

“No Justice, No Peace!”

By Sebastian Germosen '20

America. “The land of the free?”

Native Americans were the first to settle on this land, but Europeans came and conquered. They took advantage of the natives, killing them with their weapons and disease. They settled upon numerous parts of America, called it their own, and set up a type of leadership to control it. After gaining control of America, Europeans brought in natives from Africa and other countries and made them slaves. Slaves were brought to America to work. They were punished, ridiculed, lynched, murdered, and used because of the color of their skin. America was built by the hands of slaves. “Powerful” white people sat back and enjoyed the luxury of freedom and riches, while slaves worked day and night, trying to survive.

America’s first presidents owned slaves. The elected, supposed “leader” of America owned slaves and used them the same way everyone else did. Racism was widespread across this country, while attempts by slaves to gain freedom were always stopped. Numerous slaves sacrificed their lives to light the fire of hope for the freedom of slaves in America, but white supremacy reigned.

It would take until Abraham Lincoln, the 17th President, for the elected leader of this nation to state that America isn’t a land of freedom, as long as it relies on slave labor. A Civil War was fought to determine the status of slaves. Thousands died, the Union won, the freedom of slaves was recognized, but racism continued to fester.

The great Martin Luther King Jr. believed that a march would bring about change, and make people realize that others shouldn’t be treated differently because of their skin color. He had a dream that white people and people of color would be able to join together. They would be able to hold hands, talk, and do things together; all people would be united. That dream would be echoed across the nation and it would prove to be monumental in the civil rights movement. He died because of his dream. He marched and preached to spread that dream and he died for it. The civil rights movement and its mission of equality for African-Americans was successful as it desegregated society, but it didn’t end the racism in America. People of color were still being discriminated against, and that discrimination was worse in some states than others. We have had notable figures speak out and call for change, such as Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, and others. Despite their tremendous efforts, racism remains ingrained in our society.

“There’s not an American in this country free until every one of us is free.”—Jackie Robinson

Police brutality exists due to the country’s lack of justice and change. It has existed for as long as anyone can remember, but it has been witnessed more by the world because of social media. Police brutality has always been a “norm” for people of color. It has become a poison in a country that sees its people of color experience inequality every day. We have all become more aware of the mistreatment of people of color by police and many are outraged. Many notable police brutality cases have made news headlines in the past. These cases include Rodney King in Los Angeles, Freddie Gray Jr. in Baltimore, Eric Garner in New York, Micheal Brown in

Missouri, Tamir Rice in Ohio, and countless others that have been ignored in the cry for help to make change happen and to bring justice. The protests and riots that occurred in the aftermath of these cases, were a preview of what Americans are capable of when we join in outrage at the system that exists within America.

“As long as poverty, injustice, and gross injustice persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.”—Nelson Mandela

8 minutes, 46 seconds. That was how long George Floyd was face down on the ground, pinned down by the knee of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Floyd was accused of buying cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. The police were called, and seventeen minutes after the first squad car arrived, Floyd was unconscious. He later died. This senseless act by former police officer Derek Chauvin took the life of a colored man, who had a child and had a life to live. It is one of the most disgusting, horrific, malicious, and intentional acts of police brutality and racism ever seen. He did not resist arrest. Floyd pleaded to be released so he could get in the cop car. He was literally willing to go in the car. An officer taunted him by telling him to get in the car, but he couldn't because he was being pinned down by Derek Chauvin. Floyd was calling for his “mama.” He was crying for a breath. That cry would be heard around the world. The recording of his death was shared widely on social media and has been witnessed by millions of people. Three other officers witnessed what was going on and did nothing about it. They treated Floyd as if he had killed someone, but he was only accused of counterfeiting. Chauvin has been fired, arrested, and charged with 2nd degree murder. The other three officers have been arrested and charged as well. Rightfully so. Floyd's death was yet another incident of more innocent blood being spilled. In the aftermath, protests and riots have taken place across America. Though justice has been served to those responsible for Floyd's death, America is once again fighting for equality and the lives of its people of color.

“A riot is the language of the unheard.”—Martin Luther King Jr.

People are outraged. People are tired. People are hurt. People want justice. People want change. Thousands are protesting and rioting, as they seek justice for George Floyd's murder and a change in the “American system.” There are two systems that exist in America. One for white people. Another for people of color. How were Dylann Roof, Nikolas Cruz, and other white mass shooters treated after surrendering or being subdued by police? Were they assaulted, choked, suffocated, or had a knee on their neck for eight minutes? No. They were taken care of. How were Ryan Twyman, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd treated after sitting in a car, being at home, jogging, and accused of counterfeiting? They were murdered. They didn't kill anyone. They didn't commit a serious crime. Did they go in a school or church and kill people? No. They were just being themselves and living. These are the two systems that exist in America. A system that protects its white people, no matter what. A system that takes advantage of its people of color, unwilling to protect them as it lets social injustice run rampant. Why should a colored person have to be afraid of a police officer and fear for their life? Why should a person of color feel hesitant in calling 911? Why are a group of people being targeted for their skin color? Why is it that two systems exist within a country that promotes freedom and equality? This must change!

The protests that have happened since the death of George Floyd are a symbol of change. Thousands flood the streets with signs of “No justice, No peace.” They hold signs honoring the memory of George Floyd and demanding that change be brought. Riots have erupted in many parts of the country, as many showcase their anger towards the system. They are sick and tired of the inequality and lack of justice and change. Many may think these riots are unnecessary and distract from the real reason that America is protesting. Really? The 1921 Tulsa race riots killed hundreds of people of color and was initiated by white racists. Rioting began with white racists. Now, those who seek justice against racism and police brutality are rioting as well in the fight for change and equality.

America’s elected leaders are failing our country. President Trump’s love for Twitter outweighs his support for the people he is supposed to protect. He is failing democracy. Why hasn’t he tweeted “Black Lives Matter” or something that’ll help the cause, instead of calling on the military to “dominate the streets.” America is on its knees, pleading for help and change, but he is not willing to help. He ignores our calls for help. He ignores the American people. Instead of bringing change, he hides in the White House. The only way America can recover from this with change and progress is with a suitable leader. Donald Trump is not that leader.

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”—
Martin Luther King Jr.

Racism has and will always exist. It exists everywhere. It exists in schools, politics, sports, etc. It’s inevitable that a single person or group will disapprove of people of color. There will always be ignorant people who teach the ignorant idea that one race is superior. There is only one race: the human race. America is burning because we need to acknowledge this. For thousands of years, people of color have been seen as the minority. Why should we even label people as minority? As a Dominican Republican and Cuban, why should I consider myself a minority? Why should my colored friends be considered a minority? A cry for help has been echoing for years, but it’s been ignored. The revolution has commenced and it is now time to take action. In order to bring about change to end racism and police brutality, all Americans must stand together, united. No one can stay silent! See, the problem with America is that most people don’t understand. They don’t understand the war that people of color must fight every single day. They don’t understand the struggle that people of color have had to face for countless years. They don’t understand that Colin Kaepernick didn’t kneel to disrespect the flag. He took a knee to send a message that police brutality must end and that social injustice must be stopped.

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”—
Desmond Tutu.

The lives lost because of racism should not be in vain. Use your platform to spark change. Create uncomfortable conversations with family and friends. Educate yourself and others about what’s going on and what you can do to help. Take a knee during the anthem; You’re not disrespecting the flag, you’re just bringing awareness to an issue. All lives don’t matter if black lives don’t. Black Lives Matter! R.I.P George Floyd. R.I.P to all those who have perished because of racism and police brutality.

God Bless!