

Ben Carson: Bridging the race divide

Dennis Jamison
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(Ben Carson/Facebook)

SAN JOSE, August 31, 2015 — This month, on the anniversary of the shooting of Michael Brown, an organized and nationally coordinated effort prompted protesters in major cities across the country to come out in force.

These demonstrations prompt ongoing concerns about the state of race relations in the United States. These events are happening during the tenure of the first black president in the nation's history. It begs the question: Why now?

Why do race relations seem more frayed than they were before Obama took office?



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The irony of the issue is that in 2008, while Senator Obama was running for the White House, his ardent supporters and many others who voted for him believed that the fast-rising, rock-star senator would help to heal the racial divide in the United States and solve the many problems arising from racial differences. Perhaps guilt played a part in the reasoning behind white Americans voting for a black man. A segment of the white populace suffers from a covert, collective guilt regarding America's history of black slavery.

A false notion persists that all white Americans were responsible for the "peculiar institution" and the racism that prevailed in America's first century. It arises from a bias in classes where young Americans are taught U.S. history.

The reality is that slavery and racism were not American inventions. Slavery is as old as human civilization.

History-impaired Americans have difficulty getting beyond American slavery. Is this by accident, or do free people by nature feel shame regarding a shameful period in their nation's history? Is it natural for people who live in a nation of high ideals centered upon liberty and freedom to be so limited in their perceptions of world history? Those who do not understand history are incapable of a rational, intelligent assessment of American slavery; emotion prevails, and guilt holds sway over reason.

One pseudo-psychological assumption that often underlies history lessons in secondary schools and colleges throughout the U.S. is that Europeans and their descendants are inherently evil, victimizing and

dominating other races in other lands, trampling more refined civilizations underfoot to spread their own.

A corollary to this is the proliferation of lessons in schools across the country that expose and denounce the concept of “white privilege.” These have recently made news in Wisconsin, but these same ideas have been rolling around the nation’s inner cities for some time.

An irony not well-known to white America is that one of the greatest difficulties faced by Martin Luther King, Jr. when he took the Civil Rights campaign to Chicago was that he faced resistance not only from the white community, but from the young black community as well. After the success of non-violent civil rights efforts in the South, King and Dr. Ralph Abernathy tried to turn the momentum northward, with Chicago their initial target. The two men — King with his family — moved to the slums of Chicago’s West Side, but their efforts failed.

What happened in Chicago holds clues to a turning point in the civil rights foundation created by King and Abernathy. Chicago presented barriers to the success of the Christian-centric, faith-filled, nonviolent civil rights movement of the South.

Abernathy later revealed that when the leaders of that movement tried to replicate the methods successful in the South on the streets of Chicago, they were rejected. He wrote that the movement received a worse reception in Chicago than in the South, a powerful statement considering how much the members of the movement had to endure in the South.

Why has this turning point been ignored?

In August, 1966, two dynamic ministers, absolutely dedicated to the efforts they fully believed had transformed the South, worked side-by-side in the inner city in Chicago; yet despite a decade of struggle in the South, these men withdrew from Chicago and went back home. Partly, they met with violence in the streets; as they marched, bottles and bricks were hurled at the marchers. Incredibly, the opposition came not just from the white community; much of the violence was perpetrated by young black men. Why?



Dr. King after being hit by a rock in Chicago

This was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement, but not many address the situation.

In Chicago, the engine of non-violent civil disobedience met with violence in a very dramatic way. The massive effort to organize volunteers in massive non-violent civil disobedience was overwhelming. Dr. King and Dr. Abernathy had obtained success in the South via the black churches. In the North in the large metropolitan areas, the folks involved in the black Christian churches had to compete with the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers to bring young black people around to the Christian message. Especially young black men in the 1960s were filled with rage as they found company that reinforced that rage in such organizations. They still do at this time, and it is much more acceptable to vent such rage in violent expression.

