

VERONICA ESCOFFERY-RUNNELS

11. CHALLENGING WHITENESS AND THE VIOLENCE THAT FOLLOWS

A Poem of Reflection

SETTING THE CONTEXT OF THE POEM OF REFLECTION

The post-racial is a mythical idea that ironically shelters and helps to sustain the endemic nature of racism in the United States (Bell, 2002). Every year since the landmark *Brown v. Board* decision, the United States has become markedly more politically correct in its articulations. Despite these articulations racism remains fully present and just as violent, though under a new yolk of post-Jim Crow nouveaux racism as we see with the experiences of people who challenge the *status quo* of Whiteness. In this chapter, I reflect on the lives of Black men in this country who have been killed simply because they were Black and Brown in the wrong place at the wrong time; while many feel that if these men would have been well-behaved minorities, their fate would have been different. Many in this country have spent an enormous amount of effort demonizing the men listed in my poem without any reflection on the systems of oppression and violence that continue. This chapter is a reflection on the lives of those men in hopes that it can become a muse for others in the fight against race, racism and White supremacy (Juárez & Hayes, 2014).

What pray tell is a Black man's worth?
Priceless potential his parents see,
Celebrating his momentous birth.
Yet worthless his presence in society.

250 years of slavery borne upon our souls,
60 years of separate but equal we have withstood,
90 years of Jim Crow unable to vote at the polls,
And still a Black man's life is no good.

21 times more likely to be killed by police.
Another headline for the media to hype,
Rioting across the nation for justice and peace
Conservatives cry foul and reply don't gripe!

The post-racial fallacy we must judge
An opportunity for ignorance to reign

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Hypocritical people their opinions don't budge
This, a reality that Black America must deign?

We bring forth the named and nameless who have passed

Oscar Grant

Sean Bell

Trayvon Martin

Kendrec McDade

Johnathan Ferrell

Eric Garner

John Crawford III

Michael Brown

Ezell Ford

We remember their light and abhor the darkness of their absence.

How much longer must this degradation last?

The betrayal of the Black man's significance

What pray tell is a Black man's worth?

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