is sad to read.

The fact is that I love Jesus more than life itself, and I do not bow down to the political system or the religious system. I am determined to speak the truth in love, regardless of cost or consequences, and I am not a people pleaser. Yet, when I simply ask pointed questions – repeating the questions other black Christian leaders have been asking, like Bishop E. W. Jackson and Rev. Bill Owens of the Coalition of African American Pastors – I now “care more for [my] belief in the supremacy of [my] race and the continued oppression of others” This is utter nonsense. (Of course, I did not in any way endorse Mormonism either.)

It is really tragic that others shared these same, ugly views. According to Sam, “You have learned nothing from history and so you repeat marginalizing racism in the name of God again. God will spank you for this. . . . You have no interest in advancing understanding. You repeat the white man’s elitist ideas.”

Vernal wrote, “You chastise black Americans as lazy and as being the 47% then you expect them to come to our altar and support your cause??” (Please re-read my open letter, Vernal, and tell me when and where I chastised black Americans as lazy and part of the so-called 47%.)

2Gospel_Sngr2 wrote, "You too Mr. Brown like so many other 'evangelicals' can't get past President Obama's color! God is exposing hearts! No longer will you and others be able to hide behind your religious banners of racism, hate, abortion and homosexuality! God sees the real inner man!"

Lc wrote, "Just because you are an evangelical Christian white male doesn't mean you are always RIGHT!!"

Yes, Lc, I agree with you totally on this! Conversely, if you are a black, female evangelical Christian, that doesn't mean that you are always right. That's why we're having a conversation.

Bryan, however, took exception to this, writing, "It is interesting that you find it reasonable to criticize black people and not to criticize other groups of believers that voted for Pres. Obama. No, we are not blind, we are thoughtful and prayerful. It is amazing how you opted to play the race card in the most unhelpful manner."

With all respect, sir, I did not play the race card, and the black believers I know are thoughtful and prayerful. Is it possible, sir, that you played the race card in your comments?.

The fact is that no other group voted for Obama as overwhelmingly as did black Americans, and no other group believes in biblical values in as high proportions as black Americans do, hence my honest questions. Am I forbidden even to ask them?

Overall then, in response to the article, there was some excellent discussion and feedback, advancing our understanding, while some deep, racial issues were exposed. (Without a doubt, there were deplorable, white racist comments too, so it goes both ways.) At the same time, it seems that the serious nature of both abortion and gay activism was still minimized while I saw no repudiation or apology for the way

some blacks have been ostracized by families, friends, and churches because they could not support President Obama.

May I suggest that we all step back and look in the mirror, asking God to expose blind spots in our own hearts and lives before the Lord? Can we agree on that?

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