For Immediate Release

Op Ed

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**Black America in the Shadows of the Historic Civil Rights Movement**

**By E. D. Mondainé**

In This Movement

(749 words)

As I consider the evolution of Black Lives Matter, it reminds me of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. Given the work left undone after the assassination of so many leaders, it seems inevitable that Justice would return to bend the arc of history once again. For a time, I was deeply encouraged because it seemed like we would finish what we started over 70 years ago. And in many ways, I am still hopeful. But I have some profound concerns, and I believe it is essential that we ask ourselves an important question: Where are we in this movement at this moment?

I pose this question now because I am concerned that we are losing focus. That’s even understandable, in the face of pressing global issues like the COVID Pandemic, and the rising threat of climate change. But, if we allow ourselves to become disoriented and displaced, I fear that we will once again find ourselves relegated to the back of the bus. We cannot, and must not, allow this to happen again.

The most glaring example of where we need to urgently place our effort and attention is the voter suppression laws unapologetically sweeping through our nation. We must see this for exactly what it is - the resurrection of Jim Crow. I know many in both the black and white communities understand what they see. I watch them talk about it nightly on news broadcasts, I read what they write in newspaper editorials, and I cannot avoid the never-ending glut of social media posts. And yet, I feel all of this will, in the end, avail us nothing. The only way to beat back the resurrected Dracula of Jim Crow is to organize. And so, in this movement, at this moment, with the 2022 and 2024 elections looming, I ask us all: are we ready?

Not unrelated to the attempt to erase black citizenship is the 2020 Census. We must keep our eye on the ball, now more than ever, because the U.S. Census gives life to the political power structure. Miscounting makes way for Redistricting (the process of setting up district lines after reapportionment) to become Gerrymandering (drawing district boundaries to give one party an advantage). Gerrymandering enables politicians to pick their voters rather than allowing voters to elect their representatives, creating the conditions for the boldest attack on black voters since Jim Crow made his first appearance. Once again, I must ask us to see with eyes wide open the presence of our enemy who was, for decades, forced to prey in the dark. Unfortunately, given the current climate of racist permissiveness, Jim is free to attack us in the light of day openly.

I am also troubled that in this movement, at this moment, there is a scarcity of Black voices. I understand why some might hesitate to speak out. It is a difficult time for heroes. But the truth is, it always has been. It takes great courage to stand in the public square and lift the problematic woes of inequality and non-inclusiveness. And yet, without them, we risk becoming a voiceless movement in a moment when we must make ourselves heard about the noise of a world in more chaos than ever before.

And lastly, to our white allies, I say, join us. But remember that however helpful, it is not enough to post signs in yards, house windows, or on fences and billboards that say, Black Lives Matter. Black people did not create America's problem of inequity and most assuredly will not be eradicated at the solitary sound of Black voices. However, in this movement, at this moment, we must lead our white brothers and sisters in making Black Lives Matter by centering their attention on the Black Voices that cry out from the city square and in the hallowed halls of Justice.

In this movement, we must use the pain of our past to catapult us onward to finish the work started over 70 years ago. If we allow ourselves to be distracted by the clamor and hysteria of this moment, we risk losing the seven decades of progress so many gave their lives to achieve. But suppose we remain to engage and have the moral honesty to see beyond doubt where we stand in this movement, at this moment. In that case, we will make it through any fire, survive any storm, correct any dysfunction, and deliver every grievance.

The choice is ours.

E. D. Mondainé