

OPINION: “Black Lives Matter is just another continuation of the Civil Rights Movement in another form”

“Racial Politics is nothing new in American history. It is not some magical concept only born from the Reagan era through today. It’s always been part and parcel tied to American history.

Our very laws and history showcase this very historical fact. One cannot separate American racism from its laws and policies, which tie directly back to American history.

Black Lives Matter or BLM is just another continuation of the Civil Rights Movement in another form. The battle for civil rights and social justice didn’t stop with the assassination of Dr. King. Racism and Prejudice simply didn’t go away, and this has been true going back to the time of Jefferson and after the Civil War.

All the events leading to the Civil War directly tie in race and economics. This, in turn, influenced policy, which in turn led to court decisions, which in turn led to war. And these events over the long arc of time have had an impact on race relations that still affect us to this day, and it still has yet to be resolved.

The following is a brief rundown of how race directly impacted American politics and policy decisions:

The Three-Fifths Compromise 1787-during the 1787 US Constitutional Convention, literally asking how to count slaves as to inflate the numbers for the US House of Representatives. The Convention had unanimously accepted the

principle that representation in the House of Representatives would be in proportion to the relative state populations. However, since slaves could not vote, leaders in slave states would thus have the benefit of increased representation in the House and the Electoral College. Delegates opposed to slavery proposed that only free inhabitants of each state be counted for apportionment purposes, while delegates supportive of slavery, on the other hand, opposed the proposal, wanting slaves to count in their actual numbers.

The Three-Fifths Compromise is found in Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution, which reads:

“Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons”

The Three-Fifths Compromise gave a disproportionate representation of slave states in the House of Representatives relative to the voters in free states until the American Civil War. In 1793, for example, Southern slave states had 47 of the 105 members but would have had 33, had seats been assigned based on free populations. In 1812, slave states had 76 out of 143 instead of the 59 they would have had; in 1833, 98 out of 240 instead of 73.

As a result, Southern states had a disproportionate influence on the presidency, the speakership of the House, and the Supreme Court in the period prior to the Civil War. Along with this must be considered the number of slave and free states, which remained mostly equal until 1850, safeguarding the Southern bloc in the Senate as well as Electoral College votes.

And as we know the Presidency itself does in part determine the policy agenda for the US, especially in terms of what piece of legislation passes through Congress that gets signed by the President and what is vetoed.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787– Article 6 specifically held that slavery was prohibited in the territory but also allowed room for a fugitive slave law. Meaning, escaping to this new territory as a slave meant if captured you would be returned back into slavery.

Missouri Compromise of 1820–was literally about balancing the number of free states and slave states.

From 1836-1844 there was a gag rule in the US House of Representatives forbidding the talk, the very conversation of discussing slavery. Pickney Resolutions 1836, Patton 1837, Atherton 1838, The Twenty-First Rule 1840. All passed to limit discussion of the topic itself in one way or another.

But we can also count the Burning of Pennsylvania Hall, Prigg V Pennsylvania, Annexation of Texas, Mexican American War, Wilmot Proviso, Manifest Destiny, Underground Railroad, Compromise of 1850, Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Ostend Manifesto, the recapture and case of Anthony Burns, the caning of Charles Sumner, Scot v Sanford, Plessy v Ferguson, the Crittenden Compromise, the Corwin Amendment, the Civil War...

I could keep adding various court cases, amendments, and the like but the overall point is the issue of race, skin color... in particular the issue with Black skin color in American history has led to all the above. The impact race and skin color have had on our laws, wars, policies, even our own Constitution cannot be overstated. It looms greatly. So to pretend and long for some idealistic magical separation of race from our politics is impossible, historically inaccurate, and disingenuous. Economically this nation was built on

slavery, our laws and policies grew from it, and our cultural attitudes about race still suckling at the tit of racism.

It is no secret racial profiling happens. It's not always law enforcement, but it is there. Last time I checked cops are not born from some perfect ether of not being subject to bias or upbringing and aren't impacted by our history. They too are very much a product of our society.

Yes, Black Lives Matter is not a perfect social movement, and yet humans too aren't perfect. The motto of the very nation itself is to ascribe to be a "more perfect Union" and yet we expect and demand perfection from a social movement while the nation itself hasn't met this standard in over 200 years?

But the idea there should not be discussion of this in schools is abhorrent. School is there to educate, and give information, and yes sometimes within information is opinion. Even when a court decision comes down, we are given opinions. It doesn't mean we shall all agree either, it just means you heard and listened to a perspective not your own. Children are not robots designed for you to program, they are learning computers always needing input and taking in information. And yes, one day, they may evolve well past the instructions you gave them as your parents did with you. A child thinks for themselves, one day they shall have too because one day they become adults. Even we sometimes as adults must admit sometimes our thinking is outdated and outmoded, and gasp we could be wrong.

Thank you,

Andre Smith."