

Easton's Place in the Black Lives Matter Movement



George Floyd

To the Editor:

In light of the ongoing trial of Derek Chauvin and the approaching 11-month anniversary since the death of George Floyd, I find myself contemplating our town's place in the efforts of the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. The cold-hard truth is that Easton is approximately 95% white according to census estimates. Growing up in the town public school system I cannot recall a single Black teacher or counselor.

I even remember Wiley Mullins speaking at the vigil for George Floyd last June and

asking the crowd of roughly 300 outright to ask themselves whether or not they knew another Black person. While our demographics speak to a great issue—not only in our town but in the foundation of the country itself—at the current moment it presents us with an enormous opportunity to be at the forefront of change.

In my writing course at Columbia University this semester, I read an article by Black author Ta-Nehisi Coates from 2015 entitled “Letter to My Son”. In this letter Coates is bluntly pessimistic about racism in America, writing things to his then 15 year old such as “the American Legacy necessitates that of the bodies destroyed every year, some wild and disproportionate number of them will be Black” and “I would like to tell you that such a day approaches when the people who believe themselves to be white renounce this demon religion and begin to think of themselves as human. But I can see no real promise of such a day”.

Coates’ hope for a better tomorrow was almost entirely nonexistent, and with names like Trayvon Martin and George Floyd and Tamir Rice and Breonna Taylor and Michael Brown appearing on the evening news with shameful regularity, it is not hard to see why.

Yet this past June, surprising even himself, Coates went on the record of having a newfound outlook for the future. “I can’t believe I’m gonna say this,” he said on the podcast “Vox Conversations” with Ezra Klein, “But I see hope. I see progress right now... The idea that [the killing of George Floyd] would resonate with folks in Des Moines. Iowa, that it would resonate in Salt Lake City... it is unfathomable.”

To me, these words embody our place in this fight. During the Civil Rights Movement, it was mostly Black communities speaking out and fighting against the injustice they received. Yet in our time, if predominantly white communities can also throw their support into the mix, the possibility to create change becomes authentic and real. That’s us.

Easton's support and the support of other white communities will have a deciding factor on how the Black Lives Matter movement pans out. Speaking out, attending events, going to protests—these are all things we must continue to take part in. We possess the power to tip the scale in the right direction, but now we need to go out and do it.

Colin Holm-Hansen

Easton