

“From Rodney King to Jordan Davis, When Will Black People Learn?” by Cleo Manago



Cleo Manago, CEO and founder of the Black Men's Xchange (BMX)

From **Rodney King**, to **Trayvon Martin**, **Oscar Grant** and now **Jordan Davis**, Black communities have responded with hope while waiting for justice, only to be surprised again and again when justice did not come. The cycle never seems to change. At some point, it becomes important to examine why.

Unfortunately in my lifetime I have yet to see evidence of any fundamental change regarding the treacherous wrath of White control and racism within institutional, criminal justice, academic, media or other central contexts. In my worldview, disproportionately compromising, incarcerating or killing innocent, unarmed Black people is an American pastime that has never dissipated. The recent, cold-blooded murders of young Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, and the slap on the hand given to their murderers, is simply more media profiled versions of this American past-time.

Most incidences do not make the national stage however. **George Zimmerman** and **Michael Dunn**, among other killers of unarmed Black people, symbolically represent a legacy of White power protection based, deadly preemptive strikes on young Black people, especially males. Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, among other innocent Black people murdered over centuries, symbolically represent the consequences of a perceived threat to White power, racism-based control and entitlement-thinking.

Any hopeful investment or belief that any of this will just

change is dangerous and debilitating to actual change. Four hundred years plus of Black enslavement, dehumanization and cruelty – by Whites with delusions-of-superiority – still creates a dangerous dynamic and energy between Black and White people. Retribution from Black people is defensively feared among Whites but the litany of examples – like Trayvon and Jordan – will not stop until Black people gain the capacity to actively fight for, value, respect and protect the lives of Black people.

For real defense, Black people must begin to value, nurture, prepare, independently build with, invest in and affirm other Black people. And, THIS is the biggest challenge Black people have. This particular challenge is even bigger than direct racism.

Centuries of yet healed scar tissue and trauma, fueled by racism and instigated Black on Black violence has to be intentionally understood, contextualized and effectively addressed. Little sustainable or reliable Black progress can occur until this is done. Black people must stop believing that race-irrelevant equity and equality has occurred based on symbolic representation (i.e. the election of a Black president) or because they acquired a decent salary or a nice home.

Black people must actively recognize appeasements that guide them toward premature states of relief, surrender and material satisfaction. These often successfully divert Black acknowledgment of the risk and still raging problems and casualties resulting from institutionalized White supremacy. Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, among thousands, were and are vulnerable because their people are prematurely complacent, hopeful and distracted.

Real change only comes for people under attack when conditions change, or when they stop thinking and acting in ways conducive to being attacked. The murder of innocent Black

people (including by other Black people) will not change until we change. Unwarranted elements of surprise and surrender will keep innocent Black people at risk.

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