Trayvon Martin and the Invisible Hood in America

Edward Earl Bell
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While we wrestle with the killing of Trayvon Martin, we are befuddled and besmirched with the lack of sagacity towards what has transpired in Sanford, Florida. The righteous indignation that is espoused by many is evident by the national outcry. The bemoaning of America is at hand. Given the obvious trajectory of this occurrence, Americans are poised to change policies and practices that allow the killing of black men without the benefit of retribution or being taken seriously. The killing of black men is not alien to Black Americans or to the United States of America. History has cited a plethora of senseless killings/murders of black men. The value of a black man’s life is as precious as the next man of a different hue, yet for some, it is imbued with a devaluing spirit—another black man is killed—so what?

What is so disconcerting about Trayvon’s killing is the perceived cover-up and the flagrant disregard for his death juxtaposed with the audacity to think that the “village” would not react. The frontal assault on the *societal intelligence* of Black America is an affront to the consciousness of us all. The notion that Black Americans would not respond is wounding. Moreover, the killing of Trayvon is not a new phenomenon; however, the boiling-pot of injustice is overflowing as “people” are taking to the streets, reminiscent of days long gone and memories that linger still. Let’s not forget that black men in America are killed by their own. Let’s not forget that the police bear a burden for killing black men. Today, there is a new culprit—watchmen under the disguise of organized neighborhood crime watch associations; they, too, are now killing!

The suspicion that black men face is daunting. The look, the walk, the talk, and the actions are requisites for attracting an onslaught of doubt on the character of black men. The “hoodie,” a piece of clothing with no scientific basis for its direct relationship to one’s character, signals crime and delinquency—for some. The sagging pants provoke and incite prejudice, discrimination, and a sense of unlawfulness. The cultural nuances of black men seem to propel the mainstream to conjure up faulty social beliefs that are rooted in racism and discrimination on the part of not only white Americans, but also black Americans.

Black men face social killings daily. Some of us don’t wear the *hoodies* or the sagging pants. Yet, we all reap the ills of racism and discrimination. The *invisible hood* is alive and causing a stir across America. Think about that boy, that child without the *hood*—who dropped out of school or who was pushed out. Think about that black boy, without a *hood*, who is told he can’t learn and is made to feel inferior. Think about that black boy, without a *hood*, who is incarcerated at a disproportionate rate as compared to his contemporaries. Think about that black boy, without the *hood*, who is discriminated against because of his skin color. The *hood*, for some, is symbolic of one’s character and potential. Even without the *hood*, black men are faced with having their character impugned and their visibility diminished.

Hopefully, the killing of Trayvon is becoming a rallying call to invoke stronger policies and practices to eradicate the senseless and baseless killings of black boys, with *hoods* or without *hoods*. Black Americans reacted to Trayvon’s murder—and Americans as a whole did the same! Enough is enough! The devaluing of black men is insulting, and the expectation that we will be silent in the face of *damn-right* ugliness is too brazen to fathom. Americans have responded!