

Giving America the (Dis)Respect it is Due

When I think of the goodness of America, I — draw a blank. What do I have to thank America for? Well, let us step back in time. Should I thank America for granting African American people official enslavement for hundreds of years? This particular slavery that broke down familial and communal relations, that still affects Africans today. Or, perhaps I should thank America for portraying Black men as dangerous, primitive-mind gangsters, who rape good white women, and run out on their children.

Should I thank America for keeping indigenous people from their homelands (See California's Proposition 187)? By keeping the Mexicans out of Northern Mexico (i.e., California and Texas), you are no better than the Palestinians who keep Zionists out of their homelands (or visa versa depending on your view). But please don't dub me anti-Semitic, as that would imply that I have some sort of deep-seeded conviction about that struggle, when I am predominately concerned about the struggle and liberation of black people in America.

You are naive to believe that all citizens in the United States are Americans. Americans have the freedom to change their social situations without hindrance. Americans have options. Americans have opportunities. Americans have equity, justice and equality. The "Condition of the Colored Citizens in the United States, Politically Considered" is grim. We are not treated as citizens because we do not have the same opportunities as Americans (whites and a few select others).

Let us now turn our attention to justice and equality. The Natives here have never been properly compensated for their loss of land and wealth. The Africans here have never been compensated for their labor. The Asians have never been compensated for the disrespect that they endured as immigrants on the West coast. (Only the Japanese have received token compensation for their humiliation during World War II.) This country has always scared me because it acts so self-righteous and ignores its history and today's lived realities. In light of this, please do not be content with your textbook understandings of American history.

Now, with this new perspective on America's history of sitting down on justice, freedom, and equality, maybe you can now see why this brother was justified in saying "enough is enough and damn the consequences." Yes, Abdul-Rauf has turned his back on the anthem, left the room, and sat down. But, SO WHAT! America has sat down, turned its back, laughed at, scorned, tortured, and killed the black,

brown, yellow and red peoples all over the world. It is about time someone, especially one who entertains America, told America about itself.

To paraphrase Mr. Donny Oates in his March 22, DTH editorial, anyone who wakes up in the morning and is proud of the way that America has systematically sought to destroy the colored peoples of the world should stand up to be seen and heard. At least this way, we can clearly identify who the enemy is. Anyone who supports the stifling of individual belief is an enemy of freedom, justice, and equality.

If we really believe that justice and freedom are for everyone, let people express that freedom. As an African (-) American, I don't stand for the anthem, and certainly the anthem has not stood for me, or my people. Don't begrudge me my lived reality. Don't deny Abdul-Rauf his. If that brother doesn't see the equality and justice that America purports to have expressed through its citizens and in public policy, he has no reason to stand. If he did not stand just because his knees hurt (probably from being knocked down by institutional racism, injustice, and inequality), let him sit. Let him sit down, and in his own way stand up for right in the face of wrong.

Let us just keep it real. If you believe that citizens of this country who don't love America like it is should leave, then you fall in perfect alignment with Abraham Lincoln, George Wallace, Jesse Helms, David Duke, and Peter King. There is a racism inherent in the denial of anyone, regardless of citizenship, their basic rights as human beings. Those rights, for those who don't know, are freedom, justice and equality.

I am a black woman. Citizenship — American. Status — unhappy with the status quo. You may call me prejudiced (but not racist, as one must have power to be racist). But you should really be grateful that I am willing to reason with those who espouse these ideals. Many people of color are too angry to reason with you. Violence runs rampant in "minority" communities all over the United States because of this anger. But please, white people, don't be frightened by this. "They" are not the ones to fear, because they mostly perpetuate violence on themselves. There are those of us who think and reason. We are not so angry that we no longer try to work with you. But a word to the wise would be — I am not Job, and one day, I may run out of patience.

Think on that.

Latarsha Chambers, Senior
Anthropologist/African-American Studies Major