Where does America go from here in healing such a racial divide? Actually, this question was addressed by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in several messages he shared publicly with the American people on different occasions. He addressed it in his book: *Where do we go from here: Chaos or Community?* He addressed the problem he faced in Chicago more specifically as he withdrew to write *Trumpet of Conscience*, which was published in 1967 after he had witnessed the Watts riots in 1965 and the Detroit riots in 1966. He wrote:

Nonviolence as a protest form came under attack as a tactical theory (note: by black leaders), and Northern Negroes expressed their dismay and hostility in a succession of riots...

The riots are now the center of the stage, and are being offered as basis for contradictory positions by whites and Negroes. Some Negroes argue they are the incipient forms of rebellion and guerrilla tactics that will be the feature of the Negro revolt. They are represented as the new stage of Negro struggle replacing the old and allegedly outworn tactic of nonviolent resistance. At the same time some white forces are using riots as evidence that Negroes have no capacity for constructive change and in their lawless behavior forfeit all rights and justify any form of repressive measures.

Trumpet of Conscience, MLK

Dr. King saw a bit further down the road than most as a man of incredible vision. His clear understanding of his time as he reflected upon it was not limited to that time. His perceptions have played out recently on the streets of Ferguson, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore and many other urban centers. Some in America are clueless with respect to such underlying discontent, but there are those who can trace the division within black leadership to the end of the 1960s, when black leadership was clearly divided on the path of the future of the struggle for civil rights. The division remains today; it has more fully morphed into mainstream political reality.



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It is quite obvious that Democrats have captured the sentiments and votes of the black citizens; Republicans have seemingly failed to communicate or demonstrate genuine concern for the black family or community for quite some time. However, Democrat leadership, despite Obama being the first elected black president has not been that conducive to helping those in the inner cities, or to righting the wrongs that concern the black community. The recent rioting can be used as an illustration of that. In fact, one should take a serious look at Detroit, or Chicago, or New York City to see the realities of failed policies and an effort at allowing for a perpetuation of critical problems as long as uninformed voters will perpetuate one's political power.

And if that is the case, and it seems like it is a good political formula for the Democrats, where is the black leader that is running for the Democrat nomination for POTUS? One way or another, an intelligent individual would think that the Democrats would have a black candidate in this election cycle. If they can continue to hold the black citizen's vote by promoting a black leader in 2016 why hasn't that unfolded? If they truly believe that the current administration has such a great track record, why not duplicate the formula used in 2008 and 2012? What is the future of such domination of the Democrats over the black community? What leaders within the black community have the Democrats promoted? Where are the strong black leaders today?

If bridging the racial divisions in this nation is of critical importance, before such racially-oriented tensions erupt into a more serious dimension, why is there no black leader who is being supported by the Democrat Party?

In truth, there is only one black leader who is running for the nomination this time around, and that is Dr. Benjamin Carson. However, he is not a Democrat; he is running on the Republican side of the aisle. He is a genuine leader, yet because of what he believes, he is not considered a "viable" candidate. Because he was a surgeon, and not a politician, he is not considered experienced enough. However, if ever there were a black leader more qualified to run for president, the American people have not seen that leader.

One needs to consider the historical context of the American experience and realize that being first is not always best. Obama does not inspire all of America, and in fact has alienated much of America with his policies – not because of his race as he would use as an excuse.

Dr. Carson may be just the person who cares about all people who could bridge the race divide. He certainly needs to be considered as a viable candidate as the polling in many states over a long period of time has indicated as he has received votes in various recent polls that has put him within the top levels of other GOP “leaders” contending for the privilege to run as the GOP candidate in 2016. At close glance, it seems that Dr. Carson’s message resonates more fully with that of Dr. King’s message than many of the current black leaders in politics today.

Is the healing of the race divide something worthy of consideration for the 2016 elections? After several years of concerted efforts to fan the flames of “racism,” by the administration and those loosely or closely affiliated with it, possibly this unstable situation could be one of the most critical considerations in 2016. It would do some good to seriously consider any of the candidates from such a perspective.

Dennis Jamison reinvented his life after working for a multi-billion dollar division of Johnson & Johnson for several years. Now semi-retired, he is an adjunct faculty member at West Valley College in California. He also currently writes a column on history and one on American freedom for the Communities Digital News.